UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Transfer of Wealth Opportunity Southern Wisconsin

Crawford, Dane, Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Vernon, and Walworth counties

Full Technical Report; 2025-2065
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SNAPSHOT: Regionwide Transfer of Wealth

The University of Minnesota Extension's Transfer of Wealth Opportunity Analysis for Wisconsin provides an estimate of the region's assets – homes, businesses, investments – that will transfer between generations within the next 10 and 40 years. Our forecasts provides a research-based estimate of the household wealth that, with active donor engagement, might be available for charitable giving and philanthropic investing.

Current Household Net Worth

$549 billion

Transfer of Wealth

$18.6 billion

OVER 10 YEARS

$76.4 billion

OVER 40 YEARS

5% For Grantmaking

Capturing just 5% of the TOW potential over the next 10 years would create nearly $927.9 million in new endowments. Over the next 20 years, this endowment could support grantmaking of over…

$1.1 billion

5% For Local Investing

Investing even 5% of those new endowed assets locally for impact over 20 years would generate enough local financing to support construction of workforce housing, help low-income entrepreneurs launch businesses, and support nonprofit capital projects.



INSIGHTS: Southern Wisconsin Regionwide Opportunity

The Region has wealth. Research shows there are ways to put those assets to work to promote economic vitality and community prosperity. This assessment shows:

Southern Wisconsin has assets. Today, Southern Wisconsin has a current household net worth of $549.2 billion. Communities regularly struggle to overcome the perception that they lack the capacity, the tools, or the know-how to make a lasting change for the better. Simply understanding the scale of Southern Wisconsin's net worth can be helpful in dispelling that perception and help community members start dreaming about what might be possible.

Many people have wealth. Families of various incomes have something to contribute to Southern Wisconsin, with an average of $38,000 being transferred per household and $155,000 per death in the next 10 years. There are many advantages to engaging households at all levels and across generations. A broad-ranging outreach strategy is consistent with the movement by many organizations to diversify their boards, champion meaningful resident engagement, and promote community leadership. Your development team can make meaningful contributions when it comes to building community-oriented investments.

You can realize this wealth for the community. Organizations started assessing their local transfer of wealth in the 2000s. Foundations used this information to develop community legacy campaigns, inform donor development strategies, and conduct strategic planning. Some foundations called on neighbors to give just 5%, a remarkable $927.9 million in Southern Wisconsin, to support important philanthropic purposes. Experience shows that understanding Southern Wisconsin's transfer of wealth – having numbers and setting goals – helps foundations better reinvest those assets to promote community economic development.

The time for planning is now. Community economic development takes time. Local organizations should be planning for population shifts, recognizing that nearly $18.6 billion will transfer from one generation to the next by 2035. Frequently, place-focused foundations need to wait for the grantee with the right set of skills, a government that is ready to partner, or for the right donor with aligned priorities. Developing a strategy to retain just a portion of Southern Wisconsin's transfer of wealth needs to start now.

Southern Wisconsin needs these assets. Healthy and vibrant places take investment – investment in schools, housing, main streets, businesses, hospitals, and much, much more. Nonprofits, businesses, governments, and philanthropy need the capital and the skills to make these investments. The transfer of wealth opportunity in your region likely represents one of the most underdeveloped resources for furthering community-led projects and programs. Capturing 5% of your region's transfer of wealth could support over $1.1 billion in local grantmaking over the next 20 years following the initial 10 year transfer. A concerted effort to capture just a portion will mean that communities have the resources they need to make investments in their future.

What is the Transfer of Wealth?

For communities to thrive, they must thoughtfully invest in education, health care, economic development, and other community amenities. Traditional sources of funding (e.g., local taxes, federal and state funding, and support from local businesses) have come under increasing pressure in recent years and are not always there when communities need them the most. Similar programs across the U.S. show that philanthropic giving represents the greatest underdeveloped financial resource a community can mobilize. Community-based philanthropy is a way for neighbors to invest and realize a shared vision for the future of their region. It is also a community engagement tool, providing opportunities for all community members of all means to give back to the place they call home.

Across the U.S., there are examples of the power of community-based philanthropy to drive community transformation. Young parents create an endowment to support quality pre-school education. Successful entrepreneurs endow programs to encourage and support their up-and-coming peers, including youth. To encourage community philanthropy, however, you need to begin by helping the community recognize that they have collective wealth to give and the capacity to dream about the community they could create by applying that philanthropic potential.

