2 • The People

Source: John Weiss

Understanding how the community may change over time is fundamental to land use planning. Trends in the size and composition of our population greatly affect how and where land uses make the most social and economic sense.
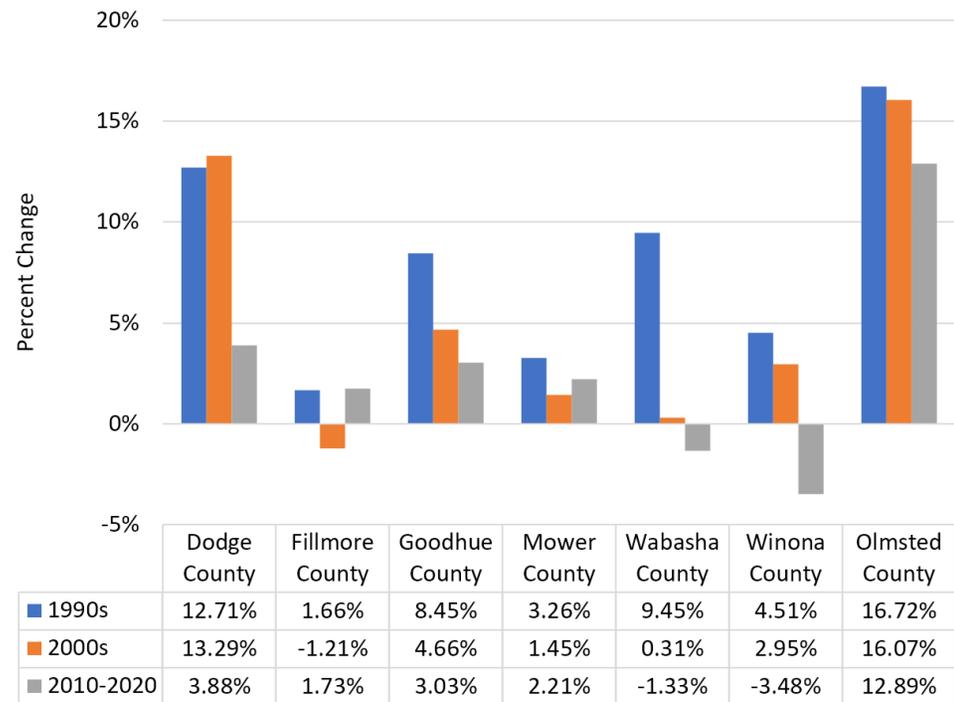
Population growth

While the populations of most southeastern Minnesota counties continue to grow, they are doing so at a slower rate than in the past. Wabasha and Winona counties have lost population in the last 10 years (Figure 2-1).

Olmsted County's population has consistently grown over the last 30 to 40 years, seeing about 15,000 to 20,000 new residents added each decade. Olmsted County's 2020 population of 162,847 ranks as eighth largest in the state and has grown by 12.9% since 2010, accounting for 18,599 new residents. This level of growth puts Olmsted County at fourth in the state in terms of largest percent population gains, behind Carver, Scott, and Wright counties.

Figure 2-2 shows the 2020 population distribution across Olmsted County. Rochester is the third largest city in Minnesota after Minneapolis and St. Paul, with a 2020 population of 121,395. Rochester has accounted for most of the population growth in Olmsted County, from about 66% in 1990 to almost 75% in 2020. Olmsted County's smaller cities have also been growing; as a group, their rate of growth in the past ten years exceeds that of Rochester. Small cities have more than doubled in population since 1990, compared to the City of Rochester increasing by about 64% during that time.

Figure 2-1: Rate of Population Growth, 1990-2020 (U.S. Census Bureau)

|	Dodge County	Fillmore County	Goodhue County	Mower County	Wabasha County	Winona County	Olmsted County
1990s	12.71%	1.66%	8.45%	3.26%	9.45%	4.51%	16.72%
2000s	13.29%	-1.21%	4.66%	1.45%	0.31%	2.95%	16.07%
2010-2020	3.88%	1.73%	3.03%	2.21%	-1.33%	-3.48%	12.89%

Due to significant annexation activity, suburban townships saw a 20% decline in population between 2000 and 2010. But suburban and rural townships have seen a rebound in population growth since 2010.

