



# Assets & Amenities Comparison Report—Ashland, Wisconsin

2015

# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary



The right “amenities,” or value-added resources, have become increasingly associated with a city’s economic development and the lack thereof, and have been similarly observed as a cause of fiscal instability and decline. Social scientists suggest that communities can foster amenity development by harnessing the variety of unique assets, or place-specific intrinsic value resources, a community already possesses. Utilizing a variety of data culled from governmental and print sources as well as information collected through original research by Northland College professors and undergraduates, this report constitutes a comprehensive understanding of the assets and amenities in the city of Ashland, Wisconsin, at the present. It also offers an in depth analysis of the city’s potential for amenity development moving forward. This is a comparative study that situates Ashland within a broader network of similar-sized municipalities in Northern Wisconsin, Northern Minnesota, and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Through extensive data collection, distillation, and analysis we are able to offer a number of key findings regarding the city of Ashland.

- Ashland has a diversifying economy and is witnessing population growth in key age groups.
- Ashland has a declining wage gap with increasing median wages among women employed full-time.
- Ashland and the Chequamegon Bay region features unmatched and unique natural assets that have great potential for amenity creation.
- Ashland possesses vital assets in the key health care and education sectors.
- Ashland features a host of unique physical assets including its historical downtown and Main Street and an aged and affordable Victorian era housing stock.

We also recognize the challenges that a community like Ashland faces, including: overall population decline; comparably high unemployment; low median wages; limited economic development; brownfield mediation; and housing and commercial vacancies. As a result, we offer a variety of recommendations grounded in contemporary theory

and practice for public and private development:

- Leverage the above assets through policy, partnerships, and promotion.
- Incentivize economic development through small business incubators and low-cost rentals in the dense mixed-use city center.
- Cater to the evolving needs of Ashland’s public education system.
- Expand outdoor and indoor recreational opportunities for citizens and visitors.
- Utilize this assets and amenities data and analysis for the comprehensive planning and unified development ordinance revisions.

Ashland, Wisconsin is a community on the brink, and we conclude with an optimistic outlook on the future viability of the city. It already possesses significant natural, physical, and human resources that should be harnessed to enhance community amenities. Planning and amenity development should target existing citizen needs, which will render Ashland more attractive to residents, visitors, and potential newcomers alike.



# Introduction

By Brandon Hofstedt<sup>1</sup>  
and Brian Tochtermann<sup>2</sup>

Over the last 40 years, the dominant narrative for rural communities has been one of decline and loss. Decline in population. Loss of industrial core. Vacant downtowns. Church, school, hospital, and business closings. This narrative suggests rural communities have nothing to offer and are in need of outside help to succeed. In need of a large outside businesses. In need of outside grants. In need of Angel Investors. Although these things, when they happen, can be extremely beneficial for a community, the outward focus of looking for funding, business, or investors, tends to hide community-based assets that should be in plain sight, and conceal real and viable economic and community development options. In fact, some of the most promising options available for rural economic and community development and municipal policymaking include capitalizing on community assets and enhancing rural amenities<sup>3</sup>.

In this report, we refer to Assets as the resources with value specific to a place that could provide future benefit – in a community this would include the people, their relationships, property, money and so on. Amenities are also assets but refer specifically to the value-added resources that increase the desirability of a given place. In communities, amenities are those things that make a community a good place to live/work (i.e., public and private infrastructure, cultural opportunities, outdoor and indoor recreation, downtown vitality).

This report examines the assets and amenities in and around the community of Ashland and compares Ashland's current stock of assets and amenities to similar-sized communities from across the Northwoods – that is, northern

Wisconsin, northern Minnesota, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. We hope the findings will be used to prompt important discussions about the future of Ashland and inform promising and viable economic and community development decisions for the Ashland community.

## Why are assets and amenities important?

When asked, many Americans state they seek quality of life factors when choosing a community to live, work and play in. This is the case for “Baby Boomers” and younger generations (i.e., Gen Y, X, and Millennials) alike. Americans consistently rank qualities such as scenic beauty, unique character, openness, tolerance, and a sense of community as the most important characteristics when choosing where to settle<sup>4</sup>. In fact, in some cases people are willing to take lower pay to live in communities that have these qualities<sup>5</sup>. Most assets such as the natural environment play into the scenic beauty of a community. Revitalized and preserved downtowns create a feeling of distinctiveness. People in a community that are open and inviting to newcomers and visitors and that actively engage in community involvement and celebration also tend to be attractive features of a community. Each of these things – the natural environment, the downtown, and the people – are important community-based assets and many of them are potential amenities, or the value added components of a place, making it an attractive place to live, work and play.

## What is actually happening in communities with high amenities?

Younger Americans increasingly seeking quality of life factors in the communities they choose. Moreover, assets, specifically those value-added

assets, are also important for other reasons. First, communities that invest in and develop their amenities tend to have happier community members who display community pride and connection to place<sup>6</sup>. While happy residents are certainly something community leaders strive for, there is more to this than just having content community members. Communities that invest in and develop their amenities tend to experience greater economic growth than those communities that ignore them<sup>7</sup>. Communities with high quality amenities have higher rates of tourism, more entrepreneurs, and more patents<sup>8</sup>. In fact, a multi-year study by Gallup and the Knight Foundation, found that communities with high levels of attachment (i.e., happy, committed residents) actually have higher levels of economic growth<sup>9</sup>. This is because residents and business owners who reside in high amenity areas tend to be more committed to that place and are willing to invest more money and time into their community when compared to communities with fewer amenities<sup>10</sup>. Again, it is important to have happy community members because happiness leads to more than enthusiastic citizens. It is sound economics. And community members are happier when they have amenities in their community.

Second, communities rich in amenities tend to experience greater growth in population of both seasonal and permanent residents<sup>11</sup>. Many of these newcomers tend to be entrepreneurs and college-educated<sup>12</sup>. In addition to attracting new community members, communities that invest in and develop their amenities are better at retaining existing community members and have much lower rates of rural “brain drain”<sup>13</sup>. Recent findings suggest amenity rich communities not only retain their youth at higher rates, they also experience “brain gain,” or a net growth of newcomers<sup>14</sup>.

## What is the purpose of this publication?

Assets and amenities are important for community and economic development because people are seeking communities based on quality of life, and places that enhance their quality of life (i.e., offer amenities) better capture and attract assets (e.g., human and financial capital). One of the difficulties for community and economic development practitioners is finding out what assets exist and how those assets can be leveraged in an effective way. This report helps identify what assets exist in and around Ashland, and compares these assets to other communities across the Northwoods; specifically communities that share a similar size in population, similar climate, and similar rural setting.

## Who is its intended audience?

This report is meant for community and economic development practitioners, community leaders, and citizens interested in the future of Ashland. The purpose is not only to depict Ashland's assets but to prompt conversation about what Ashland has, what Ashland lacks, what Ashland could have, and what Ashland should have. Although the data used in this report is empirical and scientific, the ideas and interpretations are those of the authors. We aim to provoke community conversations that will make Ashland an even better community with a higher quality of life that is attractive to its current residents and potential residents and visitors.

## How is this report organized?

The report begins with a brief description of how the data for the Northwoods Assets & Amenities database were collected and then moves into discussing the assets and amenities of Ashland. Ashland is an exemplary community with many unique assets and promising opportunities. It also is experiencing real challenges. Because of this Ashland has fallen victim at times

to the dominant narrative of decline and loss that plagues rural America. It is a problem that tends to detract from progress and hides opportunities that should be in plain sight. This report is organized to systematically examine what Ashland has and does not have in order to help the city overcome the trap of sitting idle, or worse, succumbing to a crisis mode of thinking that becomes self-fulfilling prophecy.

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<sup>3</sup>Olfert, M. Rose and Mark D. Partridge. 2010. "Best Practices in Twenty-First-Century Rural Development and Policy." *Growth and Change* 41(2): 147-164.

<sup>4</sup>Knight Foundation. 2010. *Knight Soul of the Community 2010: Why People Love Where They Live and Why It Matters: A National Perspective*. See full report and individual community reports at: <http://www.soulofthecommunity.org/>.

<sup>5</sup>McGranahan, David A. and Patrick Sullivan. 2005. "Farm Programs, Natural Amenities, and Rural Development." *Amber Waves* 3: 28-35.

<sup>6</sup>Sirgy, M. Joseph and Terri Cornwell. "Further Validation of the Sirgy et al's Measure of Community Quality of Life." *Social Indicators Research* 56: 125-143. Sirgy, M. Joseph, Don Rahtz, Muris Cacic, and Robert Underwood. 2000. "A Method for Assessing Residents' Satisfaction with Community Based Services: A Quality of Life Perspective." *Social Indicators Research* 49: 279-316.

<sup>7</sup>Nzaku, Kilungu and James O. Bukenya. 2005. "Examining the Relationship Between Quality of Life Amenities and Economic Development in the Southeast USA." *Review of Urban & Regional Development Studies* 17(2): 89-103.

<sup>8</sup>Florida, Richard. 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books.

<sup>9</sup>Knight Foundation 2010

<sup>10</sup>Besser, Terry L. and Nancy J. Miller. 2013. "Social Capital, Local Businesses and Amenities in US Rural Prairie Communities." *Journal of Rural Studies* 32: 186-195.

<sup>11</sup>Rickman, Dan S. and Shane D. Rickman. 2011. "Population Growth in High-Amenity Nonmetropolitan Areas: What's the Prognosis?" *Journal of Regional Science* 51(5): 863-879.

<sup>12</sup>Whisler, Ronald L., Brigitte S. Waldorf, Gordon F. Milligan, and David A. Plane. 2008. "Quality of Life and Migration of College-Educated: A Life Course Approach." *Growth and Change* 39(1): 58-94.

<sup>13</sup>Brain drain refers to eighteen year olds leaving town for a job, military, and educational opportunities and then that person or their equivalent in skill and education returns to the community as a late twenty or early thirty something. McGranahan, David A. and Timothy R. Wojan. 2007. "The Creative Class: A Key to Rural Growth." *Amber Waves* 5: 16-21. See article at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2007-april/the-creative-class-a-key-to-rural-growth.aspx#.VARoSPMo7Sc>.

<sup>14</sup>Winchester, Ben. 2012. "Continuing the Trend: The Brain Gain of the Newcomers: A Generational Analysis of Rural Minnesota Migration, 1990-2010." *Extension Center for Community Vitality* (May 16, 2012). See full report at: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/brain-gain/docs/continuing-the-trend.pdf>.

# Methodology

Data for this report comes from a developing, long-term project called the Northwoods Assets & Amenities database located at Northland College's Center for Rural Communities. Currently, the Northwoods Assets & Amenities database includes 126 communities (Map 1) located across northern Wisconsin, northern Minnesota, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (see appendix A for complete list of communities). Communities in the database range from approximately 1,000-16,000 in total population.

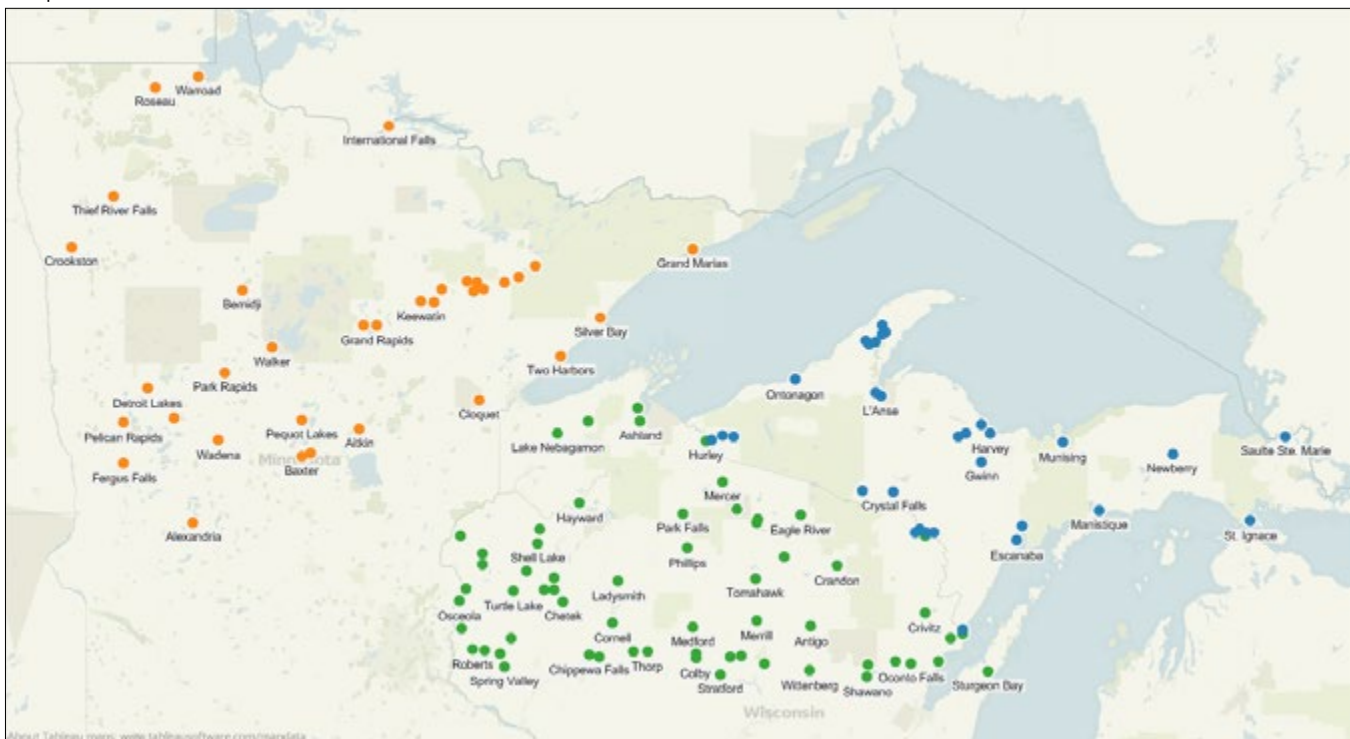
The database is comprised of hundreds of data points across

several broad categories considered community based assets and amenities. These categories include:

- (1) demographic data,
- (2) economic data,
- (3) natural environment (e.g., climate, lakes, rivers, forests),
- (4) outdoor and indoor recreational opportunities (e.g., golf, swimming, trails, parks, gyms),
- (5) downtown vitality (e.g., restaurants, vacant buildings, pedestrian traffic)
- (6) public and private infrastructure (e.g., schools, healthcare, technology, transportation),
- (7) cultural assets (e.g., festivals, museums, plays), and
- (8) social capital (e.g., how much communities trust, know and interact with one another)<sup>15</sup>.

Data for each category is compiled using a variety of primary and secondary data collection procedures. For example, downtown vitality data is collected from field visits by researchers walking and cataloging the infrastructure, cleanliness, accessibility, and traffic of each community's downtown district. Demographic and economic data have been compiled primarily through Federal data sources such as the US Census Bureau.

Map 1: Communities of the Northwoods Assets & Amenities Database



<sup>15</sup> A number of our indicators, especially downtown vitality, were constructed using the work of Besser et al 2012. Besser, Terry L., Nancy J. Miller, and Roshan Malik. 2012. "Community Amenity Measure for the Great Fly-Over Zones." *Social Indicator Research* 106: 393-405.



# Demographics

The following demographic analysis considers Ashland alongside database communities that feature a population within approximately 3000 of Ashland's population and at a minimum distance of 30 miles from<sup>16</sup> a large metropolitan area. These two parameters – population and distance – provide a more exact comparison between communities due to the relationship between number of amenities and size of population (i.e., the bigger the community the more amenities) and the relative distance to a major metropolitan area (i.e., the closer a community is to an urban center, the more amenities it has)<sup>17</sup>. For these reasons, we restricted comparison communities based on these variables. In this section, we use 20 comparison communities – seven in Minnesota, nine in Wisconsin, and four in Michigan (Map 2). Ashland sits roughly in the middle of these communities with an estimated 8,213 people (Figure 1).

## Population

A common problem for rural communities is population loss. Ashland is no different. Between 2000 and 2012 Ashland lost 4.7 percent of its population (Figure 2). Over half of the comparison communities also dropped in overall population during this same period. A surface reading of this decrease does not fully capture nor explain what is actually happening in Ashland. More importantly, it masks opportunities that may be available to the city.

Map 2: Comparison Communities

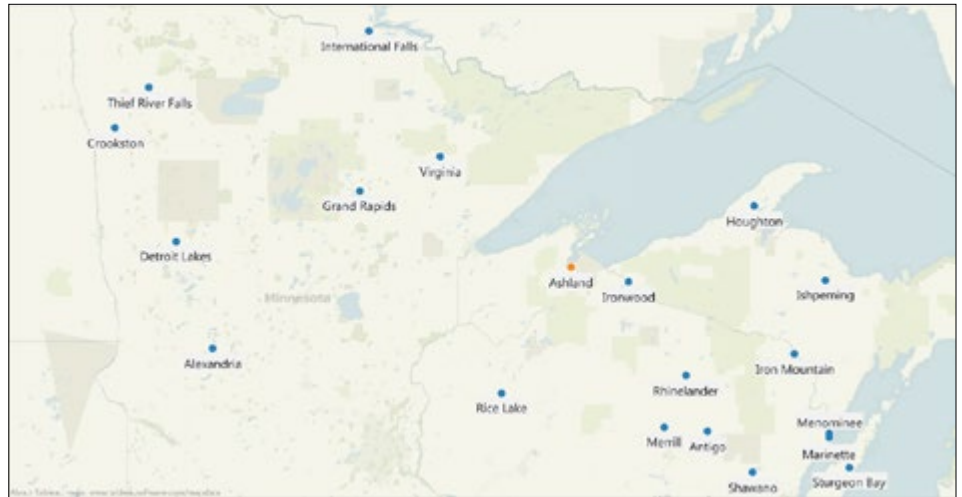
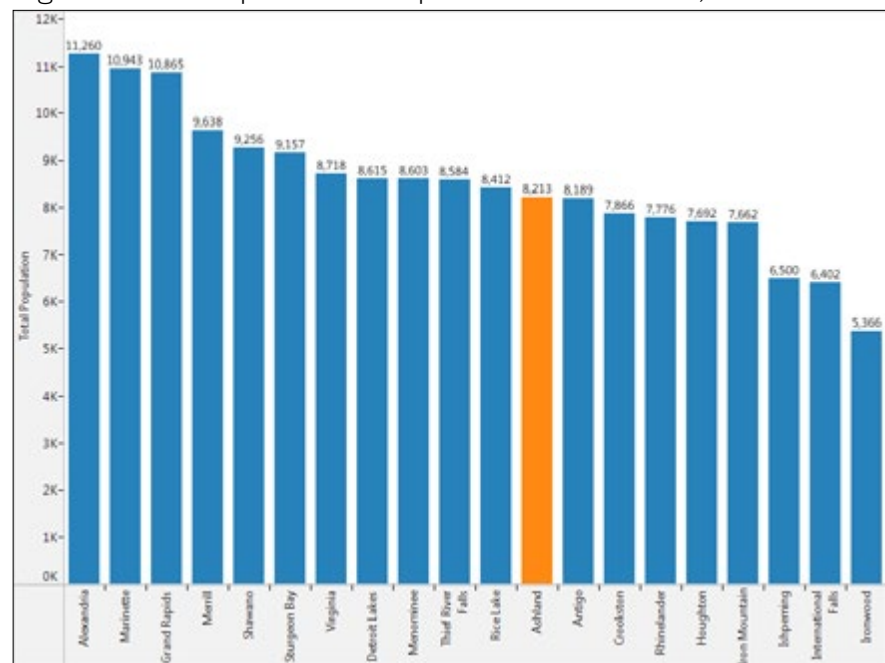


Figure 1: Total Population Comparison Communities, 2012



Source: US Census

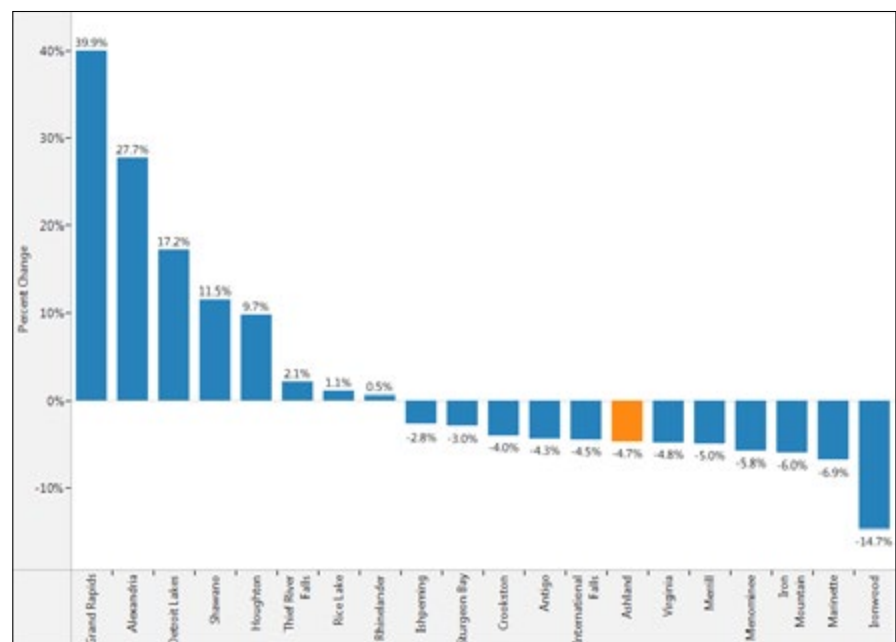
<sup>16</sup>The sole exception is Merrill, which is approximately 20 miles from the Wausau area.

<sup>17</sup>Besser and Miller 2012

For certain, the loss of unskilled manufacturing jobs resulting from the James River paper mill closing accounted for some of the decline. Another contributing factor has been the continuing development of new housing on the outskirts of the city, much of it outside of the city limits proper, as Ashland County saw a smaller percentage drop in population than the city, and nearby Bayfield County witnessed some growth in that same period (Table 1).

One phenomenon to consider is the role of Northland College's student population in this shift. In a city where the Northland College student body currently hovers around 7 percent of Ashland's population, significant fluctuations in the college's cohort, as it has witnessed in recent years<sup>18</sup> will result in minor demographic shifts at the city level. Comparatively sharp declines in the 15-19 and 20-24 age ranges suggest this may indeed be the case.

Figure 2: Percent Change Total Population, 2000-2012



Source: US Census, ACS

Table 1: Change in Population for Ashland and Bayfield Counties

	2000	2010	2012	2013
Ashland county	16,866	16,157	16,113	16,016
Bayfield county	15,013	15,014	15,119	15,156

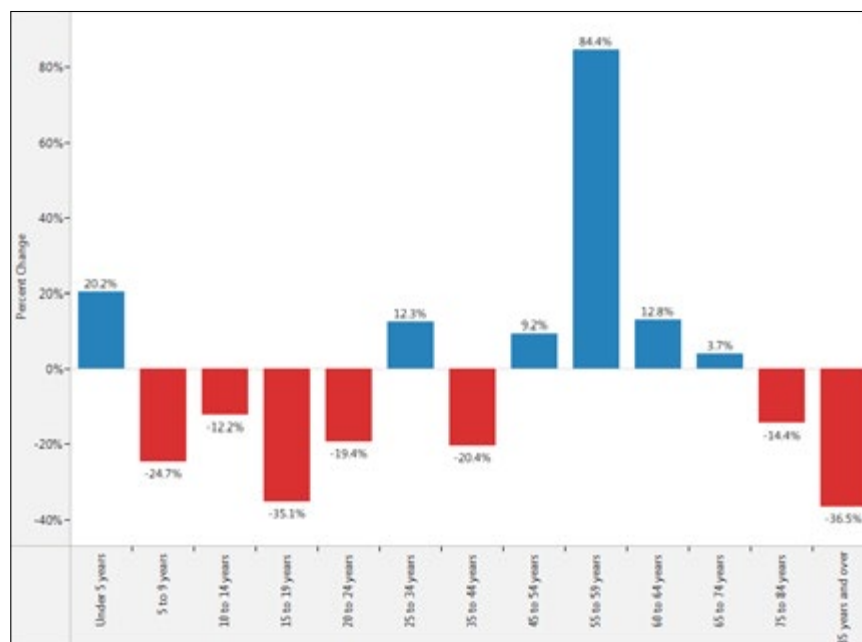
Source: US Census, ACS

<sup>18</sup>Since 2006, the total number of students enrolled at the College has dropped from 706 during to 533 during Fall 2011. The College has seen modest growth in enrollment since Fall 2011. If the College attains its goal of maintaining between 800-1,000 students, this provides a promising opportunity for economic development.

When looking at the breakdown by age group in Ashland, we see a number of notable changes that more accurately explain the reality of population change (Figure 3). First, Ashland has seen a significant growth in the population of those who are in mid-career to early retirees. This cohort has seen the largest increase in population from 2000-2012 – 9.2 percent for 45-54 years, 84.4 percent for 55-59 years, 12.8 percent for 60-64 years, and 3.7 percent for 65-74 years, respectively<sup>19</sup>— suggesting interesting economic development opportunities for Ashland and the region. If a community has or develops the amenities (e.g., health care and recreation) necessary for an aging population, they tend to do better at retaining existing community members and attracting newcomers from this age cohort<sup>20</sup>. This is particularly the case with wealthier Baby Boomers who have vacation homes and are looking to retire. At the county level, both Ashland and Bayfield Counties see a higher than expected rate of homes used for seasonal or vacation purposes (23.7 percent for Ashland County<sup>21</sup> and 42.9 percent for Bayfield County compared to the Wisconsin average of 13.7 percent<sup>22</sup>). Furthermore, amenities intended for aging populations and retirees (e.g., health, retail, and recreation) provide job and career opportunities to younger groups looking to enter the workforce or build their career.

The other notable trend is the growth in the five-years old and younger cohort and the mirror increase in the cohort of 25 to 34 years old, most likely the parents of this youngest group. This is significant for two reasons. First, people between the ages of 25-34 years old are considered the group most rural communities are concerned with attracting or

Figure 3: Percent Change by Age Range, 2000-2012



Source: US Census, ACS

retaining. Most recent estimates suggest that Ashland is doing just that. Secondly, the increase in population of those under the age of five points toward a possible reversal in a decade long trend of losing population of those under the age of 18 years old. This trend is supported by a predicted increase in population in and around Ashland (Map 3). Over the next five years (2014-2019), the city of Ashland and the area immediately around it – as defined

by census tracts – are expected to see increases in population. The northern part of Ashland County from Marengo to Ashland over through Bad River is expected to see one of the largest increases in population in the Chequamegon Bay area, and also is one of the few areas predicted to grow out of the comparison communities. Furthermore, this same area, particularly Bad River, has one of the lowest median ages across the Northwoods (Map 4).

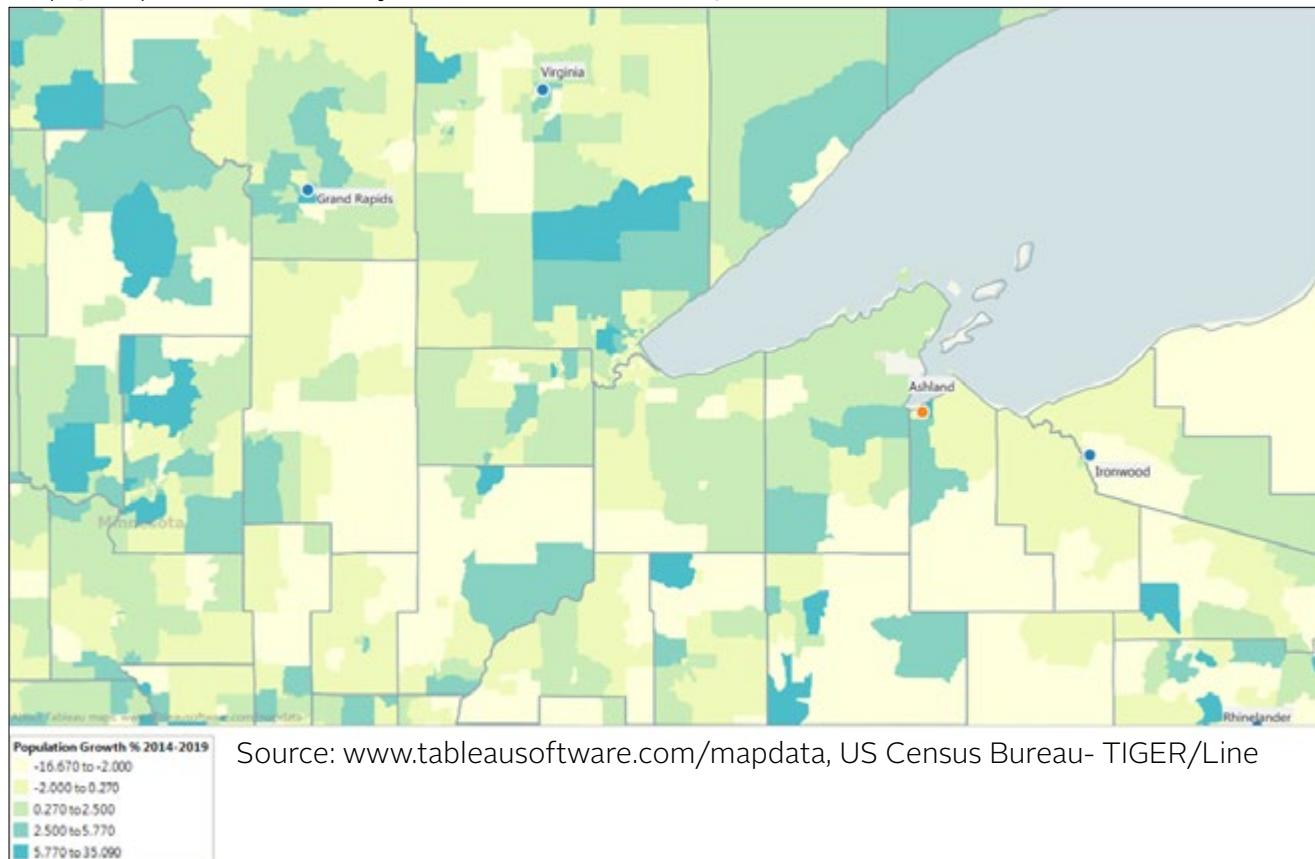
<sup>19</sup>These changes are reflected in both percent change and raw number change. The raw number change for each cohort is: under 5 (100 people), 5-9 years (-121 people), 10-14 years (-70 people), 15-19 years (-294 people), 20-24 years (-167 people), 25-34 years (113 people), 35-44 years (-246 people), 45-54 years (97 people), 55-59 years (322 people), 60-64 years (37 people), 65-74 years (22 people), 75-84 years (-88 people), and 85 years and over (-112 people).

<sup>20</sup>Poudyal, Neelam C., Donald G. Hodges, and H. Ken Cordell. 2008. "The role of natural resource amenities in attracting retiree: implications for economic growth policy." *Ecological Economics* 68: 240-248.

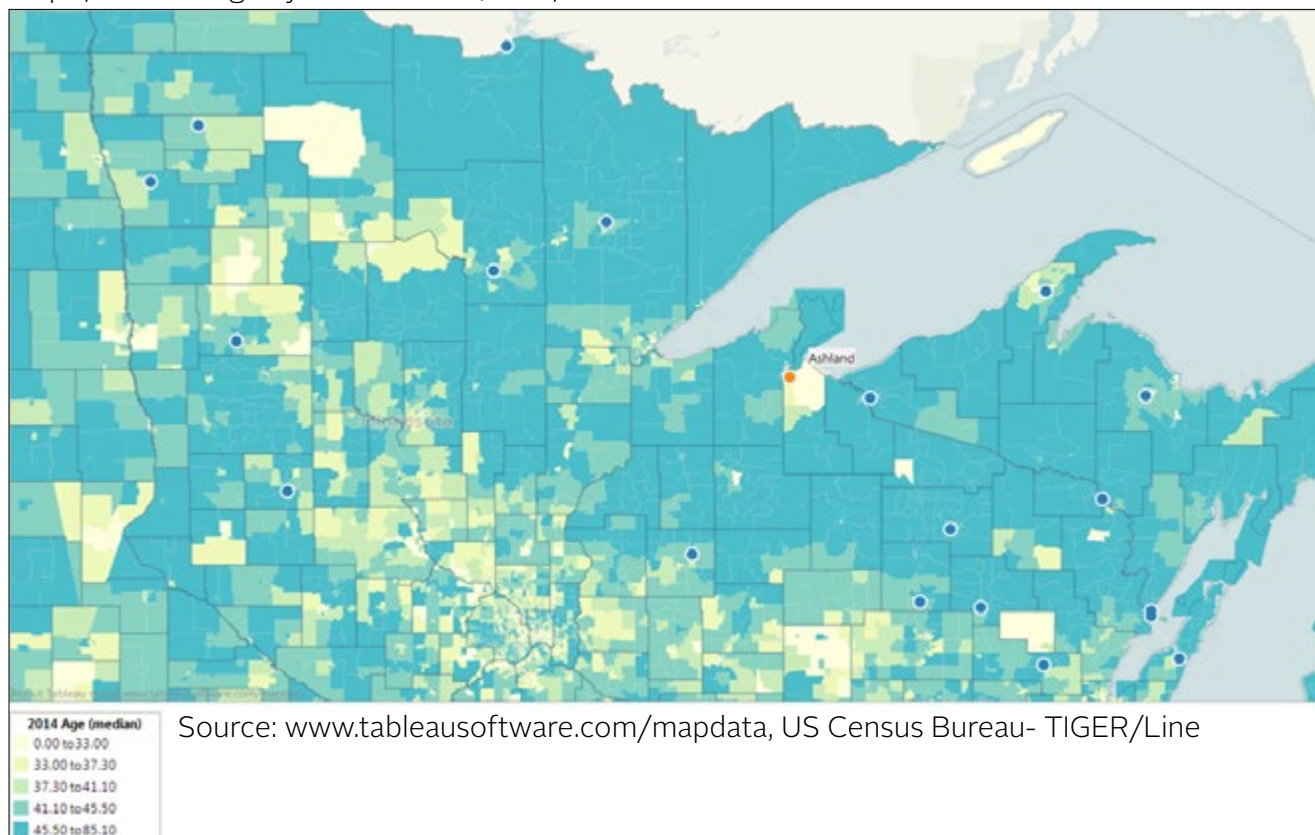
<sup>21</sup>Brown, Laura and Andrew Bernhardt. 2012. "Ashland County Wisconsin Housing Profile." UW Extension.

<sup>22</sup>Brown, Laura and Andrew Bernhardt. 2012. "Bayfield County Wisconsin Housing Profile." UW Extension.

Map 3: Population Growth by Census Tract, 2014-2019



Map 4: Median Age by Census Tract, 2014





## Spillover from the Twin Ports

Over the last 15 years, the Twin Ports area (Duluth and Superior) has experienced a reversal of fortune after a half-century long decline endured by industrial cities of the Midwest. Duluth in particular has gone through a major transformation by expanding its employment base in the areas of technology, tourism and service<sup>23</sup>. Coupled with a strong and growing white-collar professional workforce employed in the medical and education fields, Duluth and nearby Superior are expected to see continued growth and change over the decade. In fact, the Twin Ports is identified as one of the small metro areas expected to see the greatest rate of growth for professional, service, and working class occupations in the nation over the next decade<sup>24</sup>. These changes provide interesting opportunities for the City of Ashland. Despite its remoteness and distance from the Twin Ports area, Ashland is still within reach to reap the benefits and experience the challenges of a fast growing area. One of the major opportunities for Ashland is in improving integration with the Twin Ports economy, whether through increased connectivity due to workforce commuting, providing rural lifestyle options attractive to commuters, or supplementing existing economic infrastructure and needs of the Twin Ports<sup>25</sup>.

## Race and Ethnicity

Compared to other rural communities, Ashland is much more diverse in terms of its racial and ethnic composition. While approximately 84.4 percent of the population identifies as white, nearly 15 percent of the Ashland community considers themselves a different race or ethnicity (Table 2). The second largest segment of the Ashland population identifies as American Indian or Native American. Ashland's proximity to

the Bad River Band and Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribes undoubtedly contributes to roughly 11.8 percent of Ashland's residents identifying as all or part American Indian. Diversity and tolerance are two characteristics commonly identified by people under the age of forty as important characteristics of community<sup>26</sup>. Not common in rural communities, Ashland's racial and ethnic diversity provides an attractive characteristic sought by those under the age of forty.

