



# City of River Falls, Wisconsin

## 2018 Trends Report

*Published April 2, 2019 by the Community Development Department, City Hall, 222 Lewis Street, River Falls, WI 54022. For more information, please call **715-425-0900**.*

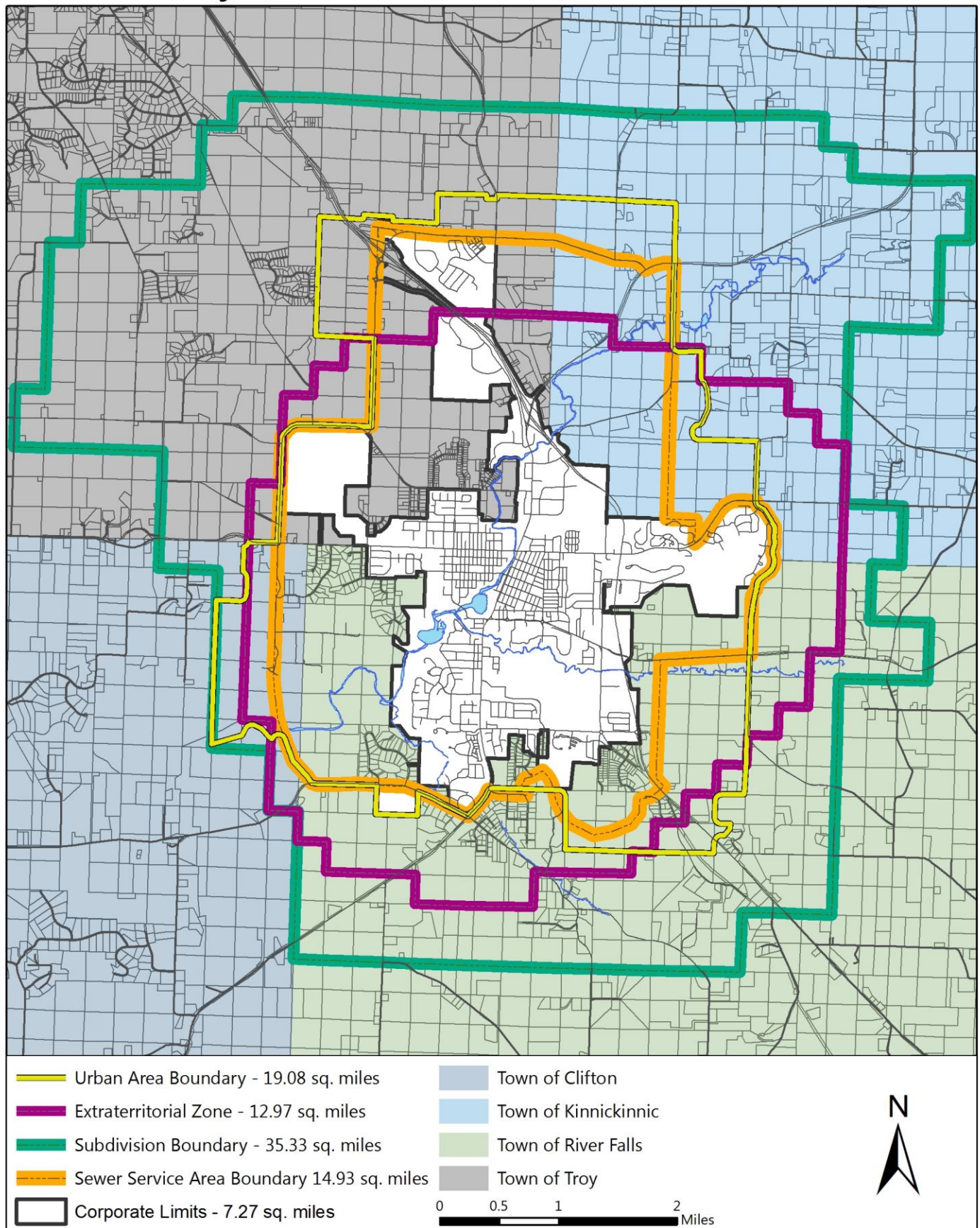
## Introduction

The City of River Falls features small-town living and abundant outdoor recreation within the Minneapolis - St. Paul Metropolitan area. The community features a traditional main street business district, two college campuses, and four business parks connected by thriving neighborhoods and scenic green space. In 2005, the City of River Falls adopted its Comprehensive Plan, which guides all decisions regarding the physical, social, and economic character of the community. The statistics in this report serve as a measure of growth and progress towards goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. The following maps depict the City's location, jurisdictional boundaries, neighboring townships, and land area within each boundary.



# City of River Falls

## 2018 Boundary Area Calculations



## About the Data

Most of the data in this report is from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS 2013-2017), since it is the most comprehensive dataset that includes city and township-level data for non-census years. The most recent American Community Survey 5-year estimates were released on December 6, 2018. It uses data collected through June 1, 2017. Additional sources of data used in this report come from the State of Wisconsin's Department of Administration (DOA), Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Other data sources are cited accordingly or produced by City staff.

## 2017 Census Data Highlights

### **2017 Population: 15,256**

The population is estimated to have grown by **1.71%** since 2010

### **2017 Income: \$54,350**

This median household income is \$3.3K below the national average of \$57,652

### **746 Companies are located in River Falls**

Source: 2012 U.S. Census Survey of Business Owners

### **2017 Labor Force: 8,757**

The unemployment rate is estimated to be just **1.4%** in 2017 (lower than state and county estimates)

### **2017 Average Commute: 20.7 Minutes**

River Falls commuters spend less time commuting than most Twin Cities residents

### **20.7% population growth expected 2010-2040**

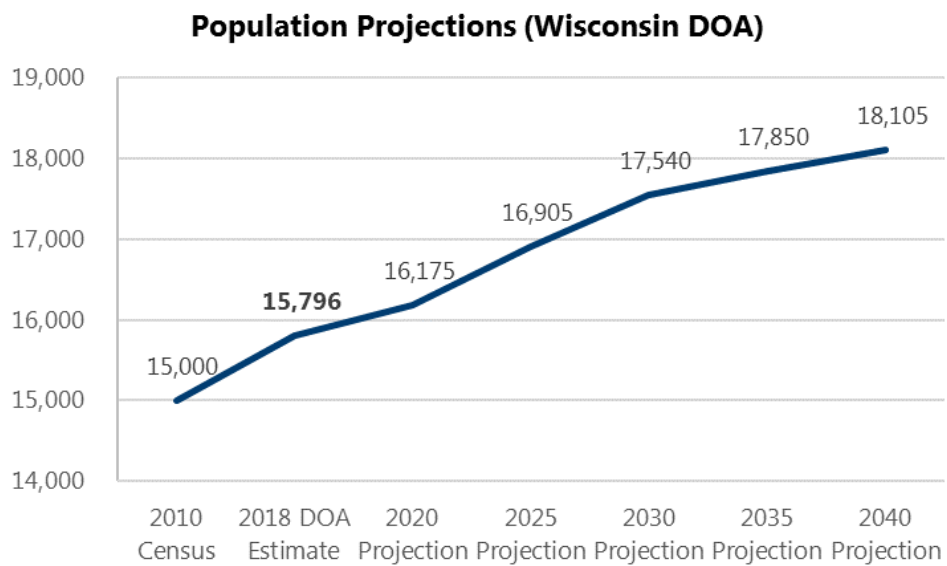
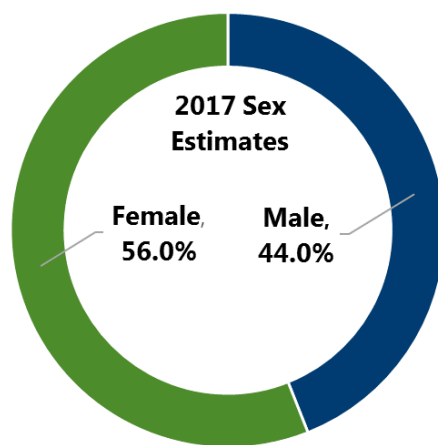
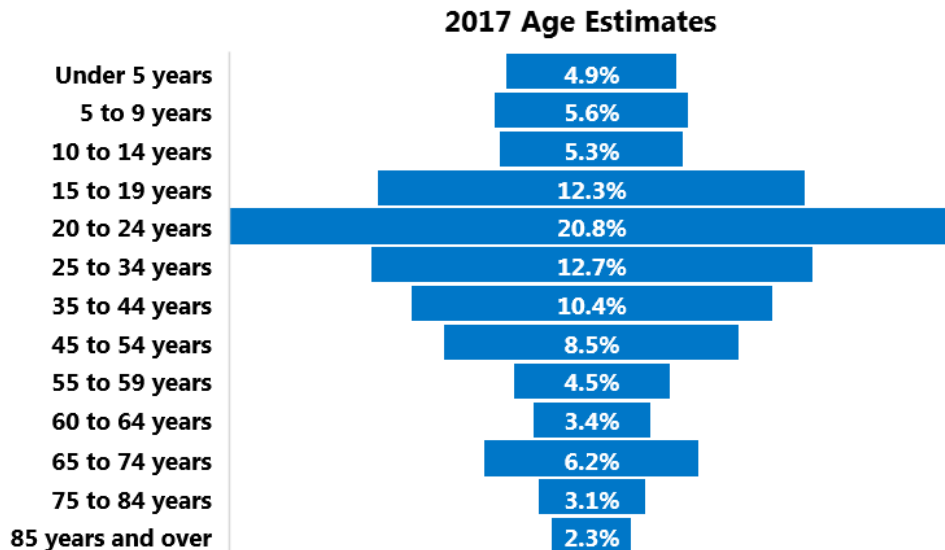
Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration projections