Figure 2-2

2020 Population by Census Block
Source: U.S. Census Bureau
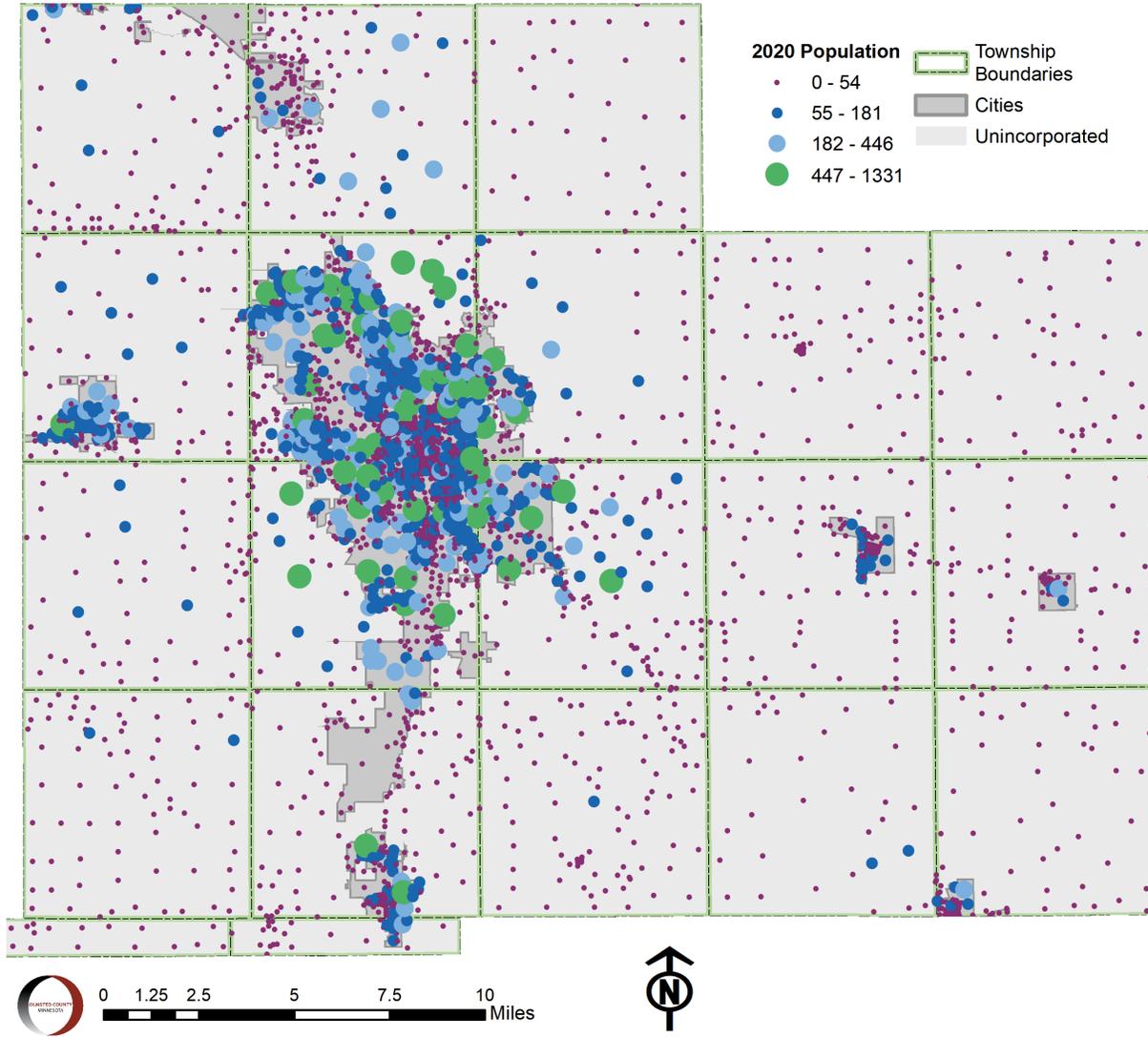
Looking to the future, the county is expected to add approximately 55,000 people through 2045. This growth will primarily be driven by the Destination Medical Center (DMC) initiative and its effect on adding demand for jobs in sectors such as retail services, leisure activities, construction, and public services.