**Table 2: Breakdown by Race, 2012\***

	Percent
White	84.6%
American Indian	6.2%
White & American Indian	5.2%
Hispanic or Latino	1.7%
Asian	0.8%
Black or African American	0.6%
Black & American Indian	0.4%
White & Black or African American	0.2%

\*Percent does not equal 100% due to rounding error.

<sup>23</sup>Fallows, James. 2014. "Why Cities Work Even When Washington Doesn't: The Case for Strong Mayors." *The Atlantic* March 19, 2014. See article at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/04/the-case-for-strong-mayors/358642/>.

<sup>24</sup>Florida, Richard. 2014. "Where the Good and Bad Jobs Will Be, 10 Years From Now: The Places Creative, Service, and Working Class Jobs Will Grow the Most by 2022." *CityLab* February 25, 2014. See article at: <http://www.citylab.com/work/2014/02/where-good-and-bad-jobs-will-be-10-years-now/8470/>.

<sup>25</sup>Olfert and Partridge 2010.

<sup>26</sup>Knight Foundation 2010.

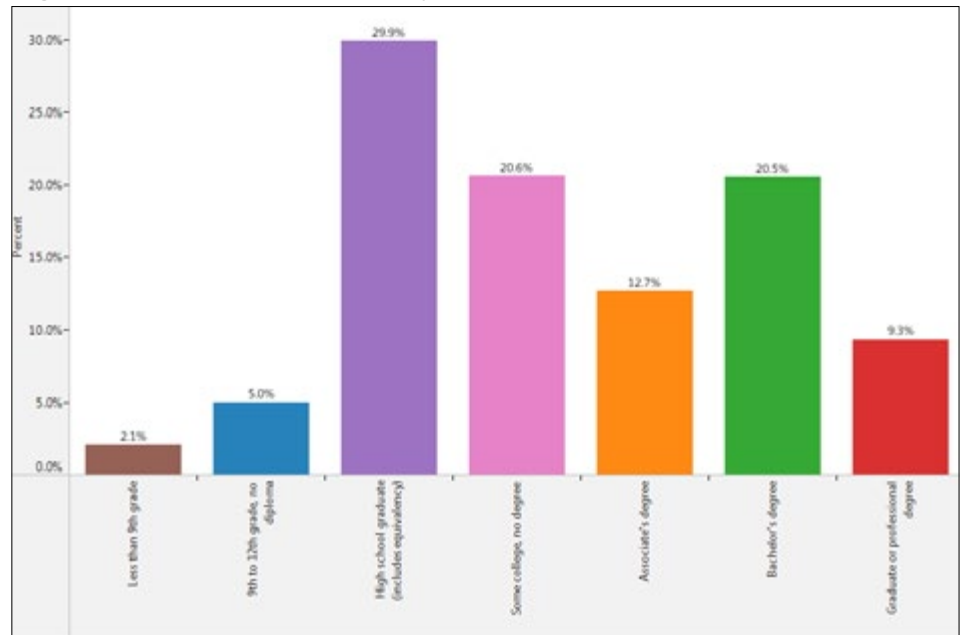


## Education

Between 2000 and 2012, Ashland has seen vital increases in the education levels of its population. Its citizens are more likely to be in the twilight or the beginning of their careers, and the city itself, despite a decline in young adults and adolescents, is bearing witness to a notable “baby boom.” These newcomers are bringing with them college and advanced professional degrees from elsewhere. Sixty percent of the adult population in Ashland has some college or more (Figure 4). Since 2000, the city has seen an 87 percent spike in associate degree holders, a 64 percent increase in bachelor degrees, and a 13 percent increase in advanced degrees<sup>27</sup> likely absorbed by burgeoning medical, natural resources, and higher education sectors within Ashland proper and its surrounding area (Figure 5).

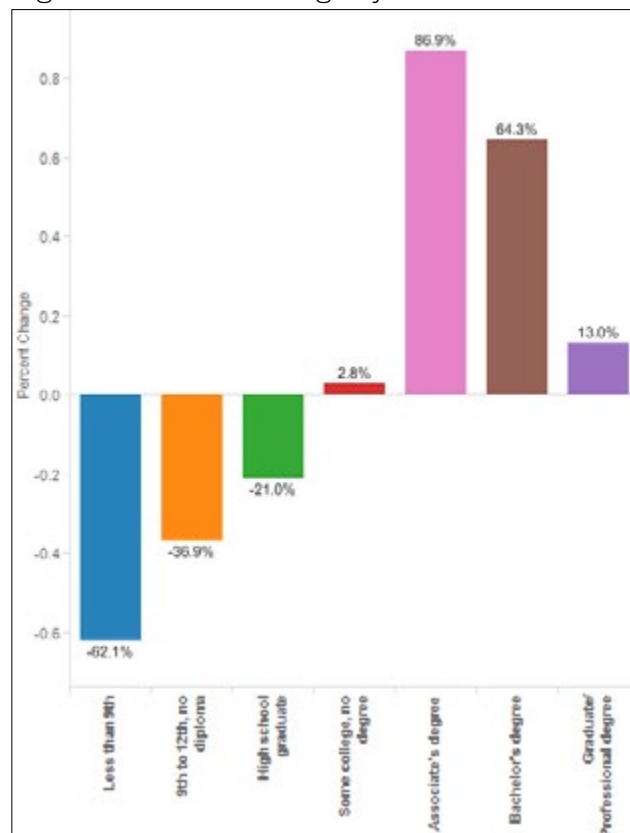
Among the comparison group, Ashland ranks behind only Houghton, home to Michigan Technological University, in educational attainment (Figure 6). Similarly, Ashland is only behind Alexandria in the overall growth in the percent of those over the age of 25 who have a bachelor's degree (Figure 7).

Figure 4: Percent Breakdown by Race, 2012\*



Source: US Census, ACS

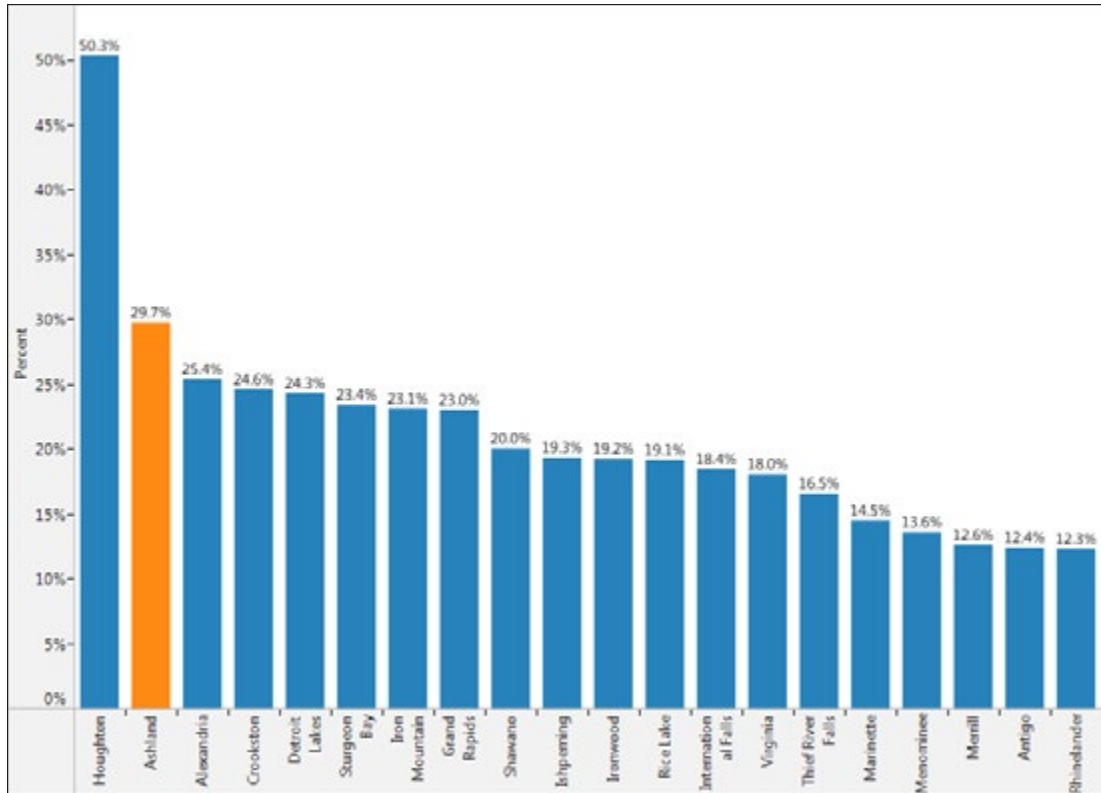
Figure 6: Percent Change by Educational Attainment, 2000-2012



Source: US Census, ACS

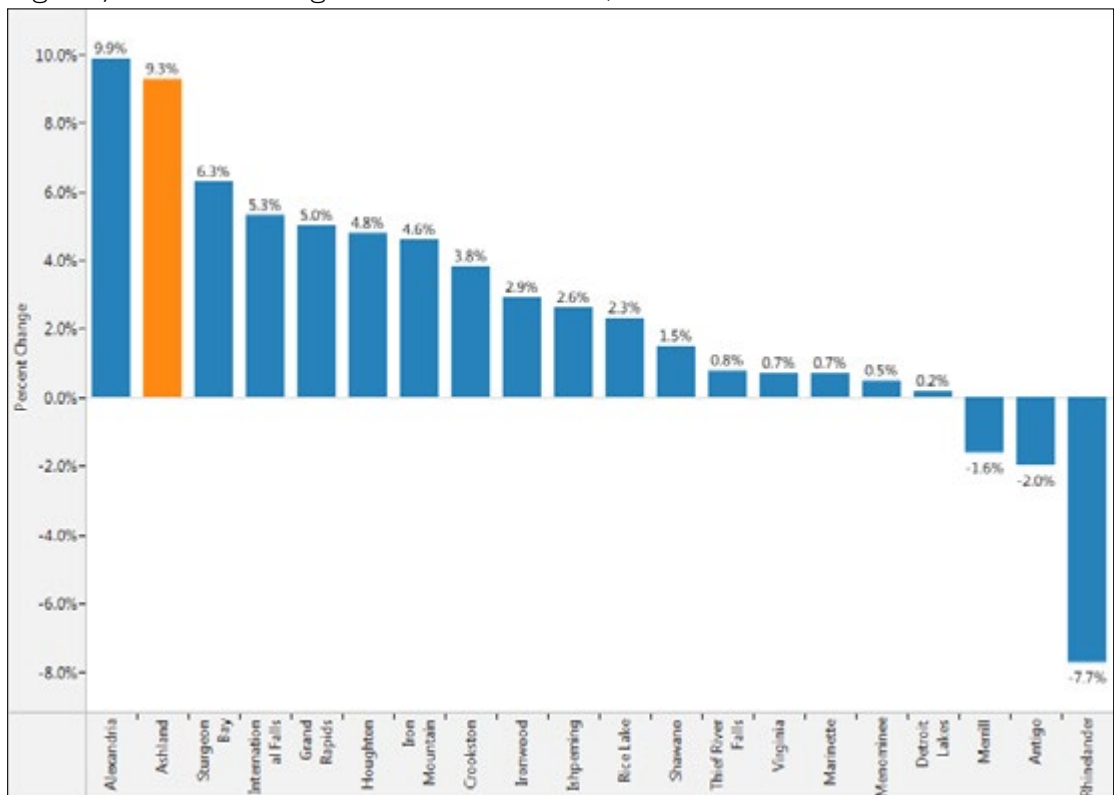
<sup>27</sup>This change is in both percent change and raw number change.

Figure 6: Percent Population Bachelor's & Above, 2012



Source: US Census, ACS

Figure 7: Percent Change Bachelor's & Above, 2000-2012



Source: US Census, ACS

Growth in population of those who have a bachelor's degree is very important for communities. As education increases so does one's income. This can be seen clearly in Ashland over a 12-month period during 2012. Workers who have a bachelor's degree make double the income of those with a high school degree (Table 3). Not surprisingly, citizens lacking in a high school or college diploma are more likely to live under the poverty line (Table 4). The key to their mobility is not only more unskilled, high-wage employment opportunities, but access to education and technical training. Ashland is not unlike comparison communities in this respect, but in contrast to most of those communities, Ashland has the infrastructure within its city limits, Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) and Northland College, to foster that type of community development.

Growth in population of those with a bachelor's degree also has an influence on areas for economic growth related to spending habits. College educated residents tend to spend more money on books and technology (e.g., computers). Furthermore, there tends to be a strong relationship between level of education and preference for "shopping at smaller, non-chain specialty retail stores located in their downtown...[and] visit cultural establishments like museums and theaters at a frequency over three times greater than those without a college degree"<sup>28</sup>.

**Table 3: Median Earnings Past 12 Months, 2012**

	Income
Less than high school graduate	\$17,000
High school graduate	\$20,829
Some college or associate degree	\$25,844
Bachelor's degree	\$40,513
Graduate or professional degree	\$57,468

Source: US Census, ACS

**Table 4: Poverty Rates Among Educational Attainment, 2012**

	Percent
Less than high school graduate	29.6%
High school graduate	20.1%
Some college or associate degree	11.9%
Bachelor's or higher	3.0%

Source: US Census, ACS



<sup>28</sup>University of Wisconsin Extension. "Demographic and Lifestyle Analysis." *Downtown and Business District Market Analysis: Tools to Create Economically Vibrant Commercial Districts in Small Cities.* (<http://fyi.uwex.edu/downtown-market-analysis/understanding-the-market/demographics-and-lifestyle-analysis/>)



## Economy

This particular demographic shift, i.e. growth in college educated, has had two significant impacts on the nature of Ashland's economy in this new century. For one, the city has developed an increasingly diversified economy (Table 5), a mark of distinction amongst most of the comparison group<sup>29</sup>. While the city remains reliant on education, health, retail, and manufacturing sectors, it has also seen small gains in public administration employment and, more importantly, it has shown a willingness to adapt to the ascendant and vital information sector.

**Table 5: Percent of Workforce by Industry & Percent Change, 2000-2012**

	2000	2012	% Change
Retail trade	529 (12.8%)	599 (15.6%)	2.8%
Wholesale trade	30 (0.7%)	83 (2.2%)	1.5%
Information	74 (1.8%)	114 (3.0%)	1.2%
Public administration	190 (4.6%)	220 (5.7%)	1.1%
Construction	223 (5.4%)	233 (6.1%)	0.7%
Other services	183 (4.4%)	192 (5.0%)	0.6%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing/hunting & mining	72 (1.7%)	72 (1.9%)	0.2%
Transportation/warehousing & utilities	125 (3.0%)	116 (3.0%)	0.0%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, & waste management	247 (6.0%)	230 (6.0%)	0.0%
Finance, insurance, real estate, & rental/leasing	138 (3.3%)	125 (3.3%)	0.0%
Manufacturing	513 (12.4%)	429 (11.2%)	-1.2%
Education, health, and social services	1327 (32.2%)	1154 (30.0%)	-2.2%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation & food services	470 (11.4%)	277 (7.2%)	-4.2%

Source: US Census, ACS

<sup>29</sup>For data comparing Ashland to the other communities by percent change from 2000-2012 by industry see Appendix B.



# Ashland Community Study<sup>30</sup>

In 2014, a group of Ashland residents were randomly selected to participate in a study about living and working in the community of Ashland<sup>31</sup>. In this study, participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their current employment. A majority of respondents (86.8 percent) identified either “very satisfied” (43.4 percent) or “somewhat satisfied” (43.4 percent) with their current employment situation. Only 13.2 percent of respondents stated they were “somewhat dissatisfied” (9.7 percent) or “very dissatisfied” (3.5 percent) with their current employment situation. When asked about the quality of jobs in the area, respondent had a much more negative evaluation. Only 7.9 percent of the respondents stated jobs were either “very good” or “good,” and the additional 92.1 percent of respondents rated jobs in the area as either “fair” or “poor”. The combination of these two items poses an interesting question related to positive evaluation of individual employment situation versus a negative or pessimistic outlook of the Ashland job market. Finally, when asked about the importance of various economic development initiatives, respondents rated the two most important economic development initiative as “helping existing local businesses” (86.4 percent) and “bringing in new businesses and industry” (93.5 percent).

## Rank by Industry Distribution

Table 6 below depicts three different scenarios and ranks Ashland and its comparison communities against these scenarios. The first scenario assumes an equal distribution by percent of workforce in a given industry. The ideal in this scenario would be a community that had 7.69 percent of its workforce in each of the industry categories listed above (e.g., 7.69 percent in manufacturing, 7.69 percent in education, and so on). The closer a community is to this ideal the higher its rank. The second scenario takes

the average by industry for every community (n=126) in the database and compares each community to how it looks in comparison to this average distribution by industry. The third and final scenario takes the communities consistently rated as the best small towns in the United States<sup>32</sup>, uses the average of distribution by industry for these communities and then compares each community to the “Best Small Towns” index. On both the equal distribution and the Northwood community average score, Ashland sits just below the median. However, when compared to the “best small town” average, it jumps to 8 out of 20.

Table 6: Rank by Industry

Community	Rank by Equal Distribution	Rank by Comparison to Average	Rank by Comparison to Best Small Towns
Virginia	1 <sup>st</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>
Ishpeming	2 <sup>nd</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>
Rhineland	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>
Ironwood	4 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>
Antigo	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
International Falls	6 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Iron Mountain	7 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Sturgeon Bay	8 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Alexandria	9 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Merrill	10 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
Shawano	11 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>
Ashland	12 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>
Grand Rapids	13 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
Thief River Falls	14 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
Detroit Lakes	15 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
Crookston	16 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>
Rice Lake	17 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>
Marinette	18 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>
Menominee	19 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>
Houghton	20 <sup>th</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>

<sup>30</sup>This indicator was the lowest rated item out of the eleven items evaluated by respondents (see Appendix C).

<sup>31</sup>For further explanation of research methodology, breakdown of results, and information on project funding see either the social capital section of this report or Appendix C.

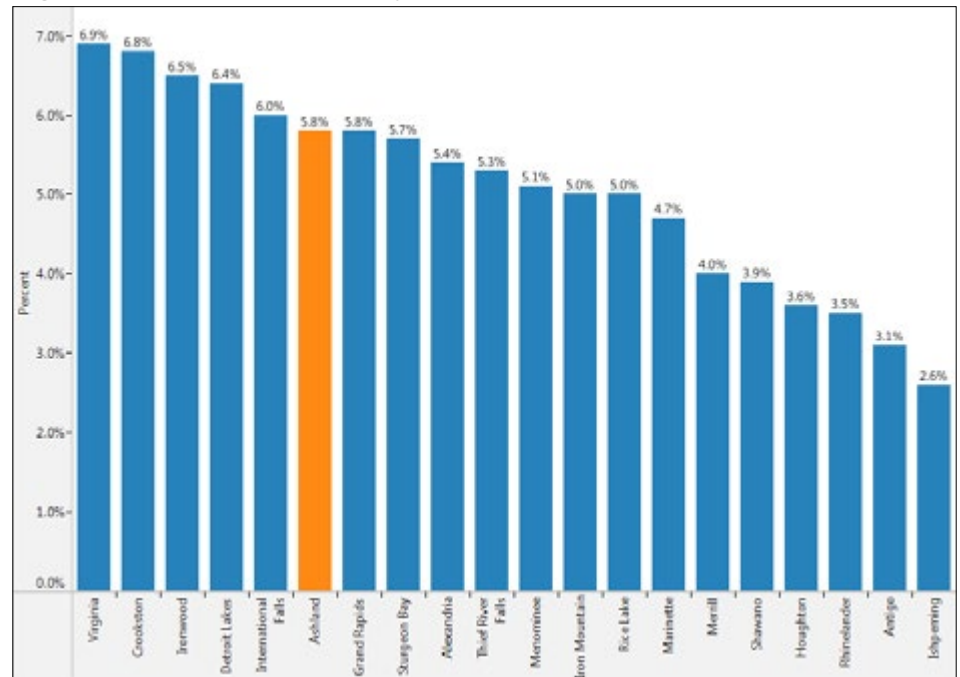
<sup>32</sup>Communities identified from various reports of the best small towns in America. We used 9 communities including: Ashland, OR; Brunswick, ME; Durango, CO; Gig Harbor, WA; Great Barrington, MA; Menomonie, WI; Red Bank, NJ; Taos, NM; and Traverse City, MI.



## Self-employed and Home-based Businesses

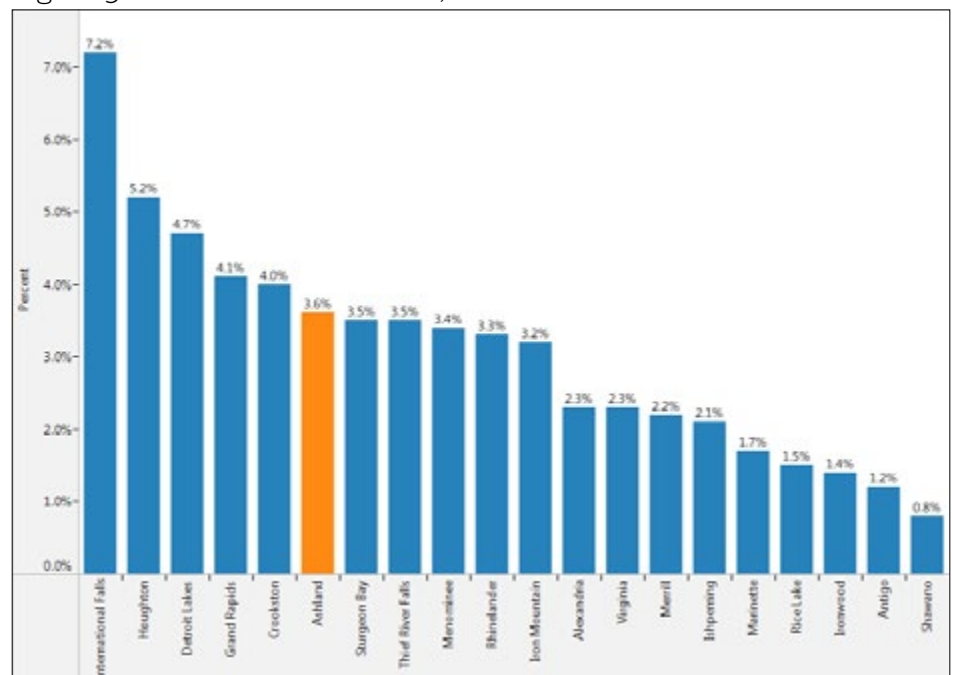
Ashland also has a high-level of self-employed workers (Figure 8) and home-based businesses (Figure 9). This labor could be performed anywhere, but these citizens have chosen to labor and live in Ashland due to the city's assets and amenities. Nurturing the fields of information services and the cohort of self-employed while disseminating Ashland's willingness to expand these sectors would bode well for the city's economic health going forward.

Figure 8: Percent Self-Employed (in not-incorporated businesses), 2012



Source: US Census, ACS

Figure 9: Percent Work at Home, 2012



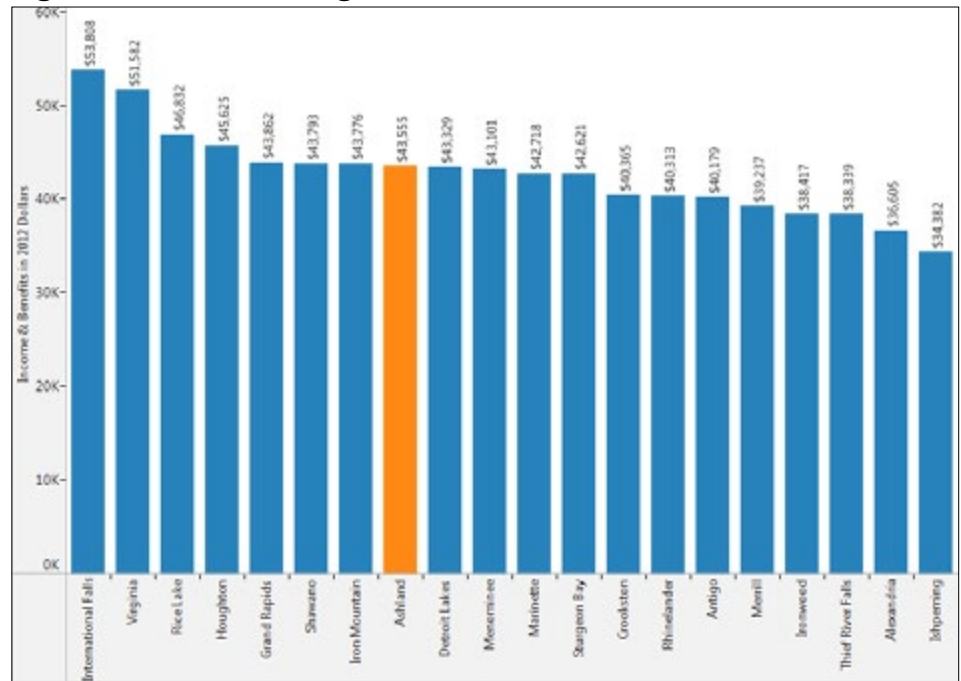
Source: US Census, ACS

## Worker Wages

The shift in education levels has enhanced Ashland's overall standard of living. Full-time workers have witnessed considerable wage increases. Both full-time male (Figure 10) and female (Figure 11) workers have seen an increase in their income. As of 2012, income for full-time male workers sits roughly in the middle of full-time male earnings found in comparison communities but it did see one of the largest increases at roughly \$3,393 in real dollars to \$43,555 (Figure 12).

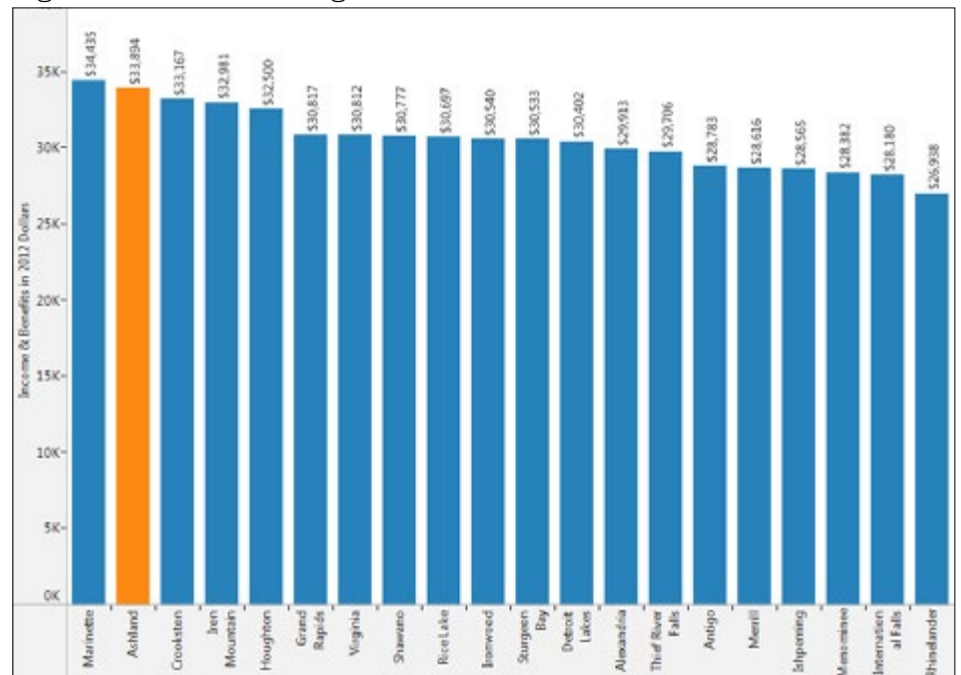
Furthermore, full-time female income earners currently rank second highest (at \$33,894) among the comparison communities and saw the highest increase (\$5,993.40) in income over this same twelve-year period (Figure 13).

Figure 10: Median Earnings, Full-time Male, Year-round, 2012



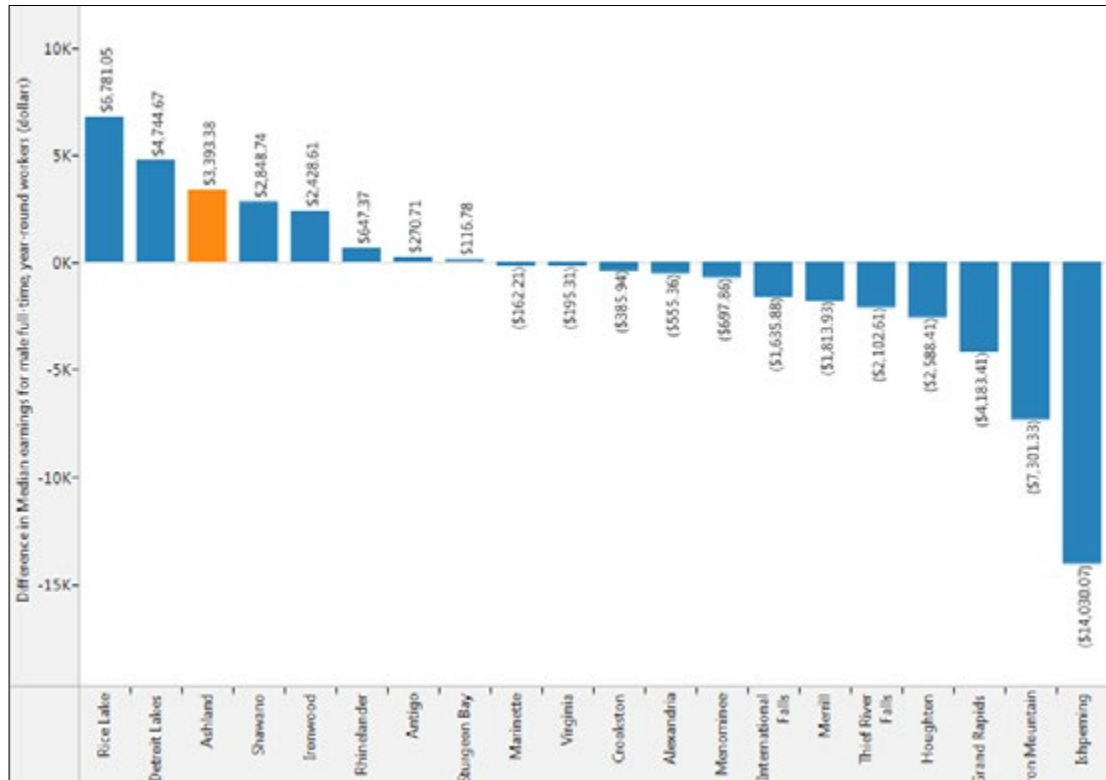
Source: US Census, ACS

Figure 11: Median Earnings, Full-time Female, Year-round, 2012



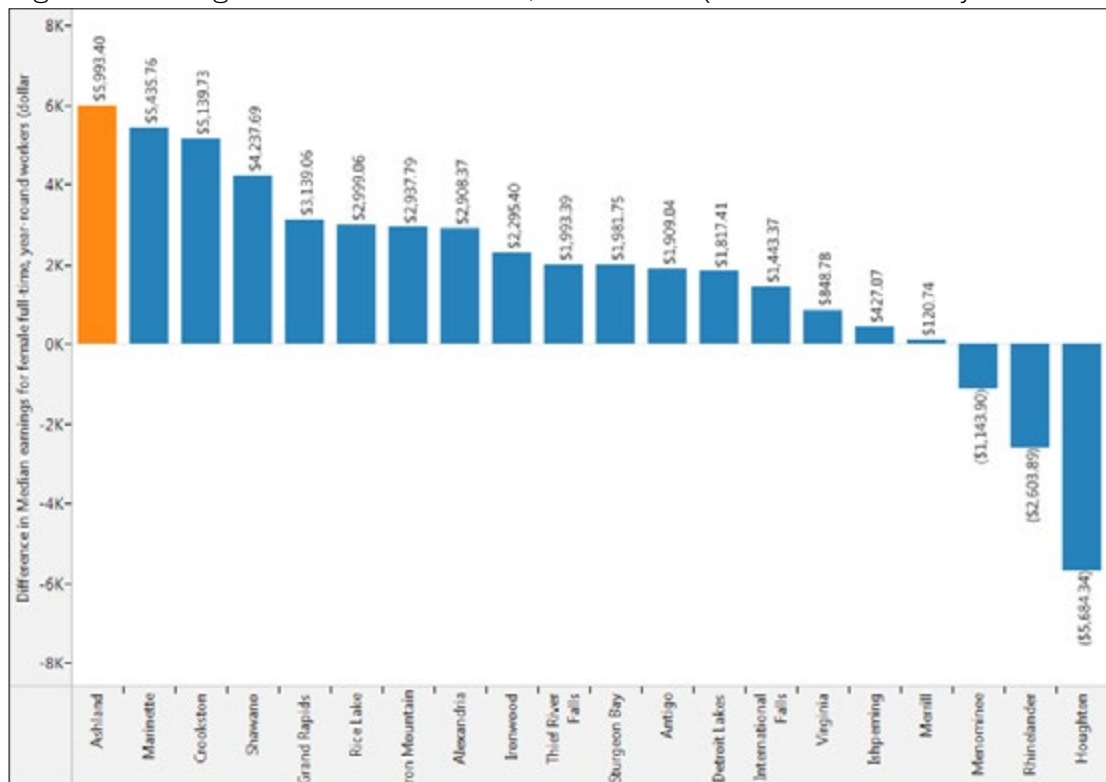
Source: US Census, ACS

Figure 12: Change in FT Male Income, 2000-2012 (in 2012 inflation adjusted dollars)



Source: US Census, ACS

Figure 12: Change in FT Female Income, 2000-2012 (in 2012 inflation adjusted dollars)



Source: US Census, ACS

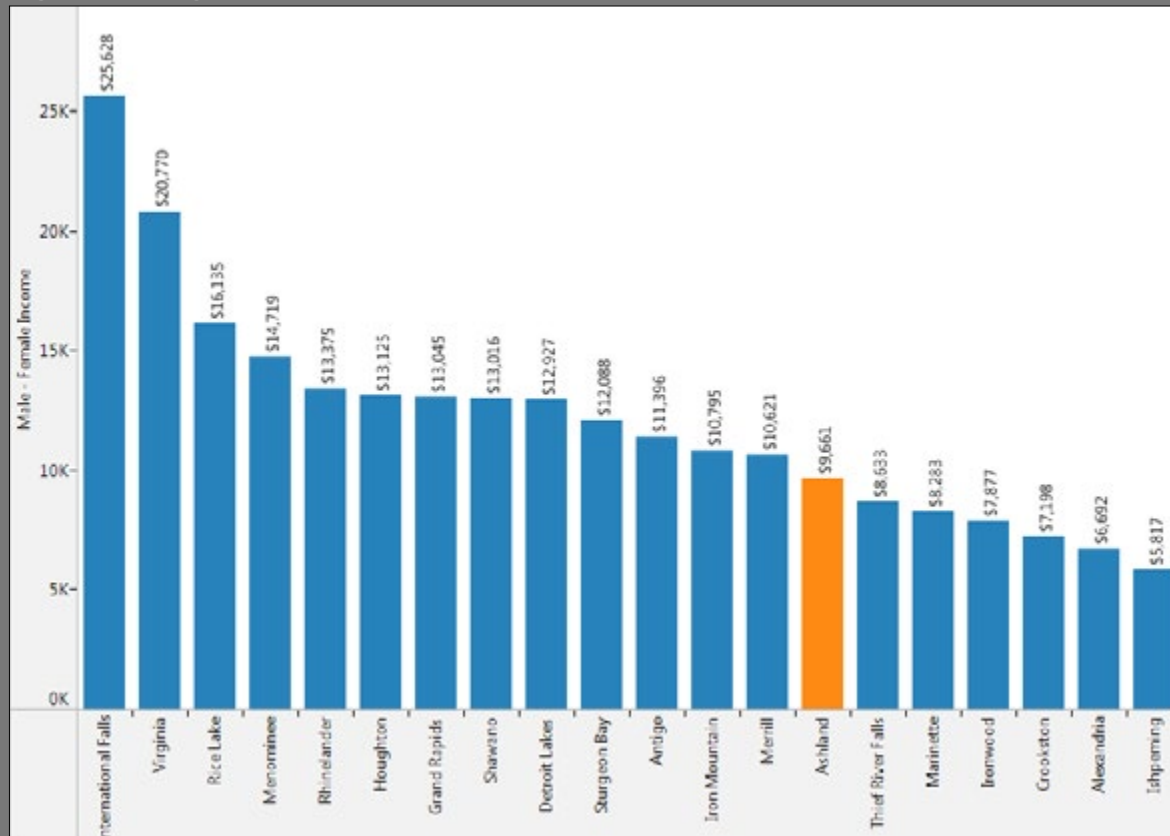
# Ashland's Wage Gap

Ashland ranks 7th out of the 20 comparison communities (Figure 14) in terms of the gap between full-time pay of male and female workers; the closer a number is to zero the more equal the pay is among male and female workers. This can

be misleading in some cases (e.g., Ishpeming) because it is not that female earnings increased; rather, male earnings decreased drastically. Ashland is, however, the only community that saw a shrinking of the wage gap from \$12,261 in 2000 to \$9,661 in 2012 while having increases in both male and female full-time pay – both of which saw increases in FT pay ranking in the top three

for all comparison communities. Ashland is third highest increase FT male and the highest increase FT female. This bodes well for Ashland as a way to promote many of the ideals younger generations rate as appealing in a community they want to live in. Not only does this suggest empirical evidence of commitment to equitable pay, but it also suggests there is opportunity for gainful employment regardless of sex.