## Demographics

The following data provides an overview of the City's population and how it compares to the region and the State of Wisconsin. Except for one neighboring township, the region is growing steadily, and unemployment has dropped considerably since 2010 due to economic recovery.

|                            | 2010 U.S. Census | 2015 Wisconsin DOA Estimates | 2017 ACS Estimates | Growth 2010 - 2017 |
|----------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>City of River Falls</b> | <b>15,000</b>    | <b>15,180</b>                | <b>15,256</b>      | <b>1.71%</b>       |
| Town of Troy               | 4,705            | 4,948                        | 5,076              | 7.89%              |
| Town of Kinnickinnic       | 1,722            | 1,755                        | 1,782              | 3.48%              |
| Town of Clifton            | 2,012            | 2,033                        | 2,209              | 9.79%              |
| Town of River Falls        | 2,271            | 2,295                        | 2,132              | -6.12%             |
| St. Croix County           | 84,345           | 87,142                       | 86,726             | 2.82%              |
| Pierce County              | 41,019           | 41,251                       | 41,226             | 0.50%              |
| State of Wisconsin         | 5,686,986        | 5,753,324                    | 5,763,217          | 1.34%              |
| Twin Cities Metro          | 3,348,859        | Not Available                | 3,600,618          | 7.52%              |

# Demographics



# Employment

**City of River Falls labor force**

**8,940**

**Unemployed**

**183**

**Number of companies**

**746**

**Employed**

**8,757**

**Unemployment rate**

**1.4%**

**Median household income**

**\$54,350**

The City of River Falls has a lower unemployment rate than Pierce and St. Croix Counties, with a median household income that is about \$3,300 less than the national average. Overall, the St. Croix Valley has seen low levels of unemployment in the last few years, following the nationwide trend of economic recovery since the early 2010s.

| <b>2017 ACS<br/>Estimates</b> | Labor Force | Employed  | Unemployed | Unemployment<br>Rate |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|----------------------|
| St. Croix Co                  | 48,926      | 47,132    | 1,621      | 2.4%                 |
| Pierce Co                     | 24,016      | 23,358    | 651        | 1.9%                 |
| Wisconsin                     | 3,087,719   | 2,939,880 | 145,271    | 3.1%                 |

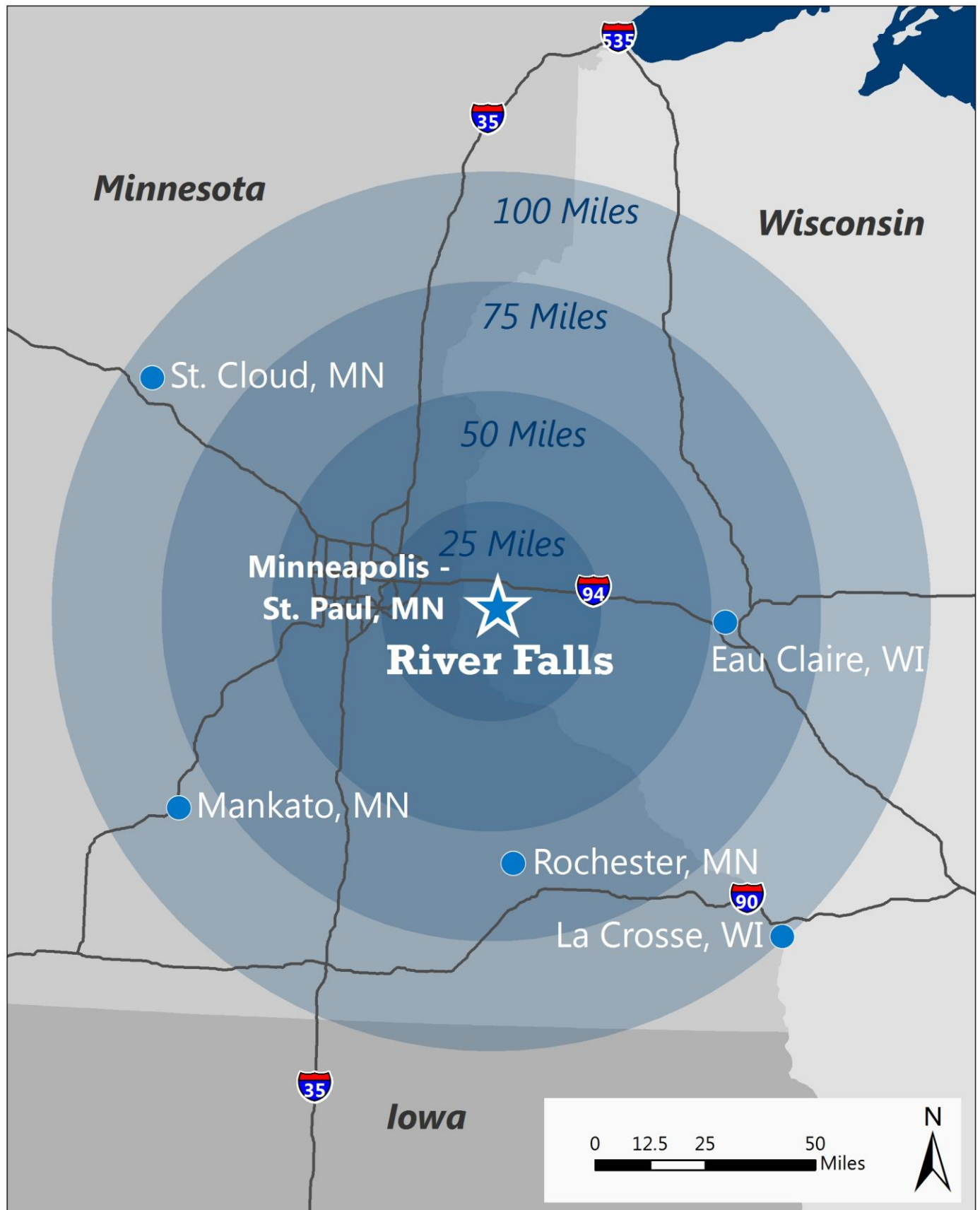
## Largest Employers in River Falls (2018)

| Entity                                | Description                      | Employees |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| University of Wisconsin - River Falls | Post-secondary education         | 886       |
| School District of River Falls        | Elementary & secondary education | 450       |
| River Falls Area Hospital             | Hospital                         | 444       |
| BioDiagnostics, Inc.                  | Genetic testing                  | 180       |
| Best Maid Cookie Company              | Industrial bakery                | 175       |
| Vibrant Health                        | Medical clinic                   | 148       |
| City of River Falls                   | Municipal government             | 145       |
| Minnesota Rubber & Plastics           | Rubber and plastic manufacturer  | 130       |
| Family Fresh Market                   | Grocery store                    | 130       |
| Shopko                                | Retail store                     | 100       |



