Retirement & Departure Intentions
Survey Report

February 2013

Germantown Chamber of Commerce, Hartford Area Development Corporation, Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce, West Bend Area Chamber of Commerce and West Bend Economic Development Corporation in conjunction with:
Understanding labor availability in the Washington County area is vital to ensuring the continued success of local businesses and the community as a whole. In order for businesses to grow and thrive, a clear understanding of this issue and a commitment to solving related problems is needed.

In past years the Washington County area, along with the entire nation, experienced economic uncertainty, financial difficulties and unprecedented changes in the way in which employees are entering and leaving the workforce. Recently, local businesses have focused on sustaining themselves during uncertain economic times; however, during that time the issue of labor availability in the Washington County area moved from a topic of much speculation and many anecdotal discussions to a stark reality. Because the local workplace, like most of Wisconsin and the rest of the nation, has undergone significant changes over the past few years, a retirement and departure intention study was conducted in 2012. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the local employment environment and stimulate discussion on necessary courses of action to ensure long-term sustainability of the Washington County community.

To understand current labor issues, it is important to set the context for the research impetus. In the past 10 years (from 2001 to 2011), Washington County’s estimated population had risen 10.9 percent from 119,387 to 132,386. As evidenced in Table 1, Washington County’s population growth exceeded both the state and national rate at 5.6 percent and 9.3 percent, respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>284,968,955</td>
<td>311,591,917</td>
<td>26,622,962</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>5,406,835</td>
<td>5,711,767</td>
<td>304,932</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington County</td>
<td>119,387</td>
<td>132,386</td>
<td>12,999</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This growth occurred while there was a small recession in the beginning of the decade and the “Great Recession,” which occurred towards the end of the decade. Although it is still too early to tell if the “Great Recession” has impacted population growth in the County, a snapshot by the US Census American Community Survey indicates the population in the past year resulted in a slight decrease of 40 people in the County; with an attraction of 429 people from other Wisconsin Counties, and exodus of 469 people. This data should be monitored for future analysis and tracked against the Wisconsin
Department of Administration’s projection of a 28% population increase for Washington County by 2030.

During the same time, Washington County’s estimated labor force had risen 4.9 percent, the tenth highest out of Wisconsin’s 72 counties (Wisconsin WORKnet). Although Washington County’s labor force growth surpassed the state’s growth rate of 1 percent, it trailed the national rate at 6.9 percent.

At 68.3 percent, Wisconsin has a relatively high labor force participation rate for residents age 16 and over, greater than Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. This is compared to 64.4 percent in the United States. Washington County had one of the highest labor participation rates in the state at 71.8 percent. Although a high labor participation rate illustrates the strength of the local work force, it may also serve as a significant liability as workers begin to retire and replacement labor becomes sparse. It is vital to consider the demographics and retirement intentions of current employees to ensure a highly skilled and abundant labor pool exists for future sustainability of Washington County employers.

Of the twenty fastest growing states, fourteen saw significant population growth derived from people moving into the state, rather than through an increase in birth rates. Among Midwest and Northern Plains states, Wisconsin’s ranked second among nine states in net positive migration during the past decade. Despite positive migration, Wisconsin had the 18th lowest population growth of the fifty states from 2000 to 2012. When native population growth rate is low, the ability to attract residents from outside of the state directly impacts the ability to grow a state’s population and labor force.

Wisconsin’s median age is 38.5, which is higher than Indiana, Minnesota and Illinois. Additionally, Wisconsin ties Indiana with the share of employment in the manufacturing sector at 15.5%. Of the ten State’s with the largest share of employment in manufacturing, only two (Michigan and Ohio) have median age’s higher than Wisconsin. The aging workforce in Wisconsin may put the State at a competitive disadvantage to other manufacturing State’s.

Wisconsin is also becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. The 2011 US Census American Community Survey shows that 95 percent of Wisconsin’s population 60 years and older are white, compared to 81 percent of children under the age of 18. That is a remarkable shift in the span of a few generations. It will be increasingly important for communities and businesses to be inclusive in attracting a future workforce to their communities.
There is a common belief that Wisconsin has what is referred to Brain Drain, which are university graduates leaving the State after graduating from college. The University of Wisconsin (UW) System conducted a study and found the State does relatively well in retaining college graduates, especially if they started off as Wisconsin residents. Overall, 61 percent of UW System Alumni remained in Wisconsin within the past 10 years. However, 81 percent of students who start out as Wisconsin residents stay in Wisconsin. Additionally, the study found the UW serves as a Brain Gain magnet, with 13 percent of students who start as non-residents choosing to stay in Wisconsin after graduation. Statewide The Wisconsin Technical College System annually retains roughly 86 percent of its graduates within Wisconsin.