Figure 14: Wage Gap, 2012



Source: US Census, ACS

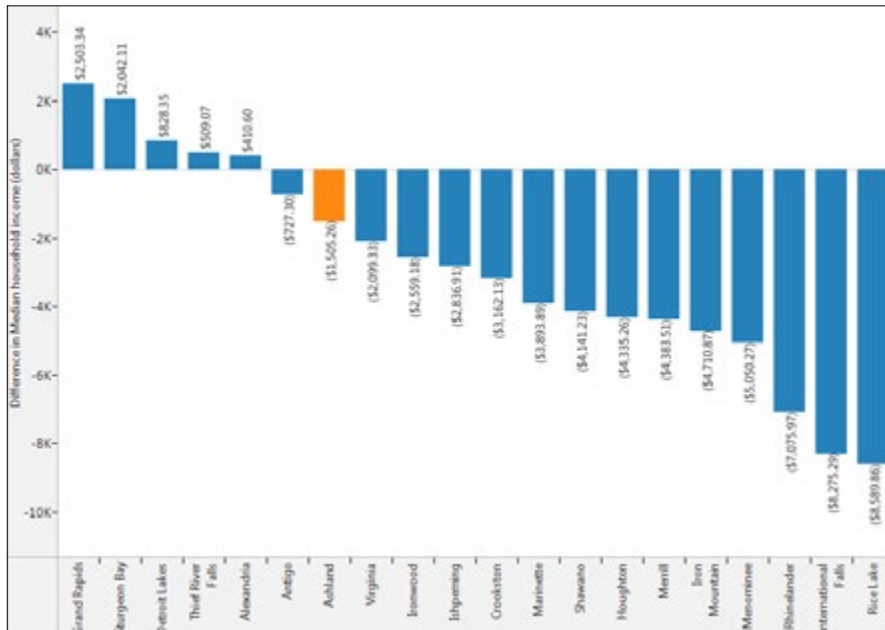
## Household Income

Although Ashland saw increases in income for both full-time male and female workers over this twelve-year period, Ashland, like many communities saw an overall drop in household income (Figure 15). Household income is different from individual, full-time earnings in a number of ways. A household refers to all people living in a housing unit, which can include those who live there by marriage, bloodline,

partnership, or friends, whereas individual earnings only accounts for income received by a single individual for a full-time job. Median household income tends to be a good measure of spending power and a good predictor of retail spending and gives a better idea of the relative well-being of people who reside together in a home. Even with this decline in income, Ashland still sits above the median household income

for comparison communities (Figure 16). Given the number of college aged students living in Ashland, the household income is most likely brought down slightly. The overall decline in household incomes is a serious challenge for Ashland and its residents that must be remedied.

Figure 15: Change in Household Income (in 2012 inflation adjusted dollars), 2000-2012

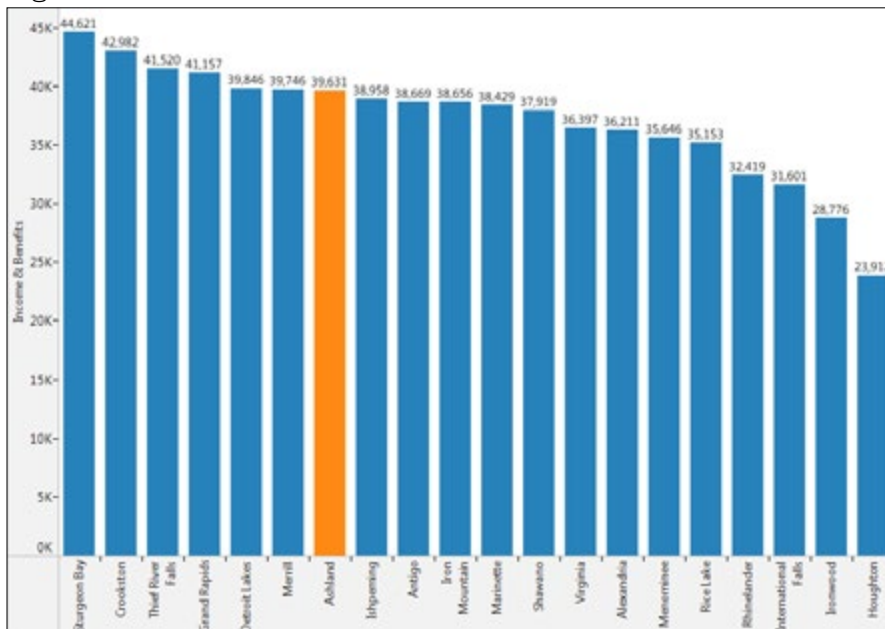


Source: US Census, ACS

## Increase in Top Household Incomes

Ashland saw a 3.6 percent increase in family incomes of \$100,000 and over between 2000-2012 with roughly 14.1 percent of Ashland families located in this income bracket<sup>33</sup>. This is up from 10.5 percent of all Ashland families in this income bracket in 2000. According to the “Demographics and Lifestyles Analysis” put out by the University of Wisconsin Extension, households that fall into this category “are strong consumers, as well as physically active and civic-minded” and suggest that “gearing a retail mix toward this segment may require a focus on luxury goods and services... as well as cultural amenities<sup>34</sup>”.

Figure 16: Household Income, 2012



Source: US Census, ACS

<sup>33</sup>Household income was adjusted for the rate of inflation and calculates for families earning \$75,000 and more in 2000.

<sup>34</sup>University of Wisconsin Extension. “Demographic and Lifestyle Analysis.” Downtown and Business District Market Analysis: Tools to Create Economically Vibrant Commercial Districts in Small Cities. (<http://fyi.uwex.edu/downtown-market-analysis/understanding-the-market/demographics-and-lifestyle-analysis/>)



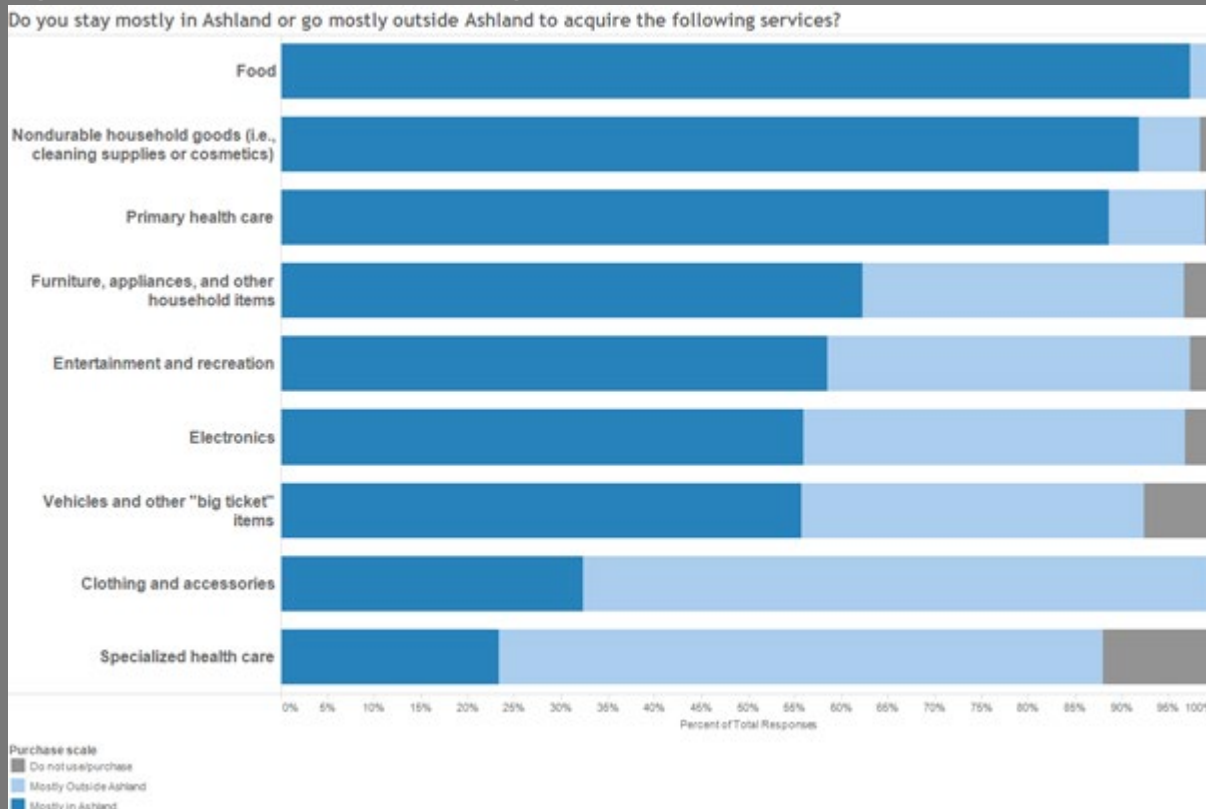
# Ashland Community Study: Resident's Purchasing Habits

When asked where they purchase a variety of items and services, a majority of respondents (97.2 percent) stated they purchase their “food” within Ashland (Figure 17). The next two most common items

or services purchased in town were “non-durable household goods” (91.8 percent) and “primary healthcare” (88.6 percent). After these three items, there was a precipitous drop in the next grouping of items or services purchased in town. Still a majority but far fewer respondents (62.3 percent) stated they purchase their “furniture, appliances, and other household items” mostly

within Ashland. “Entertainment and recreation,” “electronics,” and “big ticket items (i.e., vehicle)” were the next most common items or services purchased mostly in Ashland at 58.5 percent, 56 percent, and 55.7 percent respectively. The two items or services least likely for respondents to purchase in Ashland were “clothing and accessories” (32.4 percent)<sup>35</sup> and “specialized healthcare” (23.4 percent).

Figure 17: Ashland Resident Purchasing Habits



Source: Center for Rural Communities, 2014 Ashland Community Study

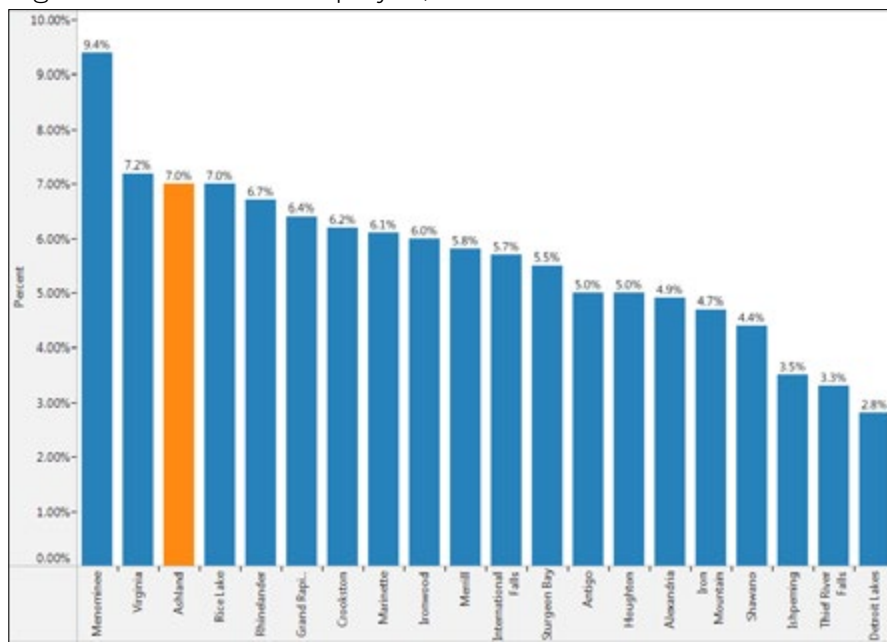
## Unemployment and Poverty

Ashland also continues to struggle with unemployment as an estimated 7 percent of its civilian workforce were unemployed in 2012 (Figure 18). This is third highest of all comparison communities. Ashland also continues to struggle with approximately 11.2 percent of families below the poverty

line (Figure 19). With growth in both educational attainment and household incomes over \$100,000 annually, Ashland is in an interesting position to create opportunities for under- and unemployed members of the workforce. One particular challenge, however, will be finding ways to continue to make Ashland and the surrounding area affordable place to live for both low income and younger people.

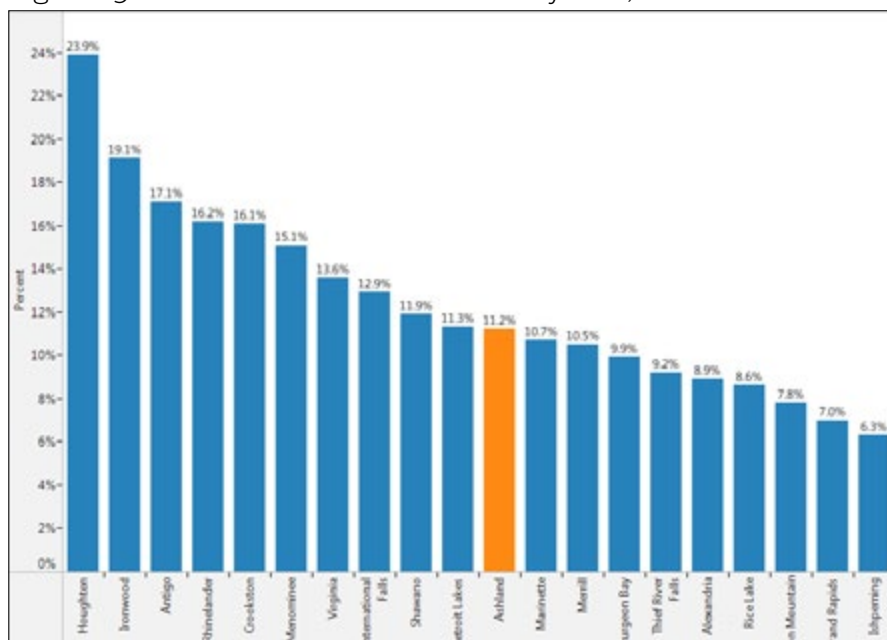
<sup>35</sup>When asked to rate the quality of services and facilities in Ashland, the second lowest rated item out of eleven as “shopping facilities.” Only 15.1 of respondents rated this items as very good (0.54 percent) or good (14.67 percent).

Figure 18: Percent Unemployed, 2012



Source: US Census, ACS

Figure 19: Percent Families Below Poverty Line, 2012



Source: US Census, ACS

## Ashland Community Study: Cooperation on Economic Development Initiatives in the Chequamegon Bay

In the 2014 Ashland Community Study, respondents were asked how important they thought it was for Ashland leaders to work with other communities in the region on a variety of issues. The two issues identified by respondents as extremely important or important were “working on economic development initiatives” (92.4 percent) and “developing programs that help alleviate poverty in the region” (82.6 percent). The fourth highest rated item, “promoting tourism in the region,” also had over 80 percent of respondents choose extremely important or important for Chequamegon Bay area communities to cooperate<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>36</sup>See Appendix C.

# Natural Amenities

Ashland is situated in a truly unique area, like very few places in the Midwest. The mix of landscapes and waterscapes creates not only a beautiful location amidst the wilderness, but it also provides an abundance of natural amenity opportunities. From an outsider's perspective, climate and landscape in Ashland probably looks and feels like every other place across the Northwoods – relatively cold average annual temperature, short summers, frigid winters covered with snow, flat topography with lots of trees. Ashland like its Northwood community counterparts can be all of these things, but the truth is Ashland and the Chequamegon Bay region are quite exceptional.



## Climate

Ashland has four distinct seasons; all of which have their wonders and joys about them. Ashland's average annual temperature is approximately 41 degrees, which is about mid-pack for all comparison communities. Tempered by its proximity to Lake Superior, Ashland's summers are mild compared to many places across the United States, but the city still has a warmer average high than many of the comparison communities, peaking at 80 degrees in July. Lake Superior also softens the cold and potentially brutal winters that many Northwoods communities experience. Ashland's average low bottoms out at one degree in January – again middle of the pack. It does get colder in Ashland than many of the comparison communities during the winter months, but it is well above the overall low (Table 7).

During the hottest months, Ashland's location on the banks of Lake Superior also influences the

relative humidity within the city and the surrounding environment. Humidity in combination with summer temperatures gives a nice proxy for gauging overall summer comfort for residents and visitors. As a result, Ashland's low percent average annual humidity in combination with elevated average high summer temperatures offers a very comfortable feel on some of the hottest days during the year and nearly always reaches a comfortable feel in the evenings. This combination of factors helps explain why so few homes in the Ashland area are equipped with any sort of central air conditioning systems.

During the colder months, the combination of cold temperature and average annual snowfall (inches) can certainly make for a long winter. As with low temperature, Ashland also has more average annual snowfall (approximately 73 inches) compared to other Northwoods communities. This ranks fourth out of all communities; however, this average is well below the

highs experienced by many Upper Peninsula communities. This combination of significant snowfall, bearable (usually!) cold temperatures, and natural abundance provides plenty of opportunity for outdoor recreation during the winter months, which we will discuss in detail in the outdoor recreation amenities section of this report.

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<sup>37</sup>See link at: <http://www.usclimatedata.com>

<sup>38</sup>See link at: <http://www.usa.com/>

<b>Community</b>	<b>Average Annual Temperature</b>	<b>Average High - July</b>	<b>Average Low - January</b>	<b>Average Annual Humidity (%)</b>	<b>Average Annual Precipitation (inches)</b>	<b>Average Annual Snow Fall (inches)</b>
Alexandria	42.3	81.0	1.0	85.1	25.9	45.0
Antigo	40.9	78.0	2.0	81.1	31.1	51.0
Ashland	41.7	80.0	1.0	77.6	32.1	73.3
Crookston	40.2	81.0	-4.0	81.6	21.7	41.1
Detroit Lakes	41.5	82.0	-2.0	80.9	24.8	43.5
Grand Rapids	40.1	80.0	-3.0	79.6	27.9	50.1
Houghton	41.7	75.0	9.0	72.3	32.2	160.6
International Falls	38.4	78.0	-7.0	83.8	25.2	52.5
Iron Mountain	40.2	80.0	3.0	76.4	29.7	60.4
Ironwood	41.0	76.0	3.0	79.0	34.1	132.2
Ishpeming	41.2	74.0	13.0	77.5	31.4	130.4
Marinette	42.1	80.0	10.0	75.1	30.6	52.1
Menominee	42.2	80.0	10.0	75.0	30.6	52.1
Merrill	41.0	80.0	2.0	79.9	31.7	50.5
Rhineland	39.9	79.0	2.0	79.4	31.3	60.2
Rice Lake	43.0	80.0	1.0	73.5	33.0	49.7
Shawano	42.9	81.0	5.0	79.7	31.4	48.0
Sturgeon Bay	44.1	79.0	10.0	70.9	31.1	47.7
Thief River Falls	39.7	81.0	-6.0	80.5	20.7	34.5
Virginia	38.0	77.0	-6.0	78.2	27.3	56.2

Source: US Climate Data & USA.com<sup>37</sup><sup>38</sup>



## Land and Water

Ashland's footprint is one of the largest of the comparison communities. Being one of only a few that sits on or next to a river or lake – let alone a Great Lake – Ashland also has more water area than other comparison communities (Table 8). We will discuss the waterfront property along the shores of Chequamegon Bay in more detail later, but it is worth noting here that Ashland's coastal city designation and connection to Lake Superior is an unparalleled asset and distinctive amenity.

The larger footprint as a coastal city is certainly noteworthy but really doesn't fully or accurately capture the extent of Ashland's natural environment. Situated on the shore of the Chequamegon Bay of Lake Superior, Ashland has immediate access to the world's largest body of fresh water. Sitting at the northwest corner of Ashland County and immediately adjacent to Bayfield County, Ashland residents have access to over 2,500 square miles of land and seemingly unlimited water area (Table 9). Much of Ashland County's land area – and its neighboring Bayfield and Iron Counties – are considered public forest area.

Ashland ranks the sixth highest in terms of proportion of land identified as public forest with a little over one-third falling into this designation (Figure 20). This, of course, provides both benefits and additional challenges. The benefit is more access to public land by area residents as well as an attraction to visitors and tourists. The challenge is a decrease in proportion of taxable land that provides the foundation for many public services.

Water area is also a distinctive

**Table 8: Land and Water Area by Community**

Community	Land Area (sq. mi.)	Water Area (sq. mi.)
Alexandria	15.96	0.74
Antigo	6.54	0.06
Ashland	13.42	0.28
Crookston	5.15	0.00
Detroit Lakes	10.32	5.00
Grand Rapids	22.53	1.88
Houghton	4.44	0.24
International Falls	6.42	0.11
Iron Mountain	7.37	0.67
Ironwood	6.42	0.00
Ishpeming	8.74	0.61
Marinette	6.83	1.30
Menominee	5.15	0.33
Merrill	7.24	0.57
Rhineland	8.34	0.27
Rice Lake	8.59	1.10
Shawano	6.58	0.21
Sturgeon Bay	9.82	1.84
Thief River Falls	5.27	0.19
Virginia	18.85	0.33

Source: US Census

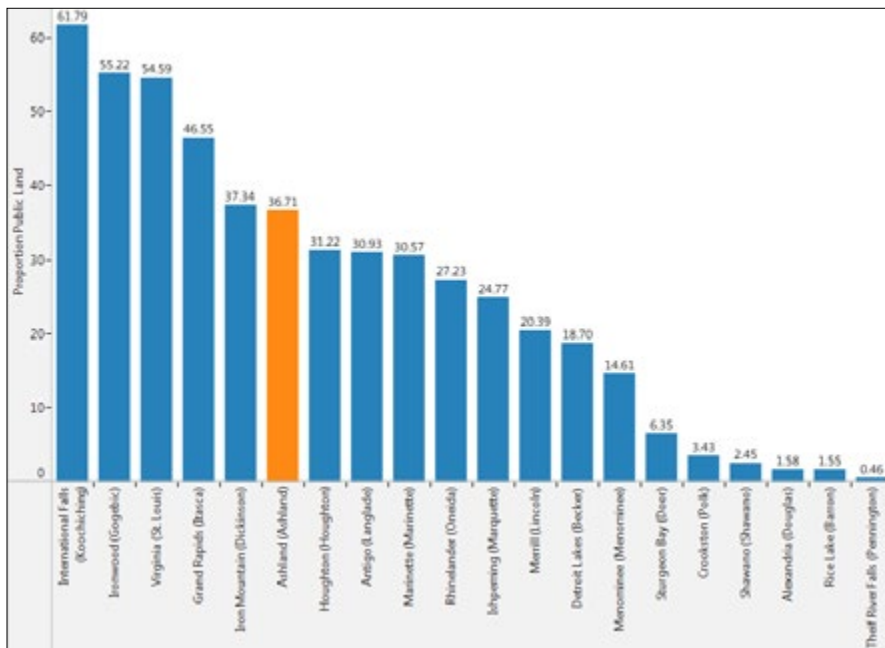
**Table 9: Land and Water Area by County**

County	Land Area (sq. mi.)	Water Area (sq. mi.)
Douglas	637.28	82.73
Langlade	870.64	17.24
Ashland	1,045.04	1,247.34
Polk	1,971.10	26.69
Becker	1,315.16	130.02
Itasca	2,667.70	260.25
Houghton	1,009.11	492.39
Koochiching	3,104.13	49.86
Dickinson	761.40	15.65
Gogebic	1,101.87	374.47
Marquette	1,808.49	1,615.98
Marinette	1,399.38	150.63
Menominee	1,044.04	294.13
Lincoln	879.00	28.00
Oneida	1,112.98	123.02
Barron	862.75	27.02
Shawano	893.06	16.41
Door	481.98	1,888.27
Pennington	616.57	1.68
St. Louis	6,247.56	611.93

Source: US Census

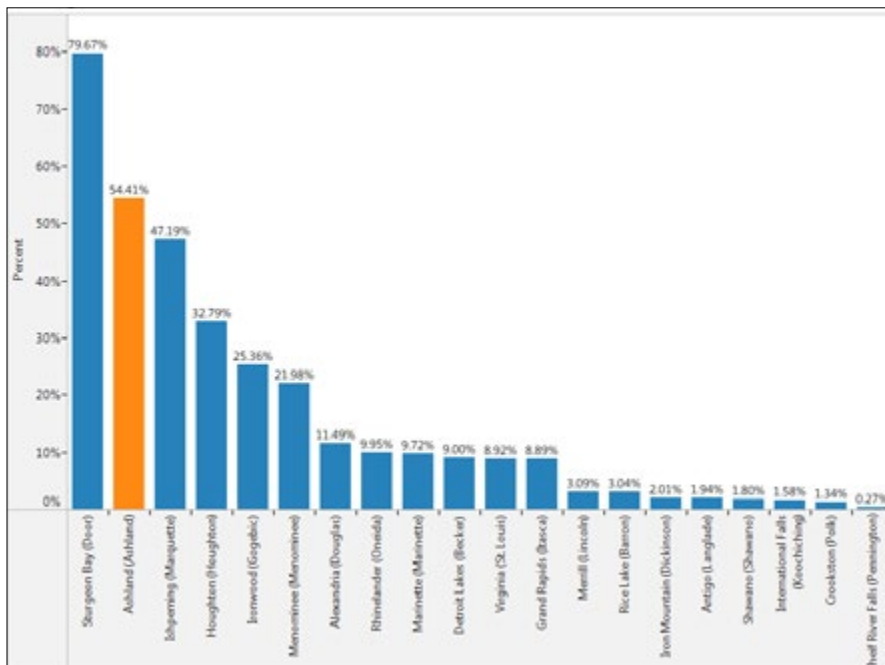


Figure 20: Proportion of County Land Area Considered Public Forest



Source: USDA Forest Service

Figure 21: Percent of Total County Area Considered Water

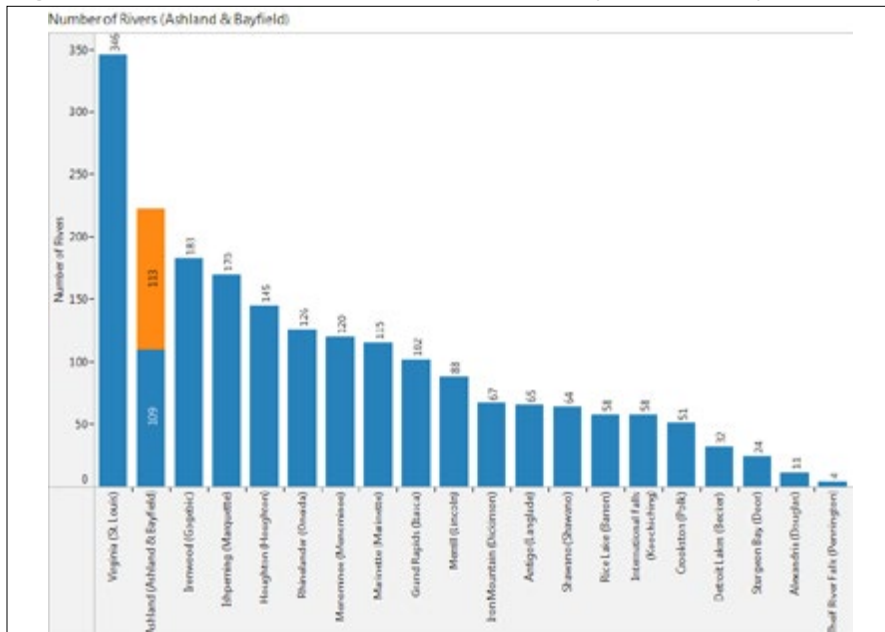


Source: US Census

feature of the Chequamegon Bay. Using estimates for amount of water area for Ashland County, residents of the city of Ashland have access to one of the highest total square miles of water of any of the counties that house comparison communities. If Bayfield is excluded in this discussion, Ashland's water area is only rivaled by another Great Lake community in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin (Figure 21).

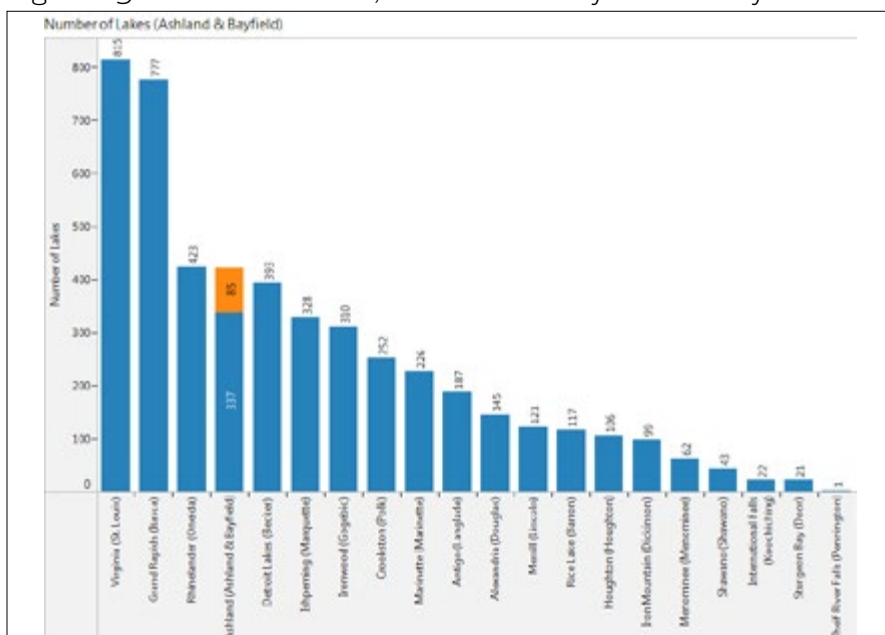
Ashland's proximity to Lake Superior figures heavily into total area of the county considered water area, but Lake Superior is far from the only body of water in the area. Ashland County alone ranks toward the midpoint of comparison communities in terms of total number of rivers (n=113) and toward the bottom third of total number of lakes (n=85). However, if Bayfield County is included a much fuller picture of the total square miles of water and abundance of water bodies available to Ashland residents. By combining Ashland and Bayfield Counties, the number of rivers moves into second (n=222) out of comparison communities and into fourth (n=422) in total number of lakes (Figures 22 and 23).

Figure 22: Number of Rivers, Ashland and Bayfield County Combined



Source: US Geological Survey

Figure 23: Number of Lakes, Ashland and Bayfield County Combined



Source: US Geological Survey

## Ashland Community Study

As part of the 2014 Ashland Community Study, randomly selected residents of Ashland were asked whether or not they have out-of-town visitors, and, if so, what they do with these visitors when they come to town? Over 93 percent of respondents stated they have out-of-town visitors yearly (59.4 percent have "1-5 time per year," 24.4 percent "6-10 times per year," and 9.4 percent have "more than 10 times per year"). And when respondents have out-of-town visitors, 87.2 percent stated they bring their guests to the Ashland waterfront and 61.2 percent stated they bring their guests to natural areas (i.e., County or National Forests)<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>39</sup>For a full breakdown of research methodology or further breakdown of the 2014 Ashland Community Study see either the social capital section of the report or Appendix C.

# Outdoor & Indoor Recreational Amenities

With an abundance of natural assets, Ashland is in the heart of outdoor recreational paradise. Within a short drive, area residents have access to thousands of acres of public land and plenty of lakes and rivers. The mix of natural environment provides year-round opportunities for outdoor recreation.

## Fishing, Hunting, Harvesting, and Observing Wildlife

Area lakes, rivers and streams provide a variety of fishing opportunities. Ashland and Bayfield Counties contain some of the best fishing locations across the Northwoods. The All-Outdoor Atlas & Field Guide identifies a number of the area lakes and rivers as part of the top five best places to catch bass, northern pike, “panfish,” and trout. The area alone contains over fifty class 1 and over seventy class 2 trout streams<sup>40</sup>. Cold winter temperatures also provide ample ice fishing opportunities, and the Chequamegon Bay off the shore of Ashland becomes a community of automobiles, ATVs, and ice shanties upon first freeze

Ashland’s remote location and the large area of public lands provide expansive opportunities for hunting, trapping, and foraging.

The area features one of the most diverse variety of game species and some of the most extensive harvesting opportunities within the state of Wisconsin and across the Northwoods. Furthermore, these same natural amenities afford residents and visitors alike the opportunity to observe wildlife in its natural habitat. The area has a wide variety of mammals and birds that are difficult to view in areas that are more populous across the state of Wisconsin and the Northwoods<sup>41</sup>.

## Camping

Despite the vast swaths of public and private lands available for enjoying the outdoors, Ashland County ranks toward the bottom third of comparison communities in total number of available campsites. According to the All-Outdoor Atlas & Field Guide, Ashland County has thirteen different campgrounds with 356 designated campsites (Table 10).

**Table 10: Campgrounds and Campsite by County, Sorted Highest to Lowest by # of Campsites**

Community (County)	Number of Campgrounds	Number of Campsites
Sturgeon Bay (Door)	20	3,271
Rhineland (Oneida)	15	2,149
Virginia (St. Louis)	123	1,695
Rice Lake (Barron)	18	1,114
Ishpeming (Marquette)	14	921
Grand Rapids (Itasca)	38	902
Merrill (Lincoln)	7	814
Marinette (Marinette)	15	778
Ironwood (Gogebic)	18	772
Alexandria (Douglas)	12	680
Shawano (Shawano)	7	534
Detroit Lakes (Becker)	9	488
Antigo (Langlade)	9	405
Ashland (Ashland)	13	356
International Falls (Koochiching)	121	354
Menominee (Menominee)	4	347
Iron Mountain (Dickinson)	9	290
Houghton (Houghton)	6	212
Crookston (Polk)	5	210

\*Includes Boundary Water Canoe Area

\*\*Includes Voyageur’s National Park (located in St. Louis County but closest to International Falls, MN)

Source: All-Outdoors Atlas & Field Guide, 2012

<sup>40</sup>Class 1 suggests high quality trout fishing where the trout experience natural reproduction that sustains the population and class 2 suggests minimal stocking necessary to sustain the trout population.