# City of River Falls

## Distance to Other Cities



# Radius Map: Labor Force Characteristics

Data are aggregated at the County level. Source: <http://www.statsamerica.org/radius/big.aspx>

| Counties within 25 miles       |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| 2017 population                | 433,256  |
| 10-year growth                 | 9.0%     |
| October 2018 labor force       | 245,759  |
| October 2018 employment        | 240,489  |
| October 2018 unemployment rate | 2.1%     |
| Average earnings               | \$46,854 |

| Counties within 50 miles       |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| 2017 population                | 3,348,345 |
| 10-year growth                 | 9.5%      |
| October 2018 labor force       | 1,871,528 |
| October 2018 employment        | 1,831,873 |
| October 2018 unemployment rate | 2.1%      |
| Average earnings               | \$67,757  |

| Counties within 75 miles       |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| 2017 population                | 4,342,119 |
| 10-year growth                 | 9.1%      |
| October 2018 labor force       | 2,421,495 |
| October 2018 employment        | 2,369,898 |
| October 2018 unemployment rate | 2.1%      |
| Average earnings               | \$64,423  |

| Counties within 100 miles      |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| 2017 population                | 4,977,387 |
| 10-year growth                 | 8.1%      |
| October 2018 labor force       | 2,775,274 |
| October 2018 employment        | 2,715,830 |
| October 2018 unemployment rate | 2.1       |
| Average earnings               | \$61,976  |

## Nearest Metropolitan Areas

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) population U.S. Census 2017 estimates and driving distance:

**Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN**  
3,600,618 people  
30 miles

**Rochester, MN**  
218,280 people  
70 miles

**La Crosse, WI**  
136,934 people  
115 miles

**Eau Claire, WI**  
167,484 people  
65 miles

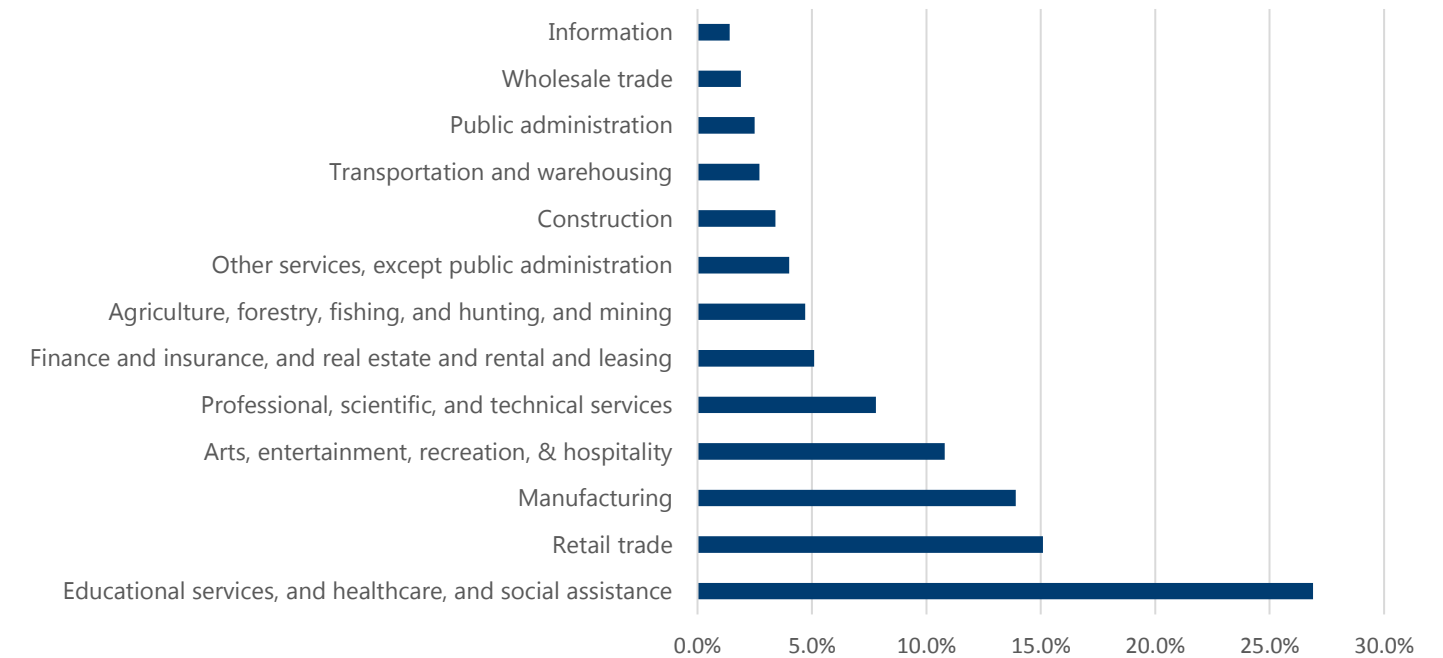
**St. Cloud, MN**  
197,759 people  
100 miles