Terms and Region

Transfer of Wealth (TOW) estimates are scenarios of a “most likely future” based on historical research and reasonable assumptions of the future. Longer range scenarios are subject to greater uncertainty. The 10-Year TOW scenarios include the cumulative intergenerational wealth being transferred by permanent resident households from 2025 through 2035. The 40-Year TOW scenarios include the cumulative intergenerational wealth being transferred from 2025 through 2065. These estimates exclude wealth held by corporations, governments, and nonprofit organizations. TOW scenarios are presented in real, inflation-adjusted dollars meaning that a dollar in 2065 has the same purchasing power as a dollar in 2025.

This study was conducted for all of Wisconsin. Primary data sources for this study include 2024 Esri, Woods and Poole, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, and 2024 Census & American Community Survey 5-Year estimates.

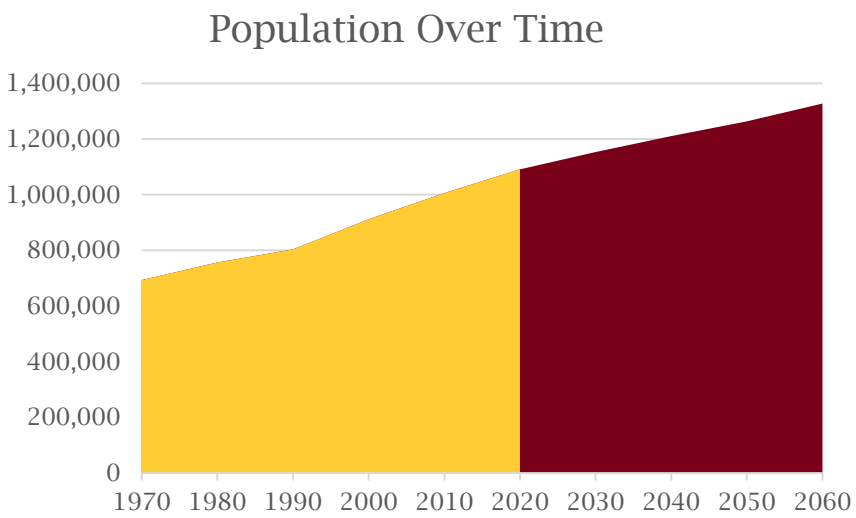
Study Region

	Population 1970	Population 2025	Forecasted Population 2035	Number of Households (2025)
Southern Wisconsin	693,505	1,119,009	1,183,464	460,365
Crawford County	15,252	15,907	15,726	6,665
Dane County	290,272	585,205	631,935	245,736
Grant County	48,398	51,814	53,435	19,913
Green County	26,714	37,324	38,913	15,609
Iowa County	19,306	24,024	24,370	9,951
Lafayette County	17,456	16,944	16,940	6,684
Richland County	17,079	17,174	17,059	7,119
Rock County	131,970	165,654	171,271	66,652
Sauk County	39,057	66,854	71,107	27,425
Vernon County	24,557	31,453	32,659	12,186
Walworth County	63,444	106,656	110,049	42,425

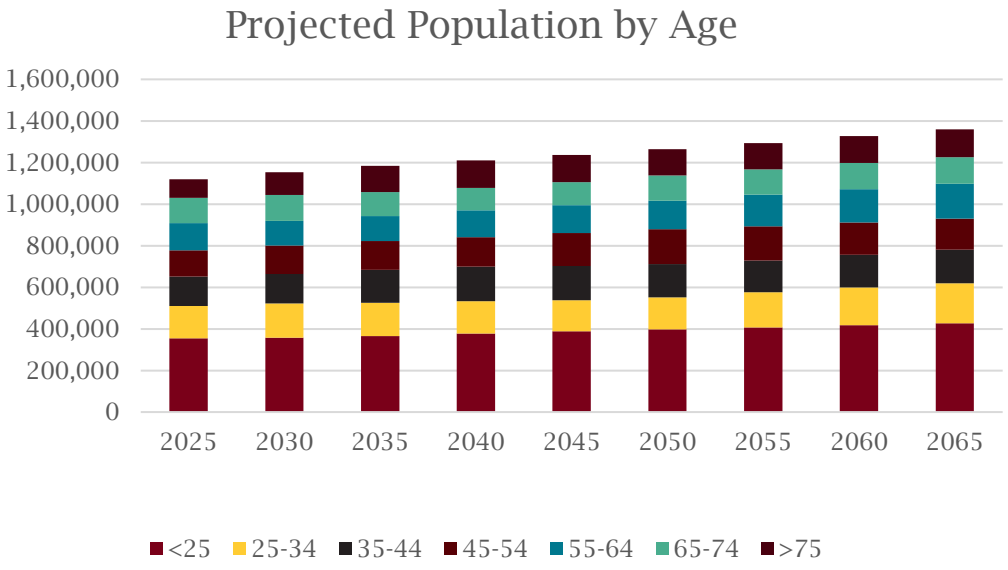
Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Woods and Poole, Esri Business Analyst