<sup>41</sup>All-Outdoors Atlas & Field Guide 2012

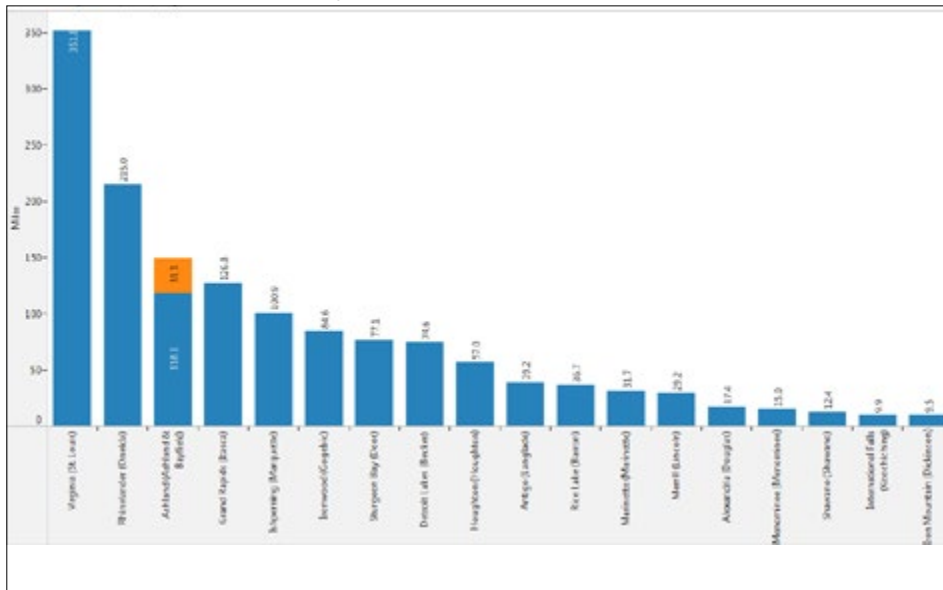
## Silent & Motorized Water Sports

The area provides many opportunities for lovers of water sports. Canoeing, kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, sailing, and swimming are but some of the silent water sports activities available, while speed boats, fishing boats, pontoons, and jet-skis are some of the motorized sports available. Lake Superior and in-land lakes and rivers provide plenty of opportunity for enjoyment and exploration for both silent and motorized sports. Sheltered from larger water, the Chequamegon Bay provides immediate access to water sport activities that many comparison communities do not have. Despite this easy access, even during the hot summer months, the Bay seems underutilized and oddly devoid of recreational activity, whether silent or motorized sports, occurring off shore. We think this is one area for expansion of recreational opportunities in Ashland that could provide an increase in tourism dollars and an increase in the quality of life for current and future residents. If this was done in conjunction with other area communities spanning from Bad River to Washburn and up to Bayfield, La Pointe and Red Cliff, the utilization and connectedness of the Chequamegon Bay could be one of the most unique feature of the area and be extremely attractive on many fronts.



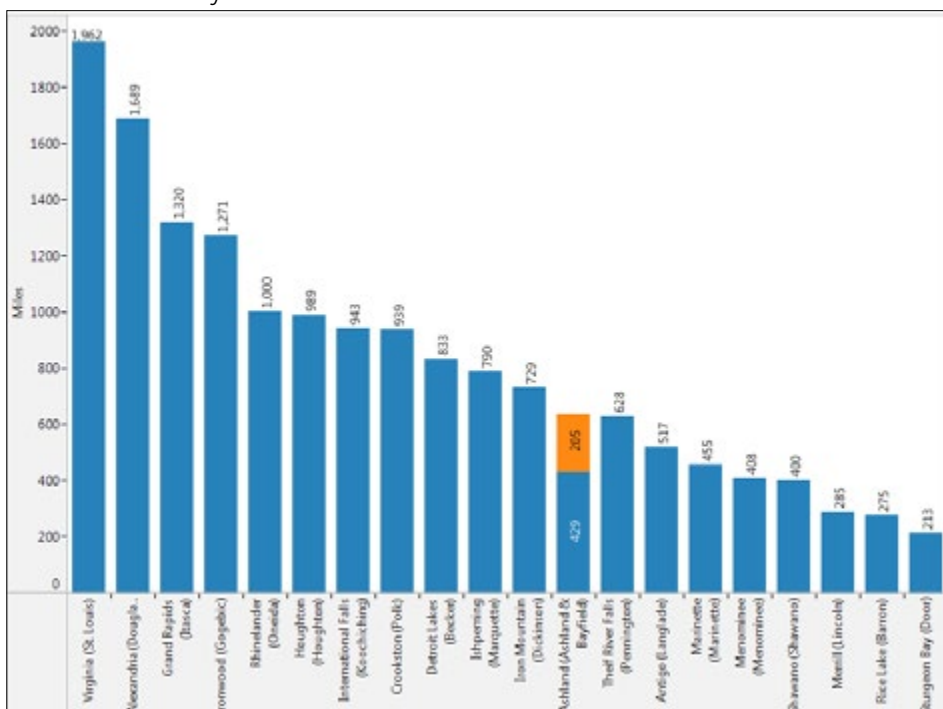


Figure 24: Number of Miles of Cross-Country Ski Trails, Ashland and Bayfield Combined



Source: All-Outdoor Atlas & Field Guide, 2012

Figure 25: Number of Miles of Snowmobile Trails, Ashland and Bayfield Combined



Source: All-Outdoor Atlas & Field Guide, 2012

## Silent & Motorized Land Sports

Like water sports, the Ashland area provides many opportunities for enjoying outdoor recreation via the land during any season of the year. Whether biking, hiking, walking, running, or skiing, the area has many designated areas and trails for enjoying silent sports. With hundreds of miles of ATV and snowmobile trails, motorized sporting enthusiasts have plenty of options as well. The area provides some of the highest quality opportunities for both silent and motorized sports. To point, the Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Association received the International Mountain Bicycling Association's bronze level designation (one of 27 in the country and one of only four in the upper Midwest) for quality of trails in the area.

Notwithstanding the vast array of public lands and forest, Ashland County ranks lower than many of the comparison communities on the sum total number miles of ski trails in the area. This number increases when Bayfield County is included. However, given the large area of public land in Ashland County, there is still opportunity for an increase in cross-country trails (Figure 24).

A very similar story seems to be the case when it comes to snowmobile trails within Ashland County. According to estimates found in All-Outdoor Atlas & Field Guide, Ashland has the lowest number of total miles of designated snowmobile trails. Again, this number increases, as does the region's position, when Bayfield County is included (Figure 25).



## Waterfront

Ashland's location on the shores of the Chequamegon Bay is a distinctive feature of this community and a valuable community asset. In fact, in many ways, Lake Superior defines the Ashland community. Compared to other waterfront communities, Ashland compares fairly well in utilizing the waterfront with a marina, walking trails, parks, three beaches, boat launches, and a pier. On the western part of town and at Ellis Avenue, there are restaurants that allow community members and visitors to enjoy the waterfront. With the superfund cleanup and development at Kreher Park, the pending development of the Oredock base, and the finalization of the old Bodin building, the waterfront is on a promising trajectory toward improved access. One thing seemingly lacking is leisure and recreational businesses along the waterfront, most notably additional dining or food cart possibilities and bike or boat rental vendors.

In the 2014 Ashland Community Study, respondents were asked how important (on a five point scale from "not at all important" to "extremely important") they thought it was that Ashland develop spaces for public use along the waterfront. Over 70 percent of the respondents selected either important or extremely important. Additionally, respondents were also asked how important they felt it is to encourage business and commerce along the waterfront. Again, a majority of respondents (53.3 percent) identified this as an important or extremely important<sup>42</sup>.



## Trail Linking Chequamegon Bay Communities

Similar to the usage of the Bay, we believe there is a viable and unique amenity waiting to be developed by providing a continuous trail from Bad River up through and possibly around the Peninsula. Trail systems such as the Tri-County Corridor or the CAMBA Mountain Bike Trail System are significant draws for tourists and invaluable features of the local area for residents. A

trail connecting communities along the Chequamegon Bay via land would provide a guaranteed tourist attraction as well as increase recreational opportunities and bike commuters in the area. A trail by land in combination with waterfront access connecting Bayfront communities via the water, would create one of the Northwoods' most distinctive amenities, undoubtedly becoming an instant draw for tourists and future residents.

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<sup>42</sup>For a full breakdown of research methodology or further breakdown of the 2014 Ashland Community Study see either the social capital section of the report or Appendix C.

<b>Community</b>	<b># baseball softball fields</b>	<b># soccer fields</b>	<b># outdoor basketball</b>	<b># tennis courts</b>	<b># golf courses</b>	<b>total # holes</b>	<b># gyms</b>	<b># indoor pools</b>	<b># outdoor pools</b>	<b>paved trails (mi.)</b>	<b># parks</b>	<b>YMCA</b>	<b>community center</b>	<b>indoor ice rink</b>
Antigo	7	1	4	10	1	9	3	1	1	5	20*	No	No	Yes
Ashland	8	8	6	10	1	18	3	0	0	12	21	No	Yes	Yes
Crookston	12	4	7	15	1	9	3	1	0	5	22	No	No	Yes
Detroit Lakes	21	10	0	12	6	99	3	0	0	26	14	No	Yes	Yes
Grand Rapids	8	4	3	14	3	54	2	2	0	40	15*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Houghton	6*	3*	2*	4*	1	18	3	1*	0*	28*	10*	No	No	Yes
International Falls	10*	6*	4*	2*	1	18	3	1*	0*	5*	8*	No	Yes	Yes
Iron Mountain	4	2	1	4	2	36	3	1	0	3	2*	Yes	No	Yes
Ironwood	2*	1*	2*	1*	1	18	2	1*	0*	3*	15*	No	Yes	Yes
Jespering	6	0	1	6	0	0	3	0	0	1	4*	No	No	No
Marquette	9*	2*	3*	4*	1	18	2	2*	0*	17*	5*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Menominee	10	8	12	21	2	36	2	2	1	34	10*	No	Yes	Yes
Merrill	16	11	1	3	1	18	1	0	1	1	17*	No	Yes	Yes
Rhinelander	6	2	5	14	2	27	2	2	0	7*	5*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rice Lake	17	10	8	6	2	27	3	1	0	4	18*	No	No	Yes
Shawano	9	5	5	10	1	18	3	2	1	4	5*	No	Yes	Yes
Sturgeon Bay	9	2	10	8	3	45	3	1	0	5	14*	Yes	No	No
Thief River Falls	8	18*	2	14*	1	18	2	1	0	10	20*	No	Yes*	Yes
Virginia	8	0	4	10	2	27	3	1	0	5	14*	Yes	Yes	Yes

\*data not confirmed with parks and recreation department

Map 5: Ashland Parks and Trails



Source: City of Ashland

## Recreational Infrastructure within the City of Ashland<sup>43</sup>

Within the city limits, Ashland has a variety of recreational and sporting opportunities available to area residents, young and old alike. Ashland residents have access to baseball and softball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, workout facilities, an ice area, and a golf course. The city has twenty-one city parks with a variety of play equipment, trails, grilling equipment, and covered pavilions. With recent additions, the city also has approximately eleven miles of continuous paved trails linking many area parks together.

Although Ashland has a wide variety of high quality recreational

and sporting infrastructure in town, some infrastructure is in need of repair or missing all together. With the closure of Northland College's pool, the community lost a valuable asset. Ashland is one of only three of the comparison cities that does not have a public swimming pool. The Bay Area Civic Center, which houses a widely used ice arena, is an important asset of the community as well, but it is also an example of a structure in need of repair and reaches maximum use and capacity during the winter months.

Finally, although most communities average about three workout facilities, the amount that Ashland has, the community is missing any sort of comprehensive indoor recreational facility that meets the needs of community members from a wide variety of ages. This missing feature becomes even more pronounced during the long winter months.

Despite having a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities in the area, many community members do not regularly participate in winter sports and look for indoor options separate from home or work. A comprehensive health and wellness community center could provide needed respite for long winters and add an attractive amenity that further distinguishes Ashland for other communities. Furthermore, increasing Ashland's indoor recreational infrastructure will help area youth (k-12), Northland College students, and WITC students. Additionally, if done in conjunction with the needs of medical and health providers as well as in the interest of aging and elderly populations could provide a very unique community based amenity.

<sup>43</sup>Alexandria, Minnesota has been removed from analysis for the remainder of this section due to lack of available data and time constraints on data collection.



## Comparison of Overall Recreational Infrastructure

When all of the recreational and sporting infrastructure features are tallied and compared, Ashland falls about mid-pack. The table below standardizes all scores for each community to fit a normal distribution so all features can be compared to one another. For example, in the case of city parks, the total number of parks in a city ranges from 2 to 22 with an average of 11.9 and number of golf course holes ranges from 0 to 99 with an average of 27. By creating a z-score for each item, we move the average of 11.9 for parks and 27 for golf holes both to “0” as a mean. This allows us to compare each item on the same scale. We then take the average of the sum total of z-scores for each community. Ashland is just below the median for comparison communities suggesting room for improvement on recreational and sports infrastructure.



## Ashland Community Study

Overall, respondents to the 2014 Ashland Community Study rated recreational and entertainment services in the city much lower than other items – in fact, it was the fourth lowest rated item out of eleven total. Just over 33 percent of respondents chose “very good” or “good” versus 67.1 percent of respondents who rated the

recreational and entertainment services as “fair” or “poor.” However, when asked about how important they thought it was to the success of Ashland, 63.6 percent of respondents stated that building recreational infrastructure (e.g., parks, trails, and piers) in Ashland was “important” to “extremely important”<sup>44</sup> suggesting that there may be room for improvement in the Ashland’s entertainment and recreational infrastructure.

**Table 12: Rank by Recreational Infrastructure**

Community	Z-Score	Rank
Menominee	0.899056	1 <sup>st</sup>
Detroit Lakes	0.84551	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Grand Rapids	0.704725	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Rice Lake	0.520505	4 <sup>th</sup>
Thief River Falls	0.495661	5 <sup>th</sup>
Crookston	0.397154	6 <sup>th</sup>
Shawano	0.169451	7 <sup>th</sup>
Merrill	0.124286	8 <sup>th</sup>
Ashland	0.111301	9 <sup>th</sup>
Rhineland	0.055875	10 <sup>th</sup>
Antigo	-0.01634	11 <sup>th</sup>
Sturgeon Bay	-0.01715	12 <sup>th</sup>
Virginia	-0.04962	13 <sup>th</sup>
Marinette	-0.10144	14 <sup>th</sup>
Houghton	-0.12249	15 <sup>th</sup>
International Falls	-0.17708	16 <sup>th</sup>
Ironwood	-0.47606	17 <sup>th</sup>
Iron Mountain	-0.51023	18 <sup>th</sup>
Ishpeming	-1.05983	19 <sup>th</sup>

<sup>44</sup>See Appendix C.

# Downtown<sup>45</sup>



Grand Rapids, MN



Houghton, MI



Rhinelander, WI

Downtown Ashland wears its social, labor, and architectural history on its sleeves. The numerous realist murals that grace Main Street and downtown buildings distinguish the city's center from neighboring communities and they constitute a successful amenity on par with the vibrant downtowns markers of Houghton (brownstone buildings), Rhinelander (the "Hodag"), and Grand Rapids (the Wizard of Oz theme). While the murals also commemorate Ashland's Main Street of old, the city has managed to preserve much of the feel of a traditional Main Street both east and west of Ellis Avenue, despite the loss of numerous historic structures, public and private parking lot development, and time-wrought disrepair.

<sup>45</sup>As of July 2014, we have completed 38 downtown inventories across the Northwoods. Of the 38, eight are considered direct comparison communities (populations ranging from 10,865 to 5,366). Inventories include a number of variables from the quantity and types of businesses in the downtown to cleanliness and accessibility of downtown district. In this section we will only examine the direct comparison communities including: Antigo, WI; Ashland, WI; Grand Rapids, MN; Houghton, MI; Ironwood, MI; Merrill, WI; Rhinelander, WI; Rice Lake, WI; and Virginia, MN – see Appendix D for map of comparison communities.



Ashland Murals



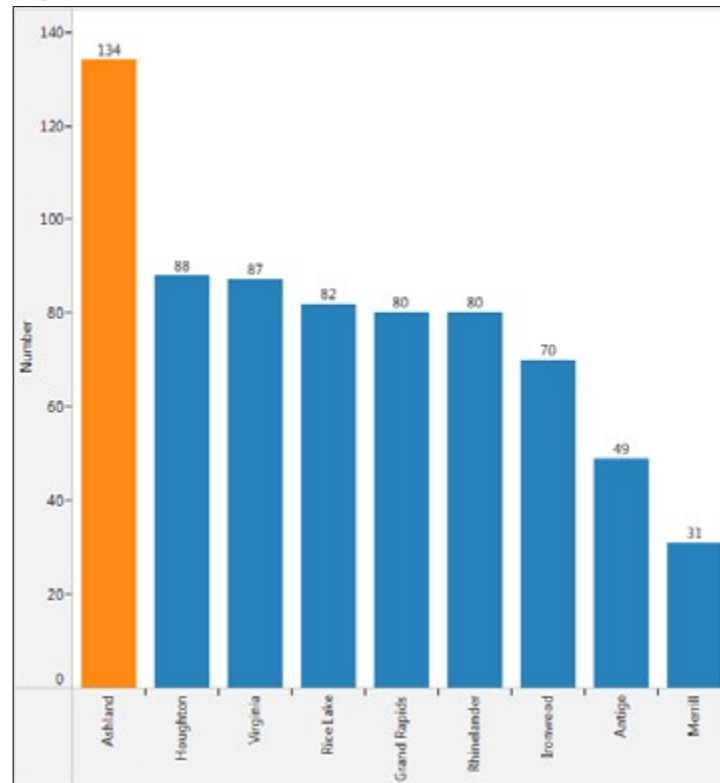


Ashland also has a unique amenity in the sheer number of storefronts (Figure 26) and mixed-use structures within the city center area (Table 13). Our research indicates that the city features nearly double the storefront volume of comparison communities, and as such it has the most downtown businesses.

At the same time, Ashland also leads comparison communities in volume of storefront vacancies (Figure 27 and Map 6), and sits at the median in vacancy to storefront ratio (Figure 28). While shuttered and vacant storefronts pose an eyesore, they also present an opportunity, and through policy and planning a community like Ashland can work to fill those storefronts.

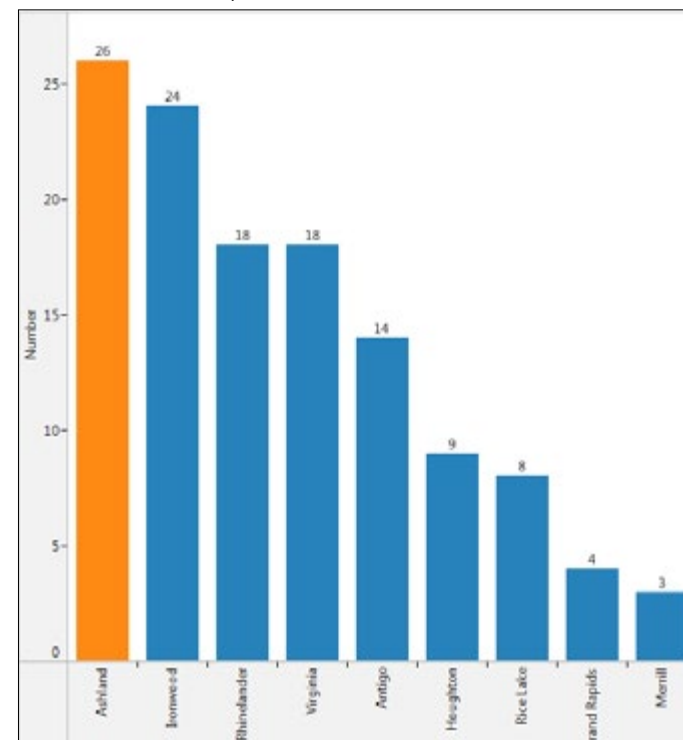
Specifically, said policy and planning will work to boost underrepresented sectors in the downtown area. Most of the occupied storefronts are retail spaces, and while retailers may fluctuate, we do not envision a significant increase in the number of retailers within the city due to an increasing reliance on online purchasing. (That said, the Music Center offers a useful case study for successfully mixing in-person and online sales.) Instead the city and its partners should work to increase the number of professional businesses, restaurants, and non-profits in the downtown area.

Figure 26: Number of Businesses Downtown Comparison Communities



Source: Center for Rural Communities

Figure 27: Number of Vacant Storefronts Downtown Comparison Communities



Source: Center for Rural Communities

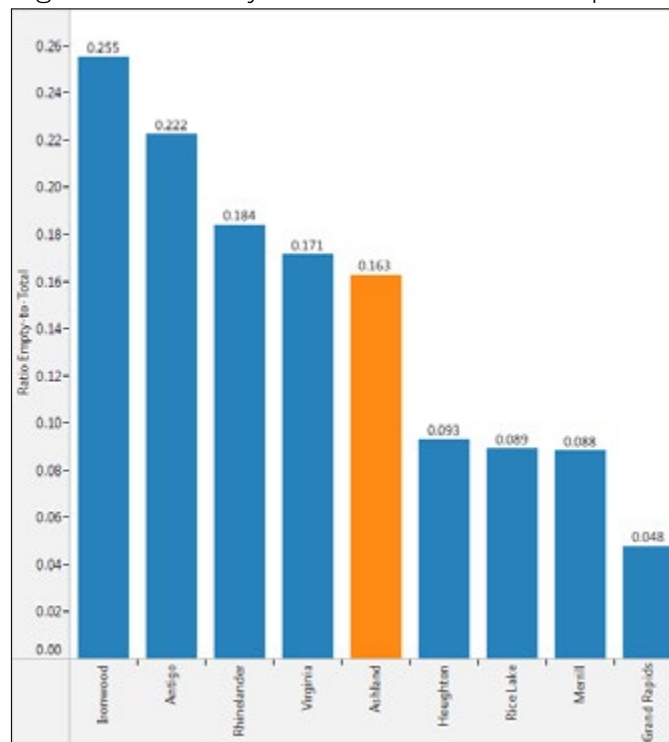
Every year Ashland casts-off hundreds of talented and creative college, technical college, and high school graduates that wish to remain in the region but lack opportunities or the capital to cultivate their own opportunities. Expanding and marketing existing incubator programs and developing more incubator space within downtown could go a long way toward increasing the number of non-retail commercial businesses in the area. New restaurants that take advantage of local food options while diversifying the area's dining options should also be encouraged. Work and gallery space for artisan craftsmen/women and artists seem a natural fit for downtown, as they are in other communities. In other college communities, college students have a range of options for their leisure time, and there seems to be a dearth of options beyond coffeehouses and taverns in Ashland. Developing cultural amenities, particularly a full-fledged music venue, will certainly attract residents and visitors who typically flock to surrounding communities for entertainment. If anything, since Ashland, more so than Washburn and Bayfield, features a larger contingent of year-round residents, the development of year-round amenities should be encouraged.

Despite current vacancies, Ashland can ill-afford to decrease the density of its downtown any further. As noted above, younger generations are attracted to dense, pedestrian-friendly communities with access to multifarious services. Thus, the city should avoid transforming anymore of its downtown district into parking lots or parks. If parking remains a priority for the city, it might consider transforming Main Street and Third Street into one-way streets with diagonal parking, as Plan Commissioner David

Map 6: Vacancy Locations in Ashland



Figure 28: Vacancy to Storefront Ratio Comparison Communities



**Table 13: Ashland Downtown Storefronts by Industry Type, 2013**

	Total #
Retail businesses (restaurants excluded)	63
Professional businesses	18
Restaurants and bars	15
Personal services establishments	13
Banks/insurance/financial establishments	11
Public buildings (city hall, courthouse, schools)	4
Nonprofit establishments	4
Entertainment establishments	3
Real estate establishments	2
Civic establishments (e.g., veterans groups, chamber, political groups)	1

Eades suggested in a recent public meeting – a traffic alteration that has been successful elsewhere. That is not to say that Ashland must preserve Main Street as is for perpetuity. In fact, the city should encourage infill development in underutilized parking and vacant lots as well as the redevelopment of one-story structures for two- or three-story multi-use buildings in the traditional Main Street vein. Such proposals may not arrive until current downtown vacancy levels have abated, but long-term

development trends are certainly fodder for Comprehensive Plan and UDO revisions. As the recent Chequamegon Food Co-op relocation indicates, successful businesses want to be downtown rather than the outskirts of town, and customers want to shop there. However, downtown will only remain attractive to commercial uses and citizens as long as it maintains its character.



## Street Vendors, Food Carts, and Festivals

A successful downtown district does not require fixed commercial places. Communities across the country have found street vendors, whether retail or food, are one avenue to increase downtown vitality by bringing in tax revenue, increased foot traffic to local businesses, and attracting people to the community center. Street vendors, similar to community wide celebration, tend to attract people to locations they may not otherwise visit. This is the case for community members and tourists alike. The impact of street vendors can be not only an economic benefit but add to the overall quality of life in that community<sup>46</sup>. Ashland has two prime areas where street vendors could thrive, one in the downtown area and the other on the waterfront – both of these locations are already distinctive features of the Ashland community and assets that are currently underutilized.

<sup>46</sup>Deley, Alexander. 2010. "Public Markets, Street Vendors and Downtowns." *Downtown Economics: Ideas for Increasing Vitality in Community Business Districts*. Issue 162 (February 2010).





# Smart Growth

Smart growth is a community planning and development philosophy meant to inform land-use policies. Smart growth principles give priority to things that increase the quality of life in a community. Preserving open community spaces, directing development towards the existing community infrastructure, encouraging mixed-use development, providing a variety of transportation options, creating walkable communities, and fostering distinctive community features are some of the main tenets of smart growth.

Using a number of data points to score Ashland and the comparison communities on smart growth features, we find that Ashland's downtown is doing fairly well (Table 14). Ashland's downtown has many open spaces such as small plazas, many benches for sitting, and regularly encourages communal

congregation in the downtown streets demonstrated by the weekly downtown farmer's market and a number of festivals and celebrations during the year – two such examples include Maxwell Days and the Library Carnival. Ashland's downtown architecture and murals also give the downtown a distinctive feel. Finally, on any given day, the downtown typically has a nice mix of pedestrian and automobile traffic providing a variety of transport options to navigate the downtown.

Despite its strengths, Ashland's downtown could still use some additional help to score higher on smart growth metrics. One of the most obvious issues has to do with the number and proportion of downtown storefronts that are vacant or in disrepair. Although the downtown presents areas both clean and beautiful, there are also a number of places with crumbling sidewalks, garbage, and weeds and in need of regular maintenance and beautification.

Finally, Ashland's downtown provides a variety of uses from work to play that undoubtedly contribute to its attraction and draw people in for regular use. In terms of the level of mixed use, however, Ashland ranks toward the bottom of the list (7th out of 9) of comparison communities on both an index assuming even (i.e., 10% retail, 10% public, and so on) distribution of business types as well as an index comparing Ashland to the overall average distribution of actual business type sof all communities in the database (Table 15). Ashland's position is the result of the proportion of downtown retail businesses, which account for nearly half of all businesses downtown. One area for improvement would be to increase the variety of uses in the downtown.

**Table 14. Smart Growth Features by Comparison Community**

Community	Outdoor Seating	Plaza or Park	Distinctive Feature	Farmers Market	% Vacant	# of Cars	# of Lanes	Outdoor Cleanliness	# of Pedestrian
Antigo	NO	YES	NO	YES	22.22	35	4	3	24
Ashland	YES	YES	YES	YES	16.25	221	2	3	49
Grand Rapids	YES	YES	YES	YES	4.76	134	2	4	62
Houghton	YES	YES	YES	NO	9.28	57	2	4	96
Merrill	YES	NO	NO	NO	8.82	21	2	3	11
Rhineland	YES	YES	YES	NO	18.37	134	2	3	21
Rice Lake	YES	NO	NO	YES	8.89	86	4	3	22
Virginia	YES	NO	NO	YES	17.14	93	2	3	30

**Table 15. Mixed Use Score by Distribution of Storefront Types**

	<b>Rank by even distribution</b>	<b>Rank by average distribution</b>
Antigo	1 <sup>st</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Rhinelanders	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Houghton	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Grand Rapids	4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Rice Lake	5 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
Virginia	6 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
Ashland	7 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>
Merrill	8 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>
Ironwood	9 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>





# Housing

Ashland distinguishes itself through an aged housing stock – including a number of historically significant structures – that is comparatively available and affordable. Over half of the existing homes in Ashland predate 1939, a period of distinguished home design defined by “Victorian” and “Prairie” styles to which many of the local homes adhere (Figure 29 and 30).

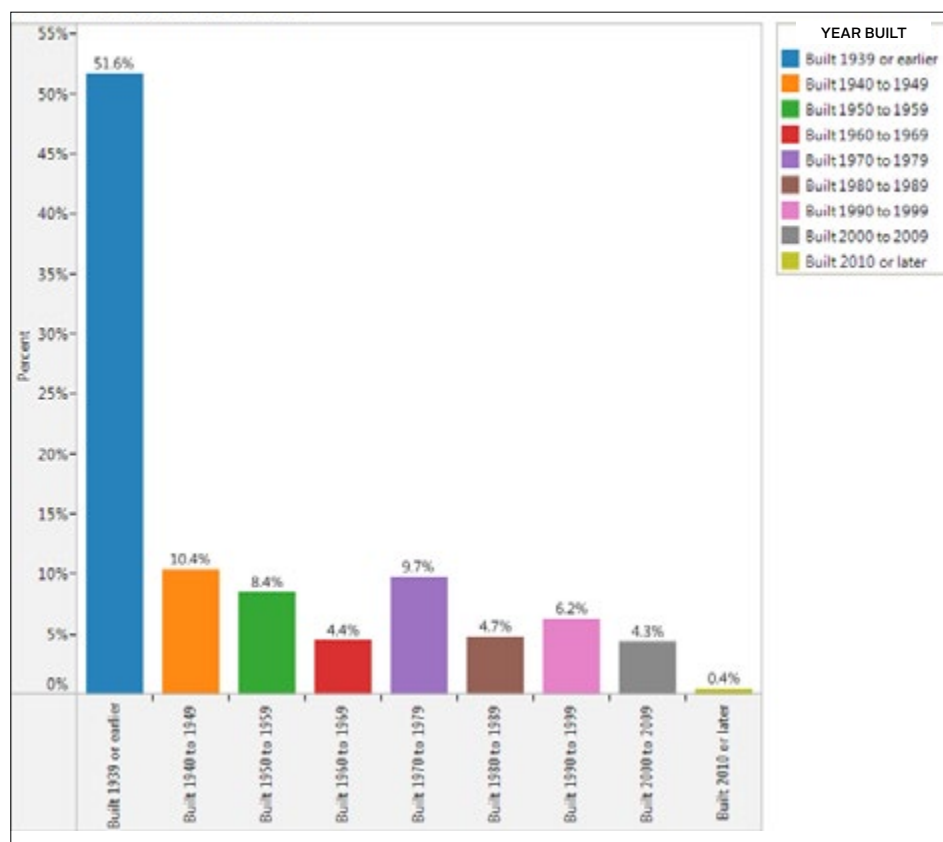
In addition, Ashland outpaces most of the comparison group in median home value, but not to the point that housing becomes prohibitive for most residents (Figure 31).

The city features relatively low rent prices (Figure 32 and 33), and the number of home vacancies compresses home prices maintaining affordability for working citizens and retirees. As such, Ashland features a comparatively small percentage of mortgage-paying homeowners exceeding the threshold of thirty-five percent of gross monthly income on housing (Figure 34). In this respect, the Ashland housing market is healthy.

While a surface reading of the data may see the age of the Ashland housing stock as a liability, research on growth trends elsewhere indicate that young professionals are drawn to cities and towns with older, historically significant housing opportunities, not to mention high-density housing with pedestrian and bicycle access to necessary services. Ashland’s central residential districts, featuring a variety of attractive architectural designs, alley parking access that enhances sidewalk safety, and quick access to downtown, have the potential, if the city wishes, to attract investment going forward<sup>47</sup>. One caveat, however, may be the condition of the old housing stock, and as the

city revises its comprehensive plan, we recommend a survey of exterior condition over the course of the land use and infrastructure study as well as an update of the historical property survey last conducted in 1991. It would also behoove the city and its partners to incentivize housing rehabilitation over new construction whether through local, state, and federal grants, property tax breaks, or other means. Again, it is in Ashland’s best interest to preserve and protect these unique housing assets.

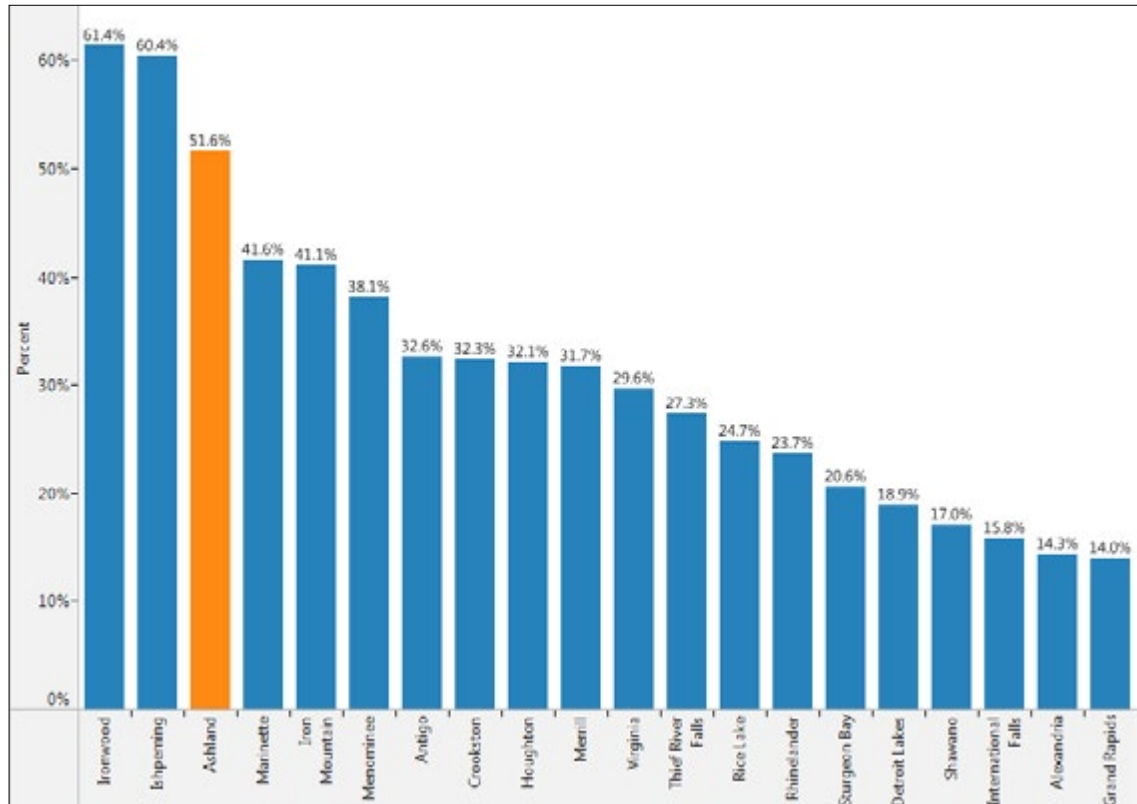
Figure 29: Year Structure Built



Source: US Census, ACS

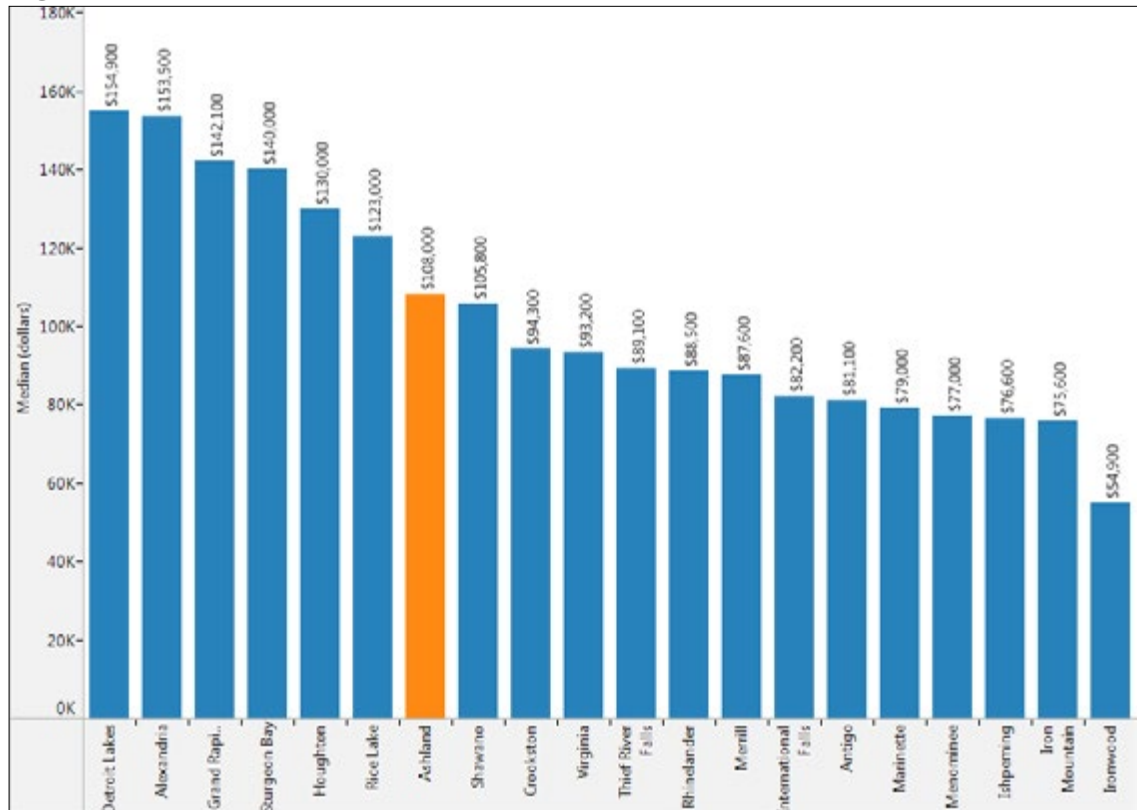
<sup>47</sup>This type of design has come back in vogue in so-called “New Urbanist” circles. Duany, Andres, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck. 2000. *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. New York: North Point Press.