**Mankato, MN**  
100,939 people  
115 miles

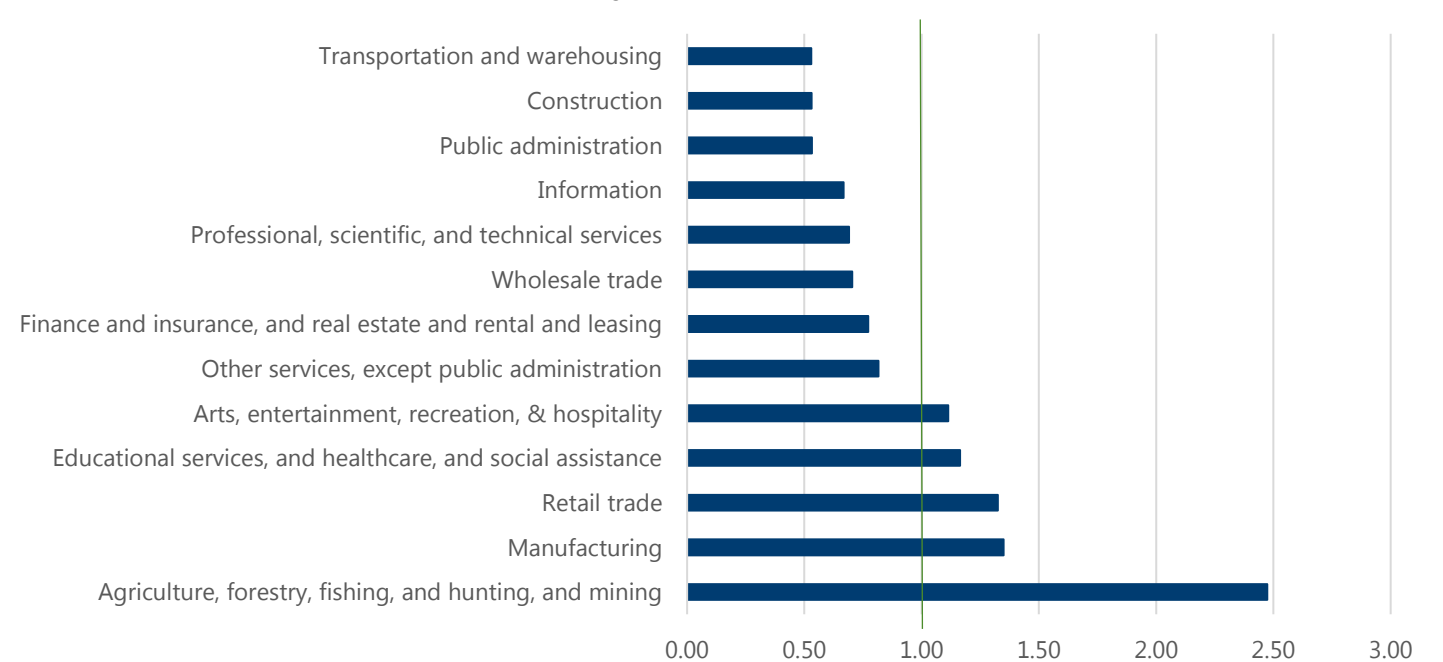
# Employment

Industry percent of total employment measures what percent of jobs in the City fall into each industry. Location Quotient measures the community's share of employment by industry compared to the national average. Industries greater than 1.00 have a greater concentration of jobs in River Falls and industries below 1.00 having a lower concentration of jobs in River Falls compared to the nation's total employment by sector.

Industry percent of total employment



Industry Location Quotient





# 2018 Development Fast Facts

**Building permits issued**

**237**

**Acres annexed**

**69**

**New Single-family permits**

**50**

**Developer agreements  
signed**

**3**

**Development review  
applications processed**

**19**

**New Multi-family permits**

**1**

(A new four-plex)

The number of development review applications in 2018 was 11 greater than in 2017, 9 greater than in 2016, and several times greater than years prior to 2016. In 2018, a 69-acre annexation of mostly school district-owned land successfully connected the upcoming Mann Valley Corporate Park to the City.

## City-Wide Development

The City of River Falls promotes infill development, and several multifamily projects are expected to be approved in 2019. Campusview Birchcrest, a 14-unit, 54-bedroom student housing project near UWRF, Aldi, and Culver's are notable infill projects approved in 2018. Single family housing construction continues in newer neighborhoods that feature desirable greenspace, playgrounds, and trails.

## Downtown and Campus Development

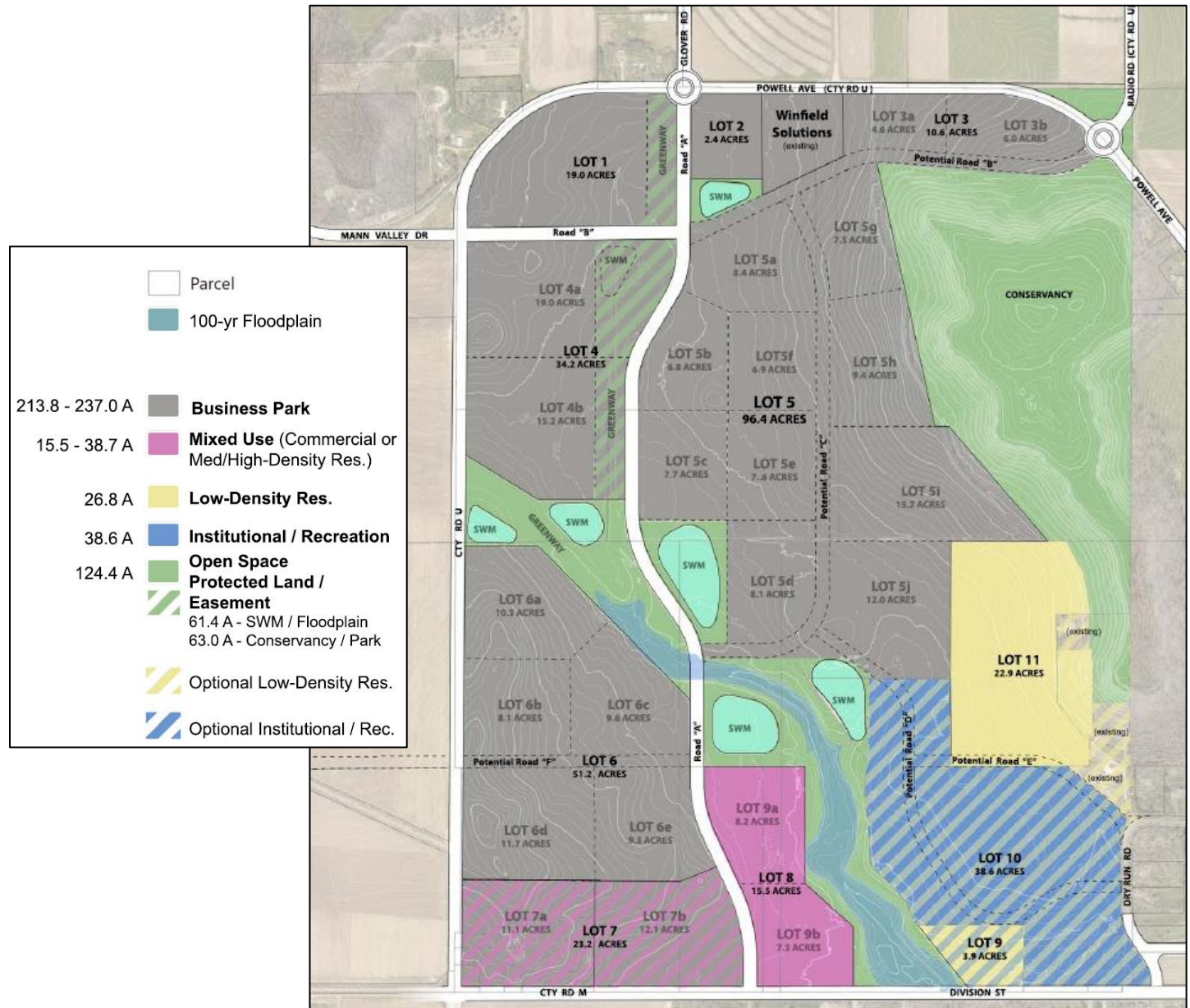
Downtown River Falls features traditional store fronts, thriving local businesses, and scenic views of the Kinnickinnic River. The City's Kinni Corridor Plan guides future downtown development following an eventual dam removal and waterfall restoration project. This Plan recommends civic, educational, and recreational amenities to enhance Main Street. Additionally, Main Street's upcoming reconstruction will provide opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure upgrades to improve downtown accessibility.

The upcoming Campus Corridor Plan highlights key areas for campus-related infill development near University of Wisconsin - River Falls (UWRF) and Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC). CVTC completed a 7,761 square foot building expansion in 2018, and UWRF is in the process of rehabilitating existing buildings and planning for a new Science building. UWRF completed the new Falcon Center in 2017, which is home to a 15,000 square foot exercise center, classrooms, rock climbing wall, indoor track, and various indoor and outdoor athletic fields, with gym memberships available to the public. Following a recent tax referendum, the River Falls School District submitted plans for all properties in 2018, including a partial replacement of the River Falls Academy Building and the addition of a new football field for the high school.