Considering the culmination of these many demographic changes, Economic Development Washington County, the Germantown Chamber of Commerce, the Hartford Area Development Corporation, the Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce, the University of Wisconsin Washington County, the UW Extension – Washington County, the West Bend Area Chamber of Commerce, and West Bend Economic Development Corporation met with representatives from Moraine Park Technical College in late 2011 to begin discussions on how to assess the current employment environment and future outlook for the Washington County area. Based on the reliability of Retirement and Departure Intentions Studies conducted in nearby counties, a Washington County study was conducted to provide the local community with a comprehensive analysis of the current and future labor availability issues facing Washington County.

**Survey Research**

Planning for the 2012 Washington County Retirement and Departure Intentions survey began in late-2011. The project set out to meet specific objectives that include:

- Anticipate retirement plans and factors influencing retirement decisions.
- Anticipate departure plans (other than retirement) and factors influencing departure decisions.
- Gather demographics, such as age, gender, specialty area, job function, tenure, and employment status, with which to analyze retirement and departure intentions.
The employee surveying process was conducted via both a paper survey and an electronic survey sent directly to employees through the assistance of each employer. Surveying lasted from late-2011 through mid-2012 and included Washington County organizations with more than 50 employees. A total of 3,059 surveys were returned, providing a margin of error of +/- 2.3 percent at a 99 percent confidence interval, given a finite population of 74,331 workers in the Washington County labor force as of first quarter 2012. Although the survey was conducted using a convenience sample of organizations with 50 or more employees, it is assumed that the data is representative of the Washington County labor force as a whole.

### Key Findings

A total of 17.5 percent of surveyed employees plan to retire within the next five years, 33.9 percent within the next 10 years and 50.9 percent within 15 years; a surprising figure considering historical averages assume one-third of the workforce retiring every 15 years.

Several occupational areas will experience higher than average retirement rates over the next 15 years, as evidenced in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>5 year</th>
<th>10 year</th>
<th>15 year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials/Warehousing/Transportation</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production/Operations/Manufacturing</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five of the top six most noted “major factors” influencing retirement decisions of those 5 years from retirement or less are concerned with finances and security at time of retirement.

Of those planning to retire within the next 5 years, 14.9 percent reported definitive plans to completely leave the workforce. Additionally, 46.7 percent indicated being unsure if they will work after retirement, while 38.5 percent indicated plans to continue working in some capacity.

Primary motivating factors of retirees to remain working in some capacity include staying active and social, and supplementing retirement income.

Over 49 percent of 5-year retirees stated there was nothing their employer could do to entice them to stay longer and allow time for knowledge transfer. Nearly 37 percent found part-time employment with health benefits an attractive option for staying longer.
Only 5.4 percent of all respondents reported plans to leave the area work force within 24 months for reasons other than retirement.

The Washington County labor pool over the next 15 years can anticipate a gap of over 13,400 individuals available to replace departing workers. Factoring departures of area high school graduates the gap grows to over 23,500 by 2026.

Retirement Intentions

Years from Retirement

Respondents were asked to indicate how many years from now they plan to retire from their current field. A total of 17.5 percent of surveyed employees plan to retire within the next five years (Figure 1). An additional 16.4 percent plan to retire between six and 10 years; a cumulative loss of 33.9 percent of workers within the next 10 years. A total of 50.9 percent of workers intend to retire within 15 years; a startling figure considering historical averages assume one-third of the workforce retiring every 15 years. Also of concern is that only 32.3 percent of responding employees are more than 20 years from retirement.

With higher than expected retirement rates, there is great potential for a significant labor shortage in the years to come. Age demographics of the community only intensify the magnitude of a potential labor shortage. The small percentage of young people within Washington County demonstrates a lack of potential replacement workers within the County.
Population estimates by age (Table 3) further spotlight the County’s aging population. US Census data for 2010 demonstrate comparatively higher population percentages in the age range of 45 to 59 years old (24.3 percent) than 5 to 19 years old (20.4 percent). Bringing further insight to an existing aging population within the County, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics cites the County’s median age as 41 years; higher than the state and national median age of 38 and 37 years, respectively. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics also reports that within the past decade, deaths exceeded births by 6,100 in the County.