Table 2-1 shows that Rochester is expected to capture the largest share of that growth, while Byron, Stewartville, and Pine Island are predicted to see significant increases compared to their existing size. The values for Chatfield and Pine Island include those city residents living in the adjacent county since they also affect Olmsted County planning efforts.

Table 2-1: Population Projections (ROCOG)

Jurisdiction	2015	2025	2035	2045	2015-2045 Growth		Share of Growth
Byron	5,320	6,835	7,815	8,724	3,404	64%	6%
Chatfield (Olmsted)	2,779	1,205	1,470	3,866	1,087	39%	1%
Dover	752	805	955	1,255	503	67%	1%
Eyota	2,038	2,045	2,495	2,809	771	38%	1%
Oronoco	1,443	2,010	2,450	2,575	1,132	78%	2%
Pine Island (Olmsted)	3,263	965	1,425	5,342	2,079	64%	2%
Rochester	112,089	128,285	147,420	162,277	50,188	45%	82%
Stewartville	6,153	7,020	7,905	8,937	2,784	45%	5%
Total for Municipalities	**129,775**	**149,170**	**171,935**	**190,482**	**60,707**	**47%**	
Suburban Townships	12,327	13,245	13,540	13,788	1,461	12%	2%
Exurban Townships	4,447	4,425	4,505	4,298	-149	-3%	-0%
Rural Townships	4,785	4,270	4,225	4,213	-572	-12%	-1%
Olmsted County	**151,334**	**171,110**	**194,205**	**212,781**	**61,447**	**41%**	

Similar to historic patterns, rural and exurban townships are generally expected to see a small decline in population, largely due to the aging of their population base. Suburban townships should see some increase in residents through 2045.

Figures 2-3 through 2-4 provide detailed population trends since 1990.

For Figures 2-3 and 2-4

Rural Townships: *Dover, Elmira, Eyota, Farmington, Orion, Pleasant Grove, Quincy, Rock Dell, Viola*

