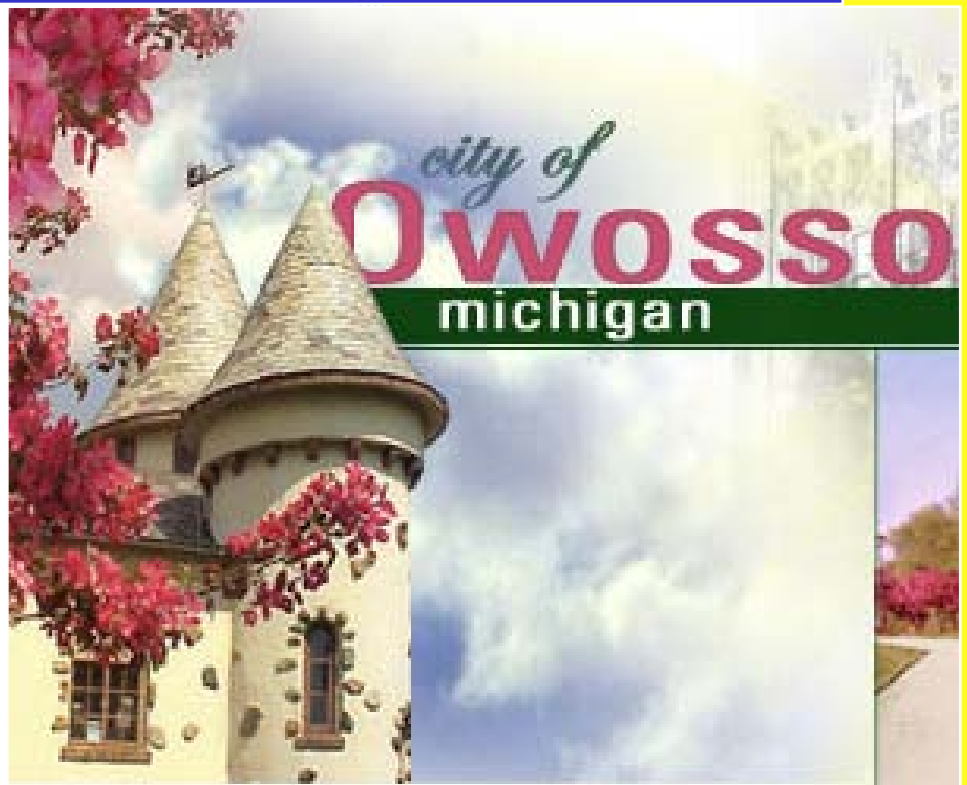


**2011**

# Elements of a Master Plan



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# Executive Summary

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The City of Owosso is centrally located in Michigan's Lower Peninsula in central Shiawassee County, directly west of the City of Flint and northeast of the City of Lansing. The closest major expressways are I-69 to the south, and I-75 to the east. Michigan state highways M-21 and M-52 run directly through the city; intersecting in the downtown area. Historically, the City of Owosso has been in close proximity to large automobile manufacturing centers. Because of its location, manufacturing has been one of the leading industries in the city's past. It is also on the border of southeastern Michigan, the most populated region of the state. The Shiawassee River runs directly through the main downtown area of the city.

## Scope

Students in the Urban and Regional Planning Practicum course at Michigan State University collaborated with the City of Owosso's Assistant City Manager and Community Development Director, Adam Zettel, to gather and analyze existing demographic, socio-economic, and housing data in order to aid in the creation of a Master Plan. The project goals were to focus on these key elements of the Master Plan process. To understand the current conditions in Owosso, data was collected and existing trends and themes were analyzed. The practicum team made site visits to Owosso to gain a better understanding of the city. A focus group of Owosso residents was also conducted to obtain the perspective of local community members. After the data collection and analysis phases were completed, findings, implications, and items for future consideration were presented. The goal of this section was to tell the story of Owosso, what current themes and trends could mean for the city, and to provide the city with items it should think about as the Master Plan process continues. In addition to this work, a public participation plan was also created as a tool to gather public input on the new Master Plan. Within the public participation plan is a sample survey to assist with the collection of public input.

## Methodology

### Census Data Analysis

Data from the Decennial Census of 1980, 1990 and 2000 was collected, as well as estimation data from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey. Data was only collected from 1980 and 1990 if available. This information was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau. The same data was collected for four different geographical areas: the City of Owosso, the City of Corunna, Shiawassee County, and the State of Michigan. These four different areas were chosen for the purpose of comparison. The main focus was on estimation data from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey. Complete data from the 2010 Census was not available during the creation of the final document. For some housing data, information was obtained through realtytrac.com and the Argus Press; the local newspaper. Crime data was collected from the Michigan State Police.

## SWOT Analysis

A focus group was conducted with local residents to share public opinion on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the City of Owosso. Information and qualitative data gathered and analyzed from this session were compiled and used throughout the practicum team's report.

## Findings

The City of Owosso has experienced many difficulties over the past thirty years. Many of these difficulties stem from the loss of manufacturing that has occurred in the mid-Michigan region. Compounding these problems is the lack of a shared vision and plan for the city's future. The city has operated since its founding without a master plan, which has left development largely unguided and unfocused. As Owosso begins the Master Plan creation process, the city is provided with the opportunity to examine its current position and chart a course for the future.

An examination of Owosso's demographics raises some concerns about the current state of the city. Owosso has experienced a steady population loss since 1980. This loss has short term implications, such as loss of a local tax base, and long term implications for the city's image. Steady population loss can contribute to the image of a city in decline, which can make the community unattractive to outsiders and create an uninviting business climate.

The city has also experienced increasing crime rates. Additionally, the poverty and unemployment rates for Owosso are higher than the other comparable areas. Median income within the city is also lower than other comparable areas. The combination of this data paints a picture of a community that is undesirable and potentially unsafe. It is important to note, however, that the data is only one piece of this story. Information collected from residents during a focus group painted a picture of a safe city with a neighborhood feel.

The City of Owosso is also more racially homogenous than Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. This lack of diversity can make the community racially isolated and leave residents less prepared to function in an increasingly global economy. The community is also experiencing some difficulties with the educational attainment of its citizens aged 25 and older. Owosso has a lower rate of individuals 25 and older who have completed at least some college. Good news for the City of Owosso, however, is that the rates of individuals who are currently enrolled in college are higher than other comparable communities. This bodes well for the future of the city.

A significant obstacle for the City of Owosso as they move into the future is the age of the city's housing stock. Almost half of the city's housing stock was constructed prior to 1940. Housing of this age is likely to require significant ongoing cosmetic upkeep and physical maintenance; such upkeep can be costly and time consuming. This type of housing is appealing to some, but it does not meet the expectations of most modern home buyers. This disconnect between the current housing stock and the desires of most home buyers raises concerns about the

attractiveness of the community to potential newcomers. It also raises concerns as to whether or not people looking to move within the city will be able to find housing that meets their needs.

Another issue related to housing is the fact that Owosso has a higher vacancy rate than Corunna and Shiawassee County. This could potentially mean more neglected homes within the city. It likely means a lack of investment in many homes and a lack of updates and renovations to existing housing stock. This could lead to the potential decline in housing values throughout the city.

While there are some current areas of concern for the City of Owosso, there are some notable bright spots. When asked about their community, most residents state that they appreciate the sense of community they have in the city. The city also has many assets that are unique to the region, such as the Shiawassee River, Steam Railroading Institute, Baker College, Memorial Healthcare, and arts and entertainment facilities. These features provide the community with a special character and unique opportunities.

## Items for Future Consideration

### Meeting the Needs of an Aging Population

The average age of residents in Owosso has been steadily increasing over the last thirty years. The trend of Owosso's aging population raises concerns for the city's future. Owosso is not alone when facing this concern, as many other cities around the nation are finding themselves in the same scenario. Preparing for an aging population can be a difficult and expensive task, which is why preparation and organizing should be considered now. The needs of elderly citizens are more extensive than that of an average citizen. Medical facilities, human services, transportation, housing and recreational activities are just some of the many issues that are relevant to seniors, and should be taken into account when planning for the future. Expanding the programs through the already existing senior center would also greatly benefit the community. Because the City of Owosso is the largest city in Shiawassee County, and is home to the only hospital facility in the area, it is provided with an advantage for it to be a leader in accommodating an older population.

### Creating a Community Image

Based on site visits, observations, and conversations with local residents, the practicum team found that the City of Owosso lacked an overall image. The city is encouraged to explore the creation of a marketing campaign to promote the many assets that already exist in the city. The goal is to provide outsiders with information about the city that will make them look at Owosso in a new and positive light. Besides being helpful to those outside of the community, the process of talking about and creating a community image will give the residents an idea of who they are and what they want to be in the future. This strategy would make the city more marketable and encourage tourism. Baker College and Memorial Health Center could also be included in the community branding campaign to showcase the regions educational potential and ability to



attract prospective industries. Involving citizens and local businesses in creating this brand is crucial because it will become the reputation of the place they call home.

### Creating a Community of Education

In today's business climate one of the most important features that a city can possess is a knowledgeable and skilled workforce that is capable of competing in a diverse, fast paced economy. Because of its presence, Baker College has the potential to significantly impact Owosso's residents. In the future, the city should evaluate what type of relationship it wishes to have with Baker College. A relationship between the campus and the city could yield benefits for both parties. This relationship could manifest physically in the form of an urban element that connects the downtown with the campus. It may also take the form of relationship building between the city, Baker College and local businesses and institutions. Such actions could demonstrate the importance and value of a community of education. Benefits of these actions could include an increase in the educational attainment of residents, and potentially the attraction of a younger cohort of residents.

### Housing

The age of Owosso's housing stock is a concern for the community. Maintenance of these homes can be costly and time consuming. With the City of Owosso's poverty levels increasing over the past decades, as well as lower median income levels compared to the State of Michigan and other surrounding communities, some community members may not be able to adequately finance home improvements. The city should be sure to communicate the presence and availability of city and statewide resources that can aid with home improvements and repairs. Any funds and assistance that the city can provide to residents to address the upkeep of housing could be valuable to the community in the long run.

The city also needs to think about the presence and prevalence of rental housing units in Owosso. There has been an increasing number of vacant housing units in the city. The city should explore and evaluate the merit of requiring renters to obtain a rental license from the city, limiting the number of rental units available in the city, or mandating more frequent rental housing inspections. Efforts to advertise vacant units to Baker College students should also be explored. Providing a forum for the sharing of this information could address vacancy rate concerns in the city while providing increased rental options to Baker College residents.

# Chapter 1: Project Information

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## 1.1. Project Overview

### 1.1.1: Class Structure

This document was prepared by the UP 494/894 Planning Practicum class at Michigan State University. This class is a senior and graduate student capstone class for students in the Urban and Regional Planning Program in the School of Planning, Design, and Construction. The intent of this class is to give students hands on experience applying the skills they have learned in the classroom to real world situations. Students used skills required in the workplace such as data collection and analysis, map and graphics creation, site analysis, and professional report writing to complete this document. Students work with clients to produce feasible solutions to the problems or issues presented. These projects are completed in the time frame of one semester.

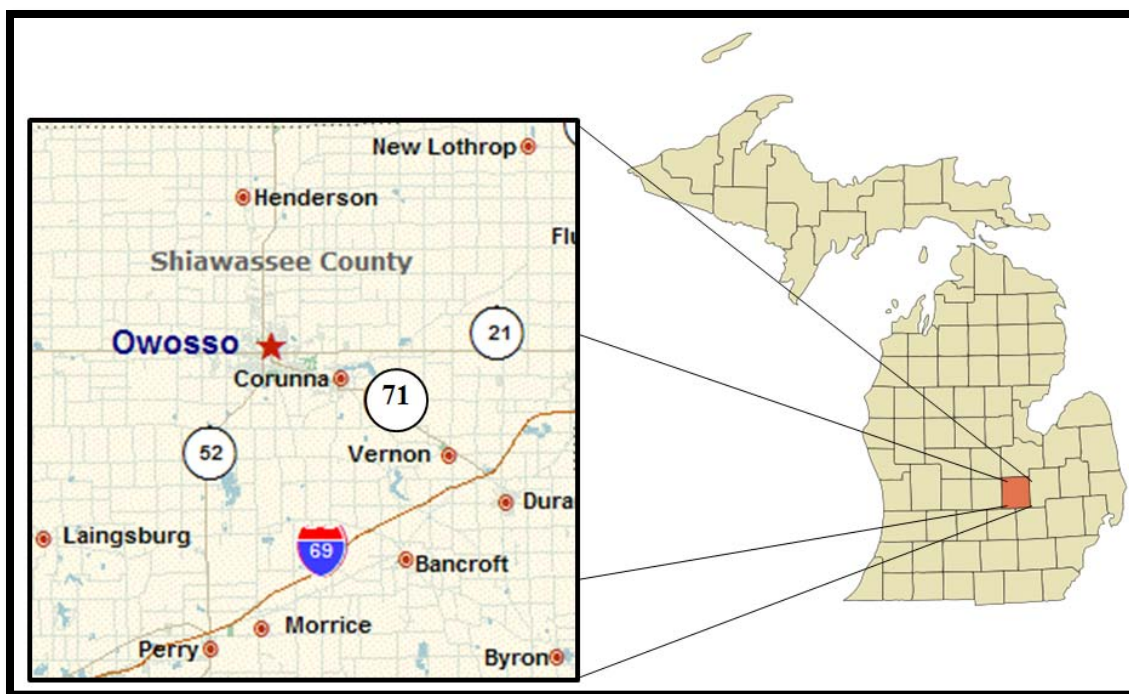
The Urban and Regional Planning Practicum groups are guided by both the clients and Michigan State University faculty. This class is an essential step in the students' transition from academia to the professional world.

### 1.1.2: Client Profile

The practicum team's client for this project is Adam Zettel, who is the Assistant City Manager and the Director of Community Development for the City of Owosso, Michigan. The residents of Owosso are also clients for this project. The City of Owosso has functioned since its formation without a Master Plan. The City of Owosso has sought the assistance of Michigan State University students to help with the initial phases of Master Plan development.

### 1.1.3: The Community of Owosso

The City of Owosso is a community of approximately 15,000 people located in the mid-Michigan region (CGI – 2010 Census Data for Michigan, 2011). Owosso is located in Shiawassee County, Michigan. It is located half way between Lansing and Flint, just north of I-69. M-52 and M-21 intersect in downtown Owosso. M-21 runs from Flint to Grand Rapids. M-52 begins at the border between Michigan and Ohio and runs north to Hemlock; just west of Saginaw. Travel time to Owosso from Lansing and Flint is 40 minutes. Owosso is located one and a half hours away from Detroit and Grand Rapids, and one hour away from Saginaw. The City of Owosso is surrounded by the City of Corunna, Owosso Township, Caledonia Township, Bancroft, Morrice, Perry, Laingsburg, Henderson and New Lothrop.

*Figure 1: Geographical Area*

Source: [www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com)

The city was incorporated in 1859 and like many Michigan settlements, Owosso first developed as an agricultural community (Libby and Ellis, 1880). The city later evolved into a prominent mid-Michigan manufacturing center. Owosso's proximity to General Motors manufacturing facilities in Lansing, Flint and Saginaw was primarily responsible for the abundance of vehicle parts that were once produced in Owosso. With the downturn of automotive manufacturing in the State of Michigan over recent decades many manufacturing companies based in Owosso stopped production or moved out of the area.

Although the City of Owosso has experienced the same unfortunate fate as many manufacturing communities across the state, Owosso does possess several attributes that give it an advantage over other communities in the region. These attributes include geographical features, local businesses, educational institutions, community facilities, and local community events. The combination of these assets is unique to Owosso, and gives the city a unique character.

The most notable geographical feature in the City of Owosso is the Shiawassee River. The river winds through the City of Owosso and passes through the downtown area. The 110-mile river, which begins just north of the City of Howell and drains into the Saginaw Bay, offers recreational opportunities including fishing, kayaking and canoeing (Friends of the Shiawassee River). Other amenities associated with the river in Owosso are the Bicycle River Walk and the Don & Metta Mitchell Amphitheater, which faces the river and hosts a variety of concerts and events during the summer. With over 180,000 people residing within its watershed, the



Figure 2: Shiawassee River

Shiawassee River provides a place for recreation and enjoyment of the natural environment (Friends of the Shiawassee River).

One of the most significant assets in the City of Owosso is the presence of the only hospital in Shiawassee County; Memorial Healthcare. Originally opened in 1921, Memorial Healthcare currently serves over 100,000 residents in the Shiawassee County region. The hospital is the largest employer in Shiawassee County, employing over 1,000 individuals. Memorial Healthcare has several clinics and facilities in nearby areas such as Chesaning, Corunna, Durand and Perry. Each year the hospital provides emergency services to over 25,000 patients in its 24-hour emergency department, in addition to services to over 200,000 outpatients and 4,500 inpatients (Memorial Health Care).



Figure 3: Memorial Healthcare

Owosso is also home to one of seventeen Baker College campus locations in Michigan. Baker College's Owosso campus currently has an enrollment of almost 3,000 students (Baker College – Owosso). The Owosso campus opened in 1983 and is part of a college system with an enrollment of 43,000 students statewide. Baker College offers traditional courses as well as non-traditional training and employment recruitment services. In 2002, Baker College created a nursing program in Owosso and Flint. The Owosso campus also has the Auto/Diesel Institute of Michigan (ADI) and a Technology Center which offers courses in computer networking and automotive services (2010/11 Catalog, 2010).



Figure 4: Baker College

One of the noteworthy institutions in the City of Owosso is the Steam Railroading Institute (SRI). The SRI was founded by the Michigan State Trust for Railway Preservation in January of 2000 with the primary goal of educating the public on technology from the steam railroad era. The SRI is home to the #1225 Pere Marquette, the largest operating steam locomotive in the State of Michigan. Today the Steam Railroading Institute owns and operates two steam locomotives, two diesel locomotives and a fleet of passenger cars. The SRI offers scheduled steam locomotive trips throughout the year as well as regularly scheduled diesel locomotive trips. Starting in late November and running through mid December the SRI operates a North Pole Express trip departing twice a day and includes events such as hot cocoa, visits with Santa Clause, as well as live entertainment (Steam Railroading Institute).



Figure 5: Steam Railroading Institute

Another asset of the City of Owosso is the presence of the Owosso Community Airport. The airport is a publicly owned airport that was founded in 1929 and is located a few miles east of downtown Owosso. According to the Federal Airport Administration, in 2008 there were approximately 68 aircraft operations per day. In the past decades, there have been constant improvements made to the airport, including paving runways, updating and adding new aircraft hangars, and adding underground fuel tanks. The presence of the airport provides a potential competitive advantage over other local municipalities (Owosso Community Airport).



Figure 6: Owosso Community Airport



Figure 7: Owosso Community Airport

In addition to the geographical and institutional assets of the community, the City of Owosso also hosts the annual Curwood festival. The festival is a major community activity that is held in honor of the famous author James Oliver Curwood. Activities include a parade, carnival, arts and crafts, and outdoor sports activities. The festival has been an annual event in the community for over thirty years (Curwood Festival).



Figure 8: Bridge across the Shiawassee River



Figure 9: Curwood Castle

The combination of these assets provides the City of Owosso with unique opportunities for future action. Capitalizing on these resources will be vital for the community as they begin the master planning process. Until now, the City of Owosso has operated without a master plan. Without a master plan to provide guidance, development decisions for the City of Owosso could be inefficient and counterproductive. With the creation of a master plan that takes data trends and community assets into account, the community will have the potential to pursue a clear strategic vision for the future.

#### 1.1.4: Methodology and Scope of Services

The practicum team collected and analyzed data in order to gain an understanding of trends in the City of Owosso. The primary data source for this report is the United State Census Bureau. Data was analyzed from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses. For current population data, the 2010 census was utilized, for most other current data the 2005-2009 American Community Survey was used.

In addition to data collection and analysis, the practicum team made several visits to the City of Owosso to tour the city and make observations in order to gain a more complete understanding of the community. During this time practicum team members identified potential assets and liabilities present in Owosso. Team members met with city staff, and a team representative participated in a local community event discussing placemaking strategies for Owosso. The practicum team handled all pieces of the focus group process including participant identification and invitations, session facilitation and analysis of content.