**Table 3: Population Estimates by Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>2010 Estimated Population</th>
<th>2010 Estimated Population Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>8,179</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
<td>9,028</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years</td>
<td>9,487</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19 years</td>
<td>8,490</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24 years</td>
<td>5,920</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 29 years</td>
<td>7,128</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 34 years</td>
<td>7,623</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 39 years</td>
<td>8,356</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 44 years</td>
<td>10,206</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 49 years</td>
<td>11,981</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 54 years</td>
<td>10,824</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 59 years</td>
<td>9,207</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 64 years</td>
<td>7,655</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years or older</td>
<td>17,803</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census**

Figure 2 depicts retirement intentions by occupation. Craft (45.5 percent) and Laborer (23.6 percent) occupations reported the highest rate of retirements within the next 5-year period. Additionally, over the next 10 years, these occupational categories will see higher rates of retirement than comparative categories – 59.1 percent of Craft and 47.5 percent of Laborer workers indicated retirement intentions from these particular occupations.
Several other occupational categories also reported significant retirements within the next five years including Service (21 percent), Clerical/Administrative Support (17 percent) and Sales (16.4 percent). Professional and Operations occupations reported five-year retirement rates of just over 15 percent.

Retirement intentions by employee specialty area are reported in Figure 3. The Materials/Warehousing/Transportation and Production/Operations/Manufacturing specialty areas reported the highest rate of retirements within the next five years at 26.4 percent and 23.1 percent, respectively. The Finance (22 percent) and Maintenance (20.4 percent) specialty areas also indicated high five year retirement intentions.

The Materials/Warehousing/Transportation specialty (48.6 percent) and Research and Development (46.6 percent) areas will be hit the hardest by impending retirements over the next 10 years. In addition, several other specialty areas indicated substantial 10 year retirement intentions, including Maintenance (44.9 percent), Production/Operations/Manufacturing (43 percent), Finance (38.3 percent), Healthcare (33.7 percent) and General Administration (33.1 percent). The Construction specialty area reported comparatively low 10 year retirement intentions at 11.8 percent.
Respondents planning to retire within the next five years were presented a list of retirement factors and asked how influential each was in their decision to retire (Figure 4).

**Factors Influencing Retirement Decisions**

Figure 3: Specialty Area by Retirement

Figure 4: Factors Influencing Retirement Decisions

- Financial security at time of retirement
- Access to post-employment benefits
- Reaching Social Security & Medicare eligibility
- Job stress/pressure
- Early retirement incentives
- Insufficient salary and benefits
- Reaching mandatory retirement age
- Physical demands of the job
- Health related issues
- Family obligations
- Coincide with spouse’s/partner’s retirement
- Technical demands of the job
- Desire for a career change
- Lack of interesting work

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
Financial security at the time of retirement was reported as the most significant driving force in respondents’ retirement decisions – 57.1 percent of respondents identified this as a major factor. Financial security was followed by access to post-employment benefits (50.7 percent) and reaching Social Security & Medicare eligibility (40 percent). Five of the top six most noted “major factors” influencing retirement are concerned with finances and security at time of retirement.

To further examine retirement factors, respondents who plan to retire within five years were asked to state the single most important factor driving their retirement decision. Figure 5 shows the top six most important factors identified by responding employees. Reaching Social Security & Medicare eligibility was the most significant factor at 18.9 percent, followed by job stress/pressure at 16.8 percent and financial security at time of retirement at 16.6 percent.

To better understand how influential each retirement factor is in retirement decisions, the most important factor data was broken down by specialty area. The most important retirement factor of each specialty area’s workforce is presented in Table 4. One of the most striking findings is 42.9 percent of Human Resources/Organizational Development respondents reported that the physical demands of their jobs were heavily influential on their retirement decisions. A potential explanation is respondents of this category perceiving physical demands as workload. Another interesting finding is 44.4 percent of Marketing/Sales respondents indicated job stress/pressure as the most influential driver in their retirement decisions. A potential explanation could be driven by high expectations related to company market penetration or revenue during a difficult economy.
Table 4: Most Important Retirement Factor by Specialty Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty Area</th>
<th>Access to post-employment benefits (e.g. health insurance)</th>
<th>Financial security at time of retirement</th>
<th>Health related issues</th>
<th>Job stress/pressure</th>
<th>Physical demands of the job</th>
<th>Reaching Social Security &amp; Medicare eligibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent of Workforce</td>
<td>Percent of Workforce</td>
<td>Percent of Workforce</td>
<td>Percent of Workforce</td>
<td>Percent of Workforce</td>
<td>Percent of Workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Administration</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic Arts/ Design</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR/ Org. Dev.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info. Tech.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing/Sales</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials/ Warehousing/Transportation</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production/ Ops./ Manuf.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Dev.</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Post-Retirement Plans**