Exurban Townships: *Kalmar, New Haven, High Forest, Salem*

Suburban Townships: *Cascade, Haverhill, Marion, Oronoco, Rochester*

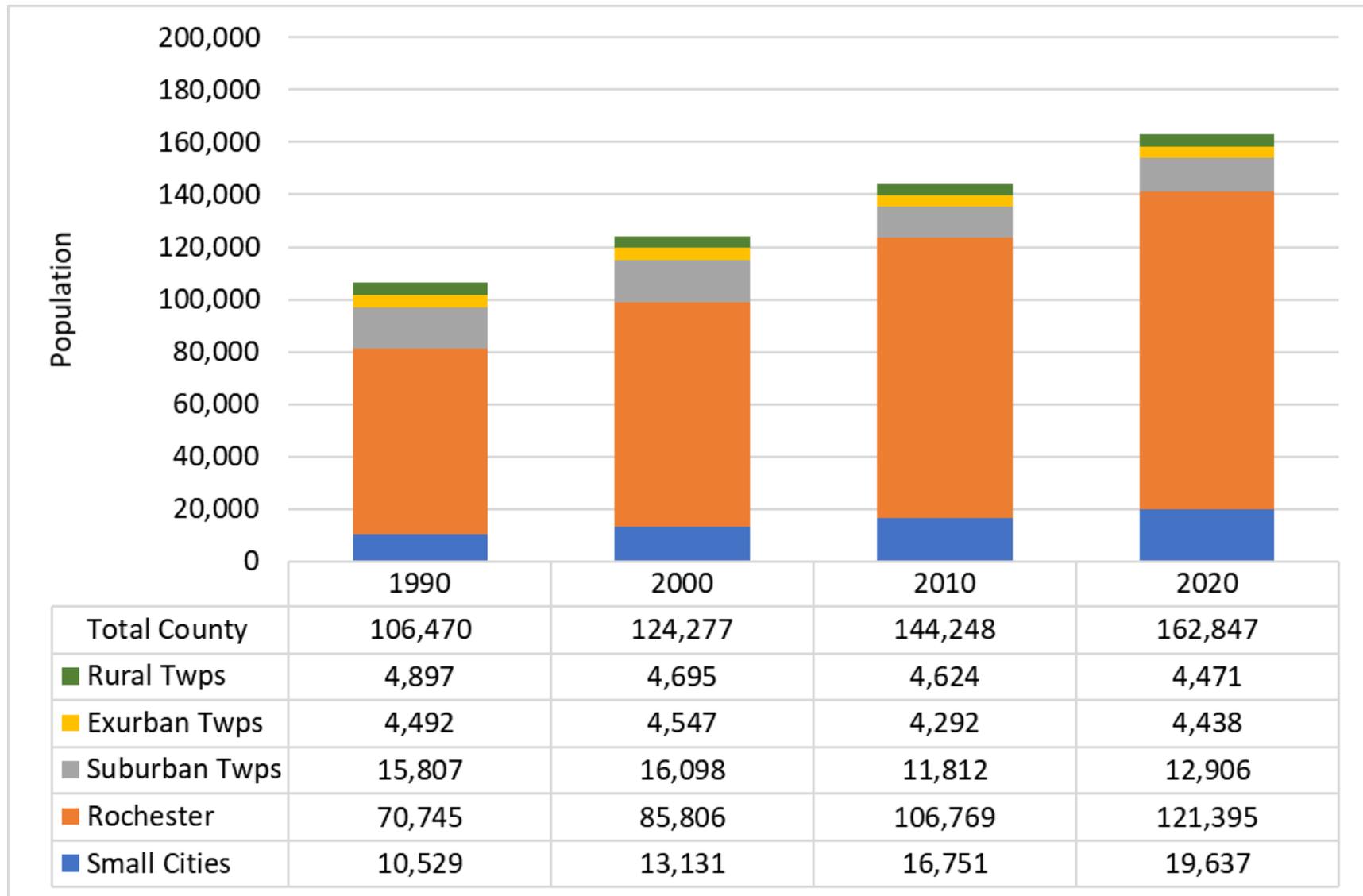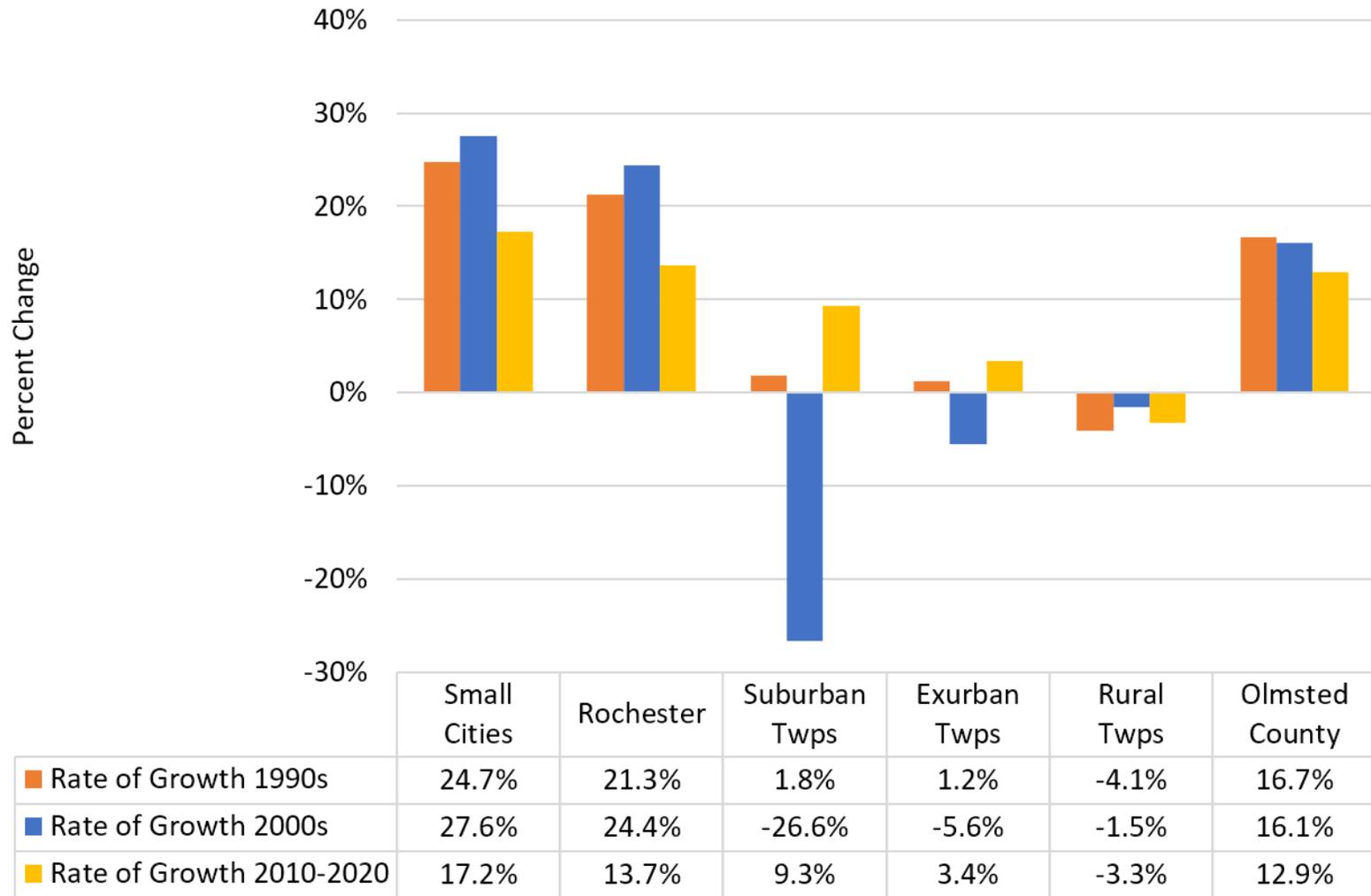**Figure 2-3: Olmsted County Population, 1990-2020 (U.S. Census Bureau)**