Figure 30: Percent of Homes Built Before 1939



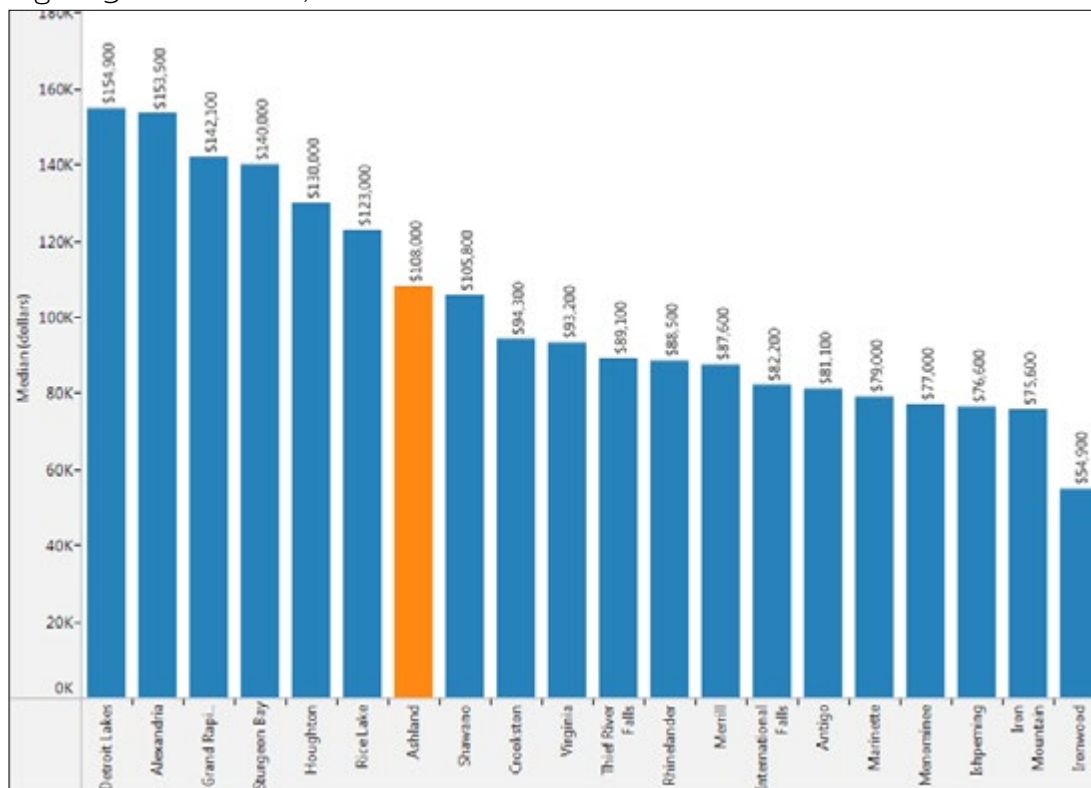
Source: US Census, ACS

Figure 31: Median Home Value, 2012



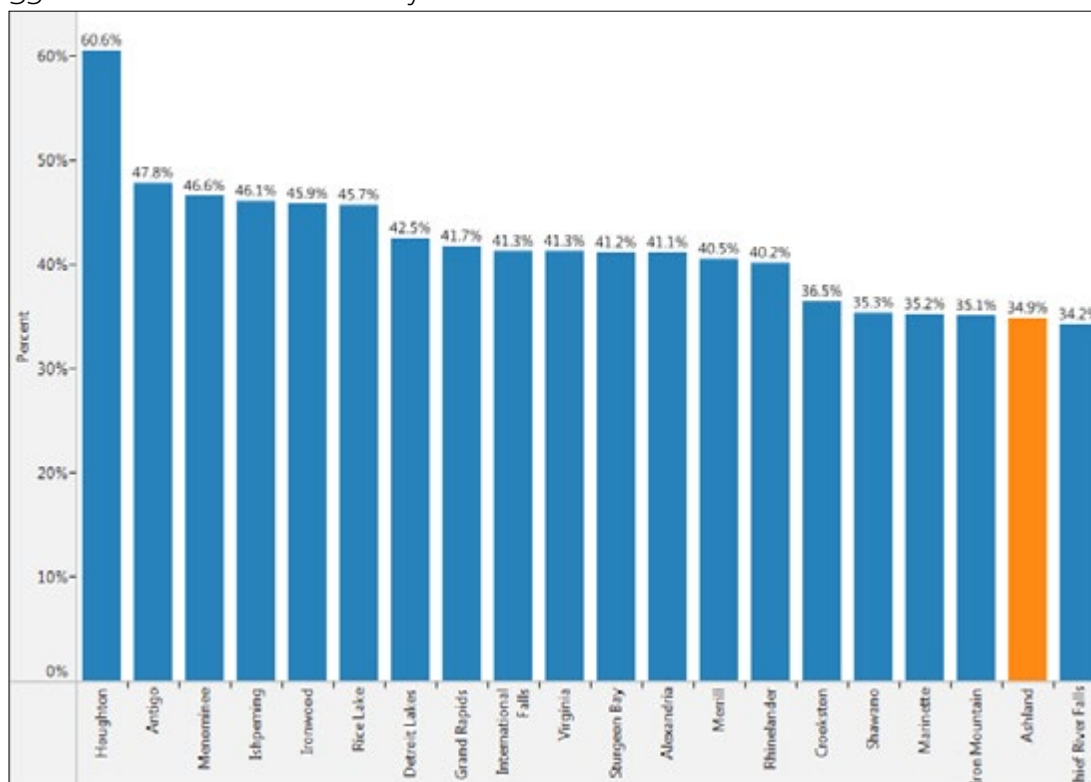
Source: US Census, ACS

Figure 32: Gross Rent, 2012



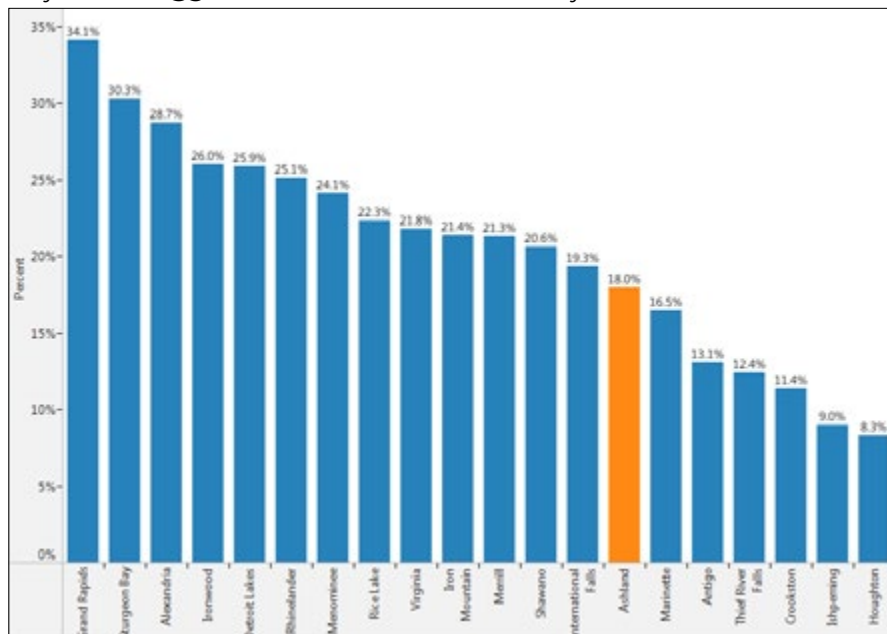
Source: US Census, ACS

Figure 33: Percent of Owner Occupied Units with Rent Payment at 35% or More of Gross Monthly Income



Source: US Census, ACS

Figure 34: Percent of Owner Occupied Units with Mortgage Payment at 35% or More of Gross Monthly Income



Source: US Census, ACS

## Ashland Community Study

In the 2014 Ashland Community Study, respondents were asked about housing in Ashland at two different points on the survey. The first question asked participants to rate the quality of housing in Ashland. Approximately 29 percent of respondents rated housing in Ashland as “very good” (1.79 percent) or “good” (27.38 percent) and the remaining 71 percent rated housing was either “fair” (45.24 percent) or “poor” (25.6 percent). When asked how important they thought creating new housing was to the success of Ashland, approximately 51 percent of respondents stated it was important or extremely important. Despite rating this as an important issue, it was still the third lowest rated item out of nine in the matrix<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>48</sup>See appendix C.



# Health

Ashland is a regional leader in the healthcare field. The city features a number of local clinics in the downtown area and on the southwest side of town. Memorial Medical Center (MMC), Ashland's regional hospital, is the cornerstone of the city's health infrastructure. In fact, medical services were the highest rated service or facility in Ashland by respondents in the 2014 Ashland Community Study<sup>49</sup>. As a regional hub for health and medical needs, Ashland's economy is strongly tied to the success and development of its medical and health-related

facilities. This bodes well for Ashland in many respects. First, adequate and accessible healthcare is important for community residents at all phases of life. Whether it's young parents with children looking for a birthing center or pediatrician close to home or an aging or elderly couple looking for care that meets the needs as one ages, healthcare is a staple in a sound community. It is certainly an amenity when that care is right around corner and not sixty-plus miles away.

Ashland has all of the most basic health and medical services

available as well as some other services not commonly found in smaller communities (Table 16). With the addition of Memorial Medical Center's new Cancer Center, Ashland will see improvement in cancer care services to area residents, and continue to strengthen its position as a regional hub for health care. Together these institutions, along with a developing wellness sector, insure that Ashland offers a broad range of services that are difficult find in sum total elsewhere in Northwoods communities of similar size.

Table 16: Health Options by Comparison Community

Community	Regional Hospital	Local Clinic	Abuse Assistance	Alternative Medicine	Chiropractor	Dentist	Midwife	OBGYN	Optometrist	Total (out of 9)
Antigo	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	6
Ashland	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9
Crookston	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	8
Detroit Lakes	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9
Grand Rapids	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9
Houghton	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	7
International Falls	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	6
Iron Mountain	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9
Ironwood	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9
Ishpeming	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	7
Marquette	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9
Menominee	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	5
Merrill	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9
Rhineland	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9
Rice Lake	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9
Shawano	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	8
Sturgeon Bay	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9
Thief River Falls	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	8
Virginia	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	9

## Community Wellness Center

Ashland and its surrounding communities lack not only a community-based recreation center but also a comprehensive wellness center that incorporates healthcare, wellness, and community in one space attending to the needs of a diverse population. With the loss of the Northland College pool, overburdened school district facilities, and outdated or missing workout facilities, the Ashland

community is missing a major community amenity necessary for current residents and attractive to potential future residents. Comprehensive wellness centers meet the health and recreation needs of elderly and youth alike as well as the healthy and sick. A community based wellness center, or a “destination fitness center,” has been the topic of conversation for at least the last decade in Ashland and could serve the needs of not only this community but communities within a 30-mile radius of the city<sup>50</sup>. We see this as a missing piece to the

Ashland community on both the recreational and healthcare front that if developed would undoubtedly be an attractive community amenity.

<sup>49</sup>See Appendix C.

<sup>50</sup>For a comprehensive report outlining the feasibility of a regional recreational wellness center see Business Plans Etc.'s 2004 study entitled “Market and Financial Feasibility Study for A Regional Lifestyle Center: Education, Recreation and Fitness Programming in Ashland, Wisconsin.”

**Table 17: Primary Care Physicians by County, 2011**

County	PCP Ratio	PCP Rate	# Primary care physicians
Ashland (Ashland)	597:1	167.3	27
Oneida (Rhinelanders)	761:1	131.3	47
St. Louis (Virginia)	827:1	120.8	242
Marquette (Ishpeming)	867:1	115.2	78
Barron (Rice Lake)	936:1	106.8	49
Itasca (Grand Rapids)	1000:1	99.9	45
Houghton (Houghton)	1144:1	87.3	32
Langlade (Antigo)	1163:1	85.9	17
Becker (Detroit Lakes)	1170:1	85.4	28
Dickinson (Iron Mountain)	1190:1	84.0	22
Gogebic (Ironwood)	1252:1	79.8	13
Door (Sturgeon Bay)	1264:1	79.1	22
Pennington (Thief River Falls)	1279:1	78.2	11
Marinette (Marinette)	1388:1	72.0	30
Lincoln (Merrill)	1430:1	69.9	20
Shawano (Shawano)	1546:1	64.7	27
Polk (Crookston)	1850:1	54.0	17
Koochiching (International Falls)	2642:1	37.8	5
Menominee (Menominee)	2991:1	33.4	8

Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

## Healthcare Access by County

Beyond the city of Ashland, Ashland County offers the highest rates of primary care physicians of any of the comparison counties with approximately 597 patients to every physician (Table 17), further suggesting further that the city of Ashland is well positioned when it comes to primary health care.

Ashland County drops slightly in the availability of dentist in the area with 1,846 patients for every one dentist practicing in the area (Table 18).

The same can be said for mental health providers within Ashland County (Table 19). Ashland County ranks 8th out of comparison counties on the mental health provider to population ratio with 1,107 people for every one provider.

While the growing medical sector is undoubtedly a valuable Ashland amenity, there are still a number of more advanced medical services and procedures that require travel to Duluth's hospitals. Gradually eliminating that need through hospital and clinic expansion should be a goal of the city, MMC, and other local partners, and doing so will only enhance Ashland's place within its region of influence.

The other side of access beyond the presence of healthcare practitioners is related to healthcare coverage and cost. Ashland County currently has the fifth highest

**Table 18: Dentist by County, 2012**

County	Dentist Ratio	Dentist Rate	# Dentists
Dickinson (Iron Mountain)	1111:1	90.0	24
Marquette (Ishpeming)	1369:1	73.0	53
St. Louis (Virginia)	1427:1	70.0	147
Door (Sturgeon Bay)	1482:1	67.5	19
Oneida (Rhinelanders)	1512:1	66.1	24
Menominee (Menominee)	1613:1	62.0	15
Barron (Rice Lake)	1785:1	56.0	26
Ashland (Ashland)	1846:1	54.2	9
Becker (Detroit Lakes)	1858:1	53.8	18
Itasca (Grand Rapids)	1926:1	51.9	24
Lincoln (Merrill)	1929:1	51.8	15
Langlade (Antigo)	1991:1	50.2	10
Pennington (Thief River Falls)	2057:1	48.6	7
Shawano (Shawano)	2118:1	47.2	20
Houghton (Houghton)	2179:1	45.9	18
Polk (Crookston)	2183:1	45.8	15
Gogebic (Ironwood)	2204:1	45.4	8
Marinette (Marinette)	2244:1	44.6	19
Koochiching (International Falls)	2689:1	37.2	5

Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

**Table 19: Mental Health Providers by County, 2013**

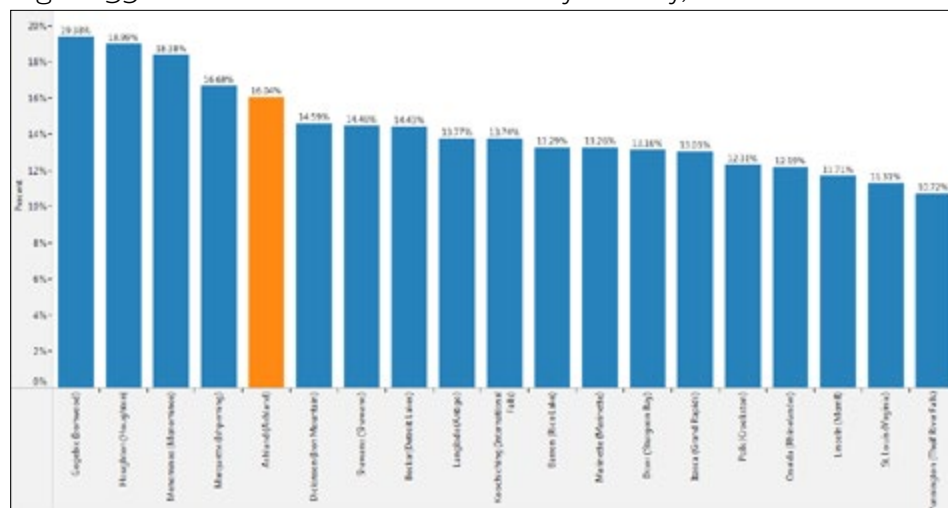
County	MHP Ratio	MHP Rate	# Mental Health providers
Dickinson (Iron Mountain)	523:1	191.2	51.0
Marquette (Ishpeming)	585:1	170.9	124.0
Houghton (Houghton)	676:1	147.8	58.0
St. Louis (Virginia)	688:1	145.3	305.0
Oneida (Rhinelanders)	725:1	137.8	50.0
Pennington (Thief River Falls)	800:1	125.0	18.0
Itasca (Grand Rapids)	811:1	123.3	57.0
Ashland (Ashland)	1107:1	90.3	15.0
Marinette (Marinette)	1152:1	86.8	37.0
Becker (Detroit Lakes)	1194:1	83.7	28.0
Gogebic (Ironwood)	1259:1	79.4	14.0
Polk (Crookston)	1309:1	76.3	25.0
Koochiching (International Falls)	1344:1	74.4	10.0
Door (Sturgeon Bay)	1407:1	71.0	20.0
Shawano (Shawano)	1513:1	66.1	28.0
Barron (Rice Lake)	1600:1	62.5	29.0
Menominee (Menominee)	1728:1	57.9	14.0
Lincoln (Merrill)	2894:1	34.6	10.0
Langlade (Antigo)	3983:1	25.1	5.0

Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

percentage of adult population that does not have health insurance (Figure 35). This number drops significantly when looking at percent of uninsured children at roughly 5.5 percent; this number puts Ashland County at the median for percent of uninsured children (Figure 36).

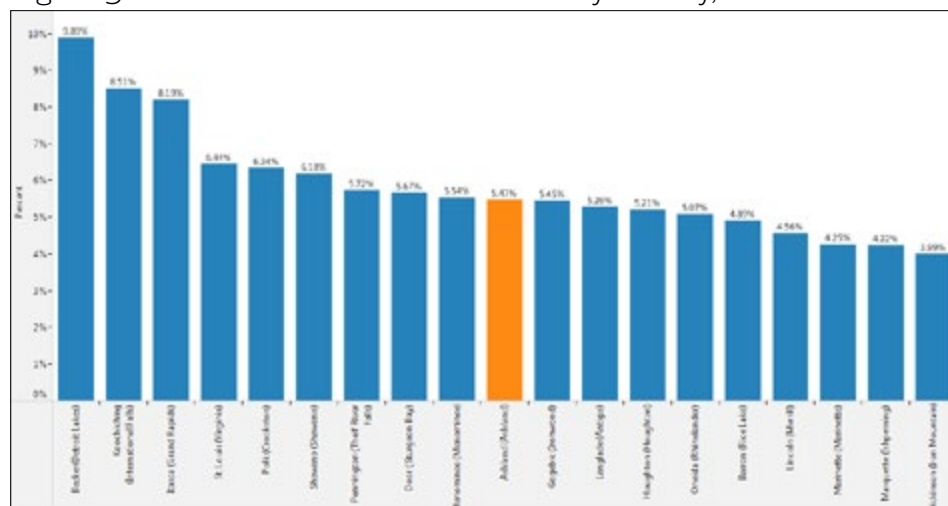
Ashland County has one of the lowest overall healthcare costs of any of the comparison counties (Figure 37) and as a result, when asked respondents who participated in the Center for Disease Control's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, only six percent stated they could not access health care needs due to cost. This is the lowest of all comparison communities for which data exist (Figure 38).

Figure 35: Percent of Uninsured Adults by County, 2011



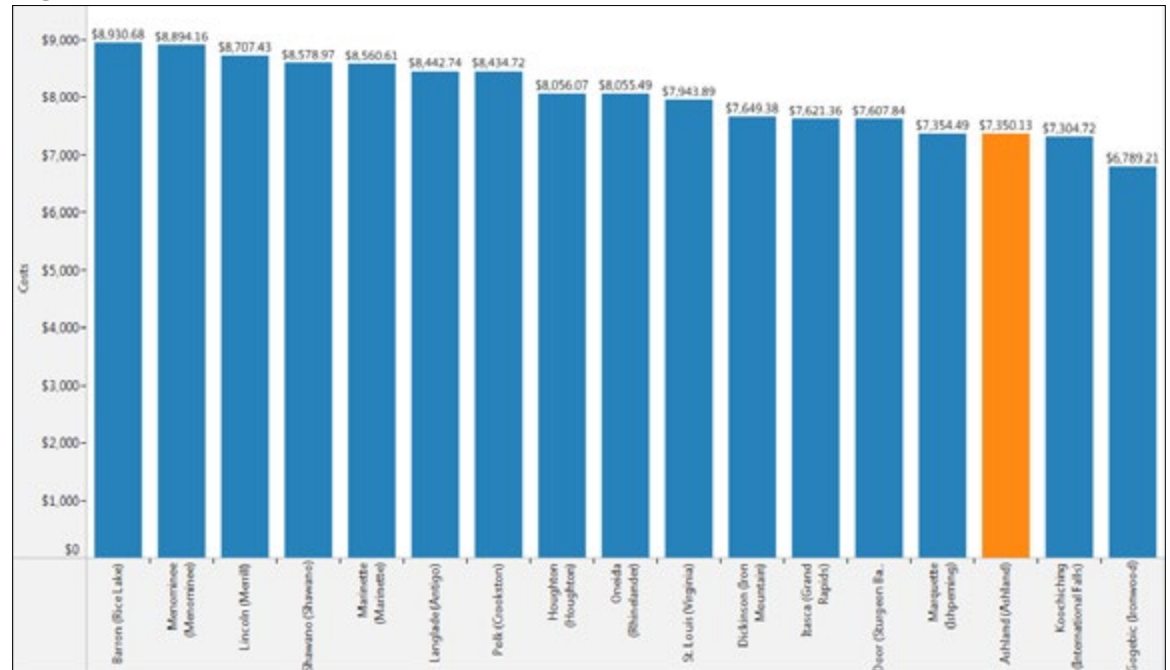
Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

Figure 36: Percent of Children Uninsured by County, 2011



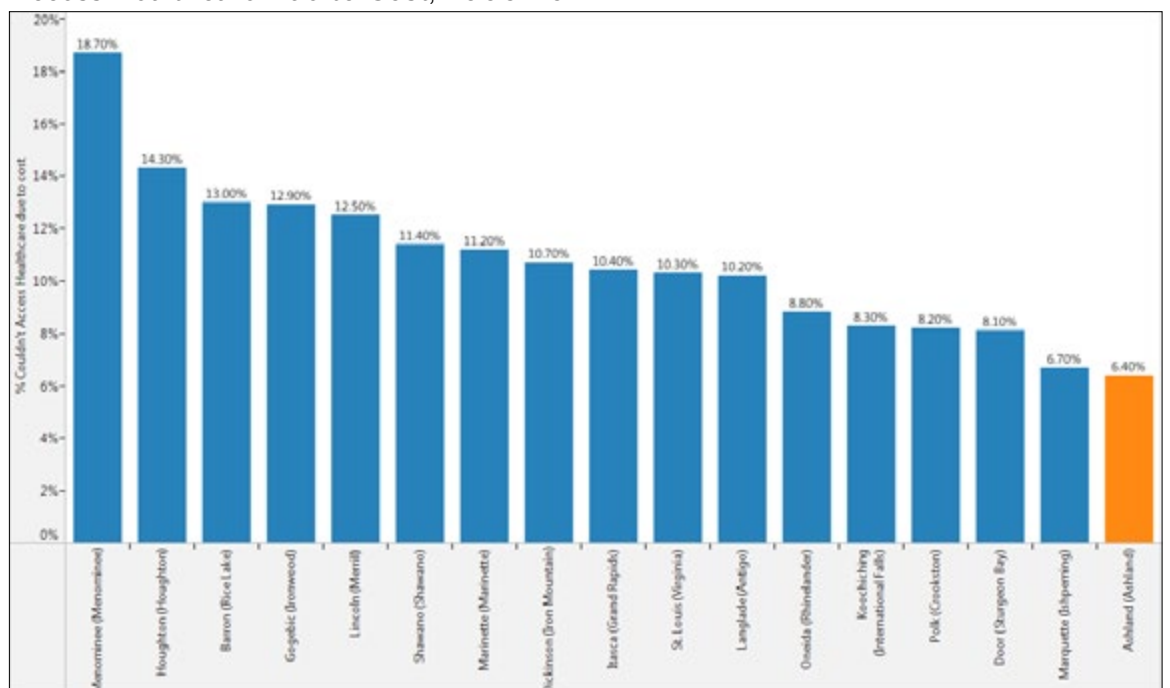
Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

Figure 37: Healthcare Costs, 2011



Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

Figure 38: Percent of Respondents Who Stated They Could Not Access Healthcare Due to Cost, 2006-2012



Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)



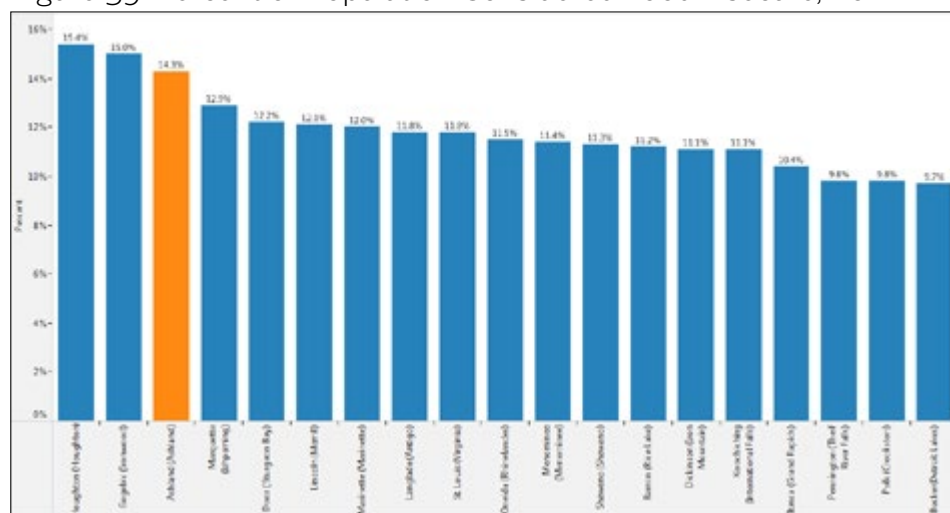
## Health Data – Diet & Exercise

Many residents of Ashland County find themselves in areas where they lack adequate access to food. Roughly 14 percent of Ashland County residents are considered food insecure (Figure 39) and approximately 13 percent lack access to healthy food (Figure 40).

Despite higher levels of food insecurity and limited access to healthy food options, residents of Ashland County tend to have healthier habits than many of the comparison counties across the Northwoods. A little over 16 percent of Ashland County residents are smokers (Figure 41), nearly 19 percent engage in excessive drinking (Figure 42), and about 21 percent are considered physically inactive (Figure 43). Smoking, drinking, and physical inactivity obviously are challenges for communities to deal with regardless of overall percent of the population with these traits; Ashland County does find itself in a better position than many of the comparison counties, however.

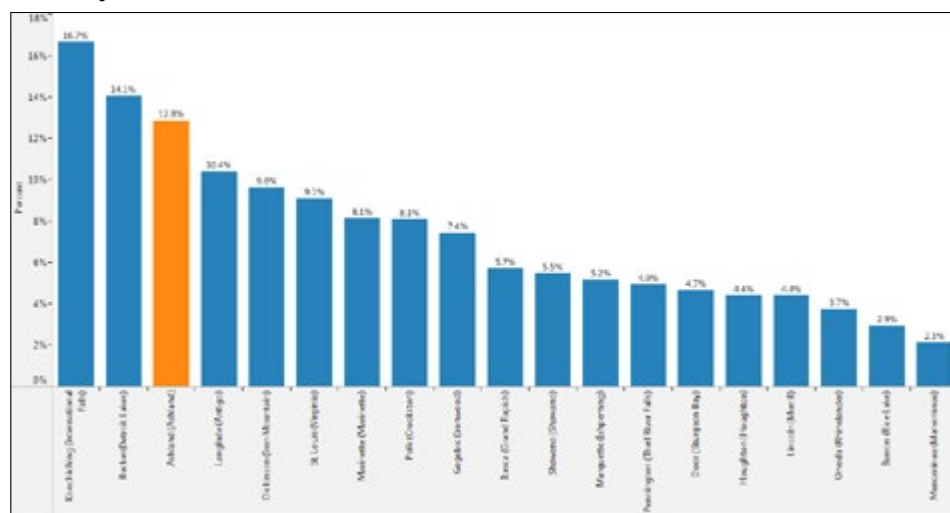
Ashland County does have many other health issues, however, with 30.5 percent of the adult population identified as obese (Figure 44). Additionally, 23.1 percent stated they have no social emotional support (Figure 45) and have the highest average number of mentally unhealthy days over reported in a 30-day period at 3.9 days (Figure 46).

Figure 39: Percent of Population Considered Food Insecure, 2011



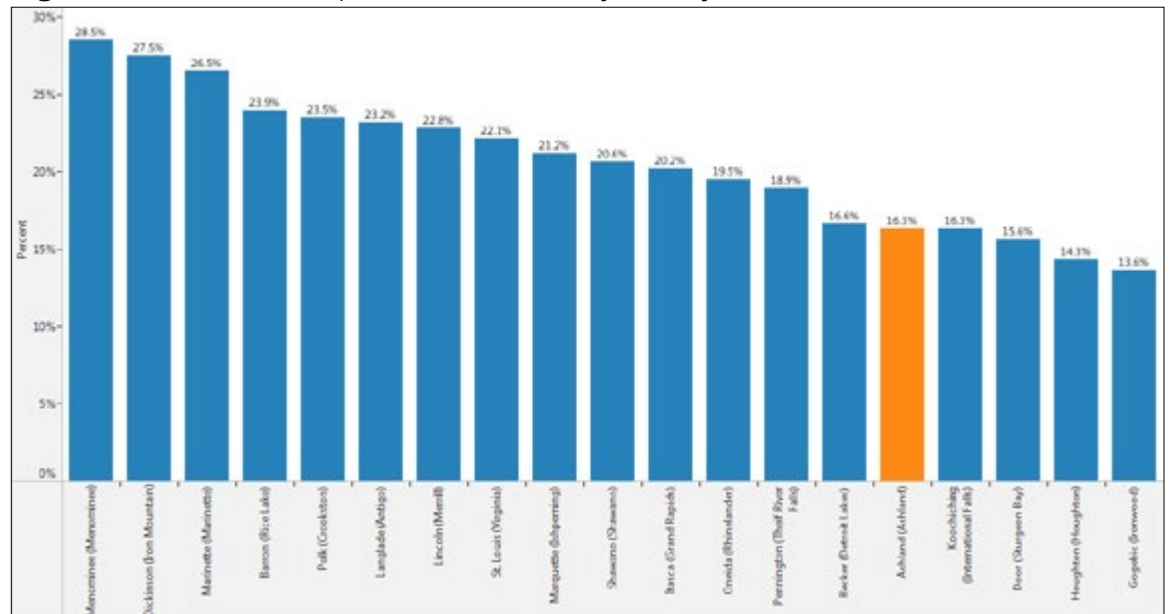
Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

Figure 40: Percent of Population with Limited Access to Healthy Food, 2012



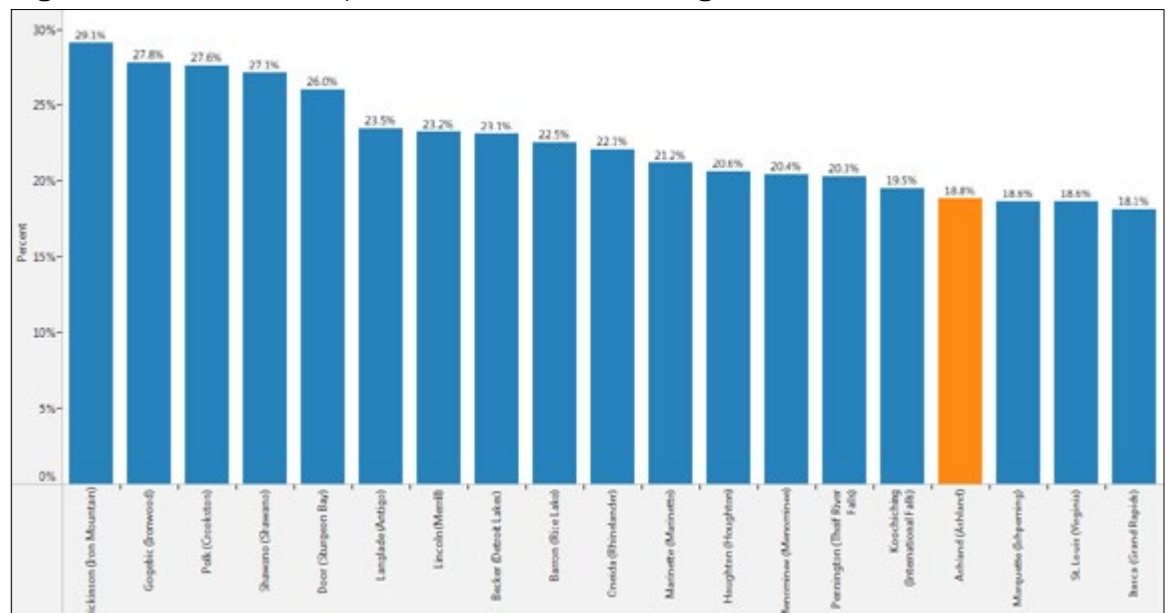
Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

Figure 41: Percent of Population Smokers by county, 2006-2012



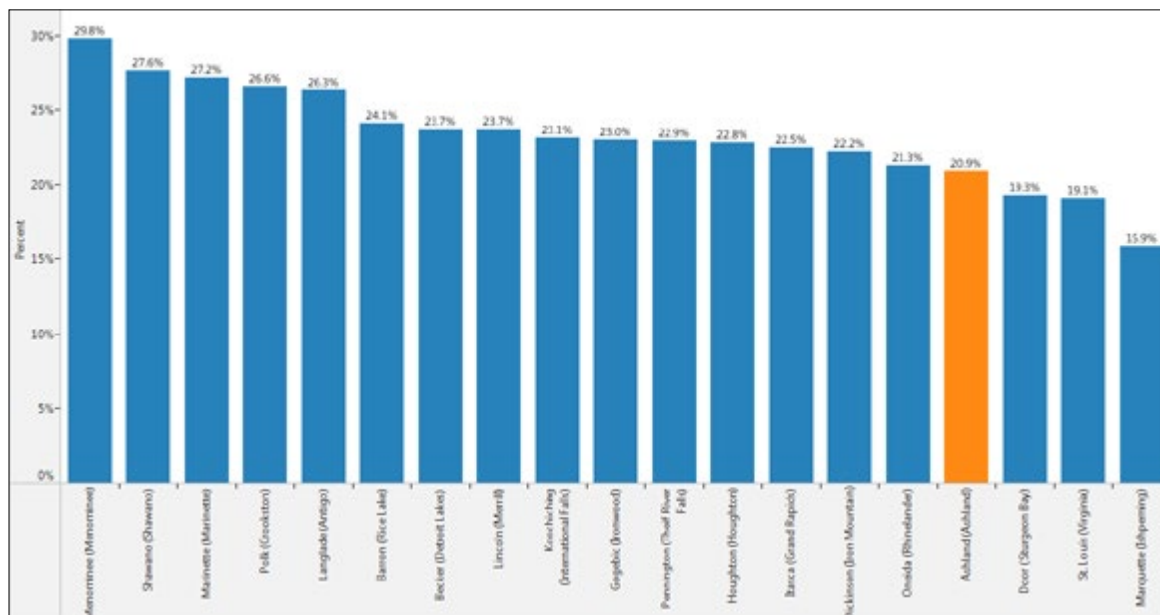
Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