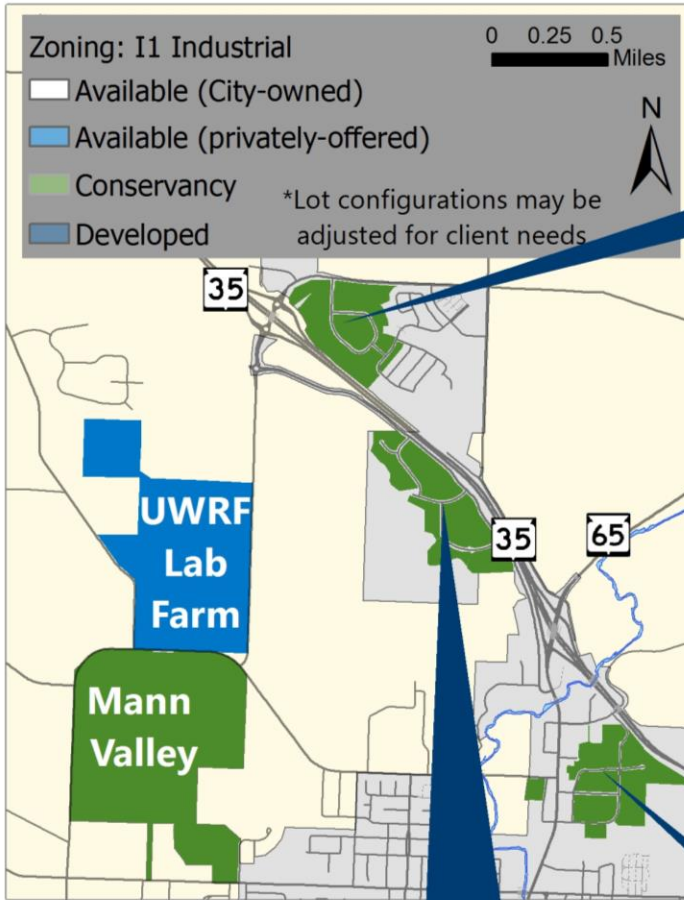
# Corporate Park Development

River Falls is home to River Falls Industrial Park (1989), Whitetail Ridge Corporate Park (1993), Sterling Ponds Corporate Park (2014), and the upcoming Mann Valley Corporate Park (see below). Existing corporate park acreage is developable under I-1 Light Industrial Zoning. In 2017-2018, Rise Baking completed two building expansions in River Falls Industrial Park, and Anchor Paper began construction of an 88,000 square foot facility in Whitetail Ridge Corporate Park.

**Mann Valley** is a future 285-acre site that will be divided into 6 lots that are among the largest available corporate park sites in Western Wisconsin and the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area. The 6 lots can be further subdivided into several smaller lots to meet client needs. Additional lots are planned for mixed business park and commercial use, mixed residential and commercial use, low-density housing, stormwater management, institutional use, and parkland. Below is a map from the adopted Mann Valley Concept Plan created by MSA Professional Services in 2018:







# Housing

**Vacancy Rate**

**4.30%**

**Owner-occupied units**

**50%**

**Total housing units**

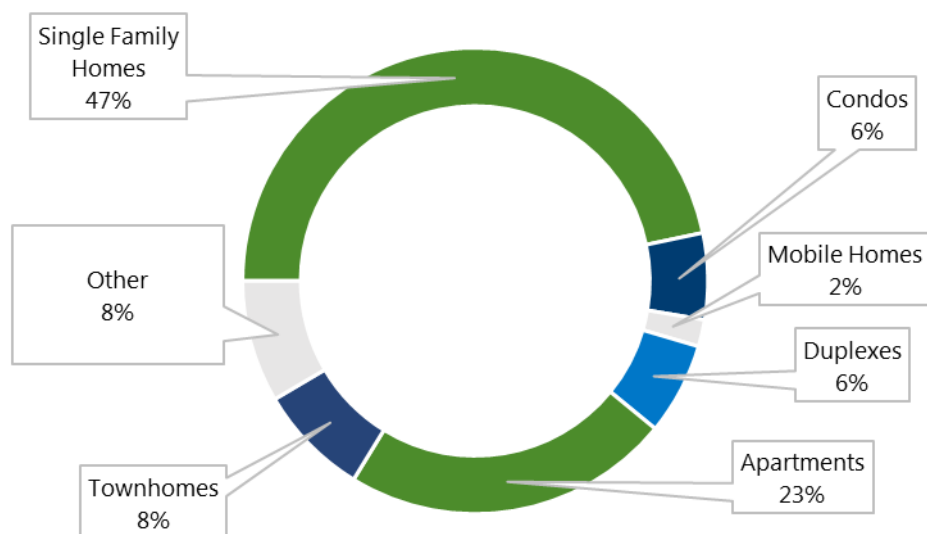
**5,979**

Average household size

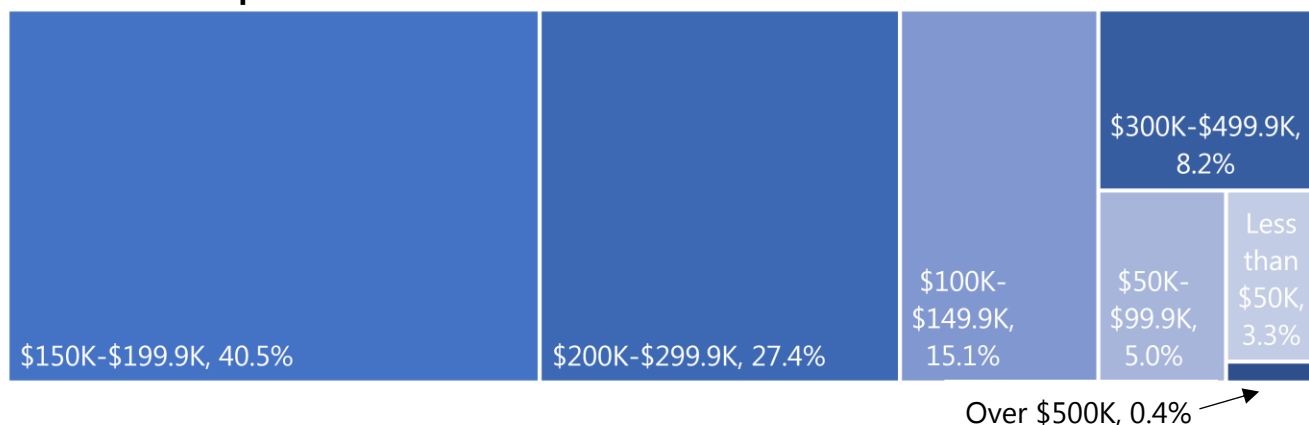
(owner-occupied): **2.63**

(renter-occupied): **2.13**

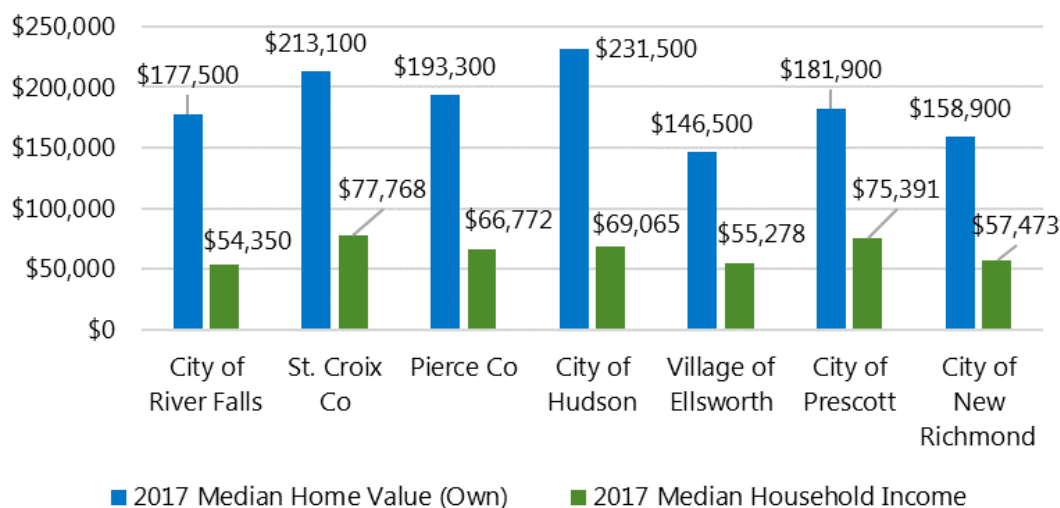
**Owner-occupied homes by type**  
(City of River Falls Building Permit Data)