	1990	2000	2010	2020
Total County	106,470	124,277	144,248	162,847
🟩 Rural Twps	4,897	4,695	4,624	4,471
🟨 Exurban Twps	4,492	4,547	4,292	4,438
⬜ Suburban Twps	15,807	16,098	11,812	12,906
🟧 Rochester	70,745	85,806	106,769	121,395
🟦 Small Cities	10,529	13,131	16,751	19,637

GLUP 2045

2.5

Figure 2-4: Rate of Population Growth, 1990-2020 (U.S. Census Bureau)

|	Small Cities	Rochester	Suburban Twps	Exurban Twps	Rural Twps	Olmsted County
■ Rate of Growth 1990s	24.7%	21.3%	1.8%	1.2%	-4.1%	16.7%
■ Rate of Growth 2000s	27.6%	24.4%	-26.6%	-5.6%	-1.5%	16.1%
■ Rate of Growth 2010-2020	17.2%	13.7%	9.3%	3.4%	-3.3%	12.9%

Household composition

Olmsted County is seeing changes in household composition similar to those experienced throughout the United States, with significant increases in single-person households expected over the planning period and limited growth in traditional family households with children. A growing number of single-person households will be composed of people over 65 years of age.

Figure 2-5 highlights Olmsted County household growth trends for 1990-2017. The annual rate of growth in the **number of households** in Olmsted County has been fairly stable since 1990, between 1% and 2%. The years since 2010 have seen an overall downturn in that rate, likely due to the effects of the Great Recession.