Figure 42: Percent of Population Excessive Drinking, 2006-2012



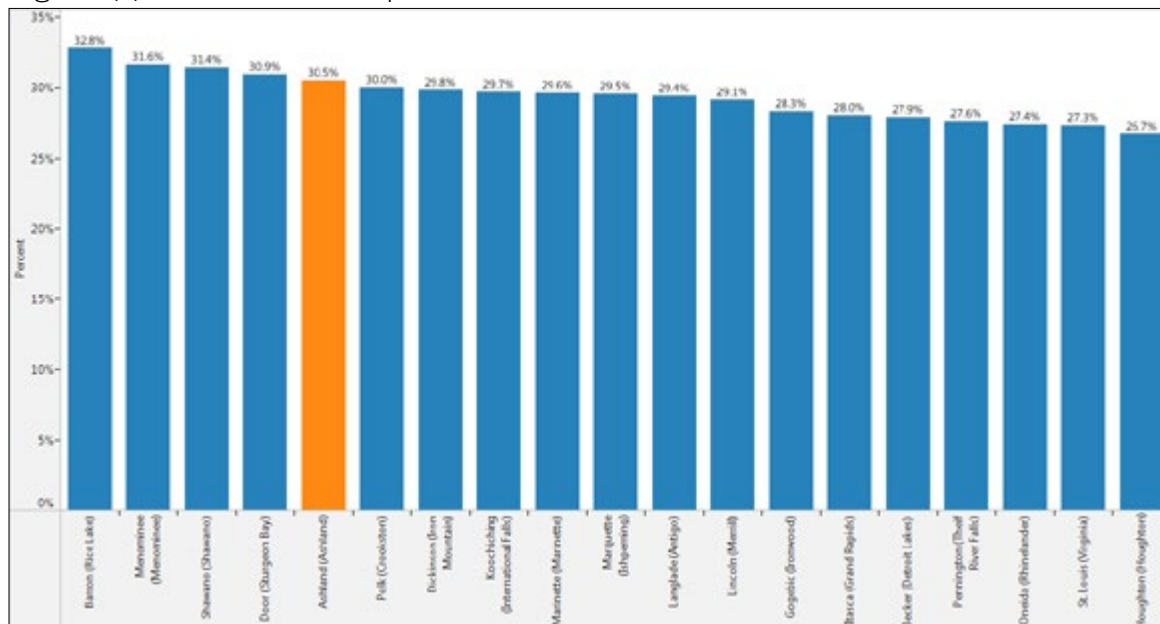
Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

Figure 43: Percent Adults (aged 20 and over) Physically Inactive by County, 2010



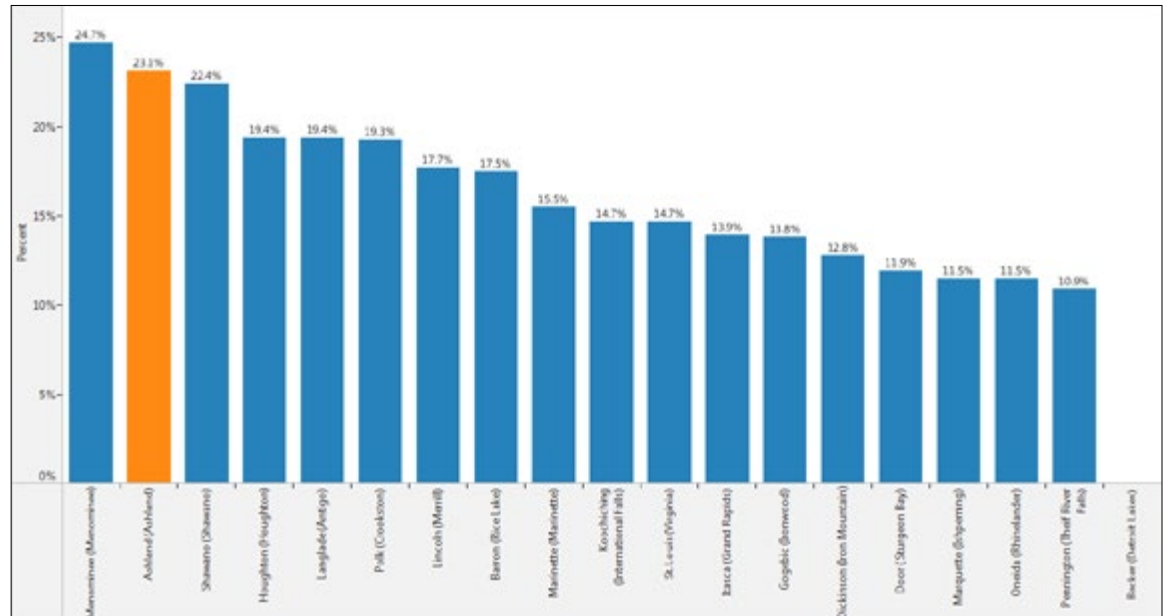
Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

Figure 44: Percent Adult Population Considered Obese, 2010



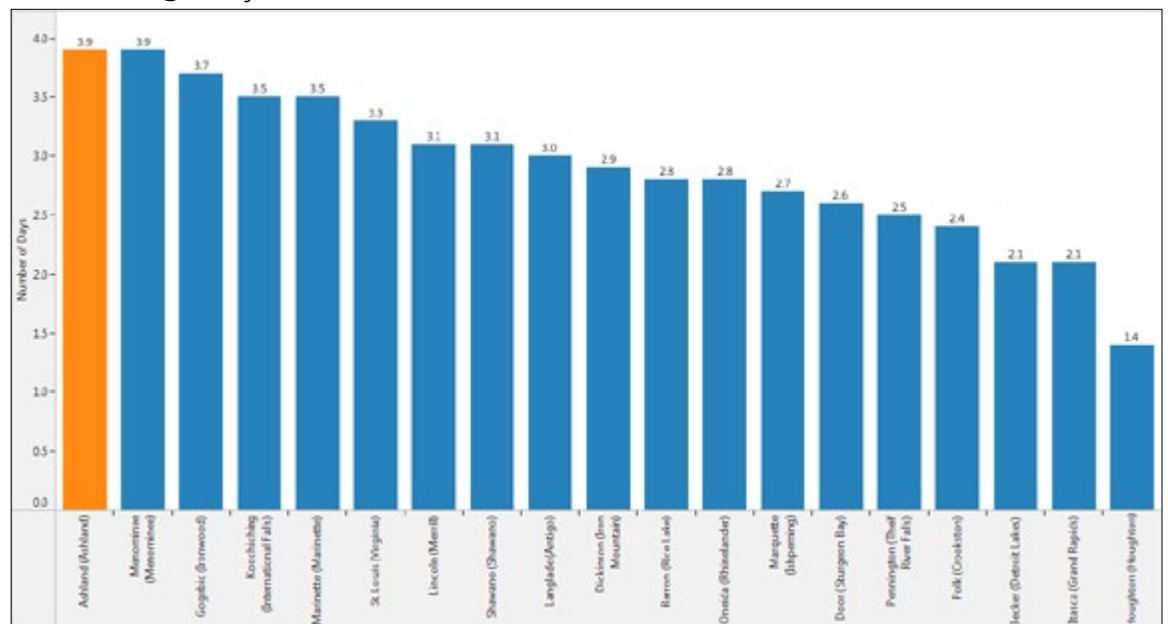
Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

Figure 45: Percent of Adults with No Social Emotional Support, 2005-2010



Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)

Figure 46: Average Number of Mentally Unhealthy Days Reported in the Past 30 Days, 2006-2012



Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>)



# Education

For families with children under the age of 18, education and educational opportunities are generally important concerns when choosing a community. Ashland has a strong educational infrastructure unique to small, rural communities with a diversity of educational opportunities available from pre-K through four-year private college (Table 20). Ashland has public schools, a charter school, and a private school that all cater to K-12 educational needs of Ashland youth and families. The city also has a technical college, WITC-Ashland, and a four-year private college, Northland College. The mixture of these educational institutions provide economic stability within the area by producing secure and professional jobs, but they also act as a valuable resource for Ashland area residents. High school students are able to take advanced or specialized classes, new high school graduates are able to improve their skill set, workers looking to return to school or make a career change are able to do so, and the elderly and retired community have access to continuing education. This combination, although a valuable asset, is currently underutilized by the Ashland community – particularly the link between area high school students and Northland College.

## Childcare (Pre-K)

According to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, which provides an online search option for locating childcare services, Ashland has the most childcare providers (n=38) of any of the comparison community (Figure 47). Anecdotally, there is a commonly held belief that there is a shortage of quality daycare options in and around the area. Even with this exceptionally high number of daycare providers, many families in need of childcare find it difficult to find placements at local providers. Additionally, Ashland does seem to have a real scarcity of infant childcare options. In fact, much of rural United States is experiencing a shortage in childcare with infant childcare leading the way<sup>51</sup>. Whether or not the perception that Ashland does not have enough – number or quality – childcare providers is accurate, is unknown<sup>52</sup>. If the issue is quality or perception of quality, then there is another need. It may be necessary to find a way to inform the public of options and to have a mechanism for quality control when providing this information.

However, if the issue is actual lack of capacity due to unmet need, then there is an opportunity for additional childcare providers in the area. We suspect this may be the case for infant care needs in particular. If this is true, there is still the added challenge for day care providers who are willing to take in infants barely breaking even or operating at a loss. Both of these realities in rural communities act as a disincentive for existing or new childcare providers to try to fill the void in infant care. Regardless, it is in the best interest of the community and it is sound economic policy to find a way to develop

adequate childcare opportunities for working families – even if that means public or private funds helping offset the cost of childcare or investing in and supporting the development of high quality childcare<sup>53</sup>.

Providing high quality childcare options for working families with children under the age of five is a significant community amenity that will undoubtedly play into attracting and retaining younger community members to the area. Additionally, Ashland has a relatively high number of low-income families, many of whom struggle with childcare needs. Providing childcare options and adequate help to low-income families not only allow the parents of these families to find and keep steady employment but it also sets children of these families up to perform at a higher level once they enter school. As we will see in the next section, Ashland public schools, K-12, have a larger proportion of the student body considered economically disadvantaged with this number expected to grow as younger students move up through the ranks. Because of this trend, we think investing in and developing pre-K childcare will help on many fronts from attracting and retaining community members to better preparing youth to succeed once they enter the public school system in Ashland.

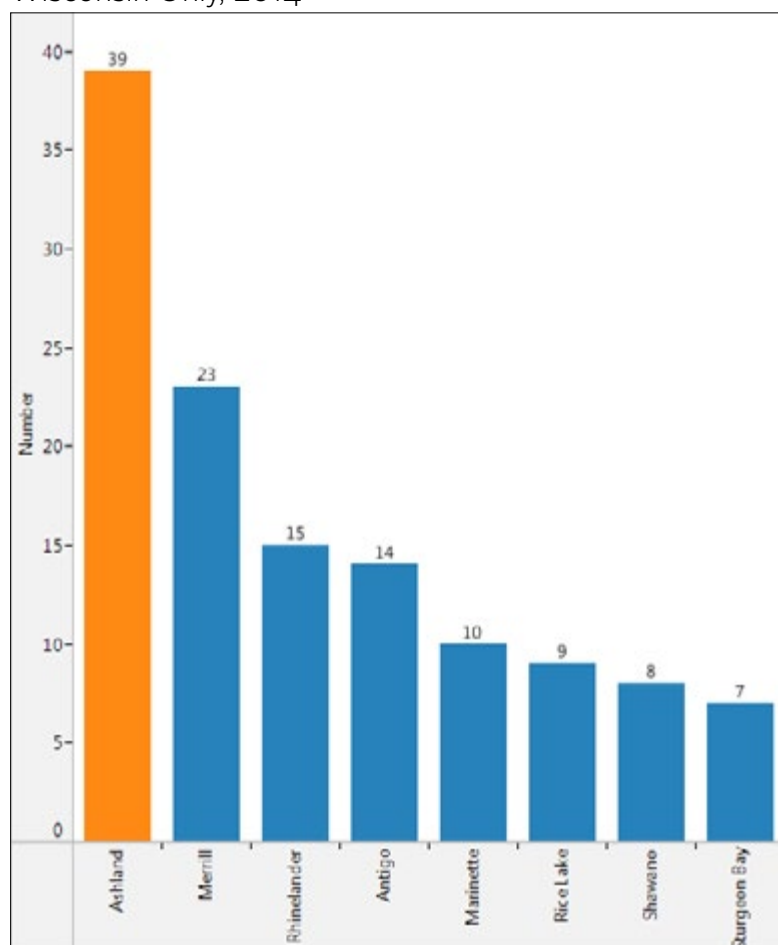


**Table 20: Educational Infrastructure by Community**

Community	Local School	College	Highest Degree
Alexandria	YES	YES	Associates
Antigo	YES	YES	Associates
Ashland	YES	YES	Bachelors
Crookston	YES	YES	Bachelors
Detroit Lakes	YES	YES	Associates
Grand Rapids	YES	YES	Associates
Houghton	YES	YES	PhD
International Falls	YES	NO	High School
Iron Mountain	YES	YES	Associates
Ironwood	YES	YES	Associates
Ishpeming	YES	NO	High School
Marinette	YES	YES	Bachelors
Menominee	YES	NO	High School
Merrill	YES	NO	High School
Rhineland	YES	YES	Associates
Rice Lake	YES	YES	Associates
Shawano	YES	YES	Associates
Sturgeon Bay	YES	YES	Associates
Thief River Falls	YES	YES	Associates
Virginia	YES	YES	Associates



**Figure 47: Number of Daycare Providers, Wisconsin Only, 2014**



<sup>51</sup>Belz, Adam. 2014. "Day-care Squeeze Hits Rural Families." *Star Tribune* August 26, 2014. See article: <http://www.startribune.com/local/272439181.html>.

<sup>52</sup>Approximately 38.9 percent of the respondents from the 2014 Ashland Community Study rated childcare services as "very good" or "good." This was the fifth highest rated item out of the ten evaluated.

<sup>53</sup>Rolnick, Art and Rob Grunewald. 2003. "Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return." *The Region* December (2003): 6-12.

Source: Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

## Ashland Public Schools Profile

Ashland public middle and high schools can expect an increase in racial and ethnic diversity as primary and intermediate students age. As this group of youth move through the school system there will also be an increase in the number of students coming from economically disadvantaged homes and an increase in the proportion of students with disabilities (Table 21).

## Ashland High School

Ashland High School is right in line with other similarly sized communities with the number of full-time teachers and student to teacher ratio of approximately 17 students per teacher (Table 22). One distinguishing feature of Ashland High School from other rural communities is its diversity. Ashland High School has both the highest percent of the student body considered racial and ethnic minorities (Figure 48) as well as the highest percentage of the student body considered economically disadvantaged. As a result, Ashland has broad range of students with different life experiences and different needs (Figure 49).

The advantages of diversity in educational settings are well-documented. Students who live and learn in a diverse educational setting are better at adapting and flourishing in a multicultural environment and an increasingly global economy. Students in diverse educational settings learn from both teachers and each other, increasing innovation by breaking down preconceived notions and

having an open-mind. This kind of environment also enhances critical thinking skills that allow the student to see issues from a variety of perspectives. Ashland's current trend is the exact opposite of the broader trend within the United States – Ashland schools are growing in diversity while many schools across the US are becoming more segregated. Given the right investment, strong leadership, and commitment from parents and community members, Ashland's diverse environment could provide an extremely rich learning environment not experienced by many rural communities. This has the potential to set students up for social and academic success later in life.

While this diversity puts Ashland students in a unique position to flourish, it also presents challenges related to disparate and possibly competing needs and interests that schools like Ashland must deal with. Difficulty related to academic preparedness, effective teaching methods, and different learning styles create added layers of complexity for teachers and administrators when trying to find the best educational options for students. The added challenge of a declining tax base in rural communities and a decrease in state funding makes an already arduous task that much more difficult for teaching professionals working to meet the needs of a very different student body.

Each year US News puts out a “Best High School” report ranking all US high schools. One of the ways US News is able to compare high schools from different states is to calculate a standardized performance index using a number of indicators from performance on state-based tests in reading and mathematics to a

college readiness index based on student performance on Advanced Placement (AP) and/or ACT exams. When it comes to comparing Ashland high school students to other communities across the Northwoods, Ashland trails all other schools with the exception of Marinette, Wisconsin on college-level preparedness<sup>54</sup>. This College Readiness Index is based on exam participation rates among students and the percentage of those who pass one or more AP exam (Figure 50).

When we compare ACT composite score performance of Ashland High School students with that of other Wisconsin communities, we see a similar pattern. Ashland High School students rank lowest on ACT composite scores of the nine<sup>55</sup> comparison communities for the 2012-2013 academic year (Figure 51). According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction data, and further demonstrating the breadth of the college readiness issue, Ashland has the lowest proportion of the 2012-2013 graduating class attending four-year colleges (Figure 52). Ashland's position improves slightly when looking at the overall percent of the 2012-2013 graduates who went on to attend a vocational or technical college (Figure 53).

Beyond college preparedness, Ashland High School students also trail other Wisconsin communities

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<sup>54</sup>This College Readiness Index is based on exam participation rates among students and the percentage of those who pass one or more AP or IB exam.

<sup>55</sup>Washburn has been included here to show performance by other area schools – specifically one that takes in a fair number of students from Ashland through open enrollment options in Wisconsin.

**Table 21: Ashland Public Schools, 2012-2013**

School Type	Achievement School	Achievement State	Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	Student Groups
Lake Superior Primary (grades k-2)	58.4/100	66.5/100	341	American Indian 29.2%	Students with Disabilities 21.3%
				Asian 1.4%	
				Black 2.6%	
				Hispanic 1.4%	Economically Disadvantaged 61.7%
				White 65.4%	
Lake Superior Intermediate (grades 3-5)	60.4/100	66.5/100	379	American Indian 33.5%	Students with Disabilities 15.0%
				Asian 0.8%	
				Black 1.8%	
				Hispanic 2.6%	Economically Disadvantaged 64.6%
				White 61.2%	
Ashland Middle School (grades 6-8)	61.4/100	67.4/100	468	American Indian 23.3%	Students with Disabilities 14.7%
				Asian 0.2%	
				Black 0.4%	
				Hispanic 1.5%	Economically Disadvantaged 59.2%
				White 74.6%	
Ashland High School (grades 9-12)	62.9/100	67.5/100	715	American Indian 18.3%	Students with Disabilities 15.7%
				Asian 0.7%	
				Black 1.5%	
				Hispanic 1.4%	Economically Disadvantaged 48.1%
				White 78%	

Source: WI Department of Public Instruction

on a number of state academic achievement tests (Table 23). The proportion of Ashland students who are considered advanced or proficient on these achievement tests tends to be lower than other communities. With the sole exception being math, ranking 4th out of the nine communities, Ashland finds itself toward the bottom of all other communities on the other state achievement tests: 7th on language arts, 8th on science, 9th on social studies, and 9th on reading.

An interesting counter to the low performance on state achievement test by Ashland High School students is the better position Ashland 4th graders find themselves in when compared to students from the same comparison communities. During the 2012-2013 academic year, Ashland 4th graders ranked 4th in language arts, 2nd in math, 6th in reading, 7th in science, and 4th in social studies (Table 24). This difference could suggest a particularly strong 4th grade class. It also could point toward one of the difficulties of a diverse student

**Table 22: Comparison by High Schools, 2011-2012**

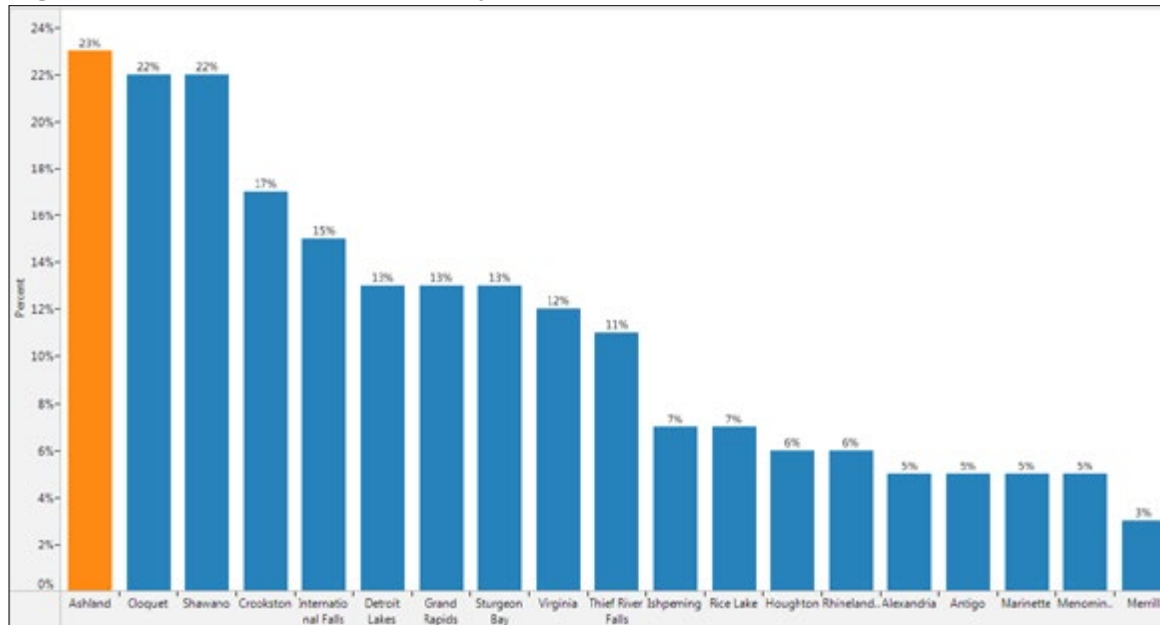
Community	Total Enrollment	Full-time teachers	Student/Teacher Ratio
Alexandria	911	53	17:1
Antigo	872	54	16:1
Ashland	727	44	17:1
Cloquet	674	35	19:1
Crookston	524	37	14:1
Detroit Lakes	844	51	17:1
Grand Rapids	1,063	51	21:1
Houghton	409	25	16:1
International Falls	573	28	21:1
Ishpeming	285	14	21:1
Marinette	664	44	15:1
Menominee	545	31	19:1
Merrill	1,056	55	19:1
Rhineland	865	48	18:1
Rice Lake	769	50	15:1
Shawano	846	55	15:1
Sturgeon Bay	398	23	17:1
Thief River Falls	601	40	15:1
Virginia	751	45	17:1

Source: USNews Best US High Schools

body with many different needs compounding over time, or it could imply a sorting process of high performing students out of Ashland to other area schools as students move from primary to high school.

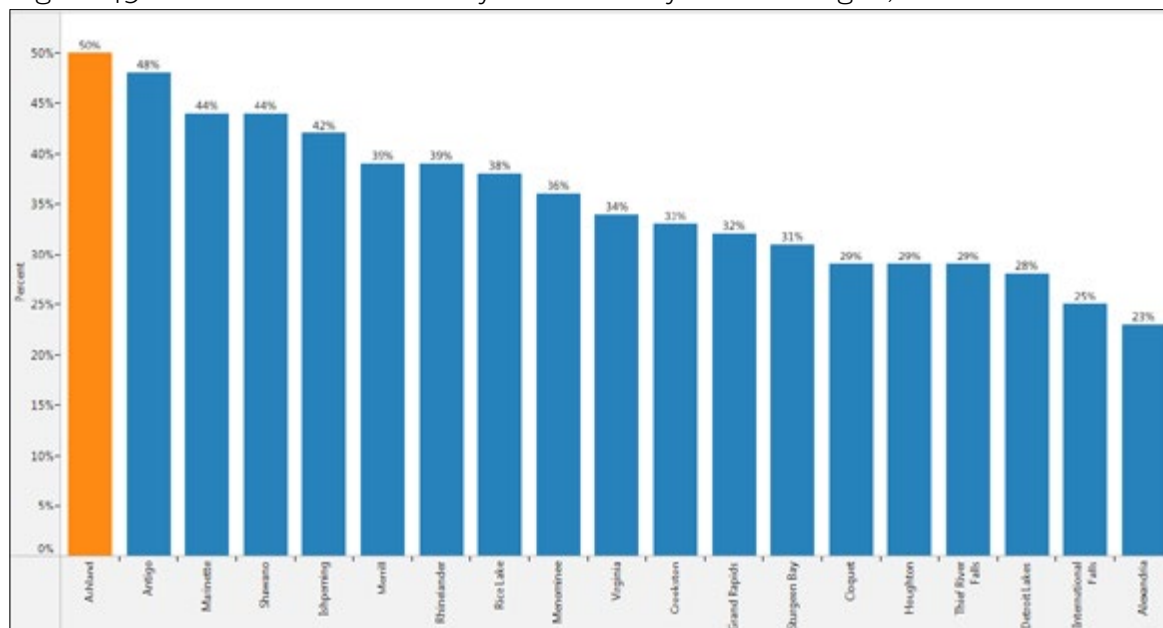


Figure 48: Percent of Student Body Non-White, 2011-2012



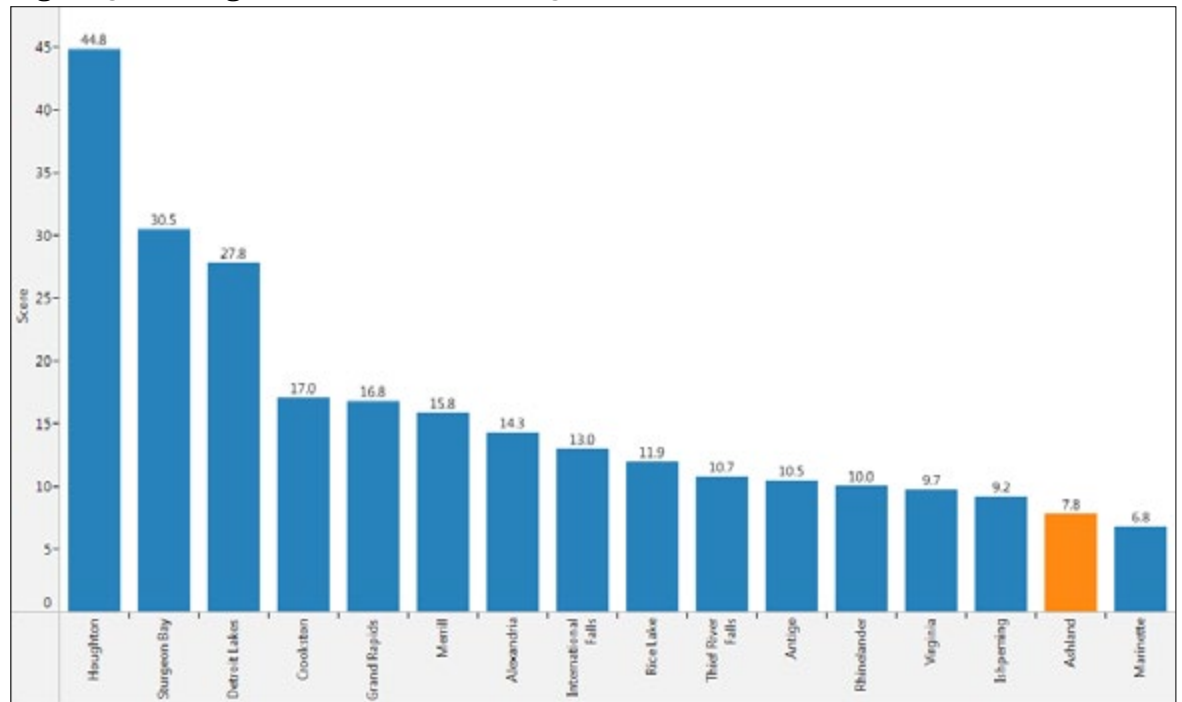
Source: USNews Best US High Schools

Figure 49: Percent of Student Body Economically Disadvantaged, 2011-2012



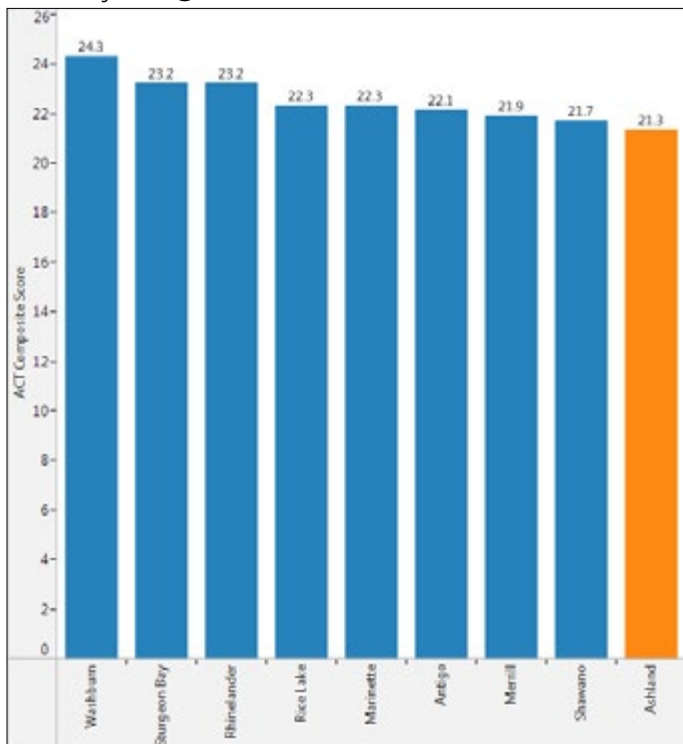
Source: USNews Best US High Schools

Figure 50: College Readiness Index, 2013-2014



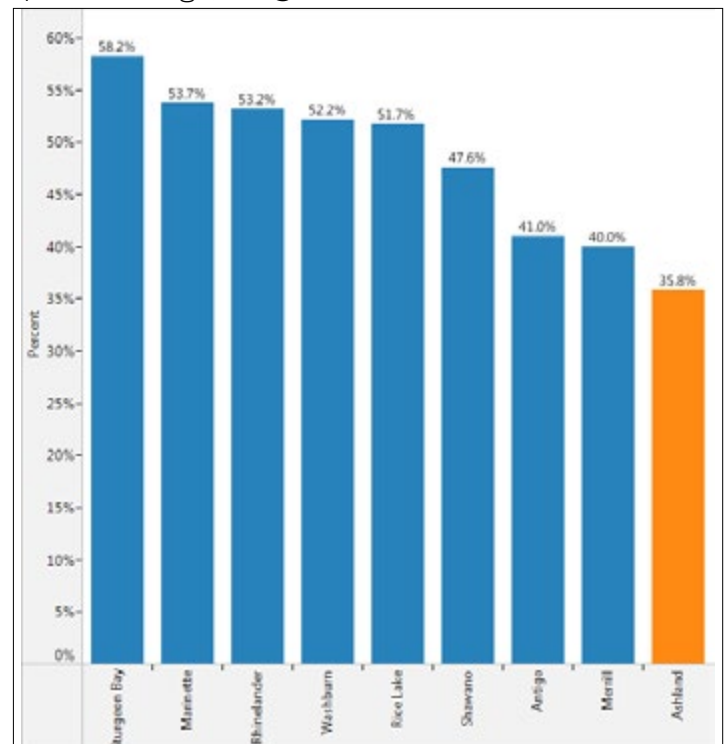
Source: USNews, 2013-2014

Figure 51: Composite ACT Score, WI Only, 2013



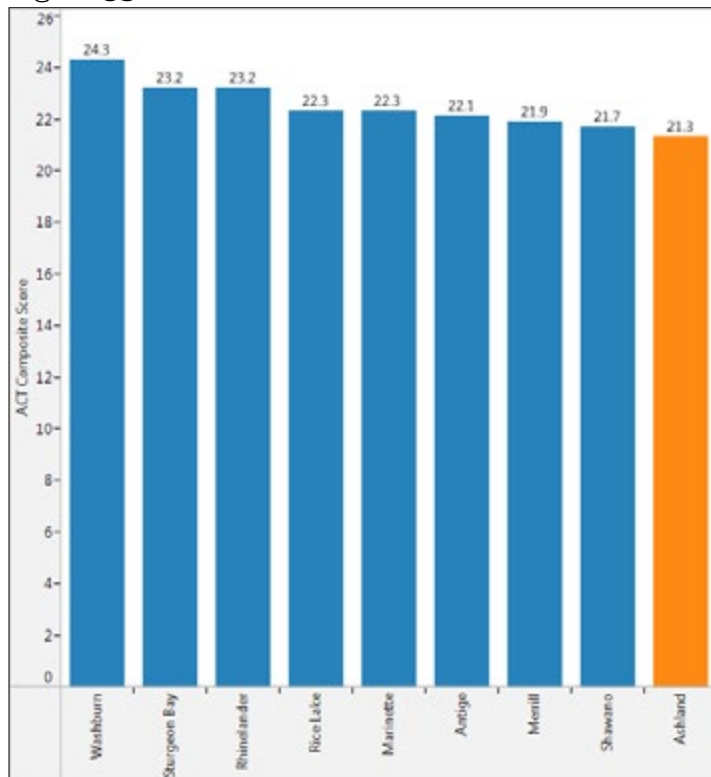
Source: WI Dept. of Public Instruction

Figure 52: Percent Post Graduate Plan to Attend 4-Year College, 2013



Source: WI Dept. of Public Instruction

Figure 53: Post Graduate Plans to Attend Vocational School, 2013



Source: WI Dept. of Public Instruction

Table 23: State Achievement Tests Results, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, 2012-2013

Community	Language Art	Math	Reading	Science	Social Studies
Antigo	76.3%	32.1%	35.5%	78.0%	81.2%
Ashland	74.6%	47.5%	26.0%	74.6%	75.7%
Marinette	75.0%	38.8%	36.8%	83.6%	80.3%
Merrill	74.4%	59.2%	35.7%	79.0%	80.3%
Rhinelander	75.1%	38.1%	35.9%	78.5%	82.9%
Rice Lake	69.8%	57.6%	36.0%	84.3%	84.3%
Shawano	79.7%	37.8%	35.5%	74.4%	84.9%
Sturgeon Bay	93.3%	50.7%	57.3%	85.3%	89.3%
Washburn	81.8%	45.5%	39.4%	78.8%	90.9%

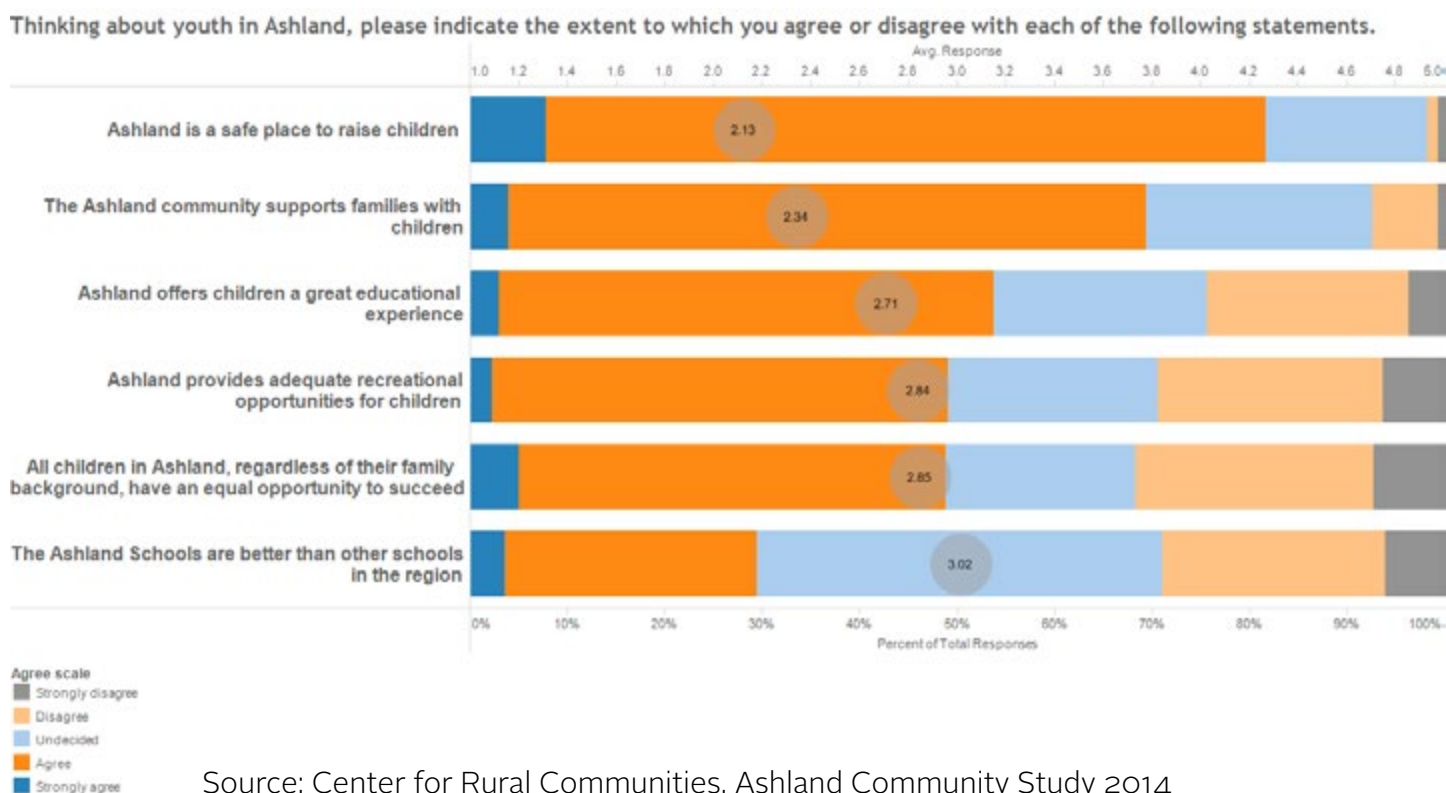
Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Table 24: State Achievement Test Results, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, 2012-2013

Community	Language Art	Math	Reading	Science	Social Studies
Antigo	69.3%	38.6%	28.8%	81.0%	90.2%
Ashland	73.2%	51.0%	29.3%	75.8%	93.6%
Marinette	67.4%	40.3%	30.2%	73.6%	94.6%
Merrill	70.5%	54.8%	24.7%	75.9%	89.2%
Rhinelander	69.6%	29.8%	24.8%	78.3%	90.7%
Rice Lake	71.0%	51.0%	32.3%	68.4%	89.0%
Shawano	76.1%	49.7%	33.7%	77.3%	95.1%
Sturgeon Bay	77.3%	44.0%	32.0%	80.0%	94.7%
Washburn	78.9%	47.4%	36.8%	76.3%	89.5%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Figure 54: Respondent Attitudes Regarding Youth Opportunities, 2014



## Ashland Community Study

Overall, 67.2 percent of respondents rated Ashland Public Schools as either “very good” or “good.” As a result, this item was the second highest quality service or facility in Ashland behind only medical services. Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree on a variety of statements related to services, opportunities, and support for Ashland area youth (Figure 54). An overwhelming majority of participants found Ashland both safe for children (81.7 percent strongly agree or agree) and supportive of families with children (69.5 percent strongly agree or agree).