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The client also asked the practicum group to provide findings and items for future consideration as the city moves forward with the development of its master plan. The findings section incorporated the data collected and analyzed by the group, feedback from community members, observations made by practicum group members, and planning theory and research.

In addition to the data analysis and findings, a public participation plan was also developed for City of Owosso staff to utilize as they move forward with the master plan development process. Recommendations were made after reviewing public participation plans for comparable communities. The plans took into account the original master plan timeline developed by the city planning commission.



## Chapter 2: Public Participation Plan

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## 2: Public Participation Plan

The creation of a public participation plan is as an important component of the master plan process. The Owosso Planning Commission and City Council identified steps of the master plan process that require input from the public, along with a timeframe for each step. This timeline was taken into account when developing the suggestions that will be discussed in this section.

In addition to the ideas generated by the Owosso Planning Commission and City Council, public participation plans for communities that are similar to Owosso were identified and evaluated. Components of these public participation plans were identified as best practices and are included in the suggestions for the following plan. Prior to evaluating the individual components of the public participation plan, a brief description of the comparable cities will be provided to offer a context for the suggestions.

Many public participation plans were reviewed in an attempt to identify plans that could work for the City of Owosso. Participation plans for municipalities of various sizes were initially examined, including small, medium and large sized cities; counties; and townships. Plans for large cities and most townships were eliminated as they did not meet many of the conditions of the Owosso. Location was also used as a determining factor; only locations in the Midwest and Great Lakes regions were considered. Other regions had different issues and populations than the City of Owosso. Census data from communities with strong public participation plans was then compared to census data for the City of Owosso.

While Michigan cities were preferred, a comparable city within Michigan with a comprehensive public participation plan was not identified. The best match was that of Port Washington, Wisconsin. Port Washington had the most comprehensive public participation plan of comparable communities (Public Participation Plan for the City of Port Washington, 2005). Although it has a slightly lower population at just over 11,000 residents, Port Washington is comparable in many ways. The average household size, family size, ratio of home-owners to renters, racial and age demographics of each community are strikingly similar. Port Washington is also the largest city in its county. The largest difference between the two communities is that Port Washington residents are more likely to have post secondary degrees, and they also tend to have higher median household incomes (Port Washington, Wisconsin – Fact Sheet).

The second comparable city was that of Ogdensburg, New York. Ogdensburg's public participation plan was less comprehensive as it was part of the City's Brownfield Opportunity Area Program. While it was less comprehensive, it did have many pieces that one would expect to find in a public participation plan (City of Ogdensburg, 2008). Ogdensburg also has a slightly smaller population than Owosso, with approximately 11,000 people. The cities are comparable in median household income, household size and family size, ratio of home-owners to renters as well as age demographics. The largest demographic difference between the communities is that Ogdensburg has slightly more racial diversity (Ogdensburg, New York – Fact Sheet).

The evaluation of public participation plans was invaluable to the development of the following suggestions. Additional resources, such as the document *How to Design a Public Participation Program* (Creighton, n.d.) from the US Department of Energy and advice from Michigan State University faculty (Z. Kotval and R. LaMore, personal communication, 1/31/2011) were also helpful. The insight gathered from these sources made it clear that the following themes were vital to a successful public participation plan:

1. A well developed communications plan
2. Collection of public opinion data
3. Educational outreach to the community
4. Public workshops to identify the future vision for Owosso
5. A clear connection between public input and the decision making process

## 2.1: Public Participation Plan Recommendations for Owosso

### 2.1.1: Communication

Communication with the public is a vital component to a successful master plan public participation plan. Open and honest communication with the public regarding the master plan process is vital to ensure maximum support and commitment from local residents. The public should be informed of the goals of the master plan process, as well as the status of the plan, where they can obtain updates, and methods for providing input into the planning process. Both the Port Washington and Ogdensburg plans included recommendations on how to keep the public informed of key updates.

Communication Strategies:

- Information about the planning process should be available to the public at Owosso's City Hall in the form of newsletters, fact sheets, meeting minutes, and public postings
- Master plan updates should be posted and updated regularly on the City of Owosso's website. If technological support is available, development of a public forum where residents can comment on master plan updates would be preferable
- Information about community meetings and the planning process should be provided to local media outlets, such as the Argus Press, on a regular basis. This information should also be provided to organizations that produce community newsletters
- Owosso Community Television (OCTV) should be utilized to broadcast planning meetings, advertise for local planning events, and provide updates on the master plan process

- Open communication with local community groups, such as the Owosso Friends and Neighbors, to expand the network of individuals who have access to information related to the master plan process
- Information should be free-flowing throughout the entire master plan process. City officials should be sharing information during the plan development process, and residents should be able to obtain information about the project at any point in time.

### 2.1.2: Collection of Public Opinion Data

Gathering information from the public regarding their views of the community as it is today, and where they see the city in the future, is vital to the successful development and implementation of a citywide master plan. This information should be gathered through multiple methods including small focus groups and community wide surveys. The practicum team worked with the client contact for the City of Owosso to develop potential survey questions. Questions focused on issues that were identified by the practicum team's report. Questions dealt with issues such as housing, employment/industry, the role of Baker College in the community, and communication between the city and residents, among other topics.

Information Gathering Strategies:

- Focus Group to identify what members of the community identify as Owosso's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This is commonly referred to as a SWOT Analysis
- Focus group of specific audiences
  - High school students taking Government at the local high school
  - Senior coffee hour at City Hall
  - Members of the faith based community
  - Local business owners
- Web surveys to collect information from the public regarding their views on the current state of Owosso, as well as their future vision for the city. If possible, a computer should be made available at the front desk of City Hall for residents to fill out the survey in an attempt to accommodate residents who do not have internet access
- Set up a booth at Curwood Festival to inform residents of the master plan process and collect their thoughts regarding the development of the plan

### 2.1.3: Educational Outreach

Educating the public on the latest planning information and techniques is also important to ensure that they can make informed contributions to the master plan process. Updating the public on cutting edge planning concepts such as how to function in the 'new economy' and placemaking techniques is an important part of the master plan process.

Educational Outreach Strategies:

- The creation of workshops and meetings to inform the public of information that can be used to help them make informed decisions about the Owosso master plan.
- Educational sessions with different constituencies
  - City official leads a discussion on city planning at the local high school’s government course. Ideally a two or three part series consisting of one discussion on public planning, and followed with a workshop/focus group where high school students have an opportunity to provide feedback on what changes they would like to see occur in their community. If time is limited, then the development of a short lecture followed by a facilitated discussion where students provide feedback on the community.
  - Senior coffee hour consisting of education about planning techniques, and collection of information from residents
  - Educational session on latest planning techniques to members of the faith based community
  - Sharing of information regarding the ‘new economy’ with local business owners. Bring representatives from the Land Policy Institute to talk about changes that local communities and businesses can make to adjust to the changing economy.
- It is recommended that the City of Owosso partner with local community groups, such as Owosso Friends and Neighbors, to offer workshops to the community.

#### 2.1.4: Future Vision for Owosso

After the current state of the community has been explored through focus groups and community surveys members of the community should gather to set a vision for the future. In other public participation plans, this typically takes the form of a public visioning session (Public Participation Plan for the City of Port Washington, 2005; City of Ogdensburg, 2008). This is an opportunity for the community to review all of the relevant information that has been collected throughout the master plan process and develop a vision statement for the future. The City of Port Washington developed the following vision statement:

“We are sailing into the future while preserving our heritage. Port Washington is a city where people come first; where their creativity, diversity, and innovation are encouraged; a growing community where people can live, work, and play in an eco-friendly environment.” (Issues and Opportunities Element, 2006, p. 1).

Pieces of this visioning work have been done through the City of Owosso’s Blue Ribbon Committee Report. This report was written by an appointed group of citizens within Owosso and offered a vision for a ‘vibrant, progressive, knowledge-based community’ (Blue Ribbon Committee Report, 2009, p. 1). However, this vision statement was not created as part of a public workshop and may not necessarily represent the views of the public as a whole.

Future visioning strategies:

- Visioning workshop for local residents to develop a vision statement for Owosso.
- Design workshop for local residents to translate the vision statement into actual design ideas. This could be done through a charette process.
- All members of the community should be encouraged to participate in this process, including local business owners, youth, elderly, and members of the faith based communities.

### **2.1.5: A clear connection between public input and the decision making process**

Members of the community should feel that they have the ability to make valuable contributions to the planning process, and that their contributions are tied to the decision making process. In Port Washington this took many forms, including formal public hearings and a formal plan adoption process. Other documents, such as the U.S. Department of Energy's Public Participation Plan, called for a clearly defined decision making process states the connection between the public and decision maker. This plan also calls for the decision maker to be an active participant in the planning process (Creighton, n.d.).

Strategies to ensure public input in the decision making process

- City officials and all available members of the Planning Commission should participate in as many workshops as possible. Their connection to the residents is vital to the process; this connection can inform decisions and provide a context to the hard data that is collected and analyzed throughout the planning process.
- A formal public hearing is to take place before the plan is to be adopted. It should be stated that the goal of this public hearing is not only to meet state requirements, but also to ensure that the public has the opportunity to provide input up until the end of the process
- Plan Adoption should occur only after the formal public hearing, and should not be adopted if there is significant community disapproval of the plan based on community values and vision.

### 2.1.6: Proposed Timeline:

October 2010: Hold a preliminary public workshop with the Owosso Planning Commission\*

February 2011: SWOT Analysis with local focus group

April – May 2011: Educational outreach sessions and collection of public opinion data from local high school students, senior citizens, business owners and members of the faith based community

Early May 2011: Present findings of MSU practicum group to local community members and the planning commission for the City of Owosso

May 2011: Collect information from city residents via community web survey

June 2011: Set up a booth at the Curwood Festival to provide information to local residents about the master plan process. Also have comment forms available for residents to provide input on the process.

July 2011: Conduct public visioning workshop to identify community vision statement. Information collected from the community survey and educational outreach sessions should be shared with residents during this workshop

August 2011: Conduct public design charette to translate community vision statement into design principles

September 2011: The Planning Commission shall formulate goals and objectives for the plan based upon the community inventory and visioning sessions \*\*

October 2011: The Planning Commission shall review and informally approve the inventory and goals sections of the master plan \*\*

November – December 2011: City staff shall draft sections of the plan relating to critical areas and issues for review by the planning commission \*\*

January – February 2012: City staff shall draft a future land use map and implementation steps for review by the Planning Commission \*\*

March – April 2012: The Planning Commission shall review and approve a draft of the master plan for review and distribution to the City Council \*\*

May 2012: If the legislative body approves the draft, it shall notify the Secretary of the Planning Commission that the plan shall be distributed to all relevant parties \*\*

July 2012: Formal public hearing to review the draft of the master plan

August 2012: The Owosso City Council shall vote on the master plan \*\*

Ongoing: Partner with local community groups to educate the public on the latest planning knowledge and techniques

\* completed

\*\* task already identified by the “2010 Owosso Master Plan: Process Checklist and Timeline” with slight modification to the timeline

### 2.1.7: Proposed Survey

Collection of public opinion data is vital to the successful development of a community master plan. In order to identify resident perspectives on key issues, the practicum team designed a survey instrument to aid in the collection of public opinion data. The practicum team recommends using questions from the following survey to collect resident opinions on the current state of Owosso, with special attention on issues raised throughout this report.

1. What is the first word that comes to mind when thinking of the City of Owosso?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I see myself continuing to reside in Owosso in its current state and condition?
  - a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Disagree
  - d. Strongly Disagree
3. What is your current housing situation? Pick One.
  - a. Rent
  - b. Own
  - c. Live with relatives/roommates
  - d. Do not have current housing
4. I am satisfied with my current housing situation?
  - a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Disagree
  - d. Strongly Disagree
5. The City of Owosso has adequate housing for seniors (assisted living, nursing homes, etc.).
  - a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Disagree
  - d. Strongly Disagree
  - e. Don't Know
6. The City of Owosso has adequate housing for low-income citizens.
  - a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree



- c. Disagree
  - d. Strongly Disagree
  - e. Don't Know
7. The senior programs and senior center, provided by the City of Owosso, satisfy the needs of its senior residents.
- a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Disagree
  - d. Strongly Disagree
8. What could be done to help improve your employment situation? Choose any that apply.
- a. Job training/additional education
  - b. Child care assistance
  - c. GED/ESL classes
  - d. Better transportation
  - e. Internships/better experience
  - f. More jobs in my field
  - g. Nothing. My job is fine.
  - h. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
9. What industry do you most strongly associate with the City of Owosso?
- a. Service
  - b. Manufacturing
  - c. Professional
  - d. Arts/Entertainment
  - e. Healthcare
  - f. Education
  - g. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
10. What industries have the most potential for growth in the City of Owosso? (Select up to two).
- a. Service
  - b. Manufacturing
  - c. Professional
  - d. Arts/Entertainment
  - e. Healthcare
  - f. Education
  - g. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. Don't Know
11. What would you like to see re-developed the most?
- a. Downtown
  - b. Riverfront
  - c. Vacant buildings

- d. Brownfield sites (abandoned, underused or potentially contaminated industrial or commercial facilities available for reuse)
  - e. Housing
  - f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
12. How well does the City of Owosso integrate Baker College and its students into the community?
- a. Very Well
  - b. Well
  - c. Somewhat
  - d. Poorly
  - e. No Opinion
13. I think the City of Owosso should be better integrated with Baker College.
- a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Disagree
  - d. Strongly Disagree
14. How well do you think the City of Owosso communicates with its citizens?
- a. Very well
  - b. Well
  - c. Somewhat poorly
  - d. Poorly
15. How well do you think local institutions (i.e. city government, Baker College, SRI, etc.) work/communicate with each other to help better the community?
- a. Very well
  - b. Well
  - c. Somewhat poorly
  - d. Poorly
16. Which, if any, is the most serious problem in your neighborhood or the city as a whole?
- a. Vacant lots/houses
  - b. Poorly maintained infrastructure (roads, sewage system, utilities, etc...)
  - c. Condition of houses
  - d. Crime/vandalism
  - e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. None
17. To what extent are you aware of the following city wide services? (Rank each item as Very Aware, Aware, Slightly Aware, Unaware)
- a. Code enforcement
  - b. Rental inspections
  - c. Leaf pickup
  - d. Park rentals
  - e. Downtown parking permits

- f. Board of review
  - g. Street sweeping/clearing of ice & snow
  - h. Police
  - i. Fire
  - j. Ambulance
  - k. Forestry
  - l. Waste collection days (e-waste, bulk items, etc.)
  - m. Historic preservation in downtown
  - n. Community development (Brownfield, tax abatements, etc.)
  - o. Webpage
  - p. Directional signage
18. To what extent are you satisfied with the following city wide services? (Rank each item as Very Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Slightly Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied)
- a. Code enforcement
  - b. Rental inspections
  - c. Leaf pickup
  - d. Park rentals
  - e. Downtown parking permits
  - f. Board of review
  - g. Street sweeping/clearing of ice & snow
  - h. Police
  - i. Fire
  - j. Ambulance
  - k. Forestry
  - l. Waste collection days (e-waste, bulk items, etc.)
  - m. Historic preservation in downtown
  - n. Community development (Brownfield, tax abatements, etc.)
  - o. Webpage
  - p. Directional signage
19. What do you consider to be Owosso's most notable asset? (Rank or ask individually)
- a. Shiawassee River
  - b. Memorial Healthcare
  - c. Baker College
  - d. Downtown Businesses
  - e. Arts Corridor
  - f. School System
  - g. Steam Railroading Institute
  - h. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
20. Where would you like to see the City of Owosso in 10-20 years?
- a. \_\_\_\_\_
21. What issue is most concerning for the future of the City of Owosso?
- a. \_\_\_\_\_

### 2.1.8: Professional Planning Standards

The public participation plan described above represents best practices from comparable communities. While this plan is purposely ambitious and comprehensive, it may be too large of an undertaking for a small city with limited time and resources. Professional planners and citizen commissioners are expected to exercise their best professional effort to support good, ethical, and high quality planning.

As noted by the AICP code of ethics, the primary obligation of planners is to serve the public interest (AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, 2009). A key piece of this obligation is the need to continuously engage the public through an open debate on planning related issues. Although all of the AICP principles regarding the obligation of planners to the public are important, the following deserve special consideration when creating a public participation plan for the City of Owosso:

**“We shall provide timely, adequate, clear, and accurate information on planning issues to all affected persons and to governmental decision makers.”** (AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, 2009)

And

**“We shall give people the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that may affect them. Participation should be broad enough to include those who lack formal organization or influence.”** (AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, 2009)

## Chapter 3: Data Analysis

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### 3.1: Demographics

The demographic data analyzed for Owosso consisted of population trends; age, sex, and race distributions; school enrollment; educational attainment and city crime rates. Comparisons were made between the City of Owosso and the State of Michigan, Shiawassee County and the neighboring City of Corunna in order to provide a context for Owosso's data. The City of Corunna was chosen as a comparable community primarily because of its proximity to Owosso and shared regional identity. In order to examine trends, data from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 census, along with estimations from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS), were examined and analyzed. Data regarding the City of Owosso's crime rate was gathered from the State of Michigan Police Department.

#### 3.1.1: Population Trends

Data for the State of Michigan shows a slow increase in population between the 1980 census and 2000 census, with a decline in population between 2000 and 2010. The 2010 census data that was available at the time of this report showed a population loss of 54,804 residents in the State of Michigan between 2000 and 2010. The data for Shiawassee County, the City of Corunna and the City Owosso also demonstrates a trend of population decline over the last decade.