Figure 2-5: Household Trends (U.S. Census Bureau)
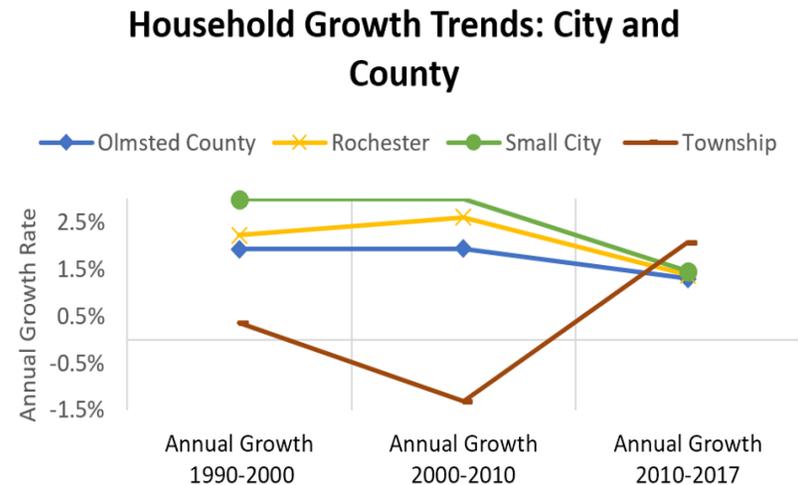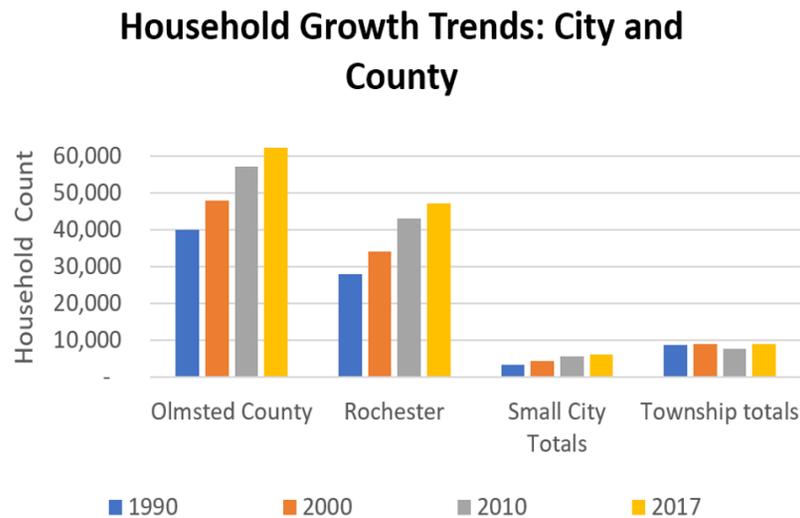
While Olmsted County cities saw steep declines in their rate of housing growth after 2010, they still were adding housing during that period. The suburban and rural townships experienced a decline in households between 1990 and 2010 due to annexations but reversed this downward trend and saw higher housing growth rates after 2010. The exurban townships

saw consistently strong growth rates despite the Great Recession, with a 6% annual growth rate between 2010 and 2017. Planning staff will watch to see if these trends continue as the 2020 Census data becomes available.

Table 2-2 summarizes the predicted changes among different **types of households**. A significant increase in single-person households is projected, both in the 65+ age group as well as among younger individuals. The number of married couple households with children will likely only increase by 2%, while married couple households without children should rise by 56%.

Table 2-2: Projected Change in Household Composition, 2000-2040 (Minnesota State Demographer)

Household Type	2017	2020	2030	2040	2017-2040	
	Census	Projected	Projected	Projected	% Change	Share of Growth
Total Households	**58,692**	**67,360**	**71,290**	**78,320**	**33%**	
Married couples with related children	13,853	13,890	14,060	14,160	2%	2%
Married couples without related children	17,359	22,610	24,470	27,120	56%	50%
Other families with related children	5,507	5,190	5,290	5,520	0%	0%
Other families without related children	2,365	2,160	2,320	2,680	13%	2%
Living alone	15,901	19,460	21,050	24,510	54%	44%
Living alone, age 65+	5,437	6,540	8,100	11,140	105%	29%
Other nonfamily households	3,707	4,050	4,100	4,340	17%	3%
Householders ages 15-24	3,165	3,780	4,070	4,520	43%	7%
Householders ages 25-44	21,247	23,430	23,650	23,420	10%	11%
Householders ages 45-64	22,215	25,000	24,610	25,160	13%	15%
Householders ages 65+	13,177	15,150	18,960	25,230	91%	61%

Age structure

Olmsted County will continue to see growth in all age groups. Figure 2-6 highlights the distribution of population by age based on comparison of 2015 and 2045 projections from the Minnesota State Demographic Center.

The greatest increase will occur among those over the age of 60 as the large baby boomer generation completes its move into that age bracket. The number of persons over 60 should nearly double over the next 25 years, as Generation X and the oldest millennials join the baby boomers in this age group. The rise in population among younger age groups will not be as dramatic as in past decades due to dropping birth rates and relatively slow growth in the number of younger households in the prime family formation years.