**2017 Owner-Occupied Value:**



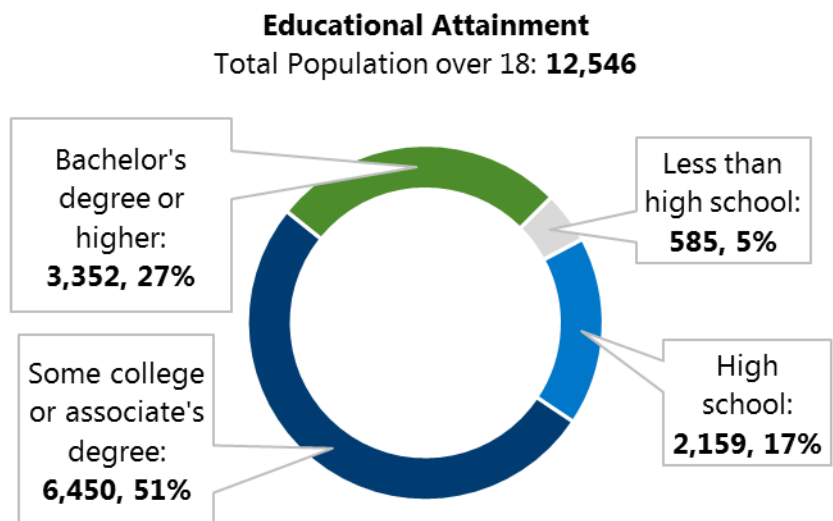
## Housing Value: Neighboring Communities





## Education

River Falls is home to the River Falls School District, the University of Wisconsin – River Falls, and the River Falls campus of Chippewa Valley Technical College. **Over half of the City's adult population has at least some education beyond high school.** The college campuses play a significant role in the City's identity, character, and economy, providing jobs and graduates for the region.



## School Campuses

### River Falls School District

#### Campuses and Enrollment:

River Falls High School: **943**

Meyer Middle School: **779**

Greenwood Elementary: **405**

Montessori (Public) Elementary: **163**

Renaissance Charter Academy: **34**

Rocky Branch Elementary: **451**

Westside Elementary: **440**

(Enrollment totals from WI Dept. of Public Instruction)

#### Other School Campuses:

Heritage Montessori Academy

St. Bridget Parish School

#### Colleges and Universities

Chippewa Valley Technical College: **1,128**

University of Wisconsin – River Falls: **6,110**

## University of Wisconsin – River Falls (UWRF)

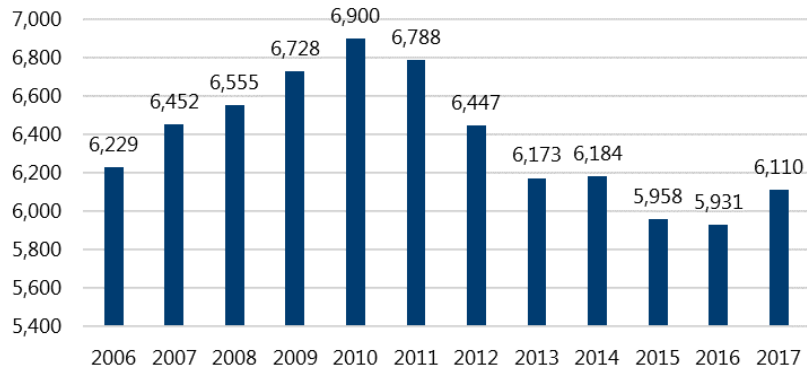
Situated on a scenic, 225-acre campus, UWRF has served as the State's westernmost UW campus since 1874. UWRF is known for its outstanding undergraduate research program, immersive study abroad programs, and excellence in the sciences, exemplified by the Biology Department's receipt of the 2014 UW System Regents Teaching Excellence Award. The University was also named the Professional Sales Education Institute by the Sales Education Foundation for two consecutive years, due to its leadership in economic growth in the St. Croix Valley. In 2017, a 162,300 square foot facility known as the Falcon Center opened its doors. This facility features exercise rooms, a rock wall, an arena and classrooms, and it houses the school's Health and Human Performance Department.

# Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC)

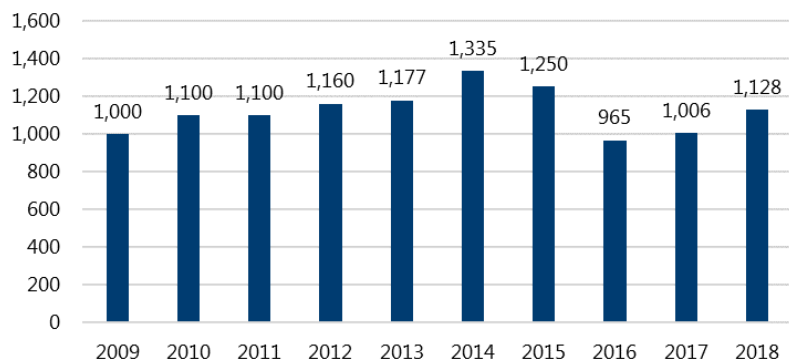
Based in Eau Claire, WI, Chippewa Valley Technical College continues to expand its facilities and course offerings at its River Falls campus. Students may live on campus, off-campus, or at UWRF. CVTC graduates have an average job placement rate of 93%, starting salary of nearly \$40,000, and may easily transfer credits to UWRF, as well as many other college campuses.

CVTC's Programs include business management, criminal justice, design and drafting technology, electro-mechanical maintenance technician, liberal arts – Associate of Science, mechanical design, nursing, nursing assistant, organizational leadership, and residential construction.

**University of Wisconsin - River Falls  
Enrollment Head Count**



**Chippewa Valley Technical College  
River Falls Campus Enrollment**



## Local Service Providers

### Phone and Internet Service Providers:

Xfinity (Comcast), Baldwin Telecom, and AT&T, with up to 1GB of internet speeds are available. Fiber internet with speeds of 1GB is available in Sterling Ponds and Whitetail Ridge Corporate Parks, and service is planned to be provided to Mann Valley Corporate Park.

### Natural Gas Provider:

Located in River Falls, St. Croix Gas Company has served the City since 1966 with standard 2 p.s.i. and high-pressure connections available.

**Solid Waste Provider:** The City contracts with Advanced Disposal for all single-family homes; other properties may choose any contractor.

### City Media

City Council, Plan Commission, and Utilities Commission meetings are broadcast on YouTube, and the City plans to upgrade recording equipment to high-definition in 2019.