Population and Household Projections

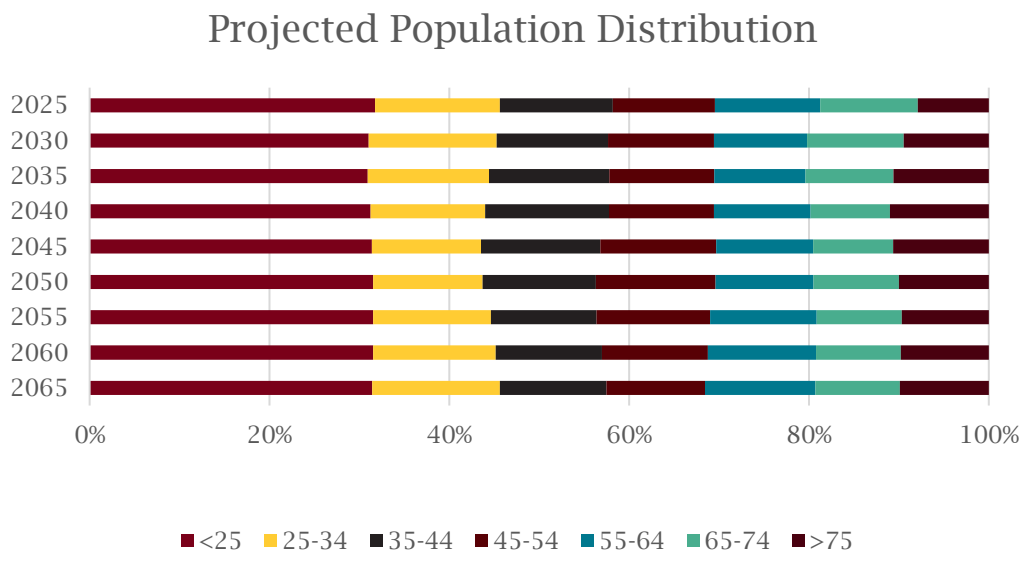
A key input required for modeling TOW scenarios is a region's population forecast. State and local demographers regularly forecast local population trends by looking at historic population levels, local economic data, migration patterns, planned housing developments, and other factors that contribute to population growth or decline. Historically, Southern Wisconsin has experienced steady population growth rising from nearly 694,000 residents in 1970 to over 1.1 million residents in 2025. Looking forward, Woods and Poole forecast a population increase for the region. The population estimates project Southern Wisconsin may reach 1.4 million residents within 40 years, or a generation.



Source: Historical data – US Census; Projected data-Woods and Poole



Source: Projected data-Woods and Poole



Source: Projected data-Woods and Poole

Wealth transfer projections are built, in part, by using population forecasts for age-group cohorts. Note that the number of people over the age of 75 will rise from approximately 88,000 today to over 134,000 in 2065. This trend has big implications for wealth formation in the region because households with people in their 60s and 70s tend to have amassed more wealth and have fewer occupants.

Current Net Worth

Many communities and community residents see themselves as lacking the financial means to make the community they call home better. However, every community has local wealth that can be re-invested "back home." Realizing this can shift attitudes from "the glass is half empty" to "the glass is half full" and motivate action. Taking stock of a region's wealth and modeling TOW scenarios start with determining current net worth. Current net worth is the total value of all permanent resident household assets less all permanent resident household debts. This includes homes, family-held businesses, and retirement assets. It does not include the value of assets held by corporations, nonpermanent residents, and nonprofits. The current net worth of Southern Wisconsin is $549.2 billion. The table below summarizes current net worth for the region and community foundation service areas benchmarked to region values.

What is a household?

For the purposes of public surveys, a "household" is a group of people who occupy the same housing unit. This can mean a family, but it also includes unrelated people living together. All households have a "householder" or one person, or one of the people, in whose name the home is owned, being bought, or rented. When surveys report a household's wealth, the wealth is the aggregate wealth of all the individuals living in the household.