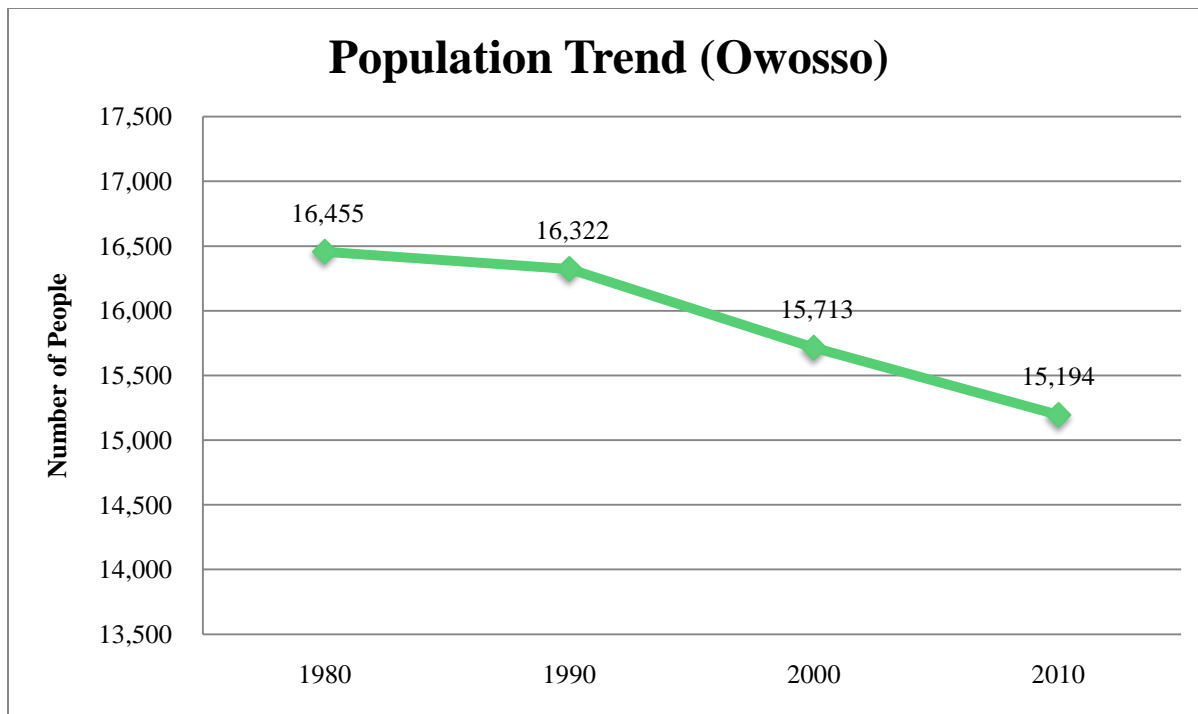
*Table 3.1.1: Population*

Year (% change)	1980	+/- %	1990	+/- %	2000	+/- %	2010	+/- %
Owosso	16,445	-	16,322	-0.8	15,713	-3.7	15,194	-3.3
Corunna	3,206	-	3,091	-3.6	3,381	+9.4	3,497	+3.4
Shiawassee	71,140	-	69,770	-1.9	71,678	+2.7	70,648	-1.4
Michigan	9,262,078	-	9,295,297	+0.4	9,938,444	+6.9	9,883,640	-0.6

*Source: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 U.S. Census*

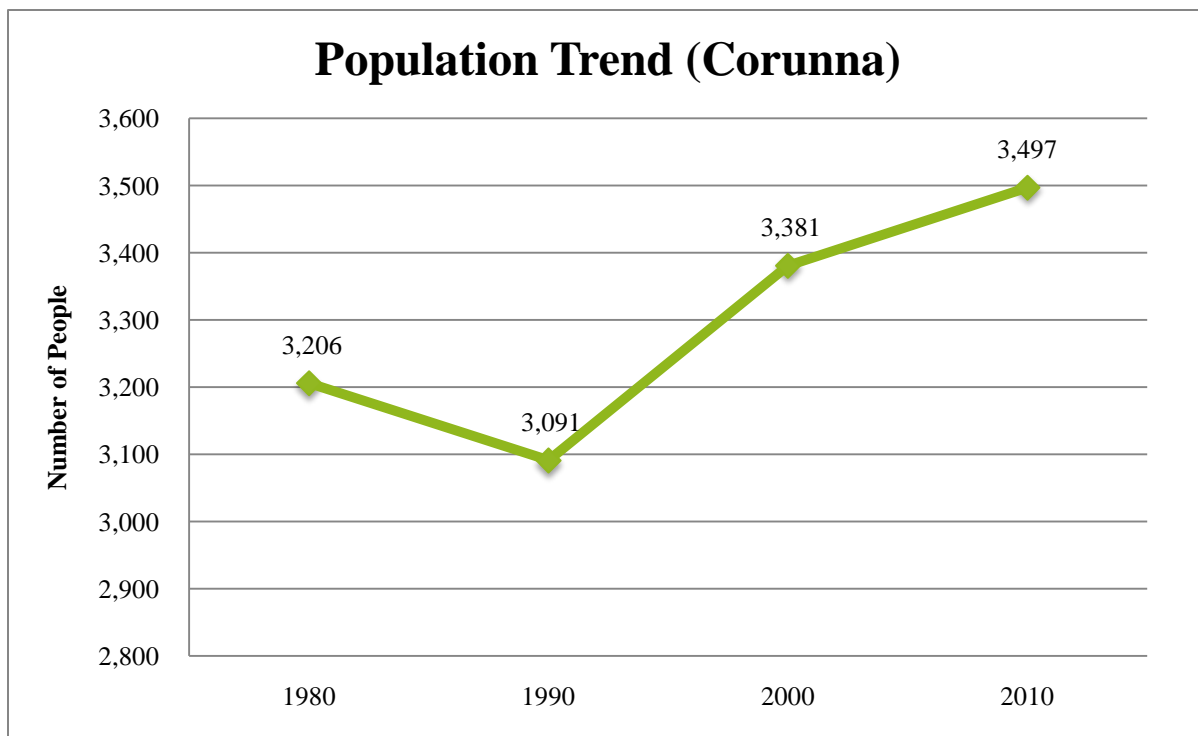
Table 3.1.1 shows the population at the state, county and city levels from 1980 to 2010. Examination of this data reveals that the population of Owosso has been declining since 1980. Between 1980 and 2010, Owosso lost 7.7% of its population. Population loss in Owosso has been holding steady at around 3.5% per decade over the last twenty years. Population trends for the City of Corunna have shown growth in the city over the past twenty years, while Shiawassee County's population trends have been more inconsistent.

Graph 3.1.1: Population Trends



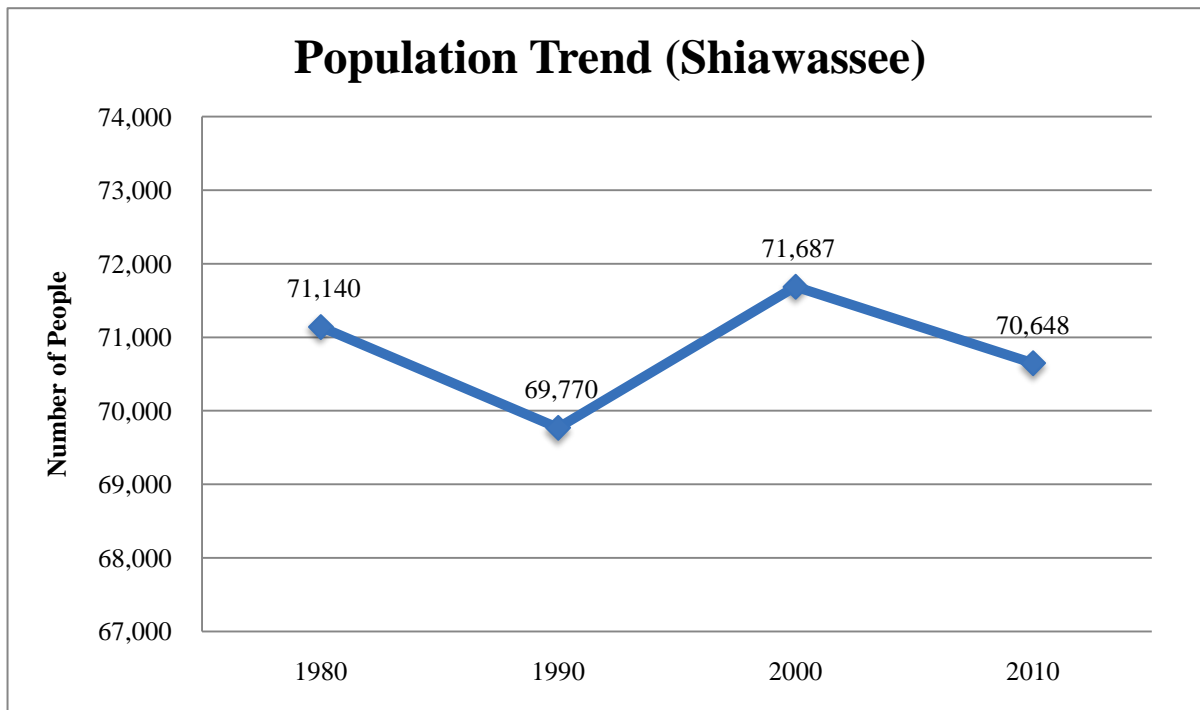
Source: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 U.S. Census

Graph 3.1.2: Population Trends



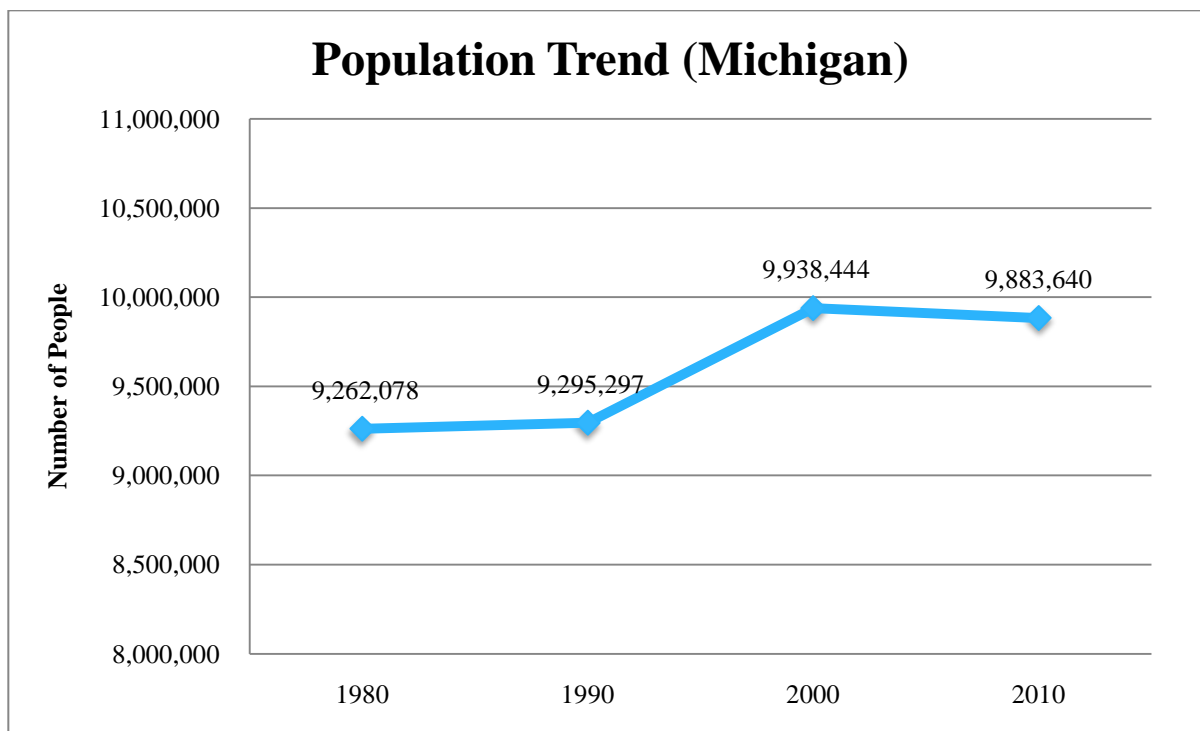
Source: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 U.S. Census

Graph 3.1.3: Population Trends



Source: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 U.S. Census

Graph 3.1.4: Population Trends



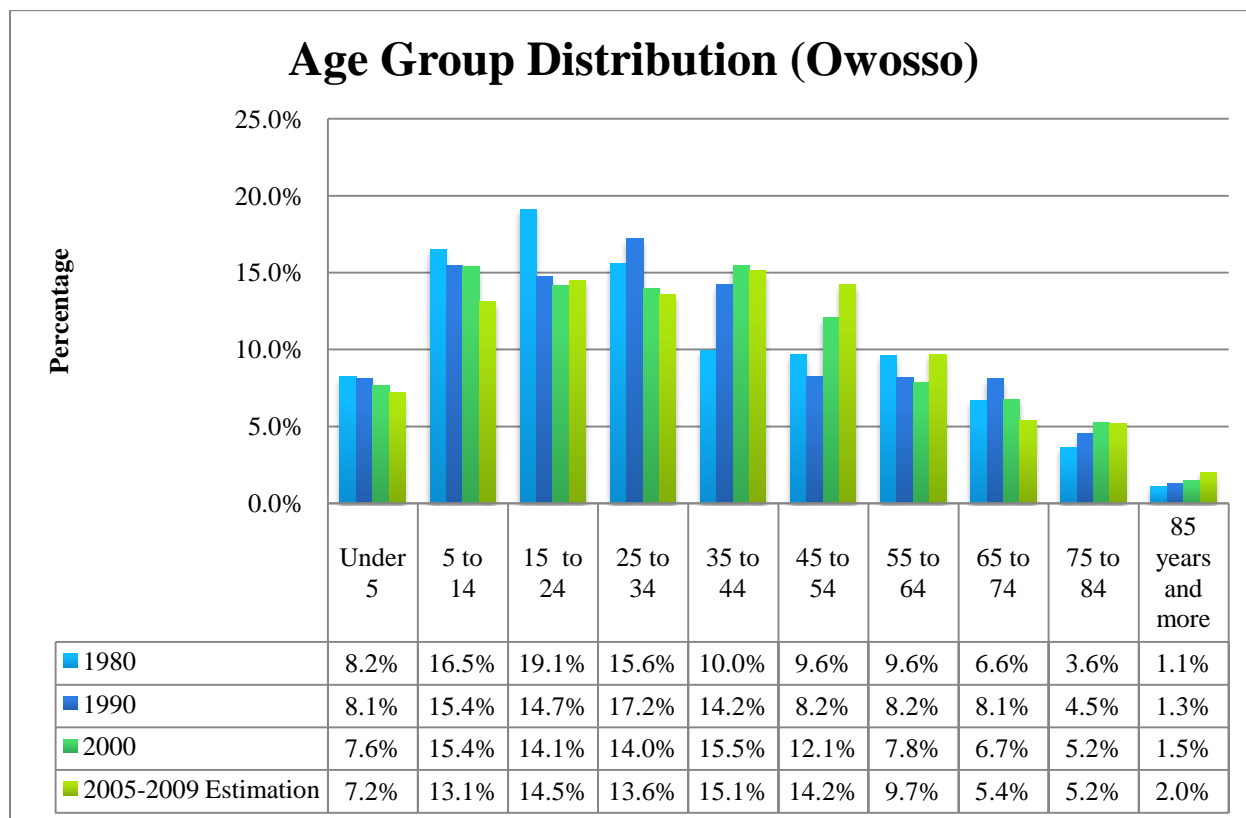
Source: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 U.S. Census



Graphs 3.1.1 through 3.1.4 show the population trends for the State of Michigan, Shiawassee County and the cities of Owosso and Corunna. The data shows that the City of Corunna is the only area to experience a constant increase in population over the past twenty years. Shiawassee County experienced population loss during the 1980’s, a population gain during the 1990’s, and a loss during the 2000’s. The graph also shows that the City of Owosso has experienced an overall population loss since 1980. Using 2010 census data, Owosso has experienced an overall population loss of more than 1,250 residents (7.7%) since 1980.

### 3.1.2: Age Group Analysis

Graph 3.1.5: Age Group Distribution in the City of Owosso 1980 – 2009 (estimate)

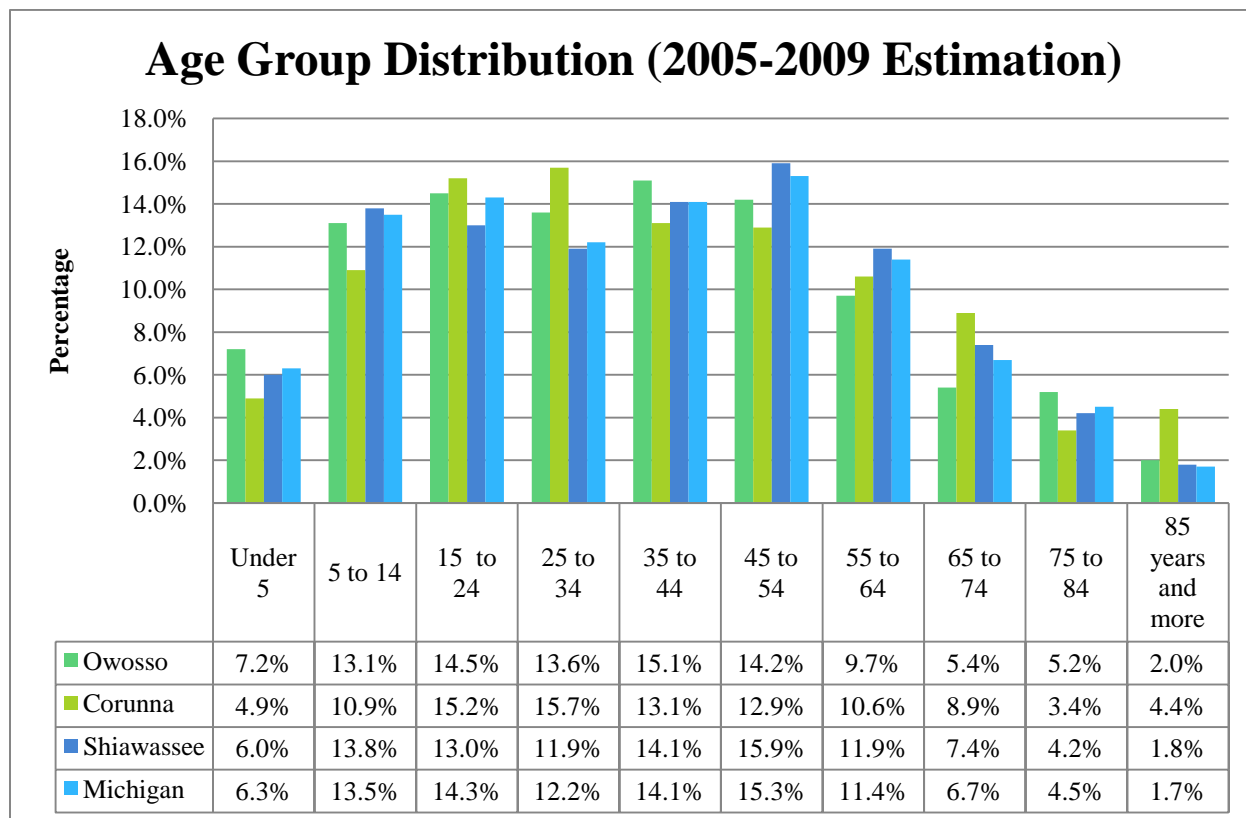


Source: 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

The comparison of the age group distribution was analyzed by using Census data from 1980 to 2000 and the 2005-2009 estimation from the ACS. This data shows that the population for the community is aging slightly. The largest age cohort has been getting older with each decade. The largest age cohort in 1980 was in the 15 to 24 year old age bracket. In 1990 the largest population was in the 25 to 34 year old age range, and by 2000 the 35 to 44 age range was the largest. Another trend worth noting is that the age cohort of 85 and older has grown each decade since 1980. Although the group is still small, it is a growing population in the City of Owosso.

In addition to examining trends within Owosso over the past thirty years, it is also helpful to compare age distribution information in Owosso to the neighboring City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. Estimation data from the American Community Survey was used to conduct this examination.

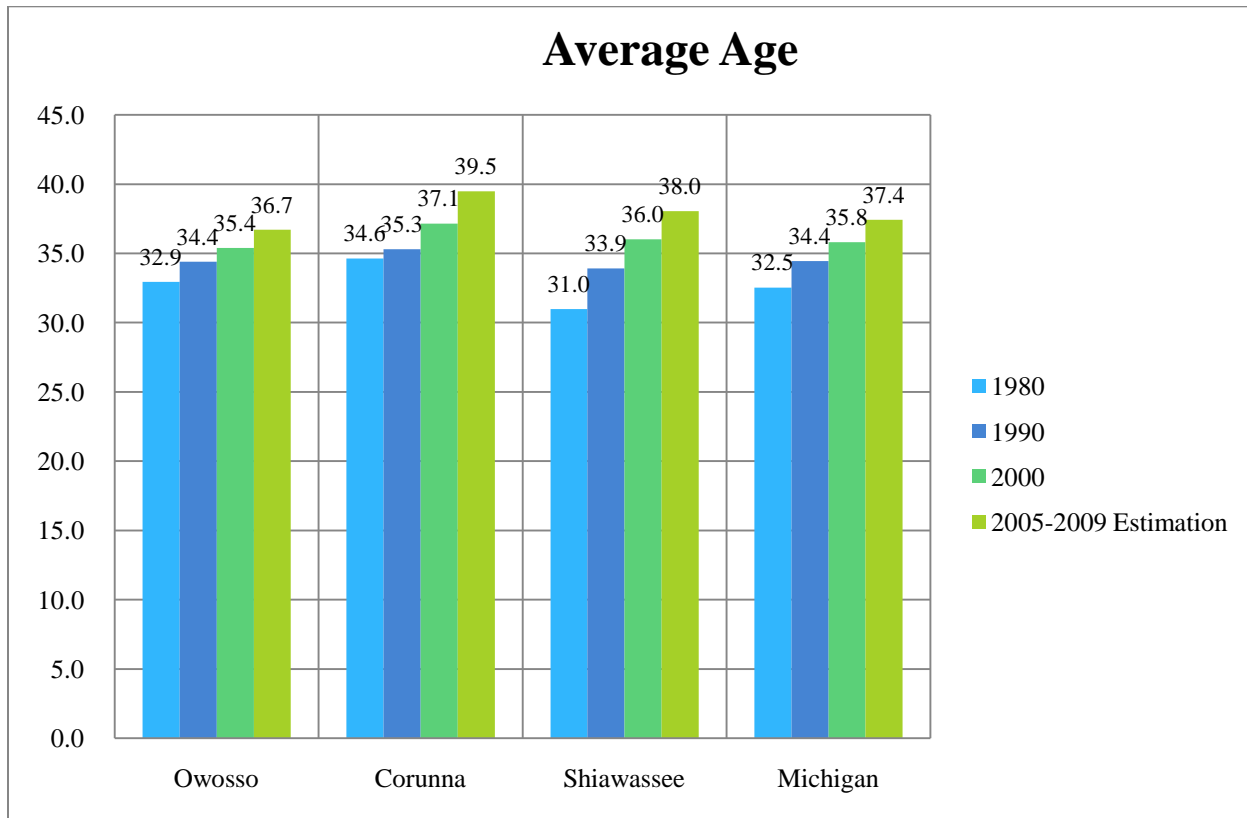
Graph 3.1.6: Age Group Distribution in Owosso, Corunna, Shiawassee County and Michigan



Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

The City of Owosso currently has a larger percentage of individuals in the 25-34 age range than Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan as a whole. This age group is often viewed as vital to the success of communities that are looking for young knowledge workers. Examination of the data also shows that Owosso has the largest percentage of individuals in the 35 to 44 year old cohort with 15.1%. Additionally, the percentage of individuals under the age of 5 years old is higher than Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan.