Despite many respondents agreeing with the statement “Ashland offers children a great educational experience” (53.9 percent), far fewer agreed with the

statement “The Ashland Schools are better than other schools in the region” with only 29.5 percent agreeing<sup>56</sup>. Taken together, this seems to support much of the data in this section where people seem to be happy with the quality of education in Ashland but also hold a fairly consistent attitude that educational opportunities in Ashland are not as good as other communities.

Finally, most respondents agreed that Ashland provides adequate recreational opportunities for children, but this is still a big difference from the most positively evaluated items in the matrix. A similar finding can be seen when it comes affording children an opportunity to succeed regardless of family background. While respondents generally agree with both of these items, between 25 and 30 percent of respondents disagree.

<sup>56</sup>When asked how important they felt it was for Ashland leaders to work with other communities in the region on providing educational activities for the region's youth, over 83 percent of respondents stated they thought it was either important or extremely important. This was the third highest rated item out of six. See appendix C.



# Transportation

Ashland provides a variety of transportation options including automobile, public and private bus transit, bicycle, air travel, and taxi (Table 25). As a small, rural city, this variety of transport options is quite unique – most notably the availability of public transportation in the Chequamegon Bay region via the Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) system. As a city roughly 18 square miles in size, Ashland is easily navigable to and from most places whether by foot, bike, public transit or personal vehicle. Roads with safe and adequate pedestrian walkways line most streets throughout the city. The eleven-mile paved trail system, a number of safe school routes, and a designated bikeway across the city add to the transportation infrastructure that supports a variety of modes of transport.

The Chequamegon Bay region's Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) system is an asset that differentiates Ashland and the other communities it serves from towns of similar size. The city of Ashland should play up the unique quality of BART as an amenity of living within the region. It should also encourage denser, low-parking development along its routes by creating nodes of mixed-uses in the vicinity of its station stops. Research indicates that the so-called millennial generation, by and large, is less inclined to drive, and its members are drawn to communities with efficient public transit systems and alternative forms of transportation<sup>57</sup>. In addition to boosting BART-oriented development, the city should look into opportunities for bike-lane creation beyond the corridor trails, and lower parking requirements for new construction as per the Unified Development Ordinance to enhance density and encourage pedestrian use. Investigating and potentially adding a ferry component to the

BART system should be considered as a future survey/research opportunity for the city.

A reasonable proximity to the Duluth-Superior metropolitan area is another of Ashland's assets, one that differentiates it from comparison communities in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Yet Ashland citizens' access to Duluth and other major cities like Minneapolis-St. Paul, Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago, is limited. Duluth in particular is only accessible by automobile and a once-daily Greyhound bus that departs Ashland early in the morning. Efficient travel to other Wisconsin and Minnesota destinations, without first traveling to Duluth or Ironwood, is limited only to automobile.

Ashland has an underutilized asset in the form the John F. Kennedy Airport. Travel into and out of the airport is purely a private affair, despite some commercial traffic in the past. The city should consider taking a page from nearby Gogebic-Iron County Airport in Ironwood, which recently attracted small regional airlines that offer affordable shuttle flights to Minneapolis-St. Paul and Chicago. A similar

arrangement at Ashland's JFK Airport, with the right strategic scheduling, could positively enhance local economic development, higher education, and tourism.

High-speed railroad access, even more so than air travel, has been seen by theorists and planning practitioners as key to economic development going forward. While the political milieu in some parts of Wisconsin has not been amenable to this trend, Ashland is in a unique position given its proximity to Duluth. The state of Minnesota has gone forward with plans for a high-speed rail connection between Minneapolis-St. Paul and Duluth, and if that project comes to fruition the city of Ashland and regional partners should seriously consider long-term planning in passenger rail connections with Duluth, St. Paul, and beyond. The rights-of-way, in the form of the Ashland-Superior trail, already exists, and the history of passenger rail in Ashland and the region demonstrates that this is not a pipe-dream. The reality is that the cost of automobile travel will continue to rise, and residents will be seeking alternatives to driving.



<sup>57</sup>U.S. PIRG. 2013. "A New Direction: Our Changing Relationship with Driving and the Implications for America's Future." U.S. PIRG Education Fund. See article at: <http://www.uspirg.org/sites/pirg/files/reports/A%20New%20Direction%20vUS.pdf>.

**Table 25: Transportation Options**

Community	Airport	Bus	Public Transportation	Rail	Taxi
Antigo	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Ashland	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
Crookston	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Detroit Lakes	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Grand Rapids	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
Houghton	YES*	NO	YES	NO	YES
International Falls	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Iron Mountain	YES*	YES	NO	NO	YES
Ironwood	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
Ishpeming	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
Marinette	YES*	YES	YES	NO	YES
Menominee	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
Merrill	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Rhineland	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Rice Lake	YES*	NO	NO	NO	YES
Shawano	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
Sturgeon Bay	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Thief River Falls	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Virginia	YES*	YES	NO	NO	YES

\*not in city limits but within 10 miles of the city center.



# Technology & Communications

Ashland's current and potential economic vitality benefits from the city's current high-speed broadband and cellular access, amenities unavailable to many remote rural communities. The city may differentiate itself further by considering Ashland-wide wireless internet as a public good, which may encourage local web development and communication (over half of the city council members, for instance, do not have an email address available). Regardless, Ashland must ensure that, whether through public or private means, the city maintains the highest available levels of broadband and cellular capability, or risk population or economic decline. One way to contribute to the cost of those updates would be to publicize the city's potential as a haven for telecommuting. As this report suggests, Ashland has a significant amount of attractive natural capital, and unlike many larger metropolitan areas, remains a relatively affordable place to live. Even if a citizen's place of employment is physically located elsewhere, the city benefits through local property and sales tax revenue and the state income tax revenues may increase as well.

Ashland and its partners must continue to recognize the significance of Northland College and Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College as technology and innovation hubs. These institutions are sites of higher learning, but professors and instructors are also doing innovative research in the natural sciences, physical sciences, social sciences and the humanities. As Richard Florida observes, cities and towns that both maintain a highly "talented" population and feature institutions committed to technological innovation and sophisticated research are more likely to be thriving.

## Ashland's Online Presence

A simple Internet search of Ashland and Chequamegon Bay governmental, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, can quickly turn into a frustrating proposition when trying to find useful and navigable information. Most cities, large and small, are light-years ahead of Ashland area entities when it comes to web presence and functionality. Even beyond specific companies and organizations, Ashland also has limited public spaces or information hubs that provide quick and easy access to information that many Internet users are seeking. Although this is improving, something as simple as utilizing free public sites to get information about what's happening in and around Ashland is lacking. There are a number of communities that have free and convenient websites available for residents and tourists who are searching for things to do, things to buy, places to eat, places to stay, opportunities for youth, night life for adults, and so on. Ashland's presence on all of these accounts is far behind other communities. We would recommend making Ashland's online presence more readily available and accessible to help promote this truly unique community.

## Ashland Community Study

In the 2014 Ashland Community Study, respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with a number of statements related to technology. When asked whether they agree with the statement "Social media and other communication technologies have improved Ashland's connectedness with the rest of the state," 57.5 percent of respondents either agreed (52.7 percent) or strongly agreed (4.8 percent). When it came to technological advances, most respondents did not feel like Ashland has been able to keep up with the rest of the state. Approximately 44.1 percent of respondents stated they did not feel Ashland has been able to keep up with the rest of the state<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup>See Appendix C.



Arts and culture is an amenity area where Ashland can improve, and it is within the power of the city government and its partners to foster cultural development. Ashland has cultural amenities (Table 26) and certainly is not void of art and tradition.

## Third Places

Like many Wisconsin cities and towns, Ashland has a rich tavern culture centered on Main Street that stretches from the Neighborly Bar and South Shore Brewery on the west end to Hec's Bar and the Spot on the east with a number of establishments between. These taverns serve drinks and some offer food, but they also sponsor local recreation sports teams, host local bands, and put on fundraisers targeting everything from Ore Dock redevelopment to a regular customer's medical bills. At their essence the local bars are sites of community development, by which we mean spaces and places where citizens come together and bonds are formed – sites of social capital where people are willing to come out and support local fundraisers. Ashland's taverns are excellent examples of what sociologist Ray

Oldenburg termed “third places,” spaces that are neither home nor work where citizens congregate for vital social interaction. Coffeehouses like the Black Cat and Tap Roots as well as diners like the Golden Glow and the Breakwater are similar “third places” that foster social capital in Ashland.

## Local Media

The persistence of a local newspaper, the Ashland Daily Press, and a public news radio station in a tough print/journalism economy is a similar sign of strong social bonds. Ashland is neither exceptionally strong nor particularly weak on any of these fronts and really maintains the status quo in comparison to other communities. However, the preservation of these kinds of institutions is essential if Ashland wishes to remain a city that values its uniqueness and that its citizens' remain passionate toward growth and community development.

## Art and Music

The Chequamegon Bay region has a rich art community that Ashland has not fully tapped into.

Washburn has Stagenorth, which is the region's premier venue for theater and independent cinema, and Bayfield has the area's major music venue, Big Top Chautauqua. While Ashland has Northland College's Alvord Theater, which features occasional productions and well-attended classical and jazz concerts, there is a distinct lack of theater and music venues with a capacity to handle national acts within the city proper. This seems a significant gap given the density of population, the untapped market of college students in the city, and the seasonal nature of Big Top. There is a similar venue gap for the artists and craftspeople within Ashland. Given the prevalence of artists on the nearby Bayfield Peninsula and the group of artists and art students at Northland College, Ashland has the potential to be the region's major art center. If the city and its partners are looking for tenants for local commercial vacancies, working with the art community seems like a great place to start. Likewise, incubating a local craft economy to replace a shrinking manufacturing sector in these spaces also has the potential to enhance Ashland's reputation as an arts- and, not to mention business-friendly, city.

**Table 26. Cultural Amenities**

Community	Newspaper	Radio	Local TV	Library	Art Gallery	Movie Theater	Music Venue	Playhouse	Brewery	Winery
Antigo	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Ashland	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Crookston	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Detroit Lakes	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO
Grand Rapids	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Houghton	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
International Falls	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Iron Mountain	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES*	NO	NO
Ironwood	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO
Ishpeming	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
Marinette	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
Menominee	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES*	NO	NO
Merrill	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Rhinelander	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Rice Lake	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Shawano	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
Sturgeon Bay	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Thief River Falls	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO
Virginia	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO



# Social Capital

During the months of September and October of 2014, researchers from Northland College's Center for Rural Communities completed a community study of residents in the city of Ashland. The project was funded through a grant from the Knight Foundation Fund care of the Duluth Superior Community Foundation. In this study, participants were asked to complete a survey via mail that evaluated living in Ashland and the Chequamegon Bay region. The survey was sent to randomly selected households (n=627) within the city of Ashland, and 186 surveys were completed and returned for a response rate of 29.6 percent and an estimated overall sampling error of +/- 6.8 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. This survey is part of a larger study of social capital in the Chequamegon Bay area and is meant to provide a baseline assessment of social capital measures for communities in the Chequamegon Bay area.

Social capital most directly refers to who people interact with, who they know, and who they trust. Measuring and understanding local forms of social capital is important for a number of reasons. Communities that have high levels of trust and have community members who know and interact with one another tend to have higher levels of voluntarism and community involvement, are able to quickly respond to community needs, have lower crime rates, have more effective local governments, have more successful and responsible businesses, and have stronger local economies. Understanding social capital has benefits for all community members, as stakeholders can more effectively link diverse and disparate social networks, something that facilitates political and economic opportunities

that benefit everyone. In this section, we map out the existing "social infrastructure" within Ashland.

## Trust

Trust is an important dynamic for any relationship. When people do not trust one another, it makes working together on some sort of goal or outcome very difficult. When distrust is part of a community's social fabric, it makes achieving collective or communal goals nearly impossible. Participants were asked to what extent they trust a variety of groups in Ashland from their neighbors to local police to public officials (Figure 55). Participants could choose from "never," "hardly ever," "some of the time," "most of the time," and "always." The circle on each line indicates the average response for all respondents for each item in the matrix. The matrix is organized in a way that puts those groups people most trust at the top and groups respondents least trust at the bottom.

The two groups most trusted by respondents were the local police and people who live in the respondent's neighborhood. Both items had approximately 90 percent of respondents trusting these two groups "always" or "most of the time." It is very important for members of a community to trust their local police, and it bodes well for Ashland overall to have neighbors trust one another<sup>59</sup>. The next highest rated group is people working in local stores with 84.3 percent of respondents selecting "always" or "most of the time." Again, trust in local businesses and those who work in these businesses is important to maintaining a strong local economy. After these three items, there is a steep drop in the percent

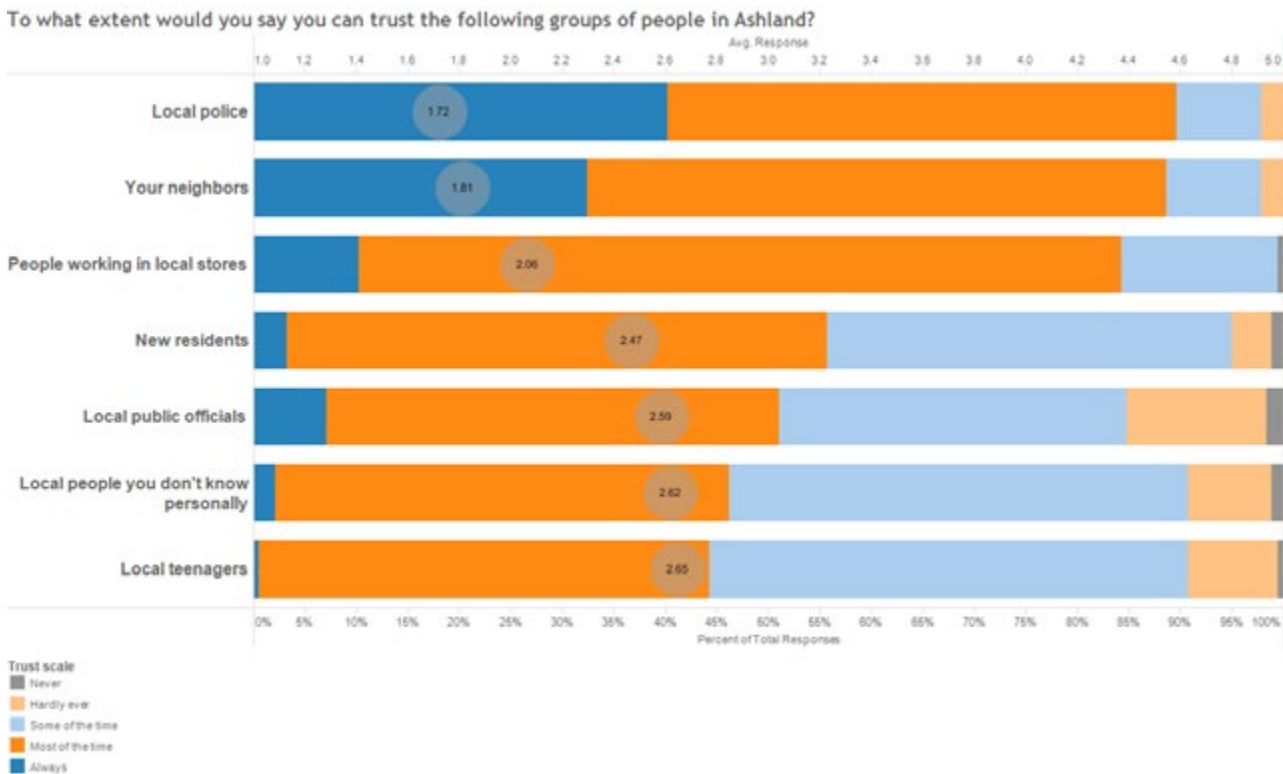
of respondents in their overall level of trust for new residents, local public officials, local people who the respondent doesn't know personally, and local teenagers. Although 55.7 percent of the respondents "always" or "most of the time" trust new residents, this is still nearly 30 percentage points lower than the most trusted groups. The bottom three least trusted groups by respondents are local public official (51.1 percent)<sup>60</sup>, local people the respondent doesn't know personally (46.2 percent), and local teenagers (44.3 percent).

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<sup>59</sup>When asked to rate whether they agree or disagree with the statement "the immediate neighborhood I live in is closely knit," only 34.9 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree versus 48.1 percent who disagree or strongly disagree. Despite trusting their neighbors, respondents tend not to see their neighborhood being tightly knit.

<sup>60</sup>When asked about their perspective on how much others in the community trusted public officials, respondents tended to feel that they like other residents do not trust elected officials. Only 20.7 percent of the respondent agreed with the statement "People in Ashland trust their elected officials."

Figure 55: Trust of Various Groups in Ashland, 2014



Source: Center for Rural Communities

## Acceptance and Openness

Respondents displayed mixed feelings about how accepting and open the community of Ashland is. The overwhelming majority (84.3 percent agree or strongly agree) of respondents “feel at home” in Ashland and rated this as the top item in the matrix. Beyond this item, more respondents tended to be undecided or disagree with other measures of acceptance and openness. For example, only 44 percent of respondents agreed with the statement “when important community issues arise, most people in Ashland are willing to express their opinions publicly.” On the measure “residents in Ashland are receptive to new residents taking leadership positions,” only 25.4 percent of respondents said they agree versus 38.9 percent who disagree. When it came to evaluating attitudes on ability for people to “get ahead in Ashland,” 60 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree “you have to know the right people.”

Additionally, when asked to rate the statement “overall, people like myself can have little impact on important community decisions in Ashland,” only 39.14 percent agree or strongly agree compared to 42.94 percent who disagree or strongly disagree. Taken together, respondents feel somewhat closed out of important decision-making bodies and feel they cannot contribute to creating positive change in the community unless they know the right people.

## Community Cohesion

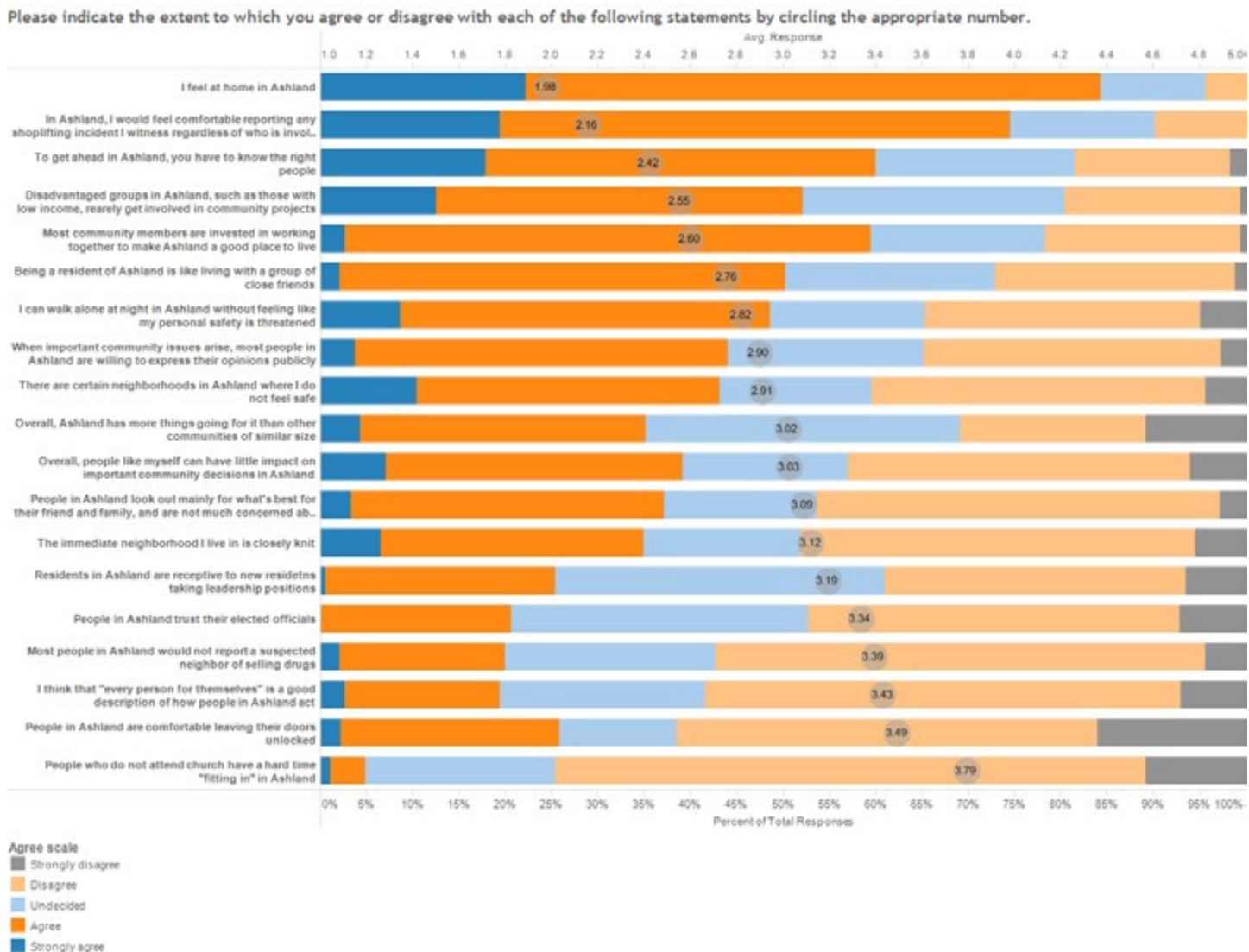
Respondents tended to rate community cohesion measures more positively than other items in the matrix. Most people disagree (58.4 percent disagree or strongly disagree) with the statements “every person for themselves’ is a good description of how people in Ashland act” while another 59.5 percent agree or strongly agree with the statement “most community members are invested in working together to make Ashland a good place to live.”

When asked to rate the statement “being a resident of Ashland is like living with a group of close friends,” a little over 50 percent agree or strongly agree. Respondents did demonstrate more negative attitudes on community cohesion when it came to disadvantaged groups (e.g., low income) or community members putting family and friends first. Approximately 52 percent agree or strongly agree with the statement that “disadvantaged groups such as low income rarely get involved.” When asked about whether they thought most people look out for “what is best for their friends and family over the general welfare of other community members,” 37.2 percent agree or strongly agree compared to 46.5 percent who disagree or strongly disagree.

# Attitudes about Ashland

Each respondent was asked to rate a series of nineteen items on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree (Figure 56). Each of these items can be grouped together with other items in the matrix to measure things like acceptance and openness, community cohesion, and safety.

Figure 56: Attitudes of Ashland, 2014



Source: Center for Rural Communities

## Safety

Finally, when asked their level of agreement on issues of safety, like acceptance and openness, community members tended to rate this a bit more negatively. Most people did feel safe walking alone at night but a large minority did not feel safe in certain neighborhoods in Ashland. The majority of respondents did not feel comfortable leaving their door unlocked.

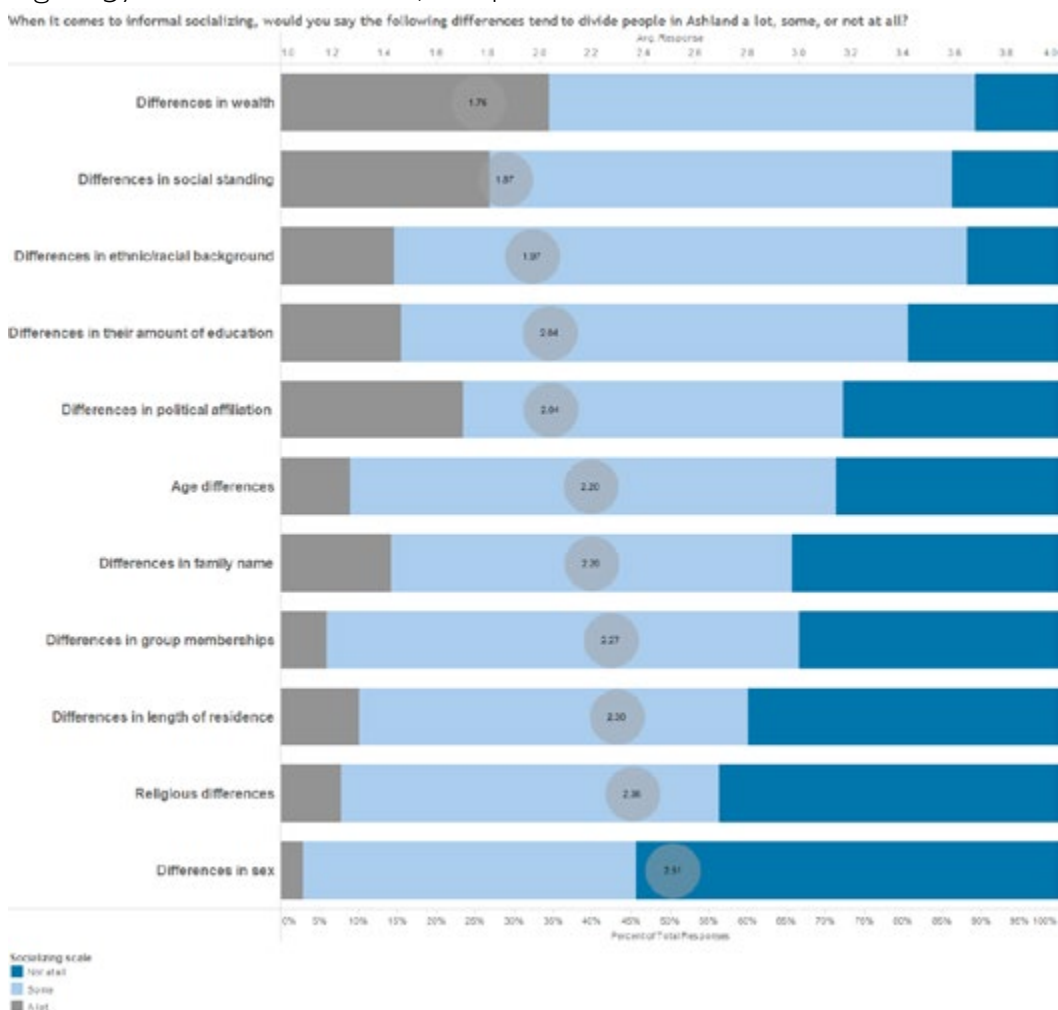
## Interaction and socializing

Respondents were asked to rate how much various differences in the community tended to divide the people of Ashland (Figure 57). Participants could choose from “not at all,” “some,” or “a lot.”

Respondents most commonly identified measures of socio-economic well-being (i.e., wealth, social standing, and level of education) as most likely to divide community members. A number of respondents also felt that racial

or ethnic differences and political affiliation tended to divide the Ashland community. Although slightly lower in overall mean score than other items in the matrix, a significant proportion of respondents did identify family name as a point of division in Ashland. Most respondents did not feel that sex, religion, or length of residence were major areas of division when it came to informal socializing by people in Ashland. Respondents did identify age and group membership as areas where divisions happen but not to the same degree as the most common areas of division.