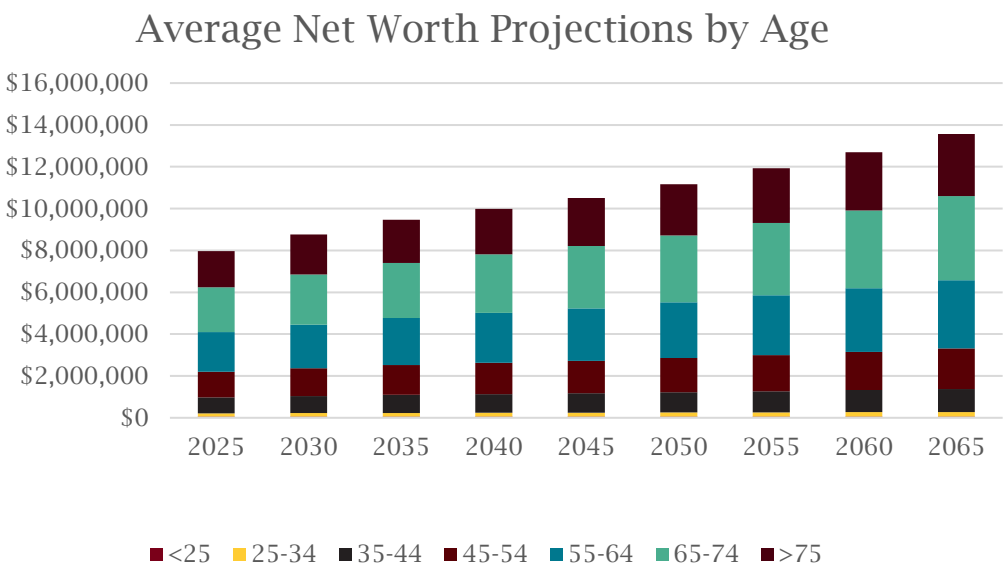
2025 Current Net Worth

	HOUSEHOLDS	CURRENT NET WORTH	PER HOUSEHOLD
Southern Wisconsin	**460,365**	**$549.2 b**	**$1,192,874**
Crawford County	6,665	$5.2 b	$783,218
Dane County	245,736	$313.8 b	$1,277,081
Grant County	19,913	$15.3 b	$768,118
Green County	15,609	$19.9 b	$1,273,410
Iowa County	9,951	$12.9 b	$1,300,667
Lafayette County	6,684	$6.1 b	$914,192
Richland County	7,119	$5.4 b	$761,900
Rock County	66,652	$65.6 b	$984,227
Sauk County	27,425	$25.1 b	$914,176
Vernon County	12,186	$10.9 b	$891,563
Walworth County	42,425	$68.9 b	$1,624,679

Source: Esri, with adjustments made by University of Minnesota Extension.

Future Net Worth Estimates and Estates

Using current net worth data and the household population forecast, University of Minnesota Extension estimates Southern Wisconsin's projected total household net worth. The region's total current net worth will rise from nearly $549.2 billion in 2025 to over $1.1 trillion by 2065. These are in inflation adjusted dollars, meaning that the purchasing power of a dollar in 2065 is the same as a 2025 dollar. In addition to population growth patterns showing a gradual increase over time, growth in total household net worth will also increase in the region. The figure below shows projected net worth by age group, with notable growth in household net worth for the older age cohorts and no measurable net worth for the youngest.



Source: Esri Business Analyst, 2024, Projections by University of Minnesota Extension

Regions that are growing and regions that have younger populations will have fewer transfers in the short term and more transfers in the long term. Regions that are declining in population and that are older will have more transfers in the short term and fewer transfers in the long term.

Transfer of Wealth

Combining projected demographic, economic, and household wealth growth, the region's transfer of wealth in the next decade is expected to average $1.9 billion annually. Aggregated over the next 10 years, $18.6 billion will transfer. Over the next 40 years, $76.4 billion will transfer. The 10-year and 40-year TOW scenarios are detailed for the region in the following table. As an update to our reports we have added a "Transfer Per Death" variable in addition to the "Transfer Per Household" variable. We did this because we believe it would be valuable to know the value of the average individual transfer that will be occurring at the time of death. The new "Transfer Per Death" data point is found by dividing a region's projected ten-year transfer of wealth by the estimated number of deaths in the same time period.