Graph 3.1.7: Average Age Table for Michigan, Shiawassee County, Corunna and Owosso 1980 – 2009 (estimate)



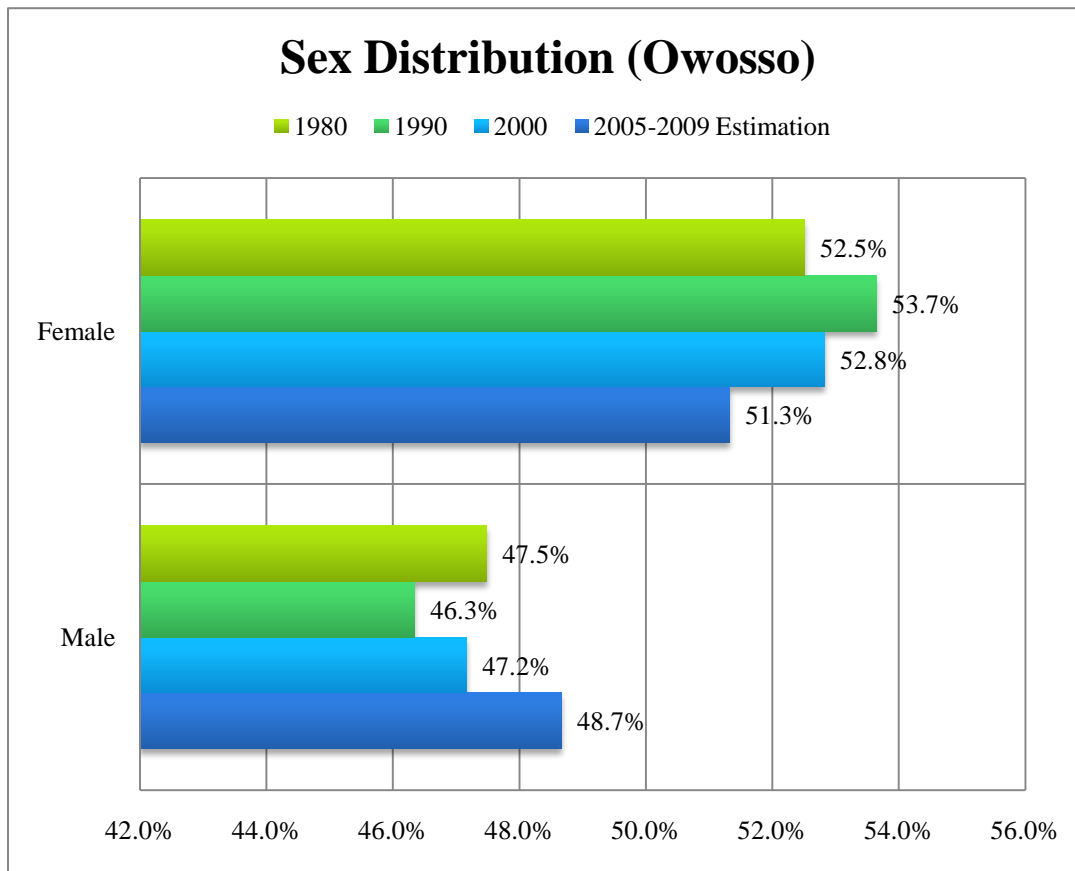
Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

As graph 3.1.7 indicates, the population of Owosso has been aging since 1980. This is in line with trends at the state and county level, as well as the trends in the City of Corunna. The City of Owosso has the youngest population average of all the comparable areas, with an average age of 36.7 years.

### 3.1.3: Sex Distribution Analysis

The following graph shows distribution of male and female residents within the City of Owosso. Graphs showing the distribution for the State of Michigan, Corunna and Shiawassee County can be found in the appendix. Data at the state and county level show a similar distribution of males and females. While the city level data is similar to the other levels, there are some interesting differences worth noting.

Graph 3.1.8: Sex Distribution by State, County and City



Source: 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Both Owosso and Corunna have smaller percentages of males than the county and state level. However, over the past twenty years both communities have experienced a general trend of increasing percentage of males. Even though the percentage of men is lower in Owosso, the trend over the past thirty years mirrors county and state wide trends. During the 1980’s there was a drop in the percentage of male residents at the city, county and state levels. All three levels have been following the general trend of a slight increase in the percentage of males over the past twenty years.

### 3.1.4: Race Distribution Analysis

The City of Owosso is a racially homogenous community. The following table shows the racial distribution for the cities of Owosso and Corunna, Shiawassee County, and the State of Michigan. Data was collected from the 1980-2000 censuses and the 2005-2009 ACS.

*Table 2.1.2: Race Distribution by State, County and City*

Race	Location	1980 (%)	1990 (%)	2000 (%)	2005-2009 Estimation (%)
White	Owosso	98.4	97.6	97.0	98.7
	Corunna	98.9	98.3	95.4	93.9
	Shiawassee	98.9	98.4	97.3	97.4
	Michigan	85.0	83.4	80.2	79.7
Black	Owosso	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
	Corunna	0.1	0.6	1.5	5.7
	Shiawassee	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.5
	Michigan	12.9	13.9	14.2	14.0
Other	Owosso	2.0	3.5	5.6	6.3
	Corunna	1.0	0.6	0.5	2.1
	Shiawassee	1.0	1.2	3.2	0.4
	Michigan	1.6	2.3	2.8	1.3

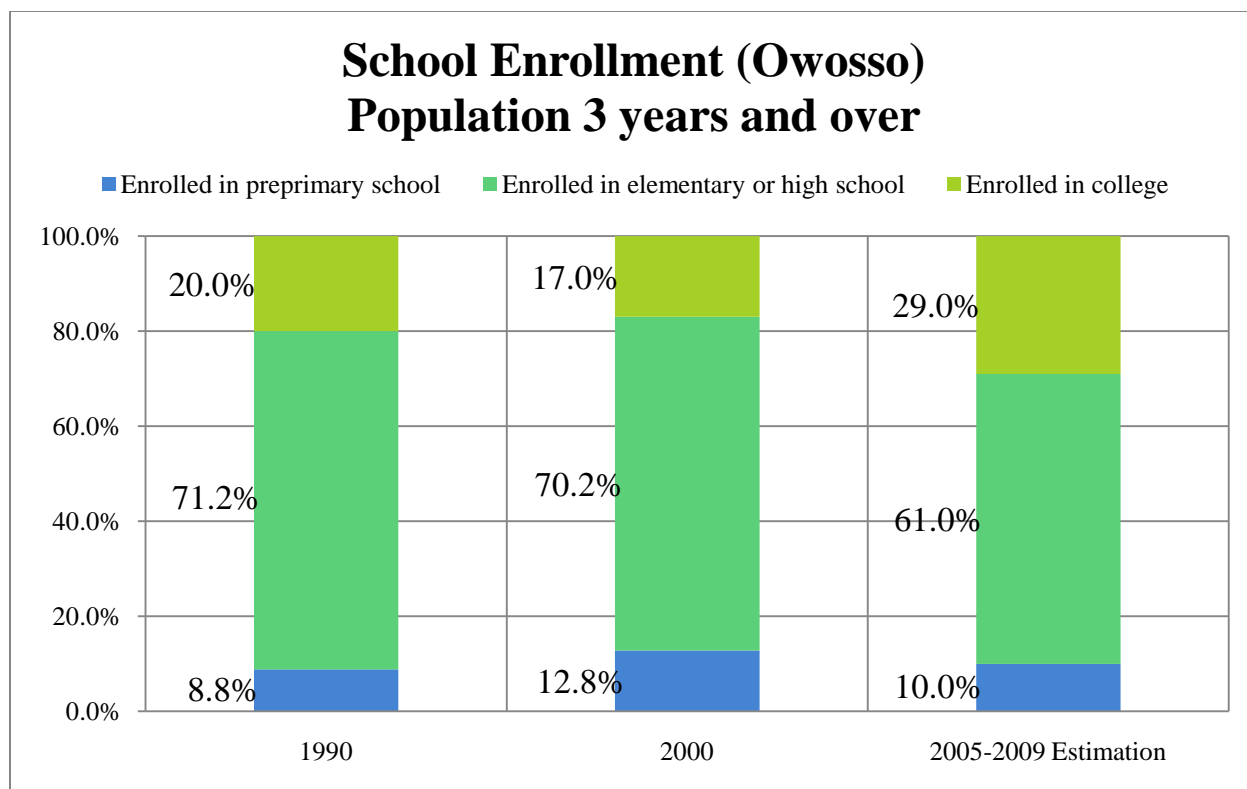
*Source: 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey (\*note: percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth)*

The State of Michigan as a whole has become more racially diverse over the past thirty years. Racial distribution of residents in Shiawassee County and the City of Owosso, however, has changed very little. While the percentage of minority residents rose 5.3% at the state level over the last thirty years, the percentage of minority residents in Shiawassee County rose only 1.5%. Contrary to this trend, the City of Owosso has become less diverse over the last thirty years with an increase in the percentage of white residents of .3%. The City of Owosso and Shiawassee County have a higher percentage of white residents than the state as a whole. It should be noted that the neighboring City of Corunna has experienced racial diversification over the past decade that more closely mirrors the State as a whole.

### 3.1.5: School Enrollment

School enrollment information was collected from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey. The data includes residents who are three years and older who are enrolled in preliminary school, elementary through secondary school, as well as post-secondary education.

Graph 3.1.9: School Enrollment



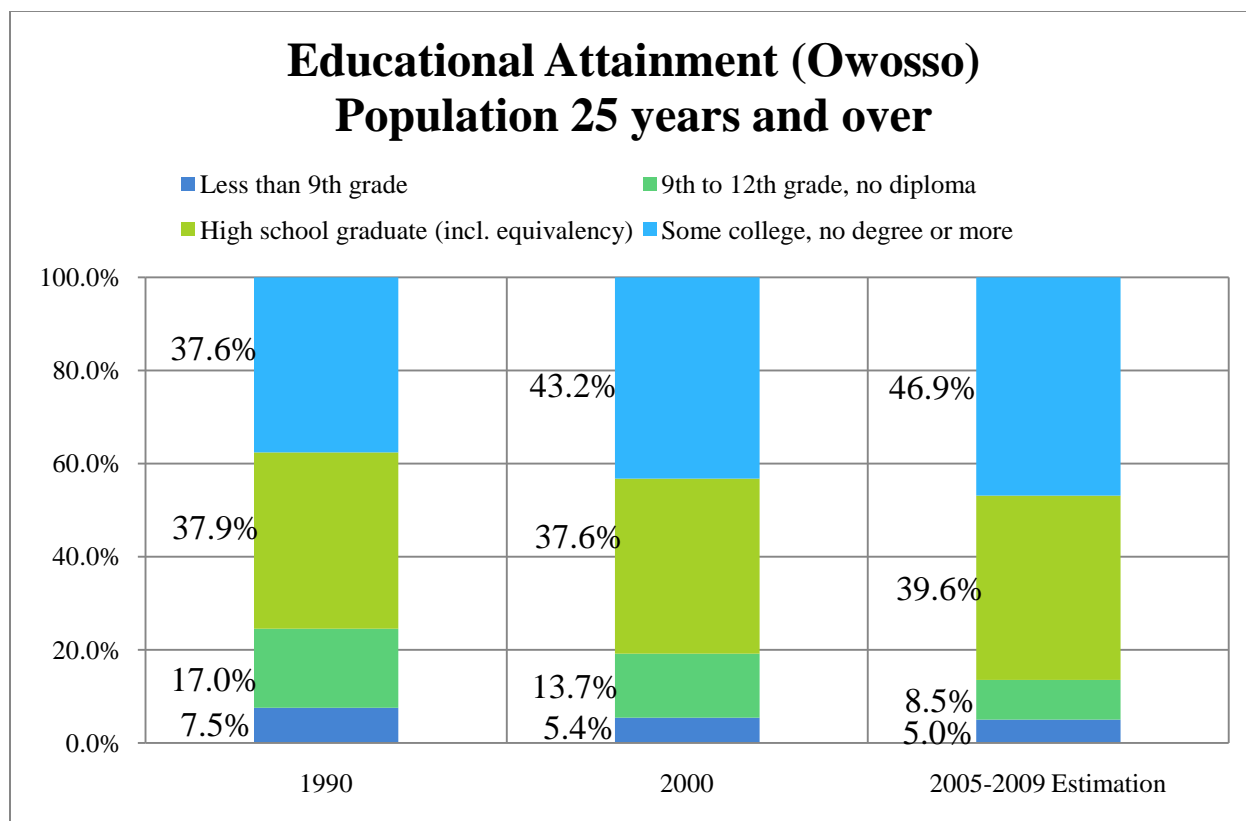
Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

The most notable feature of this data is the change in the percentage of students enrolled in college in Owosso. The other categories such as pre-primary and elementary through high school have similar trends compared to the state and county. However, the percentage of students enrolled in college has increased from 17% in 2000 to 29% in the 2009 estimate. This percentage is also higher than the City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. Graphs for school enrollment data for the City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan can be found in A.3.

**3.1.6: Educational Attainment Analysis**

Educational attainment data was collected from the 1990 and 2000 censuses, as well as the 2005-2009 American Community Survey. This data examines the level of education attained by individuals aged 25 and over. This data was examined at the city, county and state levels. Graphs representing this data can be found in appendix A.3.

Graph 3.1.10: Educational Attainment by State, County and City.



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

The most notable trend regarding educational attainment involves college data. Owosso is consistent with the City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan over the past twenty years with regards to an increased percentage of residents with at least some college education. However, the total percentage of residents aged 25 or older with at least some college education is lower than percentages for Corunna, Shiawassee County, and the State of Michigan. For graphs of educational attainment data for the areas of comparison please see appendix A.3.

### 3.1.7: Crime Rate Analysis

To evaluate crime rate data in the City of Owosso, information from the Michigan State Police Department was examined for the years 2000 to 2009. This data includes the number of unlawful acts reported to law enforcement agencies for the City of Owosso, City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. The crimes are divided into two categories; Index and Non-Index crimes. Index crimes are typically considered to be more serious in nature and include the following crimes: Murder & Non-negligent Manslaughter, Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Larceny, Motor Vehicle Theft and Arson. Non-Index crimes include all other unlawful acts reported to law enforcement agencies.

Crime data was collected from the Michigan State Police Uniform Crime Report for the years 2000-2006, and the 2007-2009 data was collected from the Department's annual Crime Data and Statistics. The population data that was used to generate the crime rates for each area came from the 2000 US Census and 2001-2009 US Census Population Estimates. Crime rates were calculated by multiplying the number of offenses by 100, and then dividing that number by the population for the area. This generated a rate of crime per 100 individuals in a community.

*Table 3.1.3 Index Crime Rates (per 100 individuals) for Owosso, Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan*

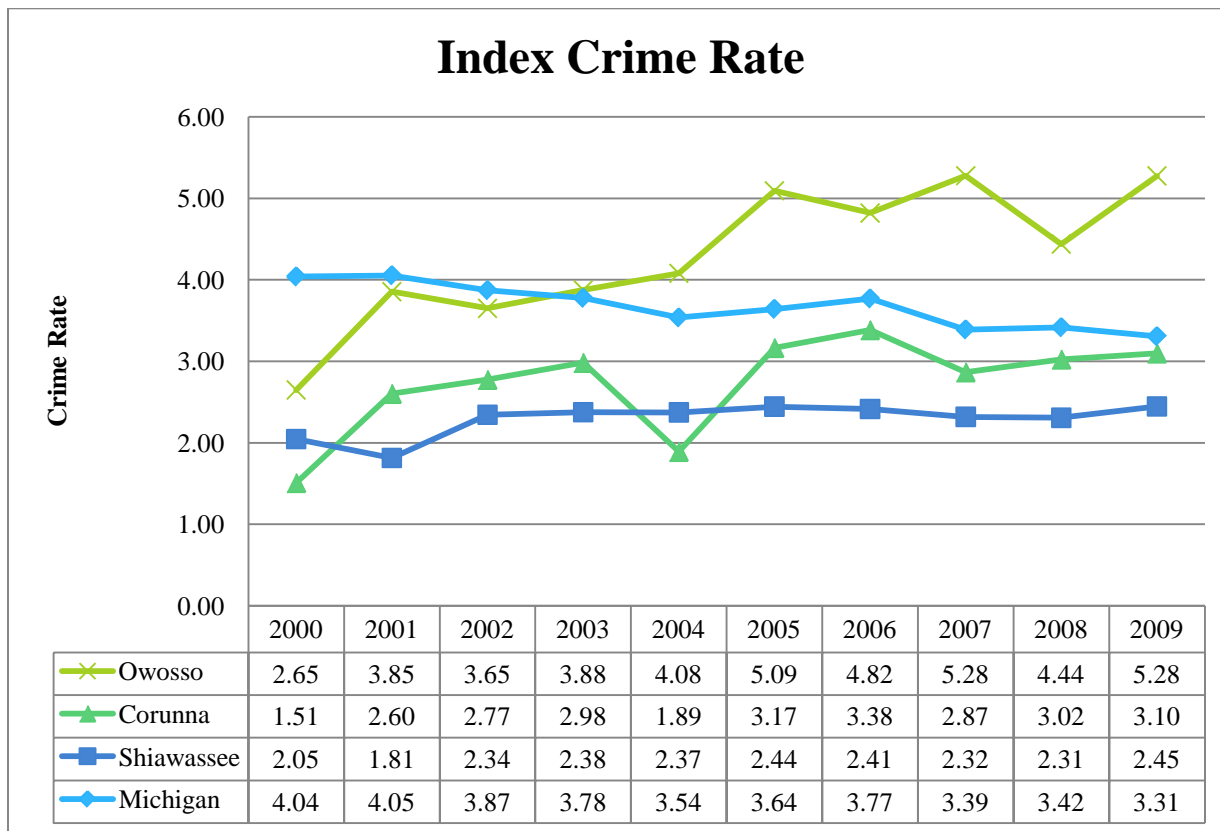
	City of Owosso		City of Corunna		Shiawassee County		State of Michigan	
	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate
<b>2000</b>	416	2.65	51	1.51	1,466	2.05	401,398	4.04
<b>2001</b>	602	3.85	89	2.60	1,304	1.81	405,633	4.05
<b>2002</b>	565	3.65	94	2.77	1,687	2.34	388,648	3.87
<b>2003</b>	598	3.88	101	2.98	1,714	2.38	380,126	3.78
<b>2004</b>	629	4.08	64	1.89	1,723	2.37	356,753	3.54
<b>2005</b>	777	5.09	106	3.17	1,765	2.44	367,396	3.64
<b>2006</b>	734	4.82	113	3.38	1,743	2.41	379,992	3.77
<b>2007</b>	799	5.28	95	2.87	1,663	2.32	340,596	3.39
<b>2008</b>	663	4.44	99	3.02	1,634	2.31	341,662	3.42
<b>2009</b>	778	5.28	101	3.10	1,712	2.45	329,556	3.31

*Source: 2000 US Census, 2001-2009 US Census Population Estimates, Michigan State Police Department*

Table 3.1.3 shows that the number and rate of Index crimes in the City of Owosso has been increasing since the year 2000. Even though the crime rate has occasionally dipped, there is an overall trend of increasing crime in the City of Owosso. The City of Corunna also shows a similar trend of increasing Index crimes. The number of Index crimes for Shiawassee County has also increased over the past ten years, but the crime rate has remained fairly stable at around 2.4 Index crimes per 100 people. The number of Index crimes, as well as the rate of Index crimes per 100 individuals, for the State of Michigan as a whole has been decreasing over the last decade. The Index crime rate for the City of Owosso has consistently remained higher than the rate for Corunna and Shiawassee County since the year 2000 and higher than the State of Michigan since 2003. It should be noted that in 2005 the City of Owosso Police Department started using a new software system that more accurately collected and reported local crime statistics (M. Compeau, personal communication, 4/21/2011). This could potentially explain a portion of the increase in the crime rate beginning in the year 2005.