Respondents planning to retire within the next five years were asked numerous questions regarding their post-retirement plans. As seen in Figure 6, 14.9 percent of those planning to retire within the next five years from their current positions reported definitive plans to completely leave the workforce, while 46.7 percent indicated being unsure if they will work after retirement.
Additionally, 38.5 percent indicated definitive plans to continue working in some capacity, of which 33.5 percent reported plans to work only in a part-time capacity.

Respondents planning to work after retirement were asked to report on the motivating factors for their post-retirement employment decisions (Figure 7). Nearly 68 percent indicated staying active and social was largely influential in deciding to work after retirement. Supplemental retirement income (63.3 percent) was also reported as a sizeable driver in post-retirement employment. A desire to give back to the community was reported by 28.6 percent of respondents while access to healthcare in retirement and fulfilling a dream were reported at 15.8 percent and 10.7 percent, respectively.

Participants expecting to retire within the next five years were asked to select all of the activities they plan to participate in after retirement. As seen in Figure 8, nearly 80 percent reported plans to partake in relaxing activities such as golfing, fishing, shopping, knitting, travel and similar activities. While the proportion of respondents who indicated participating in relaxing activities is significant, it should be noted that 33.6 percent of those identifying relaxation also indicated they plan to work in some capacity.

Of respondents who plan to retire in five years or less, 8.2 percent reported plans to work in a related field for their current employer, while 7.7 percent reported plans to work in a related field for a different employer. Nearly 4 percent of respondents indicated plans to work in a field not related to
their current occupation but with their current employer, while 26.8 percent indicated plans to work in a field not related to their current occupation with a different employer. Nearly 11 percent of respondents reported a desire to go back to school or train for a new job.

A question was posed to respondents planning to retire within the next five years investigating what their current employer could offer that would entice them to stay working longer into their retirement years (Figure 9). Part-time employment with health benefits was reported by 36.8 percent of respondents as a motivator to continue working. In addition, a gradual reduction in hours leading up to retirement, along with contract or casual employment, were reported by a large proportion of employers and appear to be beneficial solutions to retaining employees planning on retiring within the next five years. Comparatively, few respondents reported that reduced levels of responsibility prior to retirement would entice them to continue working. Of those planning to retire within the next five years, a striking 49.4 percent indicated that none of the suggested options would retain them beyond their planned retirement.

Respondents planning to retire within the next five years were also asked where they plan to reside in retirement. A total of 70 percent of respondents indicated they plan to reside within 20 miles of their current residence, while 21.6 percent reported they are unsure (Figure 9). A total of 8.4 percent indicated plans to leave the area after retirement. Of those planning to reside within 20 miles of their current residence during retirement, 88.5 percent reported plans to continue residing in the Washington County area year round.
Departure Intentions

Only 5.4 percent of all respondents reported plans to leave the area work force within 24 months for reasons other than retirement (Figure 11). The vast majority, 94.5 percent, of all respondents indicated plans to not leave the area for reasons other than retirement.

As evidenced in Figure 12, 30.7 percent of responding employees who plan to leave the area work force for reasons other than retirement primarily reported a desire to pursue a career change, and 24.3 percent indicated employment opportunities outside of the area.

Respondent Demographics

Years Employed

As seen in Figure 13, 19.3 percent of respondents reported employment in their current field for five years or less, while 35.5 percent reported employed in their current field for 21 years or more. The largest indicated response was employment for 21 to 30 years at 20.5 percent.
Respondents were also asked to indicate how many years they have been employed with their current employer (Figure 14). Nearly 28 percent of respondents indicated employment with their current employer for five years or less, while more than 27 percent indicated employment with their current employer for 21 years or more.

**Respondent Occupation**

Participants were asked to categorize their current occupation; Figure 15 depicts these results. The majority of respondents, 45.4 percent, noted employment as Professional. Respondents within this category are largely made up of employees in education, roughly 60 percent, and employees in a business functions to include finance/accounting and information technology. Nearly 15 percent of respondents identified their occupation as Clerical/Administrative Support, and roughly 14 percent as Laborer. The remaining occupations individually were indicated by less than 10 percent of respondents, with a mere .2 percent citing employment in occupations other than what was listed.
Respondent Specialty Area

Participants were asked to further categorize their specialty area within their current general occupational area (Figure 16). The largest cited specialty area was Education at 30.3 percent. According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, state and local education makes up 4.2 percent of total employment within Washington County, indicating a bias in overall results toward those employed in education related fields.