Transfer of Wealth Opportunity

	2025 NET WORTH	10-YEAR TRANSFER	PER HOUSEHOLD	PER DEATH	40-YEAR TRANSFER	PER HOUSEHOLD	PER DEATH
Southern Wisconsin	$549.2 b	$18.6 b	$37,915	$155,054	$76.4 b	$136,403	$143,888
Crawford County	$5.2 b	$187.0 m	$27,644	$81,553	$785.9 m	$116,609	$79,242
Dane County	$313.8 b	$9.0 b	$33,960	$174,848	$36.8 b	$114,555	$159,368
Grant County	$15.3 b	$589.2 m	$28,376	$95,306	$2.5 b	$110,076	$91,124
Green County	$19.9 b	$625.7 m	$37,588	$122,969	$2.7 b	$146,808	$111,951
Iowa County	$12.9 b	$454.8 m	$44,718	$157,409	$1.9 b	$179,213	$150,220
Lafayette County	$6.1 b	$188.6 m	$27,364	$104,072	$768.3 m	$108,270	$99,149
Richland County	$5.4 b	$213.5 m	$29,405	$85,607	$854.3 m	$122,392	$82,791
Rock County	$65.6 b	$2.7 b	$38,273	$131,017	$10.5 b	$141,109	$116,966
Sauk County	$25.1 b	$1.1 b	$37,433	$121,079	$5.1 b	$146,734	$117,641
Vernon County	$10.9 b	$418.6 m	$32,624	$103,686	$1.7 b	$124,601	$99,072
Walworth County	$68.9 b	$2.9 b	$64,709	$206,491	$10.8 b	$234,348	$189,453

Source: University of Minnesota Extension's Transfer of Wealth Estimates, 2025.

Special Considerations

Future wealth estimates rely on previous development patterns, regional population forecasts, and household current net worth estimates. Although reliable, these figures sometimes fail to capture unique community characteristics that may alter regional development or illiquid assets.

One significant study challenge was the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had profound implications for life expectancy, household structure and composition, household finances, and local economic wellbeing. Some areas have experienced one-year death rate increases of 20%. Nationally, the U.S. economy contracted by 3.5% in 2020[1] - the worst year of growth in 75 years. From January 2020 to January 2021, service sector employment across the country declined by 8,725,000 jobs.[2] Communities are also experiencing a massive COVID-19 migration whose impacts will take years to understand. Some populations have been changing residential preferences – senior care facilities, colleges and universities, prisons – and moving to smaller households. To calculate life expectancy, the study team used multi-year averages.

Philanthropic Opportunity

Philanthropy is not an end, but a means to build a more prosperous community. Philanthropy can catalyze investment in more affordable housing. Philanthropy can endow programs that advance affordable, high-quality childcare for all families. Philanthropy can provide gap financing for small businesses that stimulate economic growth and reduce economic inequality. There are thousands of ways that philanthropy can help strengthen communities and economies.

The 10-year and 40-year Transfer of Wealth scenarios demonstrate that there is significant and growing philanthropic potential in Southern Wisconsin. Focused development can help stimulate increased annual giving to local nonprofits and charitable activities, increased legacy giving that can capitalize existing and new endowments, and the use of some endowment funds to capitalize philanthropic impact investing funds. *What is possible if the region successfully tapped the coming transfer of wealth?*

Capture the transfer of wealth to support local charities and nonprofits. If the foundations captured even 1% of the transfer of wealth for one-time philanthropic purposes, an additional $185.6 million would bolster local nonprofits and charities. That is a lot of money to support local arts, recreation, crisis centers and other critical community needs.

[1] U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
[2] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Capture the transfer of wealth to build endowments. If the foundations captured 5% of the region's $18.6 billion 10-year transfer of wealth, an estimated $927.9 million, those resources could capitalize an endowment. Assuming a rate of return of *7%* and a payout of *4.3%*, over 20 years the endowment would grow to $1.6 billion and generate $1.1 billion in grants.

5% Capture Endowment Building Example

Year	Beginning Principal	Annual Earnings	Annual Grants	Ending Principal
Initial Endowment	$927,854,864	$64,949,840	$39,897,759	$952,906,945
Year 1	$952,906,945	$66,703,486	$40,974,999	$978,635,433
Year 5	$1,060,064,441	$74,204,511	$45,582,771	$1,088,686,181
Year 10	$1,211,112,495	$84,777,875	$52,077,837	$1,243,812,532
Year 15	$1,383,683,311	$96,857,832	$59,498,382	$1,421,042,760
Year 20	$1,580,843,656	$110,659,056	$67,976,277	$1,623,526,435
Total Grants			$1,107,921,390	

Capture the transfer of wealth to build endowments that support local impact investing. Philanthropic endowments have the potential to generate two types of community impact. A portion of investment returns is granted out to the community to support charitable purposes, but foundations can also use a portion (or all) of the endowment's resources for local investments that generate community impact and financial returns. For example, say a foundation captured 5% of Southern Wisconsin's 10-year transfer of wealth, an estimated $927.9 million, and invested 5% of that, or about **$46.4 million**, in local philanthropic investment funds has the potential to generate $55.4 million in gap financing over the next 20 years.

Acknowledgements

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