Graph 3.1.11 Index Crime Rates (per 100 individuals) for the City of Owosso, City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan, 2000-2009



Source: Michigan State Police Department

As graph 3.1.11 indicates, the Index crime rate in the City of Owosso has been increasing since the year 2000. In 2003 the Index crime rate for Owosso surpassed the state, making it the highest Index crime rate of the four comparable areas.

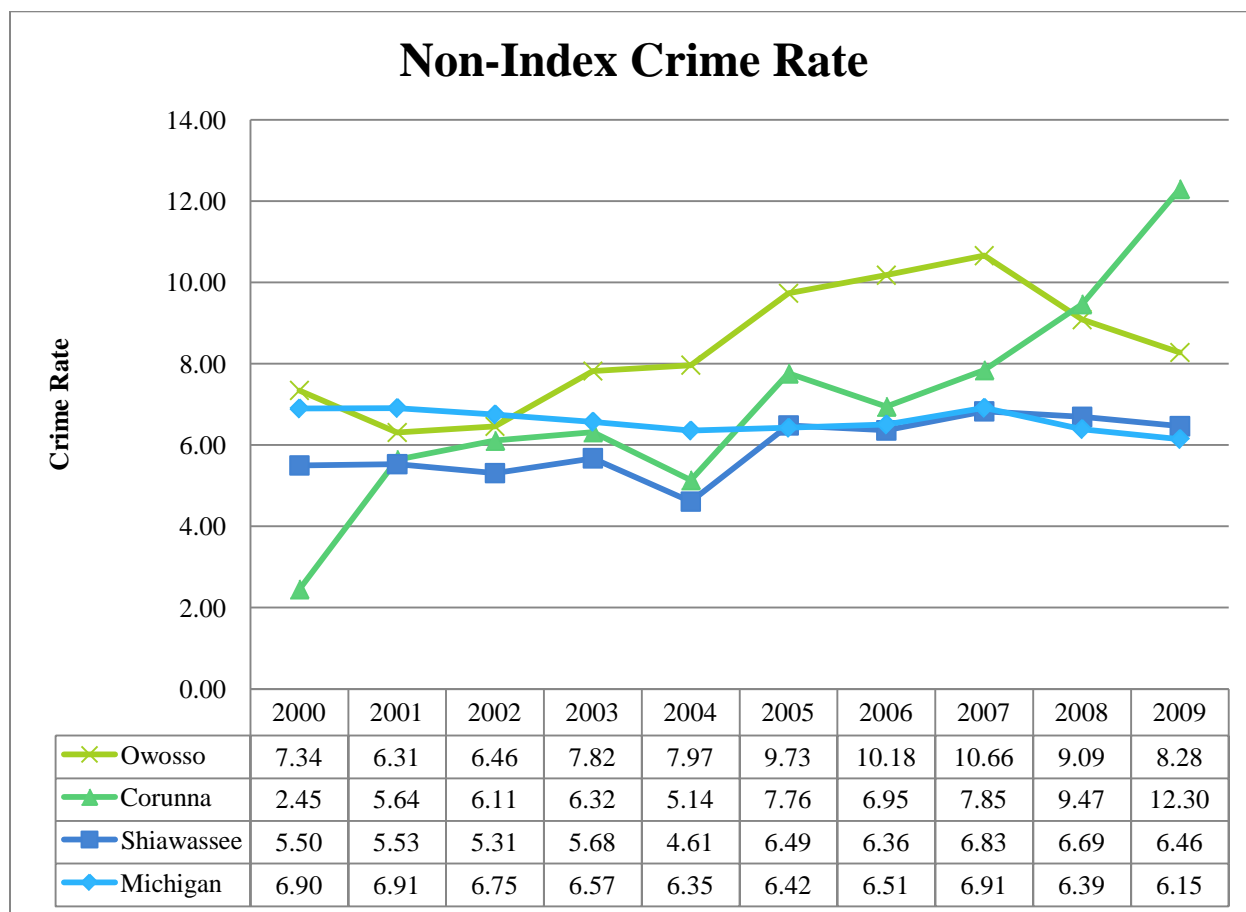
Table 3.1.4 Non-Index Crime Rates (per 100 individuals) for Owosso, Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan

	City of Owosso		City of Corunna		Shiawassee County		State of Michigan	
	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate	Offenses	Rate
<b>2000</b>	1,154	7.34	83	2.45	3,942	5.50	685,572	6.90
<b>2001</b>	986	6.31	193	5.64	3,977	5.53	691,346	6.91
<b>2002</b>	1,000	6.46	207	6.11	3,821	5.31	677,728	6.75
<b>2003</b>	1,207	7.82	214	6.32	4,094	5.68	661,653	6.57
<b>2004</b>	1,228	7.97	174	5.14	3,346	4.61	641,161	6.35
<b>2005</b>	1,485	9.73	260	7.76	4,684	6.49	648,269	6.42
<b>2006</b>	1,550	10.18	232	6.95	4,594	6.36	655,871	6.51
<b>2007</b>	1,614	10.66	260	7.85	4,900	6.83	694,932	6.91
<b>2008</b>	1,357	9.09	310	9.47	4,741	6.69	639,373	6.39
<b>2009</b>	1,221	8.28	401	12.30	4,525	6.46	612,864	6.15

Source: 2000 US Census, 2001-2009 US Census Population Estimate, Michigan State Police Department

Table 3.1.4 shows the occurrence of Non-Index crimes in the City of Owosso, City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and State of Michigan. As previously noted, Non-Index crimes are typically considered less serious crimes. While not all inclusive, examples of Non-Index crimes include fraud, embezzlement, vandalism, narcotic laws, driving under the influence, weapons and disorderly conduct. The data shows a steady increase in Non-Index crimes in Owosso between the years 2001 and 2007, with a drop during the years 2008 and 2009. The City of Corunna has experienced a large increase in Non-Index crimes since the year 2000. Corunna's number of Non-Index crimes has quadrupled and the crime rate has quintupled since its low in 2000. There has been a slow and steady increase in Non-Index crimes in Shiawassee County over the past decade, while the number and rate of Non-Index crimes has been steadily decreasing at the state level. The Non-Index crime rate for Owosso has consistently remained higher than the county and state levels since 2003. The Non-Index crime rate has decreased over the years 2008 and 2009; during that time period Corunna's Non-Index crime rate has surpassed the City of Owosso's rate.

Graph 3.1.12 Non-Index Crime Rates (per 100 individuals) for the City of Owosso, City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan, 2000-2009



Source: Michigan State Police Department

As graph 3.1.12 demonstrates, there is an overall increase in the number of Non-Index crimes in the City of Owosso between 2000 and 2009. The years 2001 through 2007 showed increasing rates, with a declining Non-Index crime rate since its peak in 2007. This overall trend is in-line with the trend of Non-Index crimes in Shiawassee County over the past decade. Non-Index crime rates for the City of Corunna have been increasing throughout the decade, and surpassed the City of Owosso in 2008. Non-Index crime rates remain higher in the Owosso and Corunna area than the rest of Shiawassee County. As previously noted, in 2005 the City of Owosso started using a new software system to track and report crime statistics. This could potentially explain a portion of the increase in Non-Index crimes in the City of Owosso beginning in 2005.

### 3.1.8: Summary

The demographic data for the City of Owosso shows that the population has been declining since 1980. Using 2010 census data, Owosso has lost over 1,250 over the last thirty years. This could be a serious concern as the city is losing population at a faster rate than the neighboring City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. The population of the community is also aging. The average age in Owosso was 32.9 in 1980; the latest estimate places the average age at 36.7 years. This change matches other trends occurring across the state. While the population of Owosso has aged over the past thirty years, the city does have the youngest average age of the comparable areas.

The City of Owosso is a racially homogenous community that is 98.7% white. An additional concern for the City of Owosso is the educational attainment rate of its residents. The percentage of the population aged 25 and older with at least some college is lower than the City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. Examination of crime data shows that the City of Owosso has experienced an increase in the rate of Index and Non-Index crimes since the year 2000. The Index crime rate for the City of Owosso has been higher than the City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan since 2003. The Non-Index crime rate for the City of Owosso has decreased in recent years, but remains higher than the county and state level. Overall, the demographic evaluation of the City of Owosso raises some concerns about the population trends of the community.

## 3.2: Socio-Economics

The socio-economic data examined for Owosso included median household income, poverty rate, as well as industry and employment data. Each characteristic is compared to Shiawassee County, the State of Michigan, and when available, the City of Corunna. The data was obtained from the 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses, as well as the 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

### 3.2.1: Median Household Income

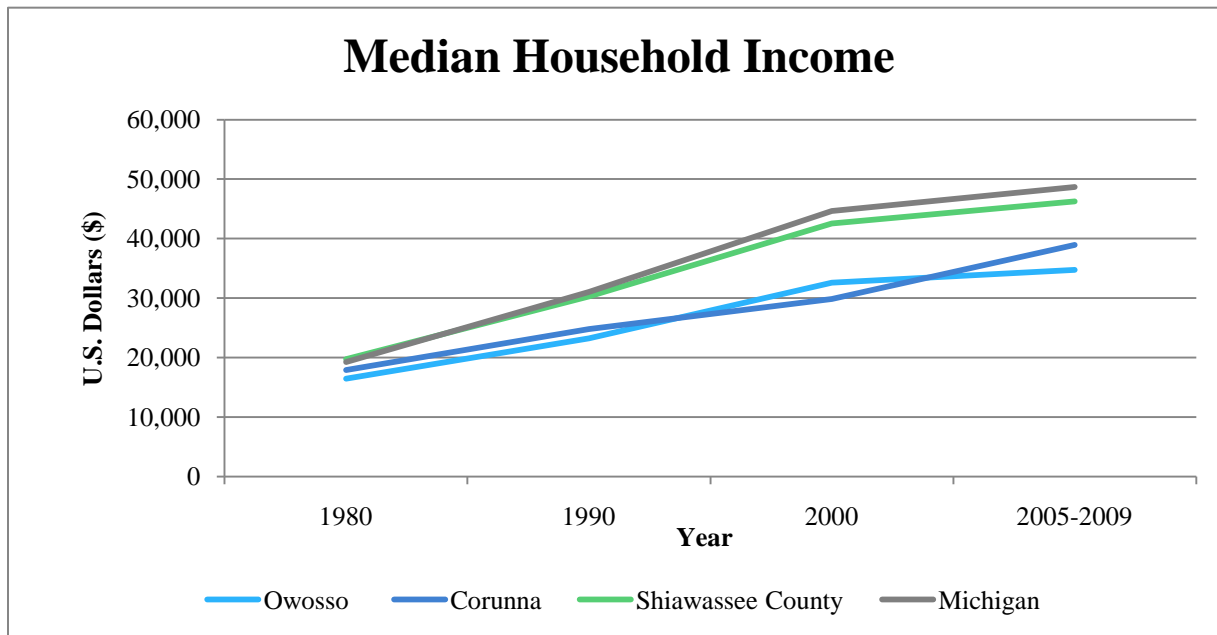
Table 3.2.1: Median Household Income – Percent Change

	Owosso	Percent Change	Corunna	Percent Change	Shiawassee County	Percent Change	Michigan	Percent Change
1980	\$16,452	-	\$17,923	-	\$19,722	-	\$19,223	-
1990	\$23,220	41.14%	\$24,784	38.28%	\$30,283	53.55%	\$31,020	61.37%
2000	\$32,576	40.29%	\$29,831	20.36%	\$42,553	40.52%	\$44,667	43.99%
'05-'09	\$34,743	6.65%	\$38,961	30.61%	\$46,260	8.71%	\$48,700	9.03%

Source: 1980, 1990 & 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Table 3.2.1 shows the growth of median household income for Owosso, Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. Median household income for the City of Owosso has continued to grow from 1980 to present day. Since 1980, Owosso's median household income has grown \$18,291; more than doubling. Although the overall income has been increasing, the percent change over time has declined. From 2000 to 2009, median household income in Owosso had risen only 6.65%. Percent changes in median household income from the 2005-2009 estimates are similar across Owosso, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan; all show single digit percent income increases. These changes are the smallest increases to occur in the last thirty years. The trend of increasing incomes at a declining rate can be seen at the county and state levels as well.

Graph 3.2.1: Median Household Income

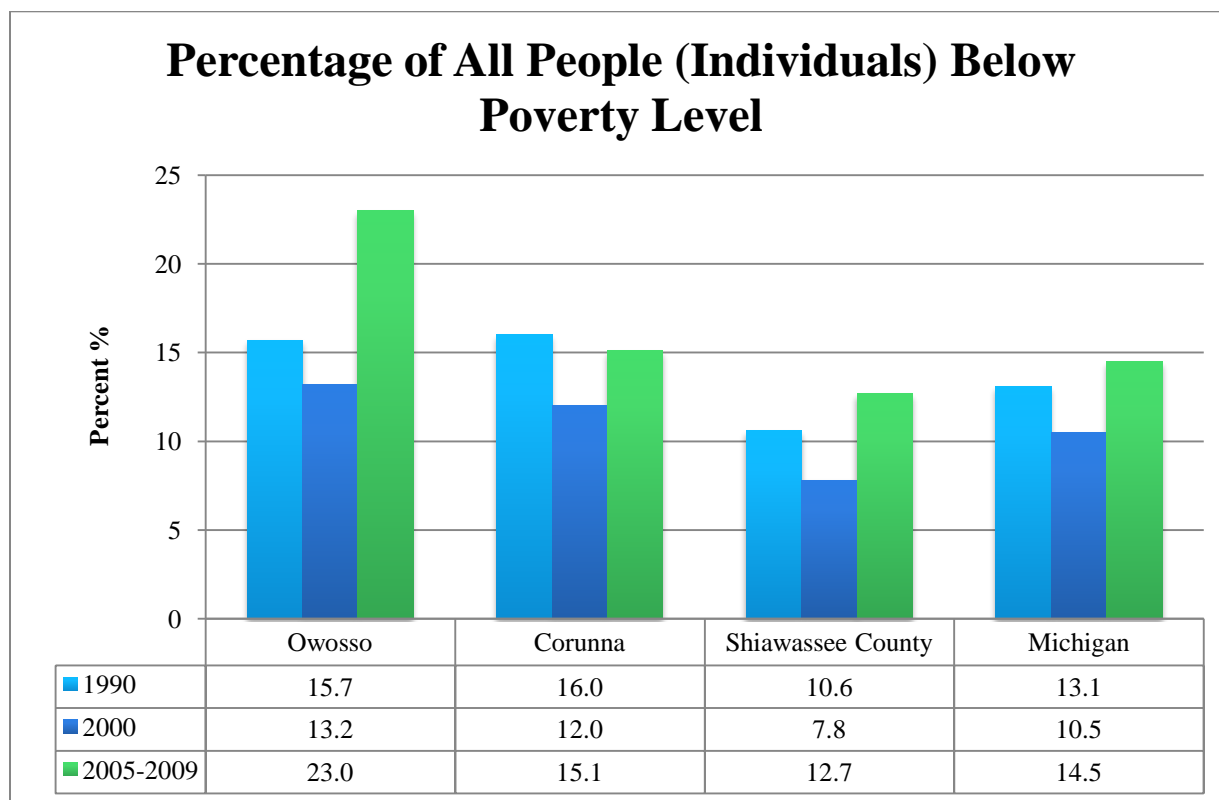


Source: 1980, 1990 & 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Graph 3.2.1 compares median household incomes of Owosso, Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan from 1980 to the 2009 estimates. The median household income of Owosso in 2009 fell below the rest of the county and state at only \$34,743. The State of Michigan and Shiawassee County had median household incomes of \$48,700 and \$46,260 respectively in 2009.

### 3.2.2: Poverty Rates

Graph 3.2.2: Individuals below Poverty Level



Source: 1990 & 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

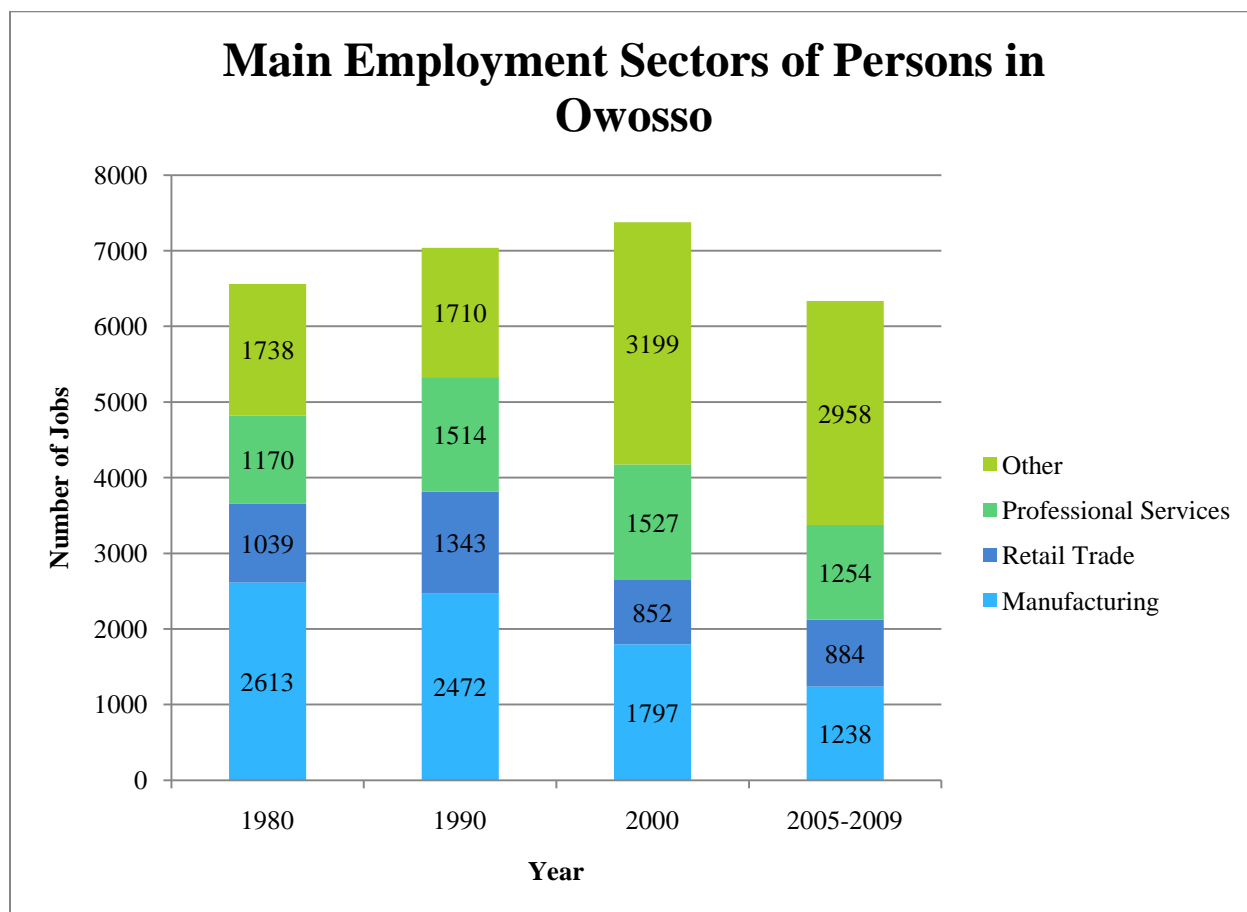
Poverty in Owosso has fluctuated since 1990. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the national poverty line is \$10,956 for one unrelated individual (How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty, 2010). Using the most up-to-date estimation data from 2009, Owosso is faced with a heightened level of poverty. The poverty rate has increased 9.8% since the 2000 Census to a current rate of 23%. This level is above the geographical areas of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. In the past, Owosso’s poverty levels mirrored the rates of Corunna and the State of Michigan. Overall, Shiawassee County has experienced the lowest levels of poverty in comparison to the City of Corunna. An overall trend of increased poverty rates since 2000 can be observed in all geographical areas.