Additionally, manufacturing makes up the largest percent of those employed within Washington County at 21.1 percent, according to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. Production/operations/manufacturing survey respondents were slightly underrepresented in the study, with only 13.3 percent reporting these fields as their current specialty area. Customer Service, Healthcare and General Administration also had notable values at 9.4 percent, 6.2 percent and 5 percent of the respondent work force. The remaining specialty areas individually maintained fewer than 5 percent of the respondent pool. Nearly 10 percent of respondents indicated a specialty area other that what was provided. The “Other” category was largely made up of employees in insurance, human services, law enforcement, and social services.

Figure 16: Current Specialty Area

- Education, 30.3%
- Production/Operations/Manufacturing, 13.3%
- Customer Service, 9.4%
- Healthcare, 6.2%
- General administration, 5.0%
- Finance, 4.9%
- Information technology, 4.3%
- Maintenance, 3.4%
- Materials/Warehousing/Transportation, 2.6%
- Marketing/Sales, 2.3%
- Engineering, 2.3%
- Quality, 1.8%
- Graphic arts/Design, 1.6%
- Research and develop., .6%
- Construction, .6%
- Other, 9.9%
Respondent Age, Gender and Residence

In total, 57.5 percent of respondents identified their current age as 46 years or older. The study was slightly biased toward older workers, but overall in alignment with county workforce demographics which indicate 48.4 percent age 45 and older. The largest indicated age range by respondents was 46 to 55 years at 31 percent, in line with county workforce data.

In total, 67.1 percent of respondents reported their gender as female, while 32.9 percent reported male. According to the American Community 3-year Survey published in 2011, 48.6 percent of Washington County residents currently employed identified themselves as female. The Washington County survey data was skewed toward females; driven by the larger female to male proportion of responses from the Education specialty area, which consists of 77.4 percent females.

Respondents were asked to indicate their current place of residence to better understand commuting patterns. A total of 73 percent of respondents identified Washington County as their current residence.
In recent years there have been a number of economic setbacks that have caused us to wonder if a shortage in labor supply is still plausible. The Washington County findings demonstrate there is not only a major concern for the supply of skilled workers in the future, but that the shortage is here today and will likely remain a critical issue for the foreseeable future.

With nearly 51 percent of respondents planning to retire within the next 15 years, findings demonstrate that respondents are very committed to their intentions to retire when they feel financially stable enough to do so. As illustrated in Figure 18, Washington County’s retirement intentions are startlingly higher than the historical retirement rate in the zero to 15 year range, slightly higher in the 16 to 30 year range, and lower in the 31 to 45 year range. The results demonstrate accelerated retirement intentions that contrast steady, historical retirement rates.

Roughly 39 percent of respondents planning to retire within five years indicated they would be interested in post-retirement employment in some capacity. Nearly 15 percent said quite clearly they had no intention of working at all following retirement. Given that roughly only one in 10 employees intending to retire within the next five years would consider working post-retirement for their current employer, it appears employers have had little success in enticing their current work force to remain in some capacity beyond retirement.
Clearly, the results indicate access to all possible replacement workers becomes an immediate concern. The 2010 US Census data indicates as workers leave the Washington County labor pool over the next 15 years, there will be an anticipated gap of over 13,400 individuals available to replace departing workers, taking into consideration the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development’s 2010 labor force participation rate for Washington County of 71.8 percent (Figure 19). If we factor in departures of area high school graduates for post-secondary education, military service, or other departure reasons, the gap in the number of retirees versus the number of available replacement workers grows to over 23,500 by 2026.

With a 2011 estimated labor pool of roughly 67,000, forecasts for retirements of employees in Washington County could reach 34,000 by 2026, with just over 10,000 available workers as replacements. All projections optimistically assume available worker skill sets will match with those demanded by employers, which will likely not be the case.

If information is power, then Washington County is well ahead of the competition with current and reliable data mapping out the future labor market for the area. Community leaders will need to create new and innovative methods for recruiting and retaining workers at all skill levels to ensure a vibrant and productive economy.
References

Manpower Group, (2012). *Talent Shortage 2011 Survey Results*. Milwaukee, WI.

State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), (2012), *May Jobs, Unemployment Numbers Announced for State*. Madison, WI.