Figure 57: Divisions in Ashland, 2014



Source: Center for Rural Communities



# Appendix A: Northwoods Assets & Amenities Communities

APPENDIX A: Northwoods Assets & Amenities Communities

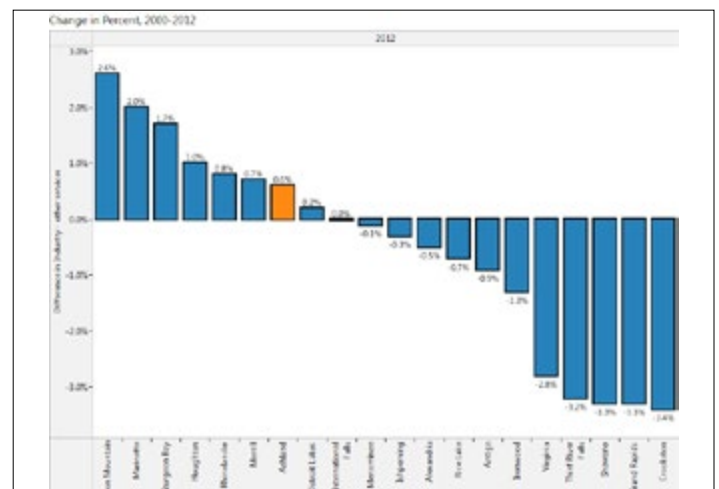
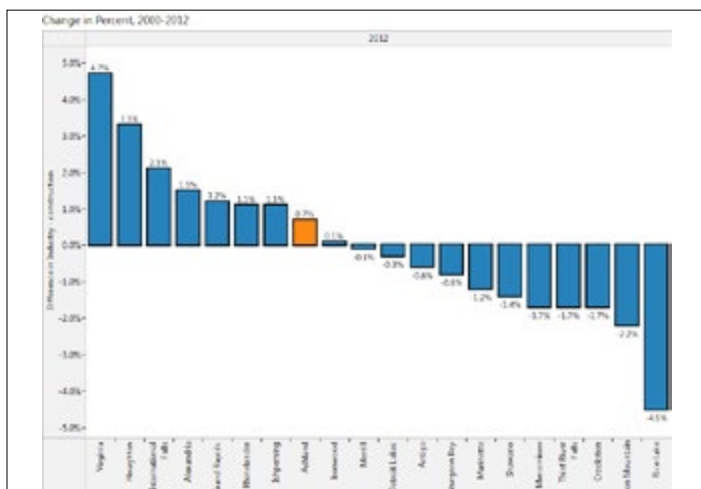
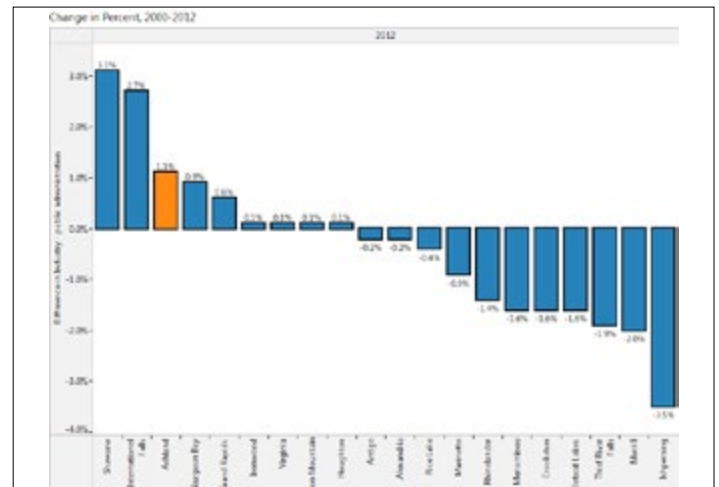
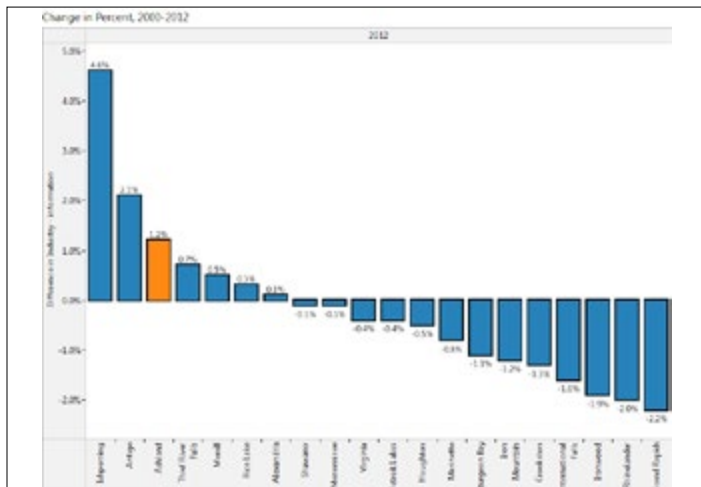
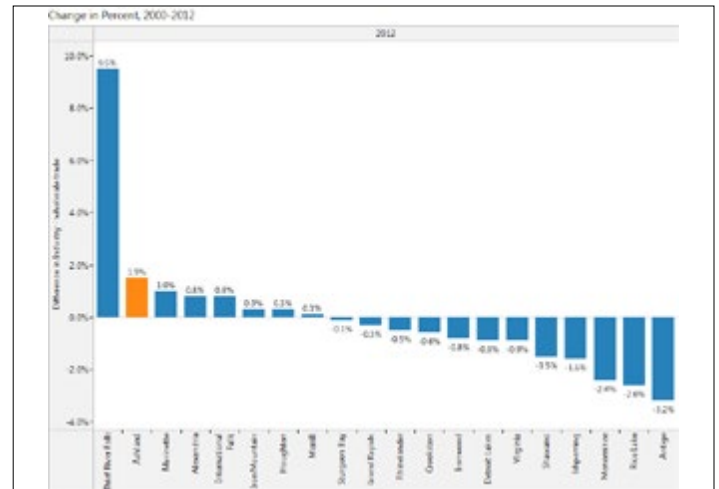
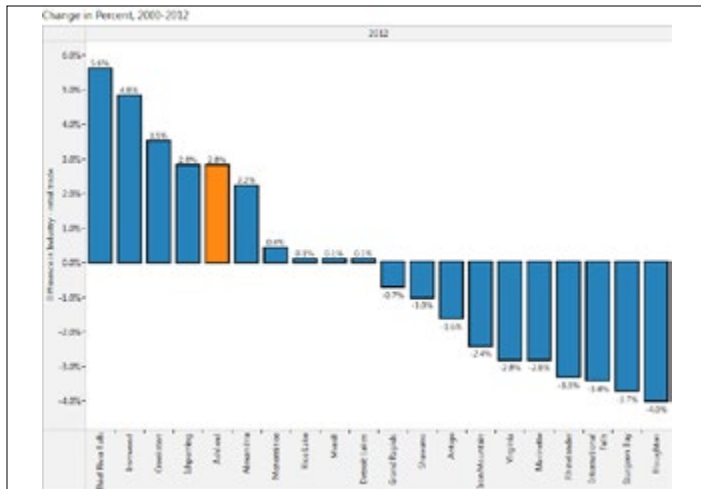
Community	County	State	2000	Total Population		
				2009	2010	2012
Abbottsford	Clark/Marathon	Wisconsin	1,956	1,621	2,310	1,984
Aitkin	Aitkin	Minnesota	1,984	2,230	2,165	2,597
Alexandria	Douglas	Minnesota	8,020	11,607	11,070	11,260
Antigo	Langlade	Wisconsin	8,560	8,073	8,234	8,189
Ashland	Ashland	Wisconsin	8,620	8,049	8,216	8,213
Aurora	Saint Louis	Minnesota	1,050	1,715	1,602	1,529
Babbitt	Saint Louis	Minnesota	1,670	1,516	1,475	1,417
Baraga	Baraga	Michigan	1,285	1,388	2,053	2,802
Barron	Barron	Wisconsin	3,240	3,133	3,423	3,420
Baxter	Crow Wing	Minnesota	5,555	7,984	7,610	7,596
Bemidji	Beltrami	Minnesota	11,917	13,369	13,431	13,485
Bessemer	Gogebic	Michigan	2,140	1,959	1,905	2,154
Brainerd	Crow Wing	Minnesota	13,178	13,763	13,590	13,609
Cameron	Barron	Wisconsin	1,546	1,748	1,783	1,875
Chetek	Barron	Wisconsin	2,100	2,031	2,221	2,339
Chippewa Falls	Chippewa	Wisconsin	12,925	12,968	13,661	13,673
Chisholm	Saint Louis	Minnesota	4,960	4,622	4,976	4,989
Cloquet	Carlton	Minnesota	11,201	11,350	12,124	12,097
Cohasset	Itasca	Minnesota	2,481	2,525	2,698	2,688
Colby	Clark/Marathon	Wisconsin	1,616	1,519	1,852	1,656
Cornell	Chippewa	Wisconsin	1,466	1,471	1,467	1,436
Crandon	Forest	Wisconsin	1,961	2,135	1,920	1,726
Crivitz	Marinette	Wisconsin	998	1,019	984	1,029
Crookston	Polk	Minnesota	8,192	7,848	7,891	7,866
Crystal Falls	Iron	Michigan	1,791	1,528	1,469	1,540
Cumberland	Barron	Wisconsin	2,280	2,473	2,170	2,273
Detroit Lakes	Becker	Minnesota	7,348	8,149	8,569	8,615
Dollar Bay	Houghton	Michigan	N/A	N/A	1,082	896
Eagle River	Vilas	Wisconsin	1,443	1,536	1,398	1,532
Edgar	Marathon	Wisconsin	1,386	1,433	1,479	1,559
Escanaba	Delta	Michigan	13,140	12,328	12,616	12,609
Eveleth	Saint Louis	Minnesota	3,865	3,598	3,718	3,717
Fergus Falls	Otter Tail	Minnesota	13,471	13,603	13,138	13,220
Frederic	Polk	Wisconsin	1,262	1,174	1,137	1,163
Gilbert	Saint Louis	Minnesota	1,847	1,763	1,799	1,912
Gillett	Oconto	Wisconsin	1,256	1,233	1,386	1,388
Gladstone	Delta	Michigan	5,032	5,115	4,973	4,960
Glenwood City	St. Croix	Wisconsin	1,183	1,056	1,242	1,228
Grand Marais	Cook	Minnesota	1,353	1,238	1,351	1,176
Grand Rapids	Itasca	Minnesota	7,764	9,331	10,869	10,865
Grantsburg	Burnett	Wisconsin	1,369	1,701	1,341	1,351
Gwinn	Marquette	Michigan	1,965	1,566	1,917	1,929
Hammond	St. Croix	Wisconsin	1,153	2,138	1,922	1,950
Hancock	Houghton	Michigan	4,323	4,160	4,634	4,627
Harvey	Marquette	Michigan	1,321	1,686	1,393	1,514
Hayward	Sawyer	Wisconsin	2,129	2,108	2,310	2,283
Hibbing	Saint Louis	Minnesota	17,071	16,277	16,361	16,345
Houghton	Houghton	Michigan	7,010	6,856	7,708	7,692
Hoyt Lakes	Saint Louis	Minnesota	2,082	2,092	2,017	1,948
Hubbell	Houghton	Michigan	1,105	1,183	946	1,173
Hurley	Iron	Wisconsin	1,818	1,704	1,547	1,365
International Falls	Koochiching	Minnesota	6,703	6,016	6,424	6,402
Iron Mountain	Dickinson	Michigan	8,154	7,838	7,624	7,662
Iron River	Bayfield	Wisconsin	1,059	N/A	1,123	1,076
Iron River	Iron	Michigan	1,929	2,987	3,029	3,038
Ironwood	Gogebic	Michigan	6,293	5,455	5,387	5,366
Ishpeming	Marquette	Michigan	6,686	6,487	6,470	6,500
Keewatin	Itasca	Minnesota	1,164	1,218	1,068	1,181
Keshena	Menominee	Wisconsin	1,394	968	1,262	1,366
Kingsford	Dickinson	Michigan	5,549	5,337	5,133	5,164
L'Anse	Baraga	Michigan	2,107	2,462	2,011	2,165
Lac du Flambeau	Vilas	Wisconsin	1,646	1,674	1,969	1,575
Ladysmith	Rusk	Wisconsin	3,932	3,336	3,414	3,400
Lake Linden	Houghton	Michigan	1,081	1,059	1,007	1,036

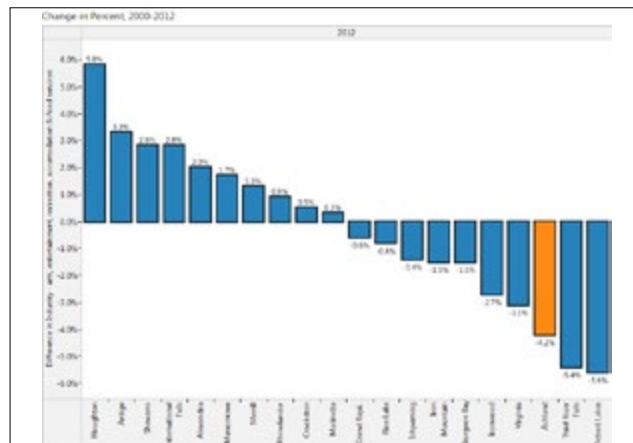
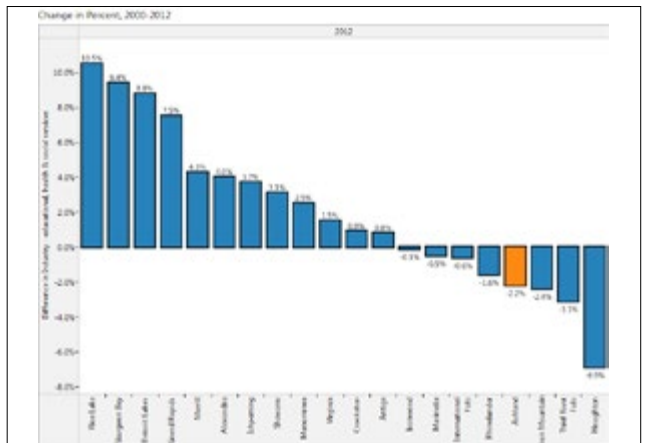
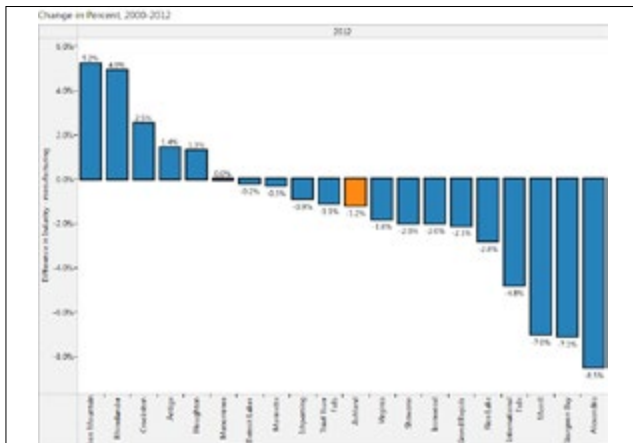
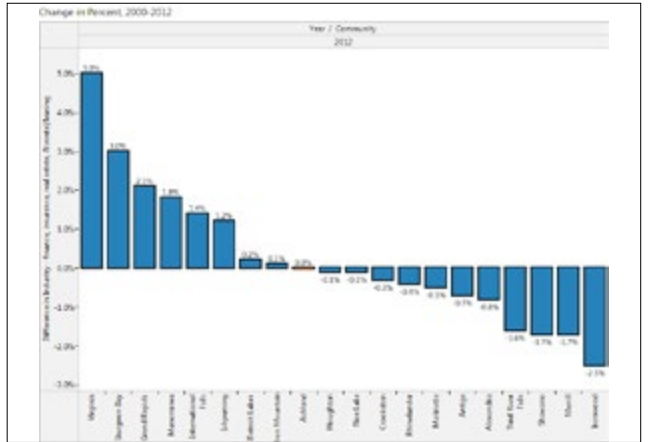
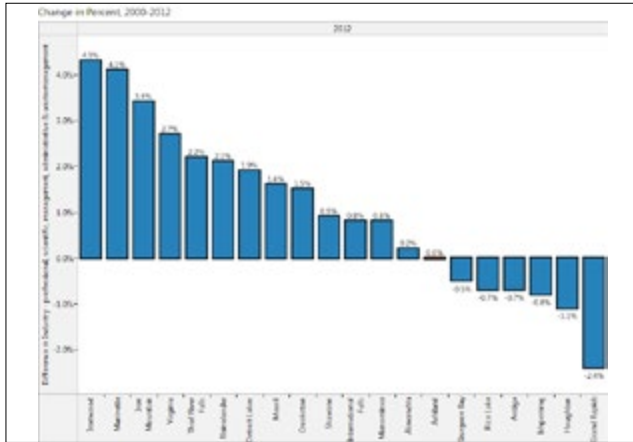
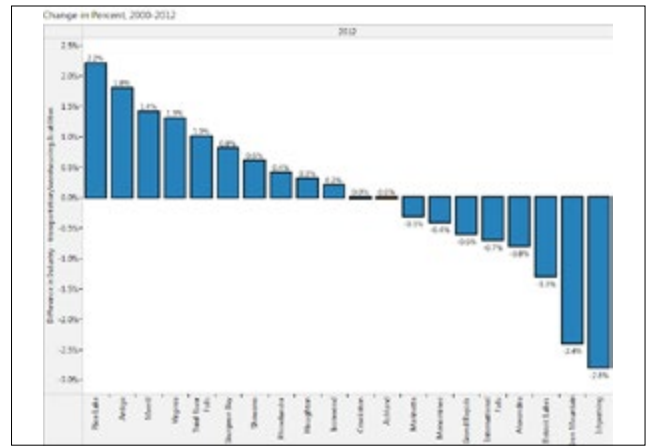
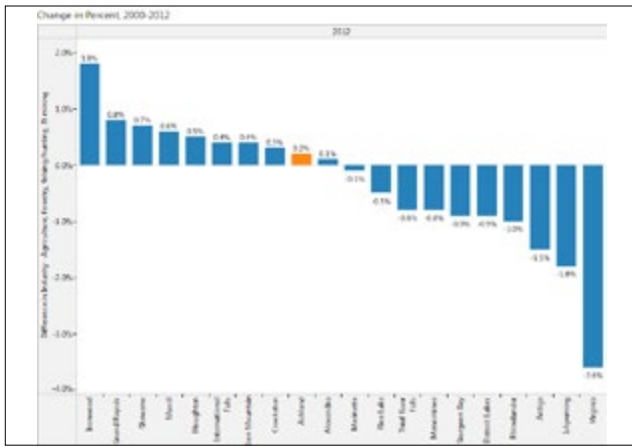


**APPENDIX A: Northwoods Assets & Amenities Communities (continued)**

Lake Nebagamon	Douglas	Wisconsin	1,015	1,146	1,069	1,181
Lake Wissota	Chippewa	Wisconsin	2,458	2,649	2,738	3,053
Laurium	Houghton	Michigan	2,126	2,202	1,977	2,200
Luck	Polk	Wisconsin	1,210	1,241	1,119	1,178
Manistique	Schoolcraft	Michigan	3,583	3,254	3,097	3,102
Marathon	Marathon	Wisconsin	1,640	1,552	1,524	1,474
Marinette	Marinette	Wisconsin	11,749	10,727	10,968	10,943
Medford	Taylor	Wisconsin	4,350	4,086	4,326	4,326
Menominee	Menominee	Michigan	9,131	8,351	8,599	8,603
Mercer	Iron	Wisconsin	1,732	N/A	1,407	1,670
Merrill	Lincoln	Wisconsin	10,146	9,652	9,661	9,638
Minocqua	Oneida	Wisconsin	4,059	N/A	4,305	4,466
Mountain Iron	Saint Louis	Minnesota	2,999	2,916	2,869	2,876
Munising	Alger	Michigan	2,539	2,516	2,355	2,242
Negaunee	Marquette	Michigan	4,576	4,456	4,568	4,581
Newberry	Luce	Michigan	2,686	1,555	1,519	1,652
Niagara	Marinette	Wisconsin	1,880	1,763	1,624	1,607
Norway	Dickinson	Michigan	2,959	2,854	2,845	2,864
Oconto	Oconto	Wisconsin	4,708	4,627	4,513	4,528
Oconto Falls	Oconto	Wisconsin	2,843	2,803	2,891	2,893
Ontonagon	Ontonagon	Michigan	1,769	1,573	1,494	1,514
Osceola	Polk	Wisconsin	2,421	2,680	2,568	2,551
Park Falls	Price	Wisconsin	2,793	2,804	2,462	2,336
Park Rapids	Hubbard	Minnesota	3,276	3,574	3,709	3,727
Pelican Rapids	Otter Tail	Minnesota	2,374	2,482	2,464	2,611
Pequot Lakes	Crow Wing	Minnesota	947	2,181	2,162	2,211
Perham	Otter Tail	Minnesota	2,559	2,712	2,905	2,900
Peshtigo	Marinette	Wisconsin	3,357	3,232	3,502	3,484
Phillips	Price	Wisconsin	1,675	1,327	1,478	1,703
Quinneseec	Dickinson	Michigan	1,187	950	1,191	1,124
Rhineland	Oneida	Wisconsin	7,735	7,610	7,798	7,776
Rice Lake	Barron	Wisconsin	8,320	8,340	8,447	8,412
Roberts	St. Croix	Wisconsin	969	1,636	1,651	1,829
Roseau	Roseau	Minnesota	2,756	2,757	2,633	2,638
Rothschild	Marathon	Wisconsin	4,970	5,295	5,269	5,254
Saulte Ste. Marie	Chippewa	Michigan	16,542	14,078	14,144	14,251
Shawano	Shawano	Wisconsin	8,298	8,800	9,305	9,256
Shell Lake	Washburn	Wisconsin	1,309	1,663	1,347	1,485
Silver Bay	Lake	Minnesota	2,068	2,119	1,887	1,949
Somerset	St. Croix	Wisconsin	1,556	2,263	2,635	2,610
Spooner	Washburn	Wisconsin	2,653	2,464	2,682	2,649
Spring Valley	St. Croix	Wisconsin	1,189	1,406	1,352	1,403
St. Croix Falls	Polk	Wisconsin	2,033	1,969	2,133	2,044
St. Ignace	Mackinac	Michigan	2,670	2,605	2,452	2,770
Stanley	Chippewa/ Clark	Wisconsin	1,898	3,324	3,608	3,561
Stratford	Marathon	Wisconsin	1,523	1,505	1,570	1,499
Sturgeon Bay	Door	Wisconsin	9,437	9,010	9,144	9,157
Thief River Falls	Pennington	Minnesota	8,410	8,474	8,573	8,584
Thorp	Clark	Wisconsin	1,536	1,573	1,621	1,629
Tomahawk	Lincoln	Wisconsin	3,770	3,657	3,397	3,393
Townbridge Park	Marquette	Michigan	2,012	2,036	2,176	2,172
Turtle Lake	Barron/Polk	Wisconsin	1,065	1,044	1,050	1,254
Two Harbors	Lake	Minnesota	3,613	3,353	3,745	3,707
Virginia	Saint Louis	Minnesota	9,157	8,533	8,712	8,718
Wadena	Otter Tail/ Wadena	Minnesota	4,294	4,065	4,068	4,183
Wakefield	Gogebic	Michigan	2,085	2,058	1,851	1,831
Walker	Cass	Minnesota	1,069	1,138	941	895
Warroad	Roseau	Minnesota	1,722	1,621	1,781	1,954
Washburn	Bayfield	Wisconsin	2,280	2,500	2,117	2,102
Wittenberg	Shawano	Wisconsin	1,177	1,153	1,081	1,079
Woodruff	Oneida	Wisconsin	1,902		2,055	2,023
Woodville	St. Croix	Wisconsin	1,104	1,041	1,344	1,159

## Appendix B: Comparison by Percent Change by Industry, 2000-2012

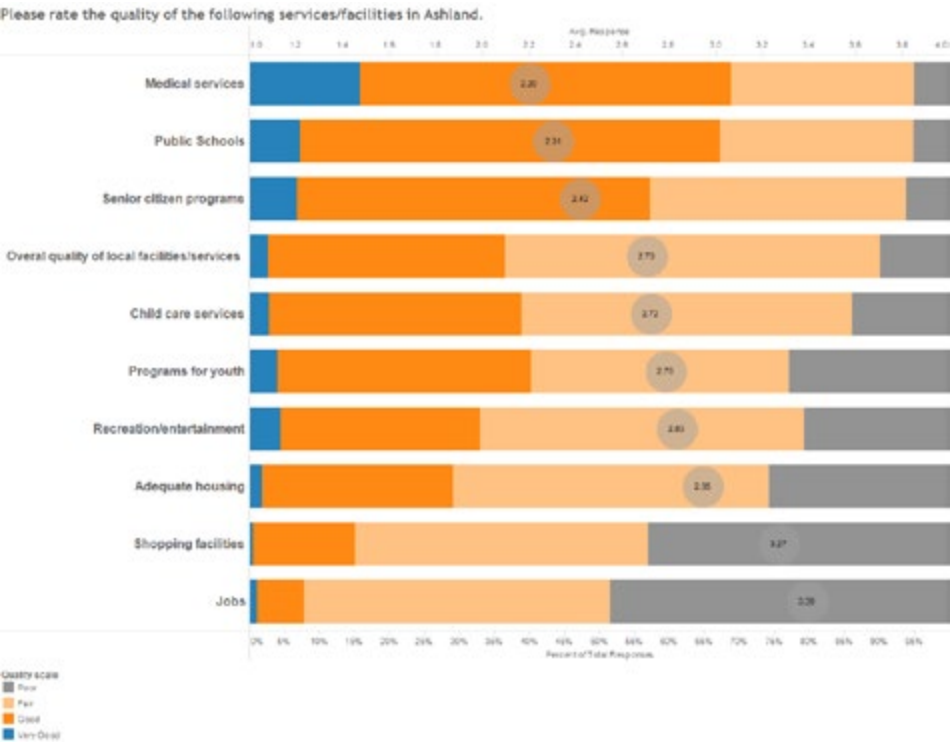






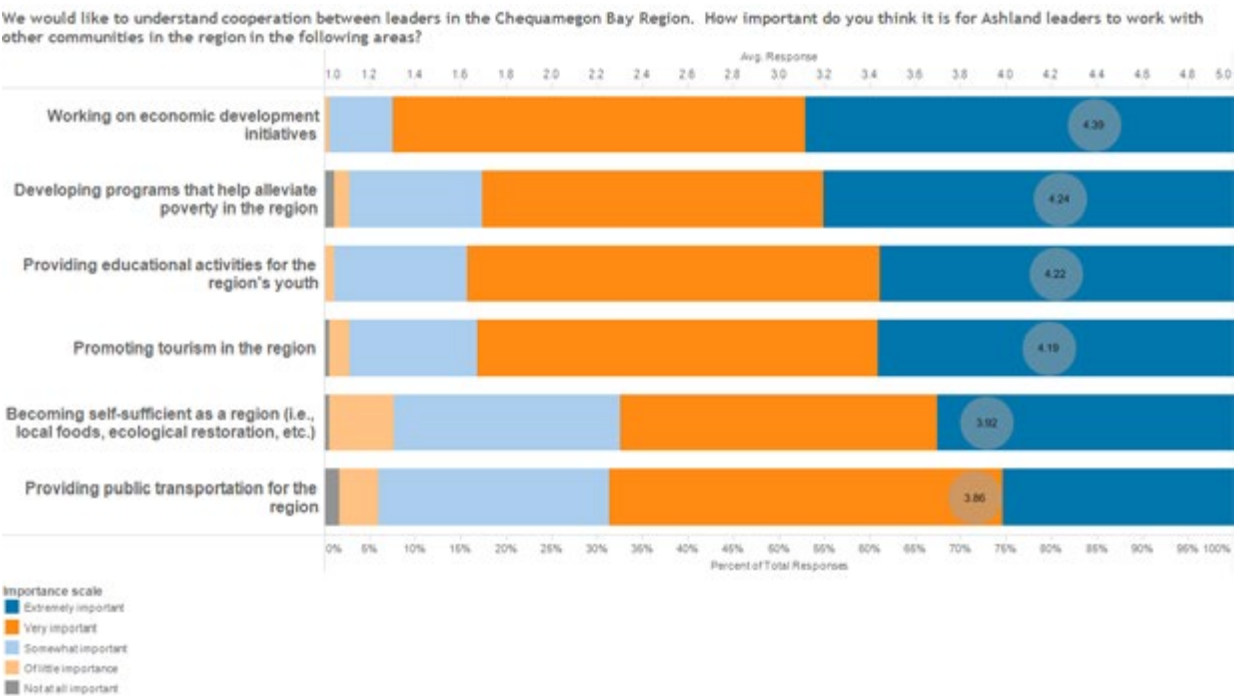
# Appendix C: 2014 Ashland Community Survey

Figure 58: Quality of Services and Facilities in Ashland, 2014



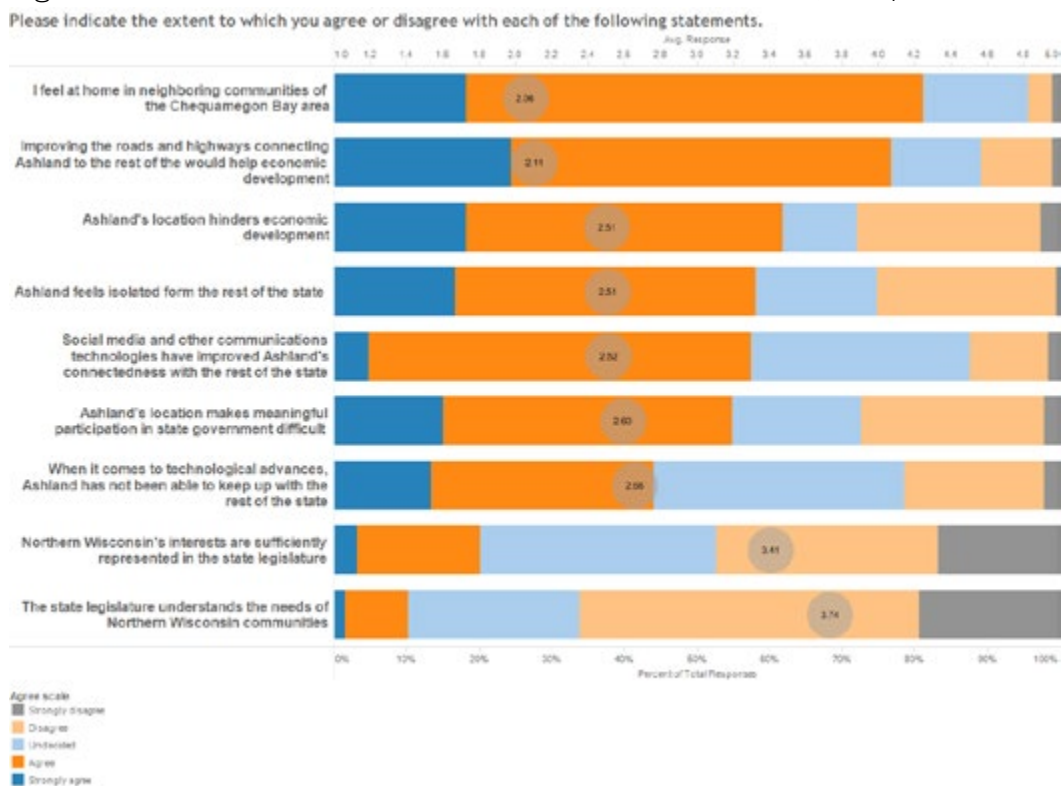
Source: Center for Rural Communities

Figure 59: Importance of Cooperation within Chequamegon Bay, 2014



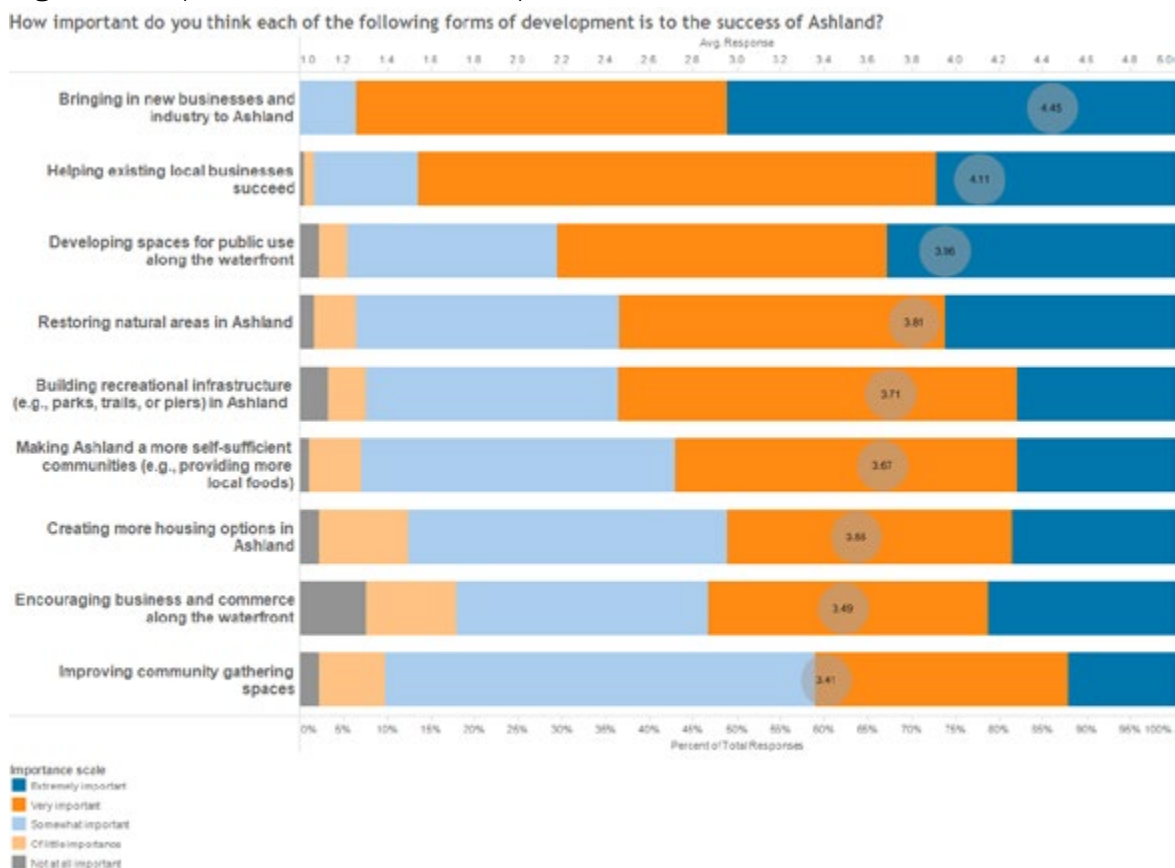
Source: Center for Rural Communities

Figure 60: Ashland's Connectedness to Other Communities, 2014



Source: Center for Rural Communities

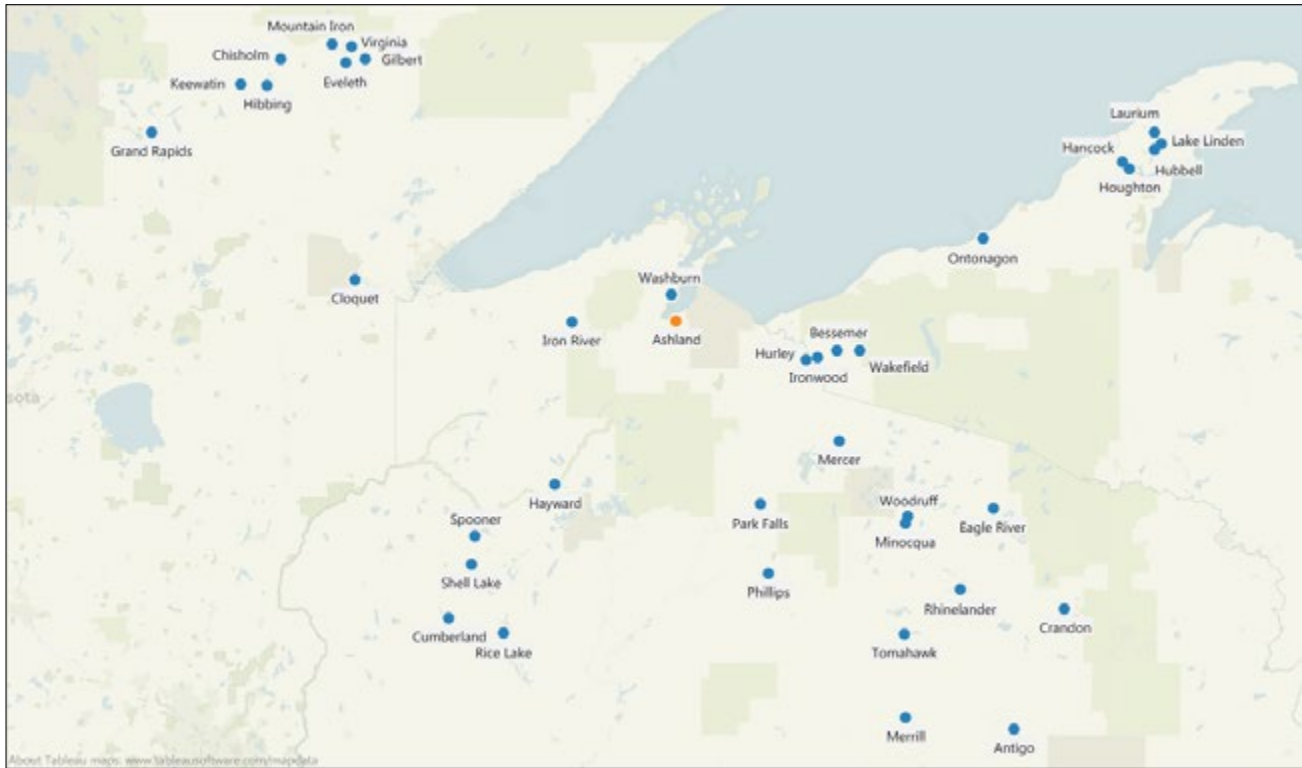
Figure 61: Important Forms of Development, 2014



Source: Center for Rural Communities

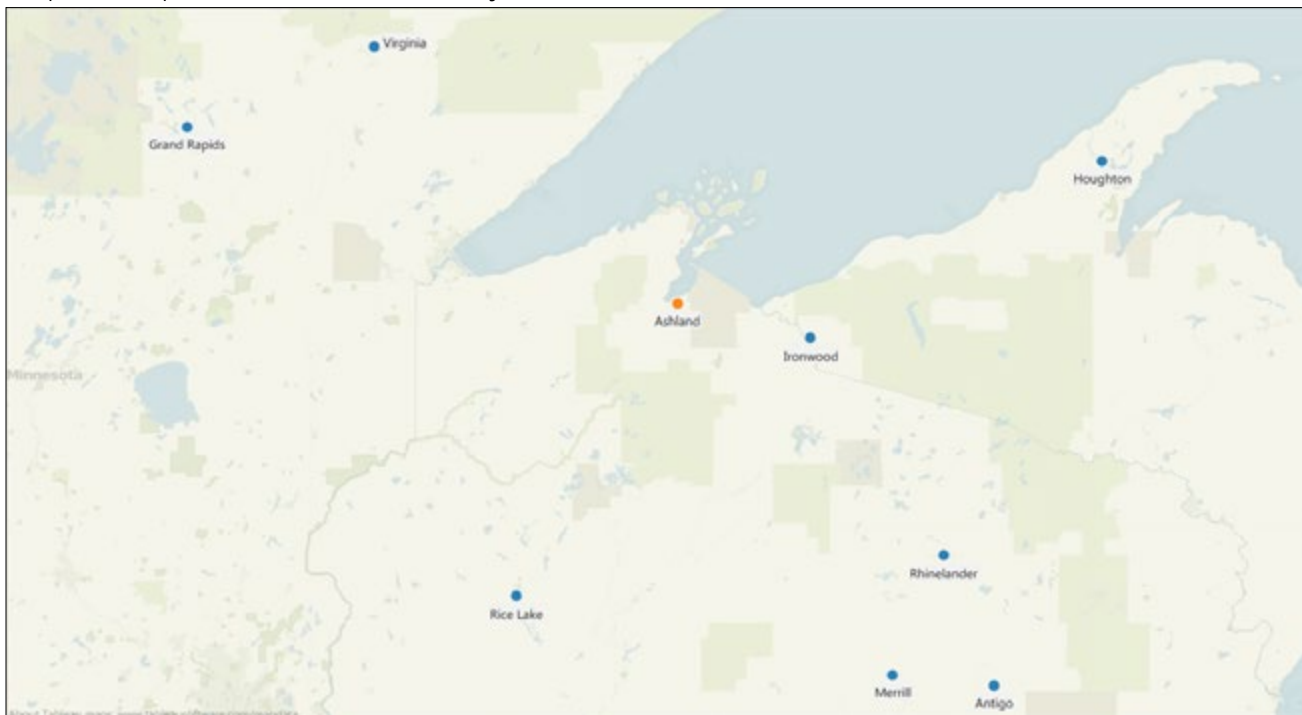
# Appendix D: Map of Completed Downtown Inventories

Map 7: All Downtowns



Source: Center for Rural Communities

Map8: Comparison Downtowns Only



Source: Center for Rural Communities

# NOTES



**Center for Rural Communities**

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