Net migration

"Net migration" is the number of people moving into an area minus the people moving from that area. In response to the slowing of resident labor force growth, the aging of the baby boomers, and a strong local job market, Olmsted County's population growth has been driven by new residents attracted to the area from local, national, and international locations. This trend started in the 1980s, accelerated in the 1990s, and continues today.

Migration has increased the share of the population in racial and ethnic minorities (Figure 2-7), more than doubling the minority share of population in the 1990s. The Minnesota State Demographer has indicated that population growth in Olmsted County is largely attributable to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) populations (Figure 2-8).

Figure 2-6: 2010 and 2045 Population Distribution by Age Cohort (Minnesota State Demographic Center)

Age Cohorts in 2015

- 80+ yrs. 4%
- 60-79 yrs. 16%
- 0-19 yrs. 27%
- 40-59 yrs. 26%
- 20-39 yrs. 27%

Age Cohorts in 2045

- 80+ yrs. 10%
- 60-79 yrs. 21%
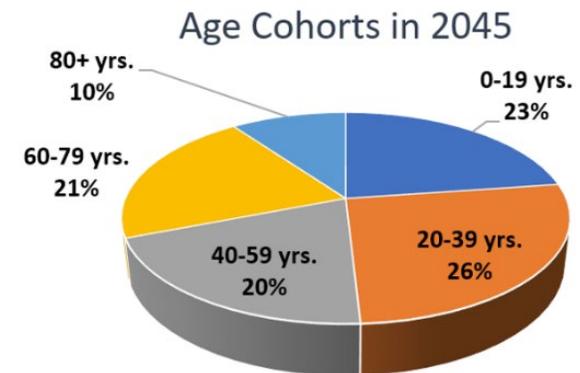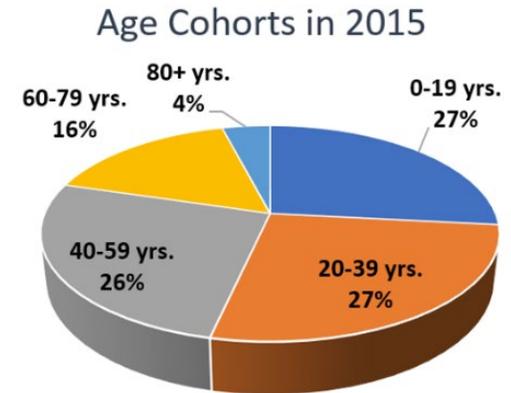- 0-19 yrs. 23%
- 40-59 yrs. 20%
- 20-39 yrs. 26%

Figure 2-7: Race as Percentage of the Population (2019 U.S. Census ACS Data)

2019 Olmsted County Race as a Percentage of the Population

Legend:
- White
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- 2+ Races
- Hawaiian & Pacific Islander
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Some other Race
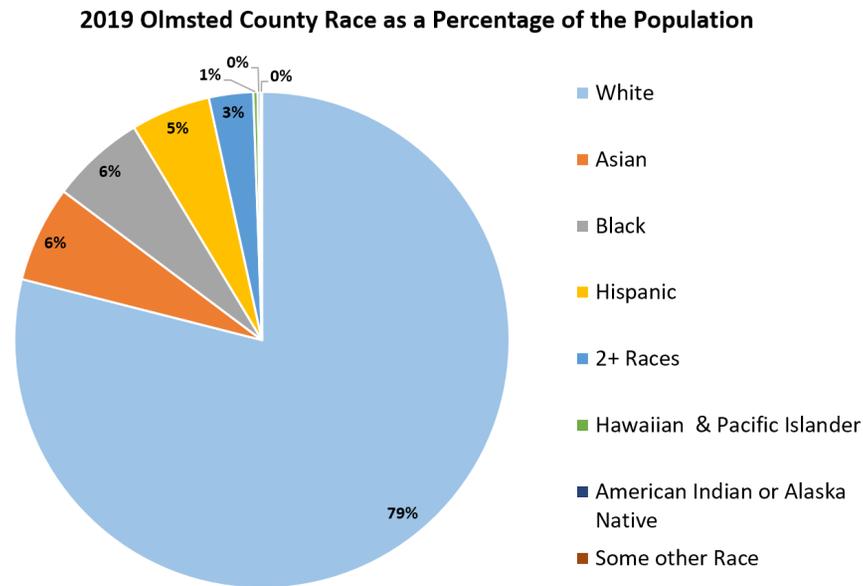
Figure 2-8: Change in County Population by White/BIPOC, 2010-2020 (U.S. Census Bureau)