### 3.2.3: Industry and Employment

The following section will examine trends and comparisons of industries, and employment within those industries, for the City of Owosso, the City of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan.

### 3.2.3.1: Employment Distribution

Graph 3.2.3: Industry of Employed Person and Labor Force



Source: 1980, 1990, 2000 Census and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Graph 3.2.3 explains the major employment sectors located within the city of Owosso. The largest are education and health care services (also known as professional services), the manufacturing sector, and retail trade. Prior to 1980, manufacturing was Owosso's main sector of employment. Over the past 30 years, manufacturing has experienced a significant decline and continues to lose jobs. In 1980, a total of 2,613 manufacturing jobs existed in Owosso. In 2009, only 1,238 jobs were retained.

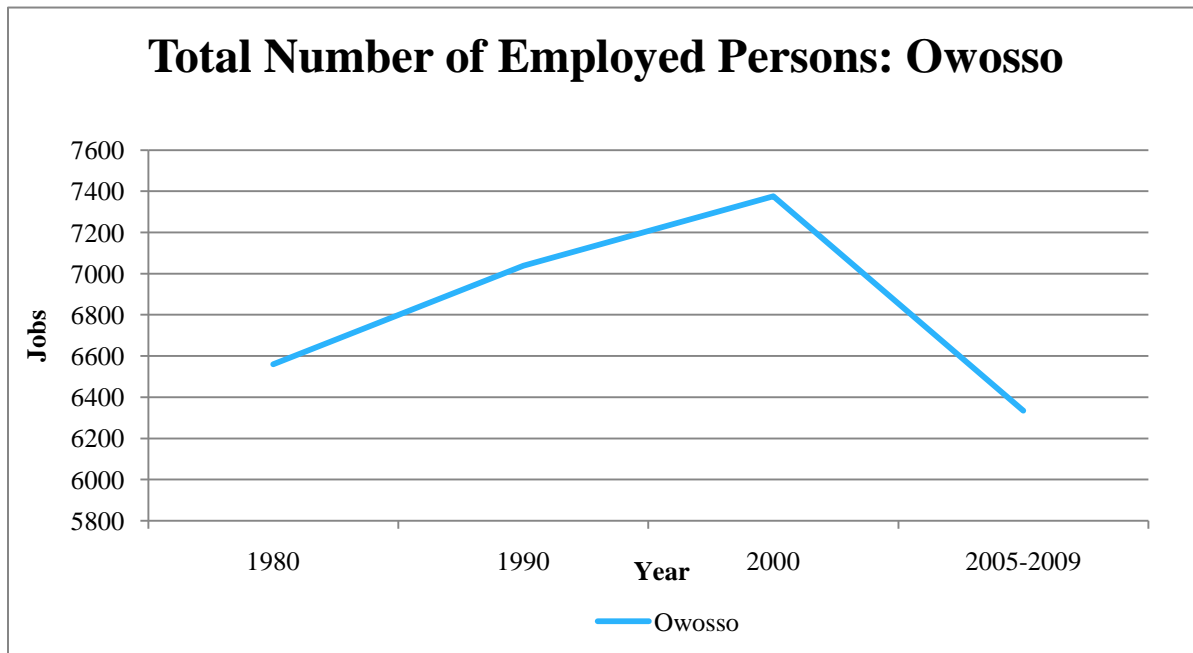
Retail trade has fluctuated over time with a large increase between 1980 and 1990. It reached its highest number of jobs in 1990 with 1,343. In 2000, the number of retail trade jobs significantly dropped to 852, but has since rebounded. The professional services sector gained jobs between 1980 and 2000, but a decline in this sector has occurred since 2000.

The "Others" category includes the following sectors: arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations, and food services; professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management; construction; transportation, warehousing, and utilities; public



administration; finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing; information; wholesale trade; and agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining.

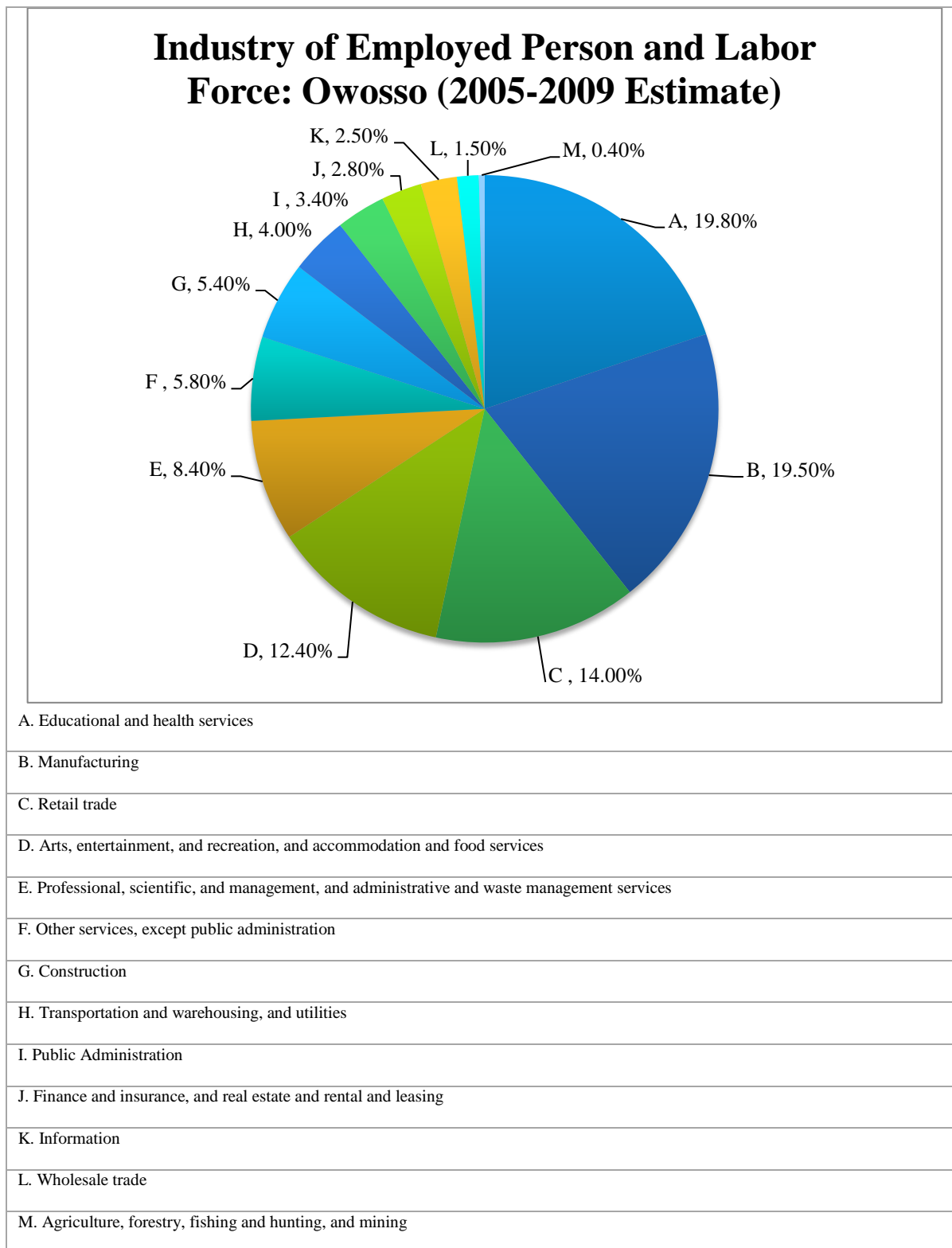
Graph 3.2.4: Total Number of Employed Persons



Source: 1980, 1990, 2000 Census and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Graph 3.2.4 shows the employment trends for the City of Owosso since 1980. Since 1980, the total number of employed persons increased until it peaked at 7,375 jobs in 2000. From 2000 to the 2009 estimation data, Owosso faced a large drop in total number of employed persons. This drop may be attributed in part to the loss of manufacturing jobs and related sectors during the same time period. The total number of employed persons in the City of Owosso was 6,334 during the 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

Graph 3.2.5: Industry of Employed Person and Labor Force

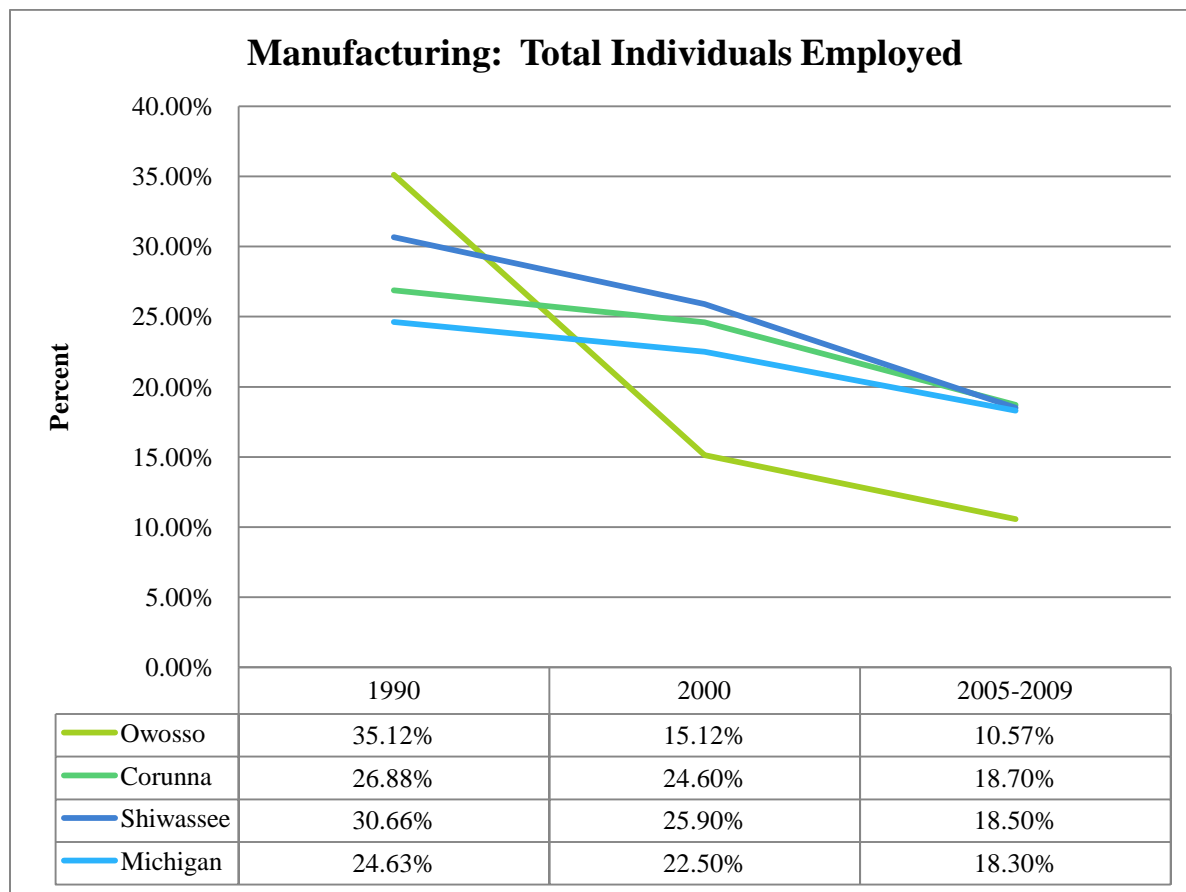


Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Graph 3.2.5 displays the current (2009 estimation) distribution of jobs based on industry for Owosso. According the U.S. Census, there are thirteen major employment categories. Owosso has four main employment sectors, which are defined as those industries providing more than 10% of total employment to population. The main employment sectors are education and health services (19.8%), manufacturing (19.5%), retail trade (14%) and arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services (12.4%).

### 3.2.3.2: Major Industry Employment Distribution Trends

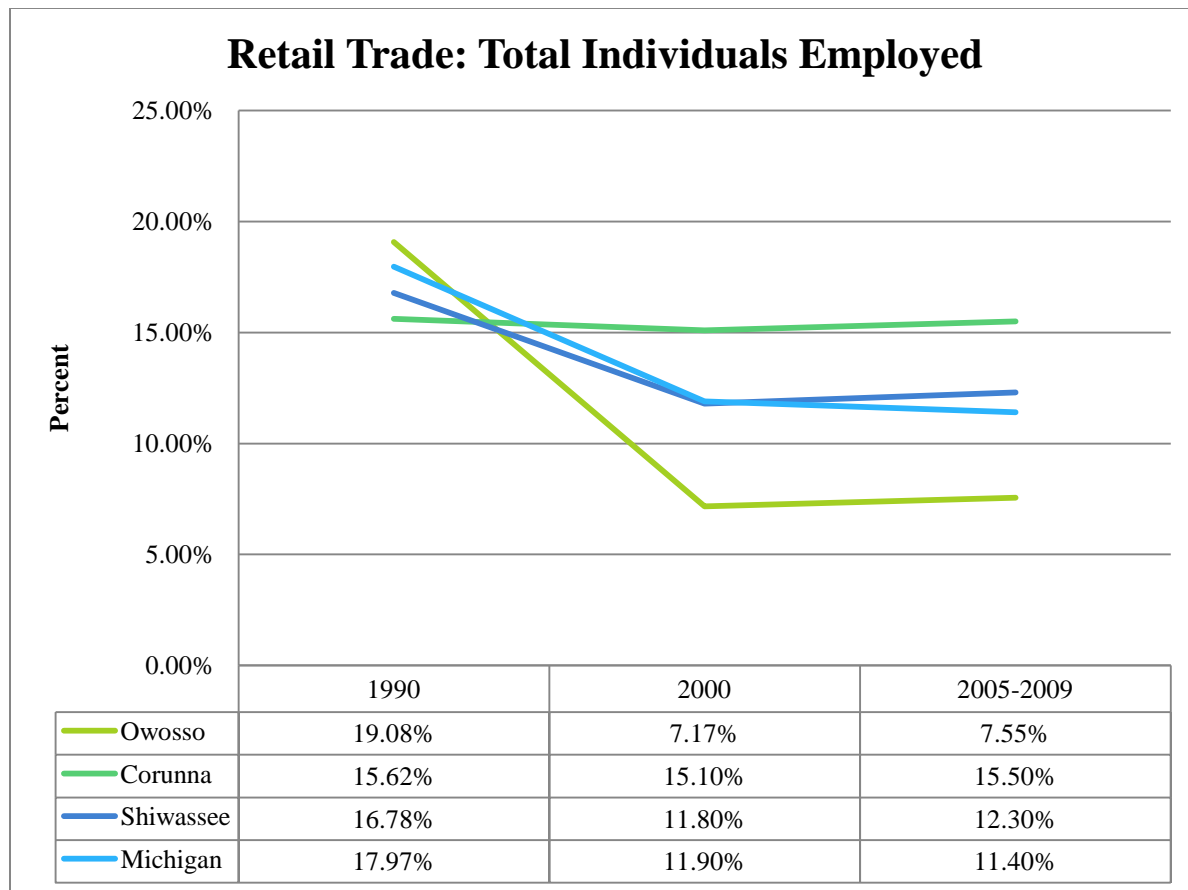
Graph 2.2.6: Manufacturing Employment



Source: 1990, 2000 Census and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Graph 3.2.6 shows the trends of the manufacturing sector in the four geographical areas from 1990 to 2009 (estimate). Owosso had the largest decrease of manufacturing jobs, descending from 35.12% in 1990 to 19.50% in 2009; this represent a total reduction in manufacturing of 15.62%. All other geographic locations also experienced drops in manufacturing employment.

Graph 3.2.7: Retail Trade Employment



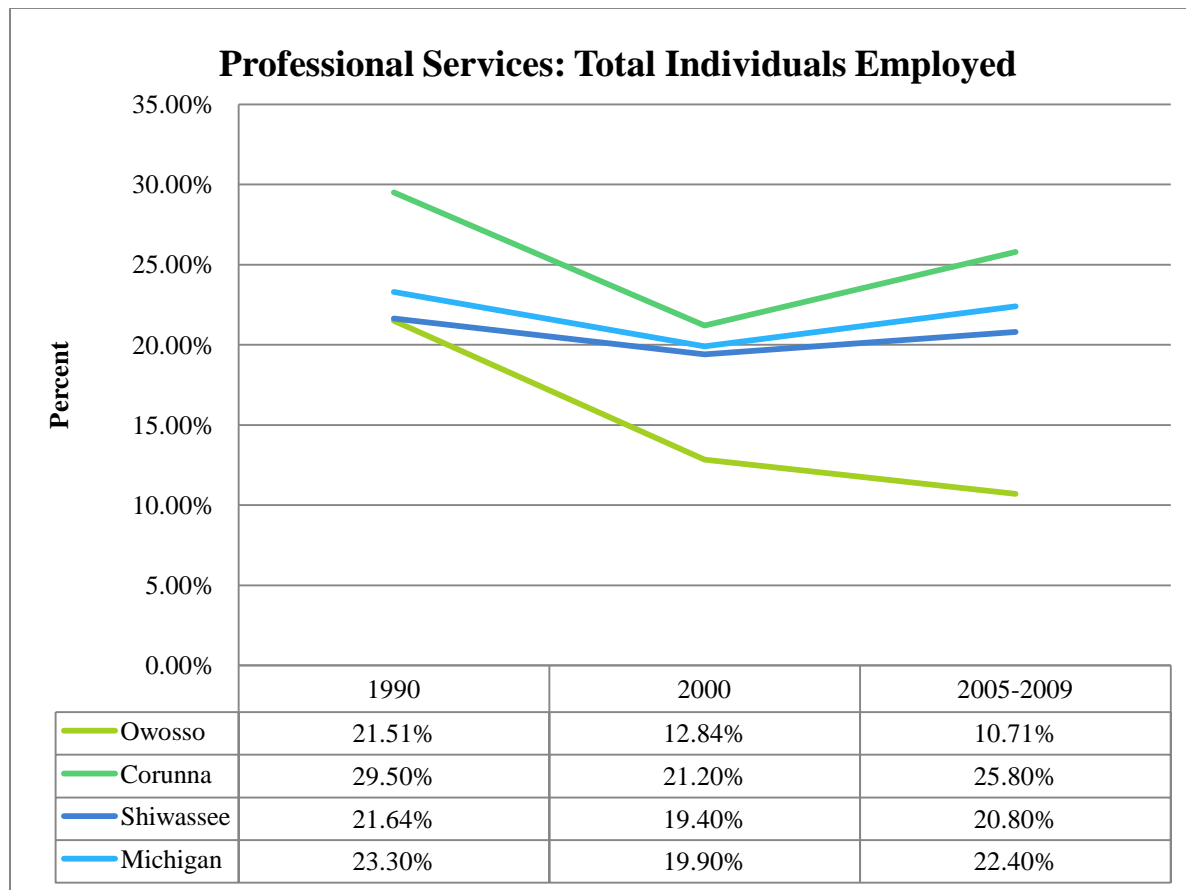
Source: 1990, 2000 Census and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Graph 3.2.7 shows retail trade employment of the four geographical areas from 1990 to 2009. Owosso, Shiawassee County and Michigan have all experienced declines in retail trade employment from 1990 to 2000, each ending at around 12%. In the 2009 estimate Owosso and Shiawassee County have experienced an increase in the number of retail trade jobs, while Michigan has slightly declined.