# River Falls Municipal Utilities (RFMU)



## Power Service

- River Falls is a Green Power Community (since 2009)
- **The solar energy customer participation rate is 10.0%, ranking #1 in Wisconsin and #5 nationally**
- 133,044,513 kWh consumed City-wide in 2018, of which 26.62% comes from renewable energy sources
- Average households use 2 to 3 energy blocks per month
- Customers may purchase solar energy at \$3 per block (1 block = 300 kWh)
- RFMU partnered with Habitat for Humanity in 2015 to create an affordable housing development known as the Eco Village
- The Eco Village recovers 35%-67% of its energy use, saving residents \$578-\$715 annually
- Power is generated by RFMU and purchased from Xcel Energy and Dairyland Power Cooperative

## POWERful Choices!

Since 2007, this community-lead sustainability project has accomplished:

- Saving 33.8 million kWh of power City-wide
- Saving \$2.7 million on customer electric bills
- Reducing \$2.3 million of wholesale purchased power costs
- Returning \$1.3 million in Focus on Energy incentives to customers

## Water (Since 1894)

- The network includes 5 wells, 3 booster stations, 3 storage tanks, and 80.5 miles of water mains
- Water is pumped from the Jordan Aquifer (Ordovician and Cambrian Sandstone)
- 398,651,000 gallons were pumped in 2017 (1,092,195 per day)
- Maximum daily usage in 2017: 2,168,000 gallons (down from 2,840,000 in 2015 and 2,500,000 in 2000)
- Minimum daily usage in 2017: 454,000 gallons

## Wastewater (Since 1930)

- The network includes 1 Wastewater Treatment Facility, 62 miles of sewer mains and 7 lift stations
- The treatment facility's capacity is 1.8 million gallons per day (GPD)
- The average flow was 1.3 million GPD in 2017 (up 18% from 1.1 million GPD in 2008-2013)
- The Wastewater Treatment Facility's future capacity is 3,110 additional residential units (Assumptions: household size of 2.7, 75 GPD per person, and no wet industrial development)

# Emergency Services

## Police Department

- 4 Patrol Sergeants
- 13 Patrol Officers
- 5 marked fleet units

## Emergency Medical Services

- 10 full-time staff
- 203 square miles served
- Approximately 50,000 residents served

## Fire Department

- 42 volunteer firefighters
- Average of 15 years of service
- 3 engines, 1 ladder, 2 tankers, and 2 brush trucks

|              | 2016  | 2018  | % Change |
|--------------|-------|-------|----------|
| Fire calls   | 267   | 278   | 4.1%     |
| Police calls | 5,775 | 6,637 | 14.9%    |
| EMS Calls    | 2,221 | 2,089 | -5.9%    |

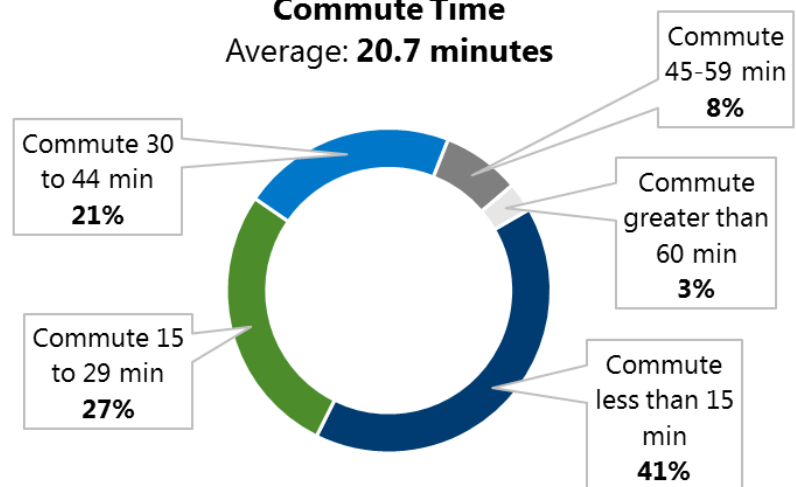
## 2018 EMS Statistics

|                       |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Ambulance transports  | 1,515    |
| Total ambulance hours | 49,883   |
| Average response time | 7.4 min. |

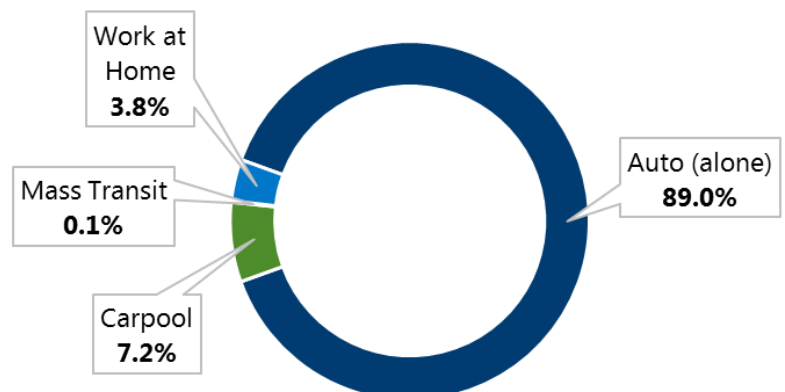
# Transportation

River Falls is served by Wisconsin State Highways 29, 35, and 65, with Highway 35 providing direct 4-lane access to Interstate 94, the Twin Cities, and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. Cars are the primary mode of transportation, and estimated commute times dropped from 24.9 min in 2016 to 20.7 in 2017. A new taxi began in 2015 that serves up to a five-mile radius beyond the City limits. In 2018, the City was awarded a \$48,000 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant for a future City-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan. Since 2016, the City has sponsored the Blue Bike program, providing free bicycles to borrow at several locations throughout the City. Overall, the City totaled 15.7 miles of unpaved paths, 19.8 miles of paved paths, and 51.5 miles of sidewalks in 2018.

## Commute Time Average: 20.7 minutes



## Commute Mode



## Parks and Recreation

**Public Parks**  
(Active recreation space)

**275.82 acres**

**Parks Per  
1,000 residents  
18.08 acres**

**Public Conservancy**  
(Undeveloped open space)  
**327.61 acres**

The National Recreation and Park Association recommends at least 6 to 10 acres of developed, active park space per 1,000 residents. River Falls' extensive park system includes 18.08 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, in addition to school district playgrounds and fields, private golf courses, and public conservancy lands that contain miles of nature trails. An upcoming Park and Outdoor Recreation Plan will provide an in-depth inventory and analysis of the City's park system and when completed, qualifies the City for grant funding for parkland acquisition and improvement. In 2018, 90 Parks and Recreation programs served 2,527 youth and 1,200 adults.

### **New and in-progress park projects include:**

- New storm shelter at Hoffman Park
- Master plan implementation of Glen Park (parking, trails)
- New picnic pavilion and storm shelter at Glen Park
- National Historic Register designation of the Swinging Bridge (1928)
- Grand opening of River Falls Dog Park
- Glover School utility upgrades

### **Community designations include:**

- Bird City Wisconsin (High Flyer Status)
- Tree City USA
- Playful City USA (one of 6 in Wisconsin)
- Monarch City USA
- Bicycle Friendly Community

## Library

Opened in 1997, the 36,000 square foot River Falls Public Library shares resources with 50 libraries in 10 counties through the MORE Library Consortium. The Library received the Wisconsin Library of the Year Award in 2015, and it provides River Falls residents access to various databases, computers, laptops, and iPads, with E-books, Kindles, and Nooks available for check-out. Additional library resources are available at UWRF and CVTC for students. **In 2018, there were:**

Total library patrons  
**173,981**

Number of Youth Programs  
**288**

Number of gallery visitors  
**9,000**

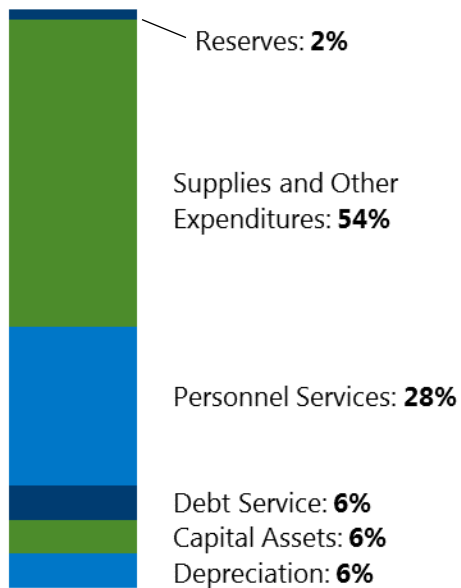
Total materials checked out  
**319,778**