Legend: ■ White NH ■ BIPOC

GLUP 2045
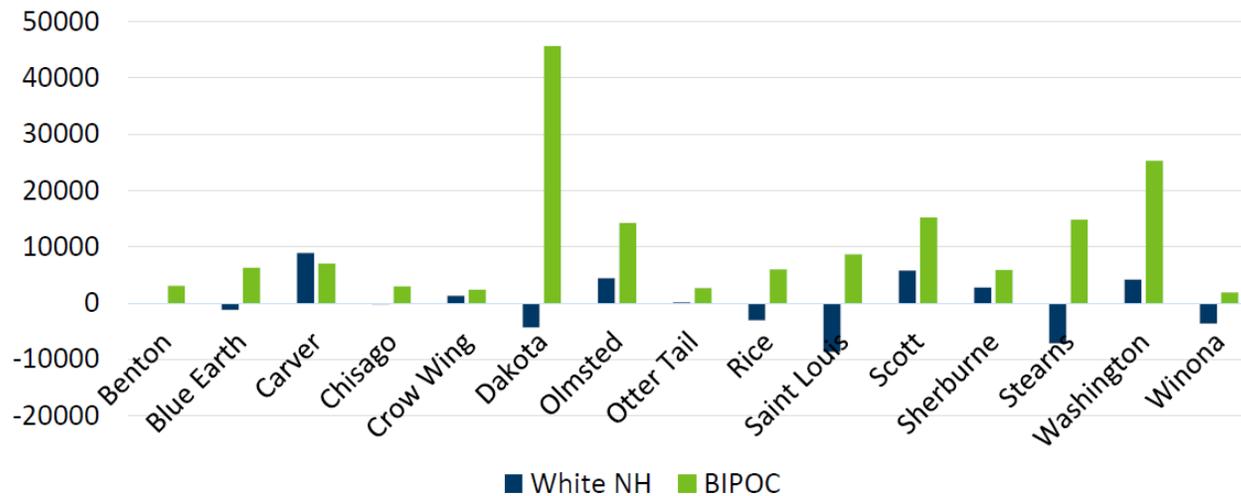
Land use implications

Most of the projected population and household growth will take place in the urban service areas of Olmsted County cities. The age groups projected to significantly grow over the next 25 years are also those most likely to seek urban living in walkable neighborhoods with mixed use development. The Rochester Downtown Master Plan (2011) and the Destination Medical Center Plan (2015) expect a 100% to 200% increase in downtown Rochester's population as a result. Household types historically associated with suburban lifestyles, on the other hand, will grow only slightly.

Rochester will continue to house the vast majority of the county's population. The high level of job growth in the county, however, combined with short commuting times to jobs in Rochester and local economic development initiatives, has resulted in population growth rates in small cities comparable to those in Rochester. These communities will continue to offer attractive residential options for those desiring to live in a smaller community.

Applying conservative assumptions to household growth, housing style, vacancy rates, and resulting land area demands, urban service areas have more than adequate land area to handle projected residential growth. It is likely that some parts of the urban service areas will in effect become reserves for urban growth beyond the period of this GLUP, some of which may be in the form of interim development (see Chapter 10 for more information on interim development).

Trends in age and household structure will also impact travel modes and patterns in the county. The age groups with large growth rates are most likely to rely on transit or ride sharing services such as Lyft and Uber. Households with children, however, are expected to account for only 2% of the household growth during the life of this plan. These household units typically have the highest trip generation rates, suggesting that vehicle traffic may decline at the household level in the future.

People moving to our area bring their cultural traditions and lifestyle preferences with them. Olmsted County must be open to and prepared for land use needs and expectations that will accommodate our new community members.