Figure 10: JC Penney in Owosso

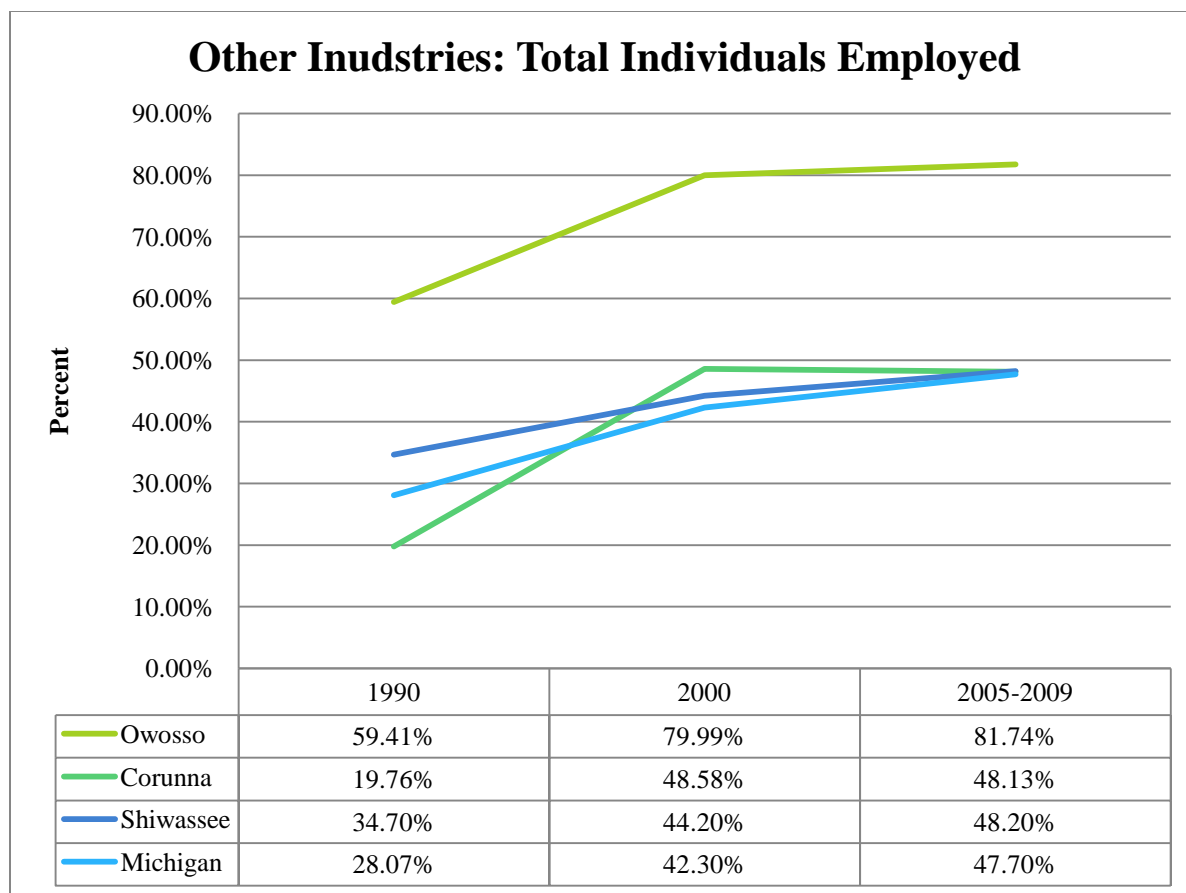
Graph 3.2.8: Professional Services Employment



Source: 1990, 2000 Census and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Graph 3.2.8 displays the professional services employment data from 1990 to 2009. Employment in this sector has generally stayed the same over the 20 year period examined. Owosso, Shiawassee County and Michigan have followed the same general trend since 1990. Each of these geographical locations have had relatively consistent levels of employment in this sector.

Graph 2.2.9: Other Employment

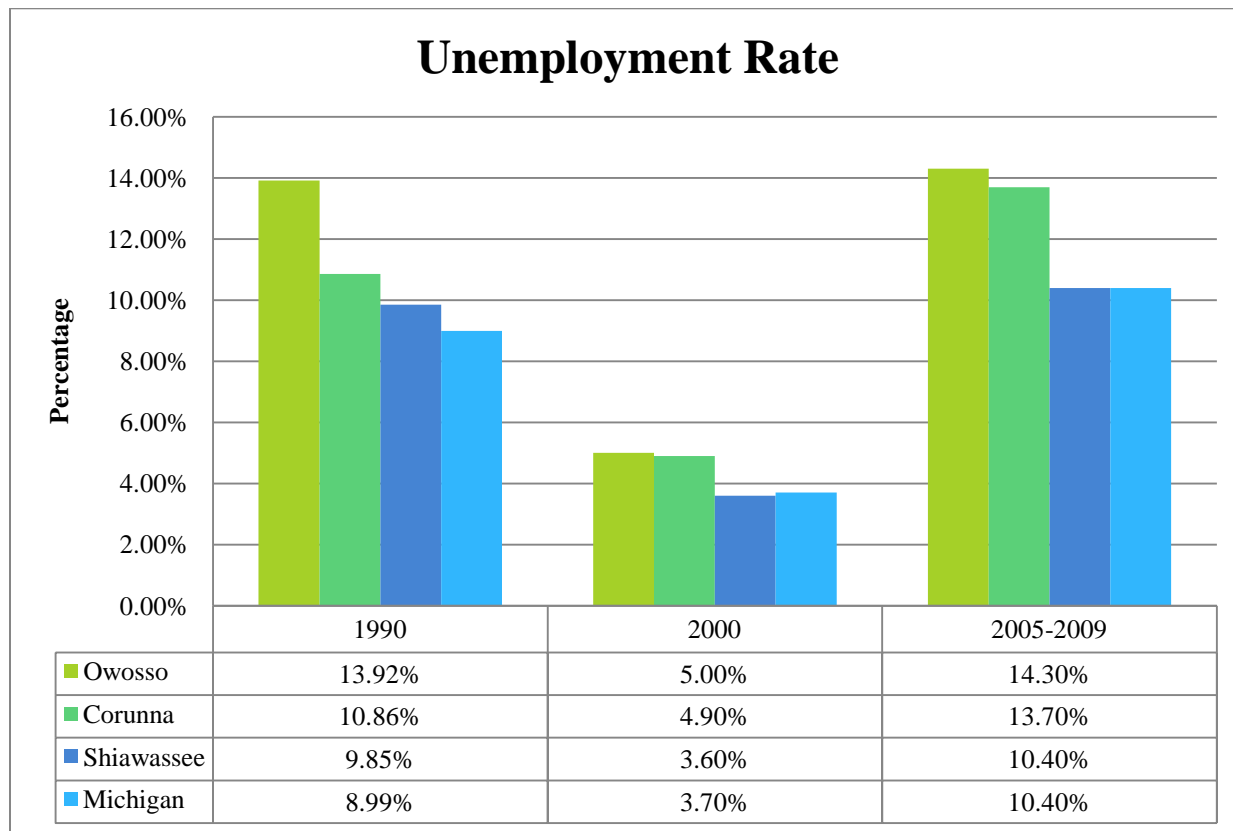


Source: 1990, 2000 Census and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Graph 3.2.9 shows other employment in the four geographical areas being examined. These sectors include agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining; construction, wholesale trade, transportation and warehousing, and utilities; information; finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing; professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services; other services (except public administration); and public administration. This graph shows each of the geographical locations to be gaining employment in the sectors mentioned above from 1990 to 2009. Owosso, Shiawassee County, and Michigan have followed the same trend since 2000; almost half of their employment base now comes from sectors outside of manufacturing, retail trade, and professional services.

### 3.2.3.3: Unemployment Trends

Graph 2.2.10: Unemployment Rate



Source: 1990, 2000 Census and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Graph 3.2.10 displays the unemployment rates over the past 20 years. Owosso has experienced the greatest fluctuation of unemployment of the four geographical locations. Currently, Owosso’s unemployment rate is 14.3%, which is the highest it has been over the past 20 years.

### 3.2.5: Summary

After collecting data from the U.S. Census, multiple notable trends can be identified. First, the median income levels of Owosso have been increasing, but at a declining rate. This trend is consistent at the regional and state levels. However, Owosso’s median household income (\$34,743) is considerably lower than county (\$46,260) and state (\$48,700) averages, but comparable with the City of Corunna (3\$8,961) in 2009.

Employment by sector has experienced a major change over the past 20 years. The main sources of employment are being replaced with the other emerging sectors. The most notable change is in the manufacturing sector, which is a major declining industry in Owosso. The current increase of unemployment can in part be associated with the fluctuation of employment in this industry.

Poverty rates have increased over the past decade for Owosso, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. Owosso has the highest rate of poverty at 23% of all individuals; almost 8% higher than Corunna. The trend is similar across the local, county and state levels; decreasing from 1990 to 2000, but then spiking back up in the 2009 estimates.



### 3.3: Housing

The housing data analyzed for Owosso includes total housing units, owner occupied and renter occupied housing units; vacancy rates; and foreclosure rates for the city, county and nation as a whole. Home ownership data was also examined including single family and multifamily homes, housing values and household size trends. The data was collected from the 1990 and 2000 Census, as well as the 2005-2009 American Community Surveys. Data was also obtained from the GIS database maintained by the City of Owosso.

Foreclosure data was gathered from [www.realtytrac.com](http://www.realtytrac.com). RealtyTrac is a company that collects and maintains foreclosure listings for over 2,200 U.S. counties and 90% of U.S. households.



Figure 11: Home in Owosso

#### 3.3.1: Number of Housing Units

The first aspect of the housing analysis examined was the number of total housing units within the City of Owosso. Additionally, the number of units in Corunna and Shiawassee County was analyzed for the purposes of comparison. Between the years of 1990 and 2009 the total number of housing units in Shiawassee County rose from 25,833 to 30,443; which equals a 15.14% increase in the number of housing units. The total number of units in the City of Corunna rose 1,152 to 1,424; which equals a 19.10% increase in the number of housing units. The total number of units in the City of Owosso rose from 6,716 to 6,954, giving Owosso the lowest percentage of growth with 3.39%. This data is shown in Tables 3.3.1-3.3.3.

Table 3.3.1: Occupied Housing

1990 Owner/Renter Occupied Housing							
Location	Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied		Total Units	Vacant Units	% Vacant
	Number of Units	% of Total Units	Number of Units	% of Total Units			
Owosso City	4,114	61.3	2,363	35.2	6,716	239	3.56
Corunna	657	57.03	458	39.75	1,152	37	3.21
Shiawassee County	19,321	74.8	5,543	21.5	25,833	969	3.75

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

Table 3.3.1 shows data collected on housing units from the 1990 U.S. Census. This table shows the total number of housing units available in the city of Owosso, Corunna and Shiawassee County. It further divides the data into owner-occupied, renter-occupied, total housing units and vacant units for each geographical area. Table 3.3.1 shows that in 1990 there was a total 6,716 housing units in Owosso; 61.3% are owner occupied, 35.2% are renter occupied and 3.56% of all

units are vacant. There was a total of 1,152 housing units in Corunna in 1990; 57.03% were owner occupied, 39.75% and 3.21% of all housing units were vacant. Shiawassee County had a total of 25,833 total housing units; 74.8% were owner occupied, 21.5% were renter occupied and 3.75% of all housing units were vacant. The following two tables make the same comparison as table 3.3.1 does for the years of 2000 and 2005-2009 (estimate).

*Table 3.3.2: Occupied Housing*

2000 Owner/Renter Occupied Housing							
Location	Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied		Total Units	Vacant Units	% Vacant
	Number of Units	% of Total Units	Number of Units	% of Total Units			
Owosso City	4170	62.0	2170	32.3	6724	384	5.71
Corunna	686	48.75	634	45.06	1497	87	6.18
Shiawassee County	16041	55.1	5121	17.6	29087	2191	7.53

*Source: 2000 U.S. Census*

Table 3.3.2 contains housing data collected from the 2000 U.S Census. This table contains the same geographical representation as the data collected in table 2.3.1. The data from the 2000 U.S. Census shows an increase in housing units as well as an increase in housing vacancies. The number of owner-occupied housing units for Shiawassee County fell by 3,280, whereas the number of owner-occupied housing units in the cities of Owosso and Corunna increased. However, all three geographical areas experienced an increase in vacant housing units.

*Table 3.3.3: Occupied Housing*

2005-2009 Owner/Renter Occupied Housing							
Location	Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied		Total Units	Vacant Units	% Vacant
	Number of Units	% of Total Units	Number of Units	% of Total Units			
Owosso City	4097	58.9	2240	32.2	6954	617	8.87
Corunna	621	43.61	703	49.37	1424	100	7.02
Shiawassee County	21970	72.2	5871	19.3	30443	2602	8.55

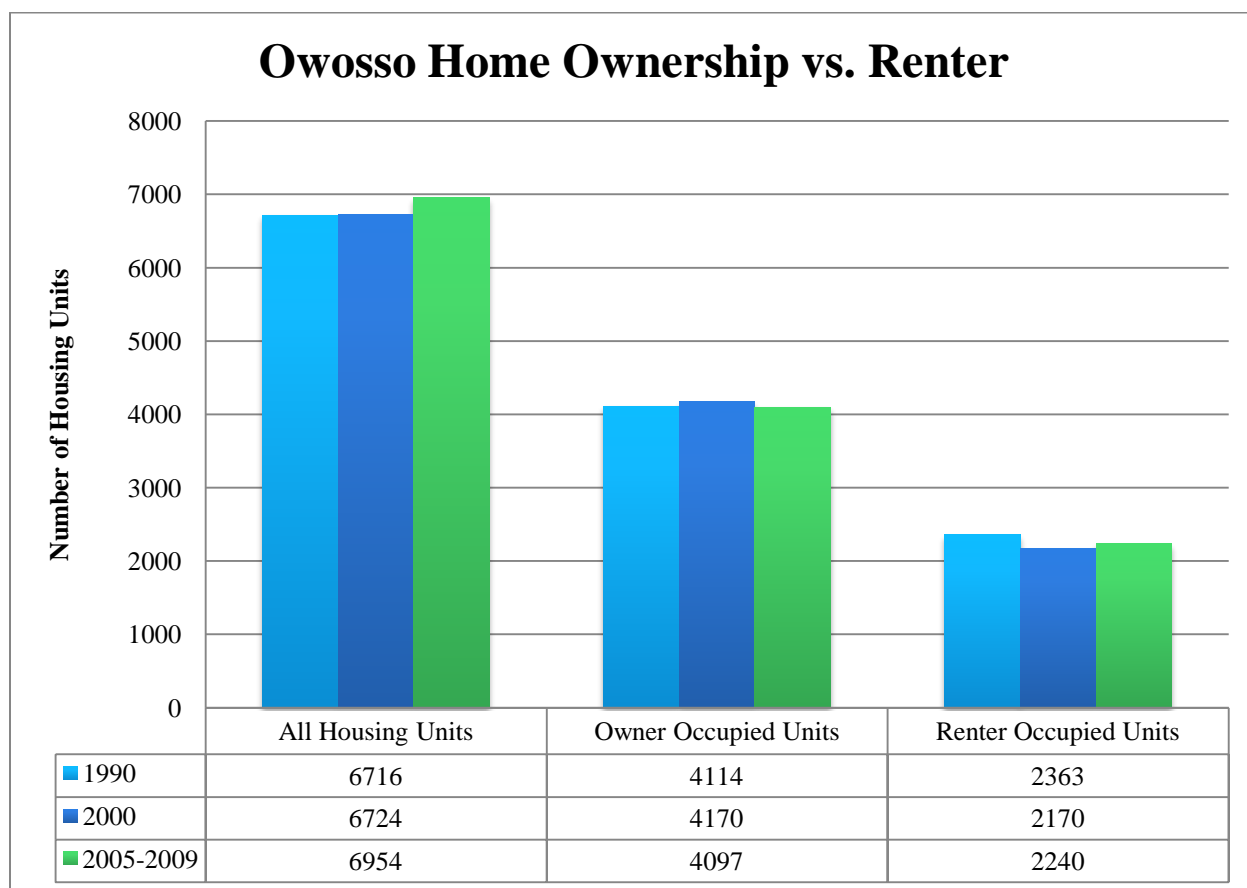
*Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey*

Table 3.3.3 shows the most up-to-date data for the cities of Owosso and Corunna, as well as Shiawassee County. This data comes from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey. Given that this data is from a survey, the data may not be as accurate as the previous two tables. However, this data is based on a stratified survey and should be an accurate representation of data that will be shown in the 2010 U.S. Census.

One of the major notable trends that occurred in Shiawassee County, the City of Owosso and the City of Corunna was the fact that housing vacancy rates continued to increase throughout the observed 19 year period. Shiawassee County’s vacancy rate rose from 3.75% in 1990 to 8.55% in 2009 resulting in a net increase of 4.8%. The city of Corunna’s vacancy rates rose from 3.21% in 1990 to 7.02% in 2009 resulting in a net increase of 3.81%. The City of Owosso’s vacancy rates rose from 3.56% in 1990 to 8.87% in 2009 (estimate) resulting in a net increase of 5.31%. This data further indicates that the City of Owosso experienced the greatest net gain in vacancy rates over the 19 year period.

### 3.3.2: Home Ownership Analysis

Graph 3.3.1: Home Ownership vs. Renter



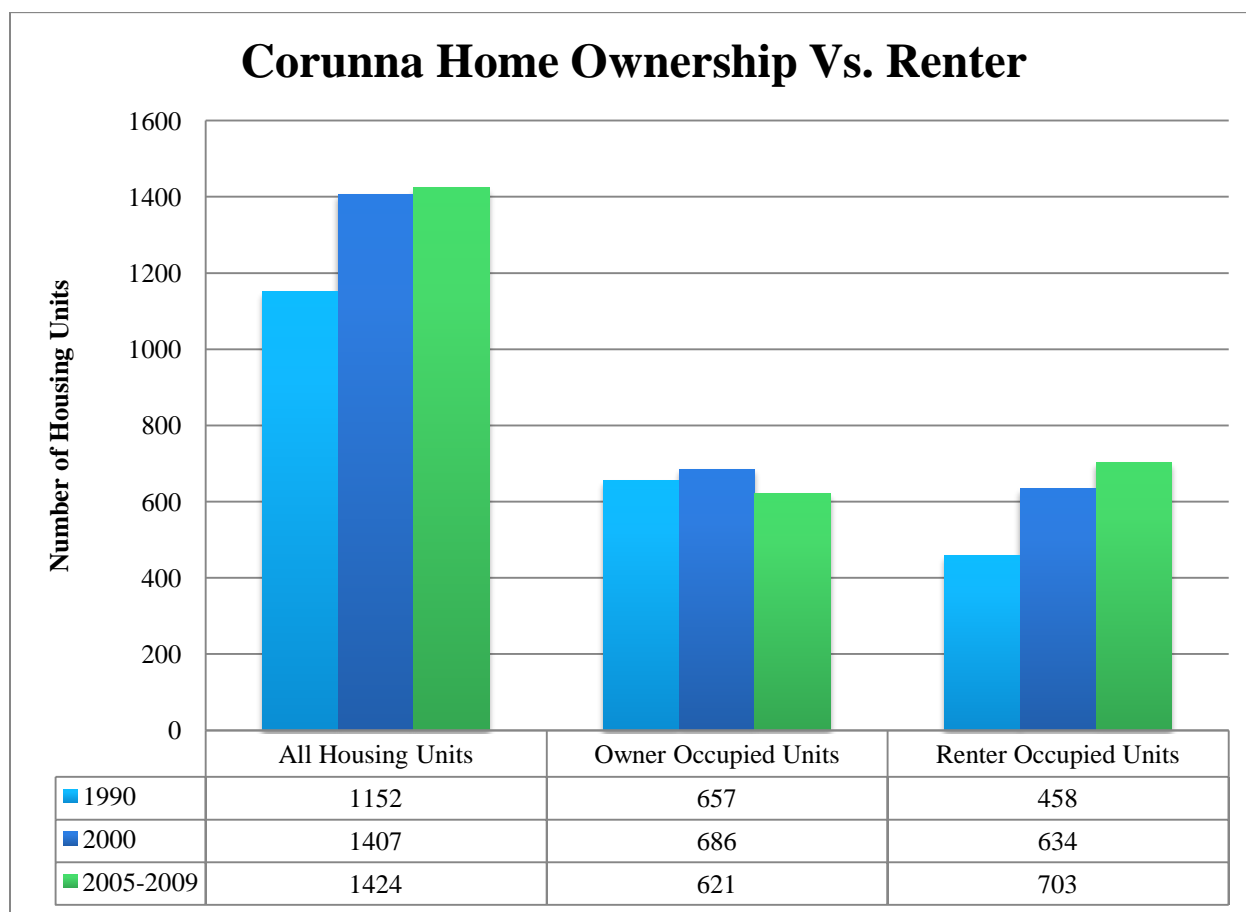
Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

The percentage of owner occupied units in the City of Owosso fell slightly from 61.3% in 1990 to 58.9% in 2009. The percentage of renter occupied units for the City of Owosso followed much of the same pattern with renter housing making up 35.2% of the total housing stock in 1990 and 32.2% in 2009. The other geographical areas of Corunna and Shiawassee County experienced roughly the same distribution of owner and renter occupied housing units (See Graph 3.3.2 and Graph 3.3.4). Shiawassee County experienced a significant drop in owner

occupied housing units of 3,280, a net decrease from 74.8% of total housing units to 55.1% of total housing units between the years of 1990 and 2000. The City of Corunna maintained the highest percentage of renter occupied housing units between the years of 1990 and 2009, and as of 2009 (estimate), 49.37% of all housing units were renter occupied. (Graph 3.3.1).