Number of adult programs  
**217**

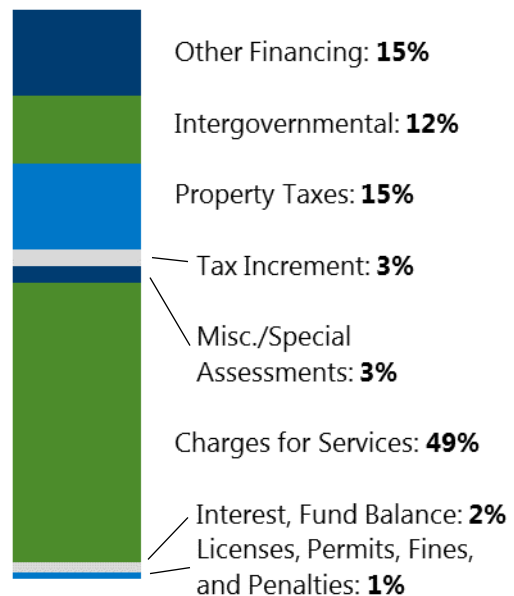
Number of exhibits  
**10**

# Finances

**City Budget 2019-2020  
Expenditures**



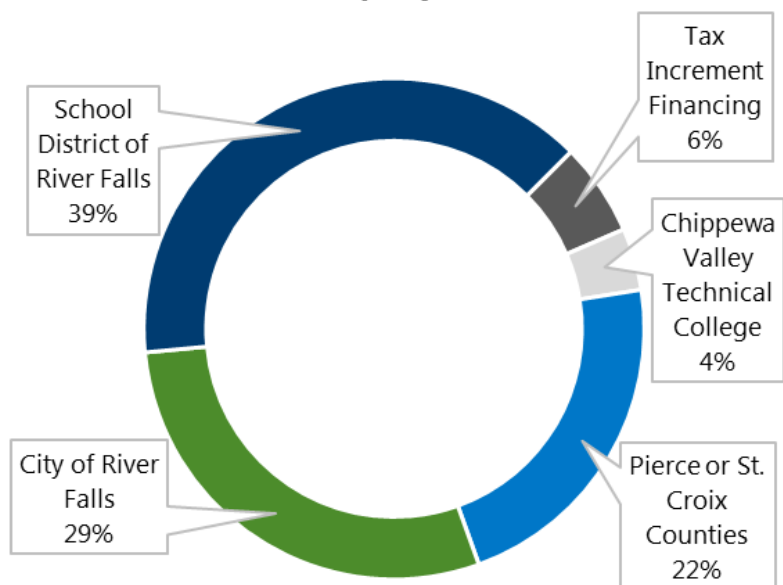
**City Budget 2019-2020  
Revenues**



**Major Capital Projects  
in 2019-2020 Budget:**

- Glen Park Implementation (\$4.4 million)
- North Interceptor Sewer Project (\$2.7 million)
- Division Street/STH 35 Interchange (\$2.6 million)
- Advanced Metering Infrastructure (\$1.3 million)
- South Fork Substation Transformer (\$1.2 million)

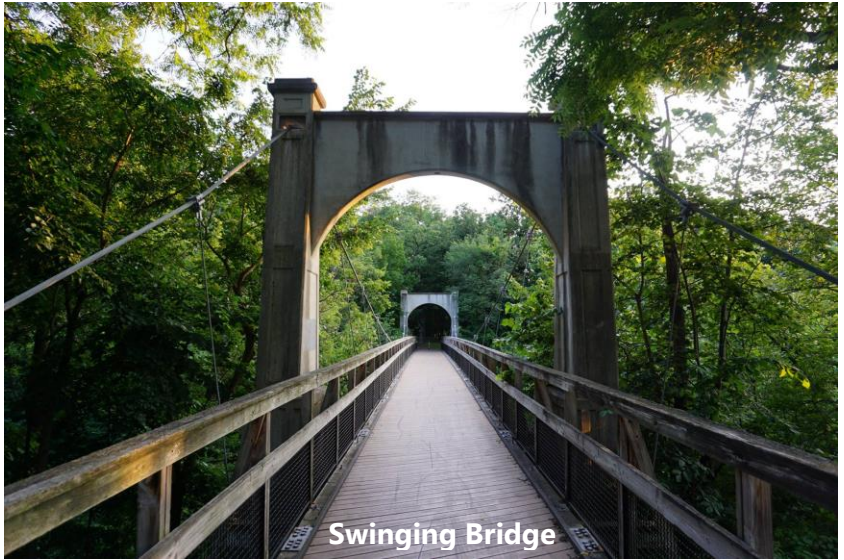
**Where Property Taxes Go**



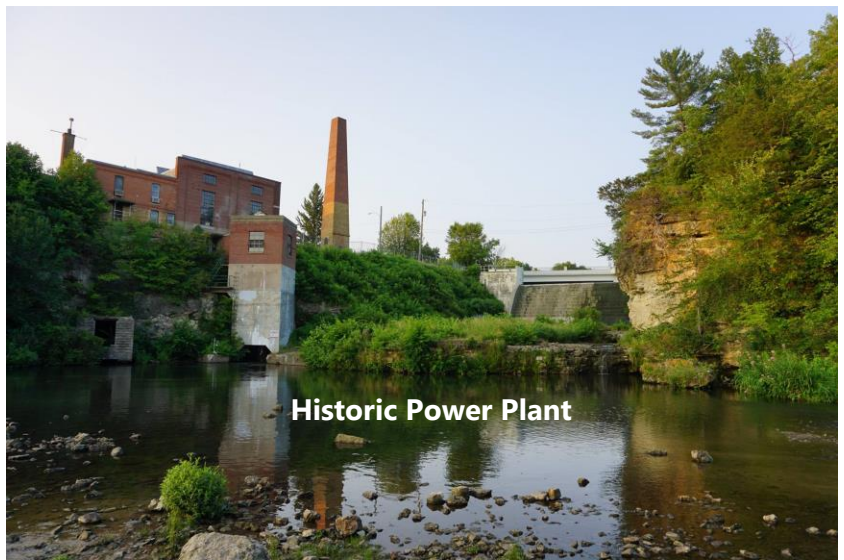




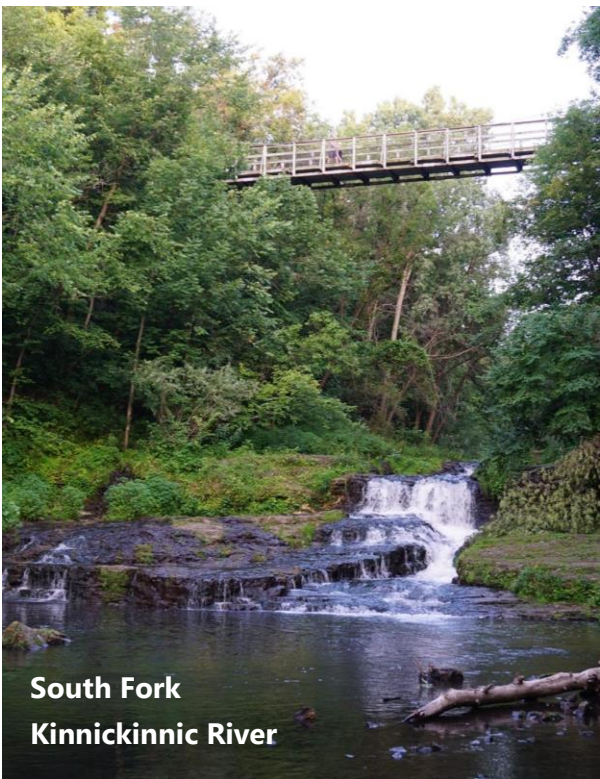
University of Wisconsin -  
River Falls



Swinging Bridge



Historic Power Plant



South Fork  
Kinnickinnic River



River Falls City Hall

## Photo Gallery

Photos by Sam Wessel, Planner