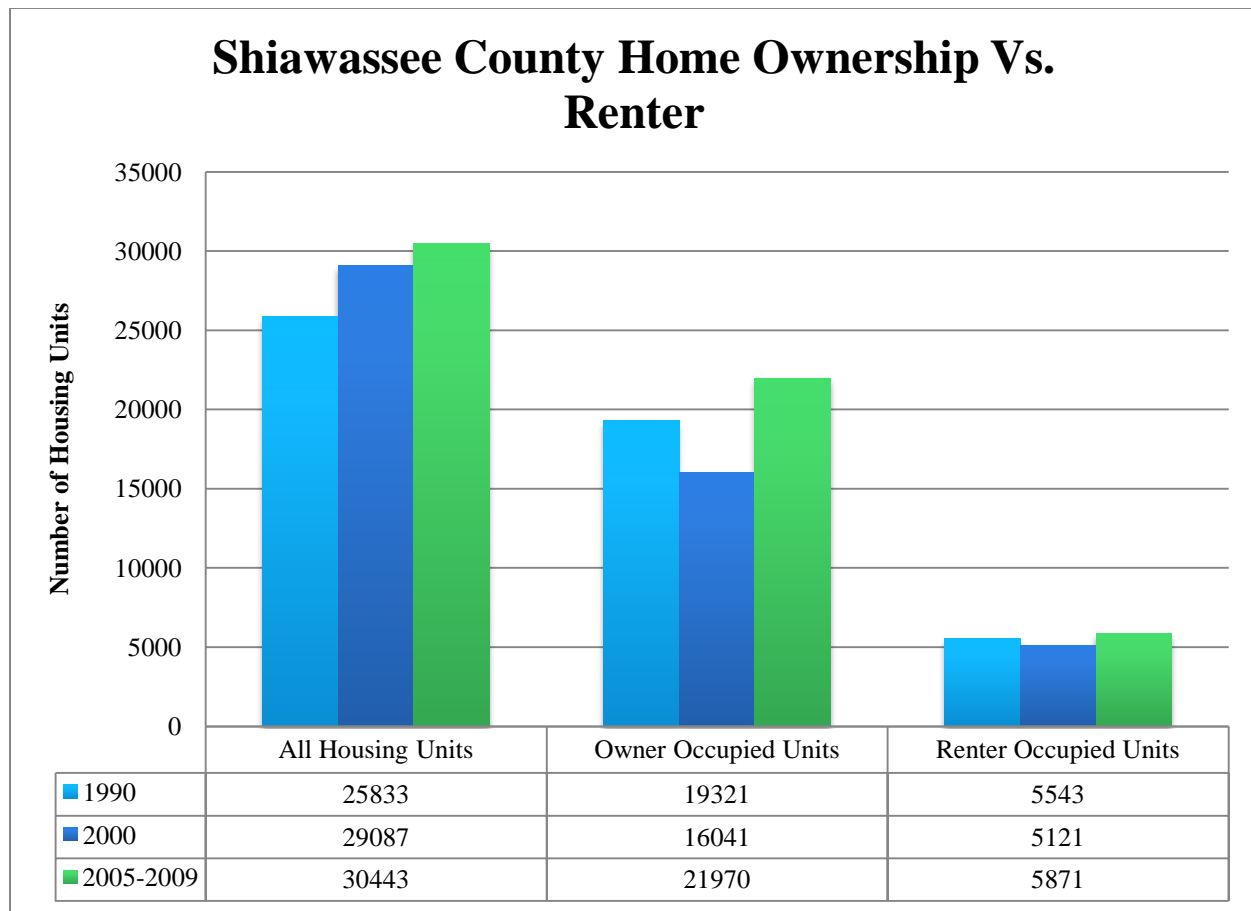
In the City of Owosso an increase of 54 housing units occurred in 2004 with the creation of Osburn Lakes. Osburn Lakes is the newest residential construction within the city of Owosso. This community was built based on the theory of New Urbanism and as of today this project is unfinished. After the completion of the first 54 units the housing market crashed and the project stalled (A. Zettel, personal communication, 4/20/2011).

Graph 3.3.2: Home Ownership vs. Renter



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

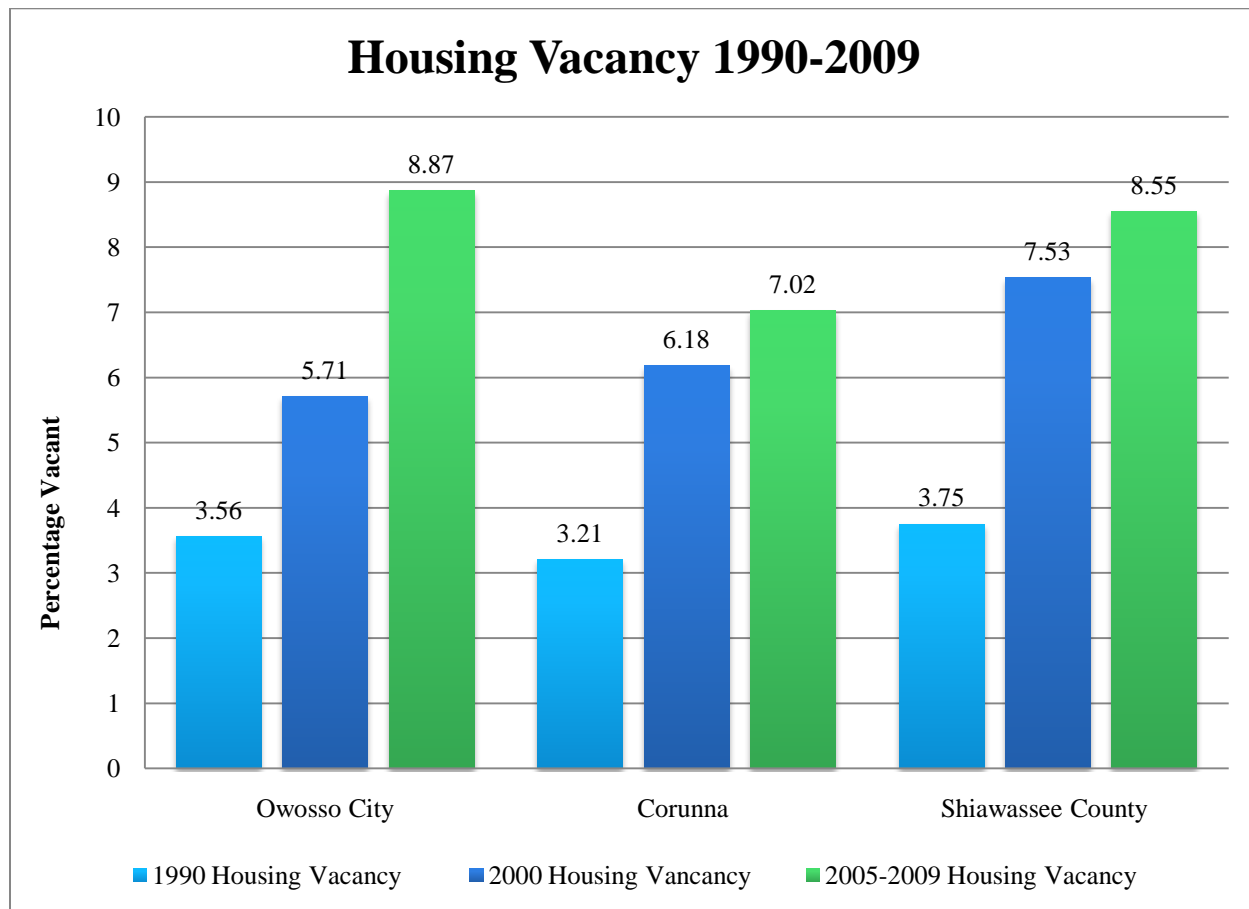
Graph 3.3.4: Home Ownership vs. Renter



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

**3.3.3: Occupied/Vacant Property Analysis**

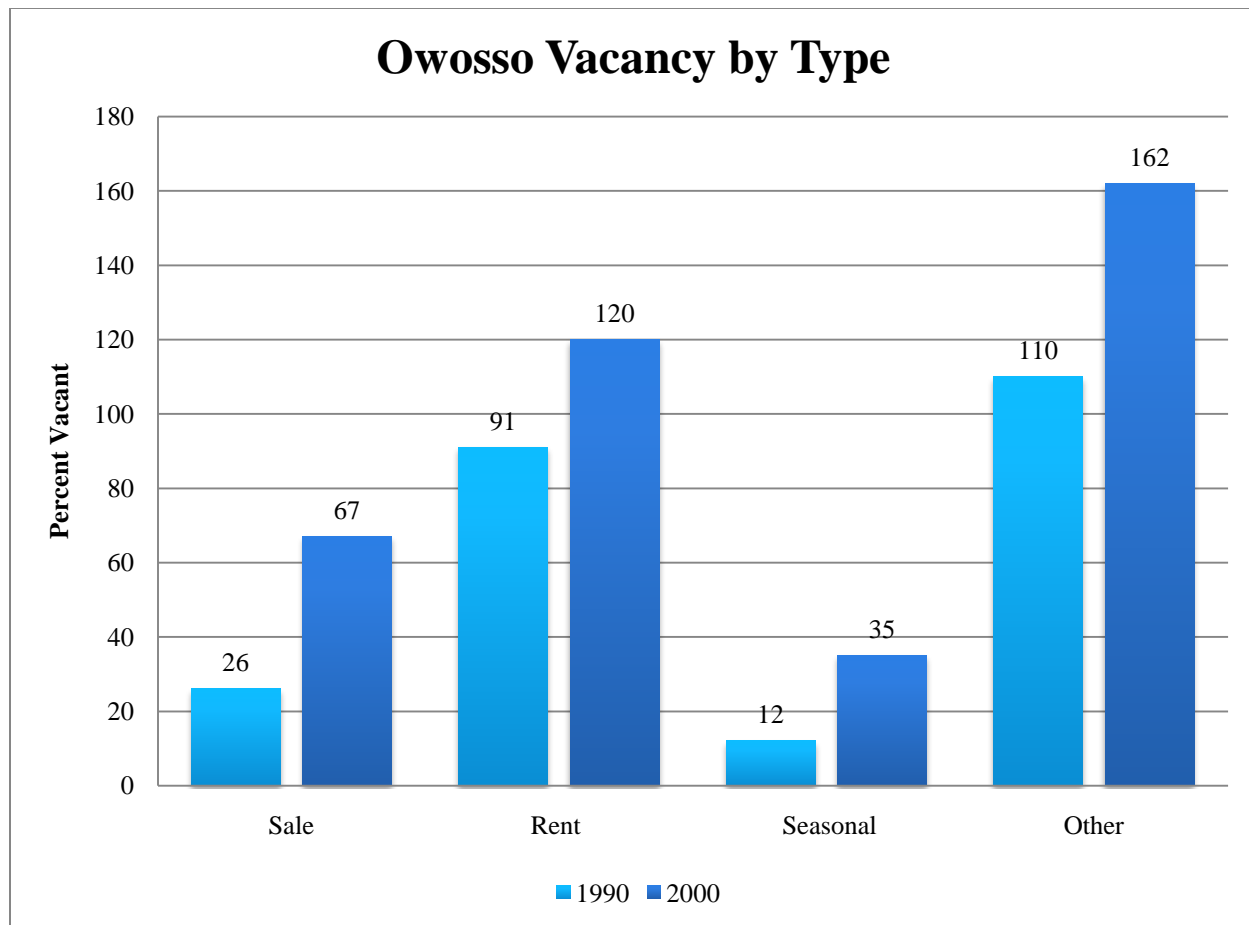
*Graph 3.3.5: Housing Vacancy*



*Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey*

A comparison of housing vacancy rates was made using the data from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census. One of the most notable features related to Owosso’s housing stock is the fact that the amount of vacant housing units increased by 5.31% between the years of 1990 and 2009. Whereas the City of Corunna only had a 3.81% increase in vacant housing and Shiawassee County had a 4.8% increase in vacant housing units over the 19 year period. (Graph 3.3.5).

Graph 3.3.6: Vacancy by Type

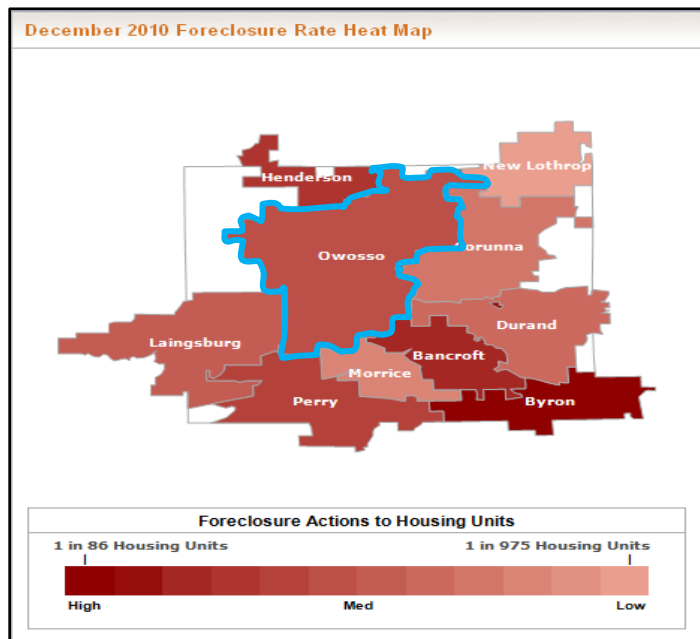


Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

The information in graph 3.3.6 is from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census. For this type of information the 2000 U.S. Census was the most recent data that could be obtained. The information presented is a percentage of total vacant housing units in the City of Owosso. Between the years of 1990 and 2000 the City of Owosso’s vacant units for sale increased by 41 units; vacant rental units increased by 29, number of seasonal units increased by 23 and all other vacant units increased by 52. The category of all other includes units for migrant workers as well as condominiums or any other designated purpose.

3.3.4: Foreclosure Data

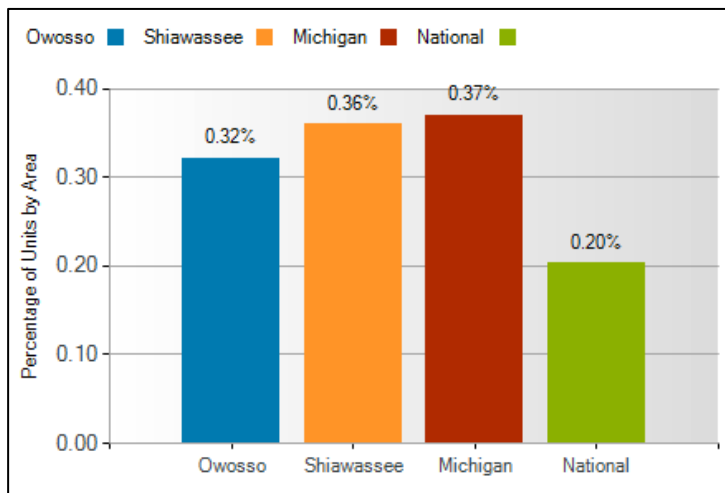
Figure 3.3.1: Foreclosure Heat Map (by Zip Code)



Source: RealtyTrac.com

The data obtained from Realty Trac shows that the City of Owosso has a relatively high foreclosure rate compared to many of the surrounding cities (Figure 3.3.1). One in every 312 housing units in Owosso is in foreclosure. In Corunna, one in every 269 housing units is in foreclosure. Figure 3.3.2 shows a geographical comparison of foreclosure rates from January 2011. The data shows that the City of Owosso has a foreclosure rate lower than that of Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. All three communities are higher than the National average.

Figure 2.3.2: Comparison of Foreclosure Rates

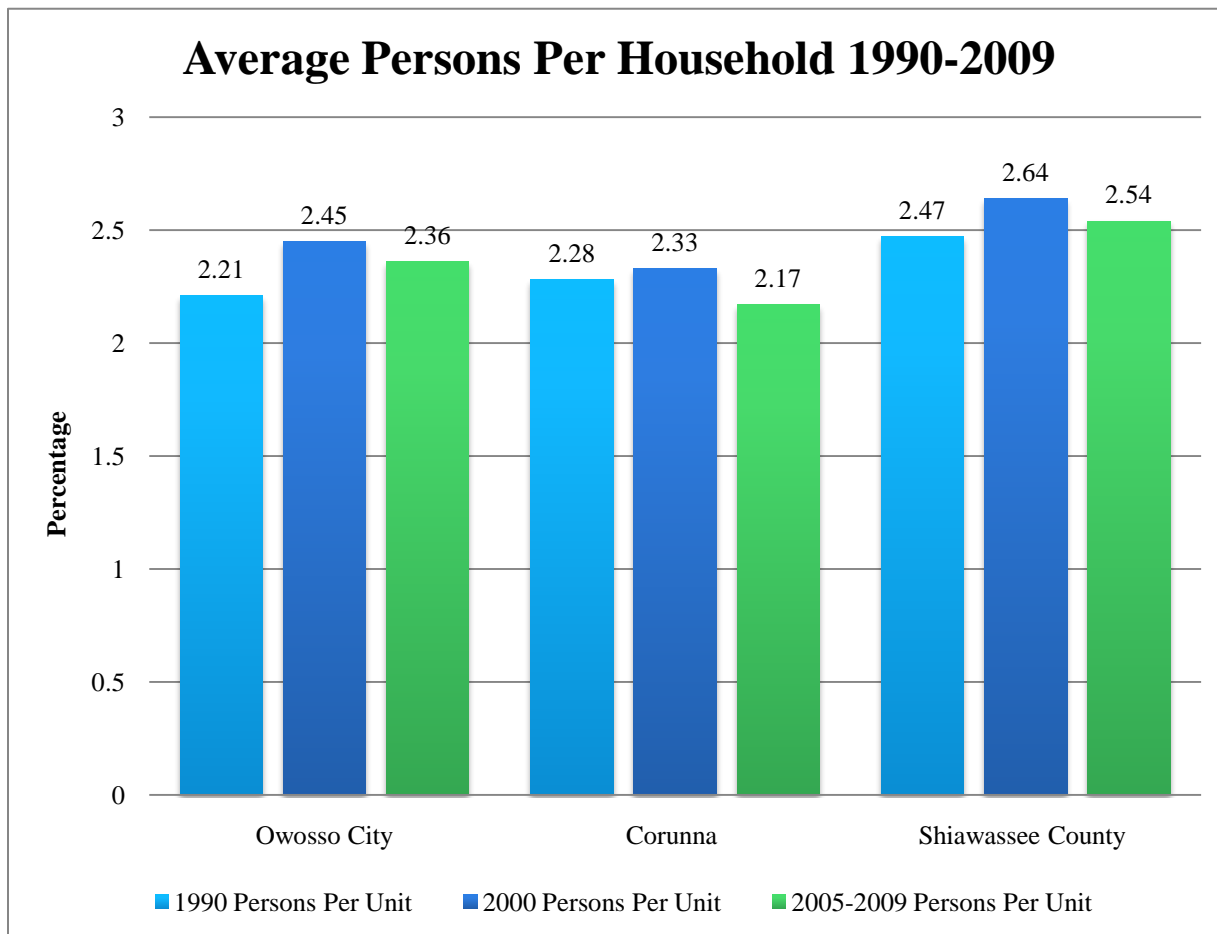


Source: RealtyTrac.com



3.3.5: Persons per Household

Graph 3.3.7: Persons Per Household

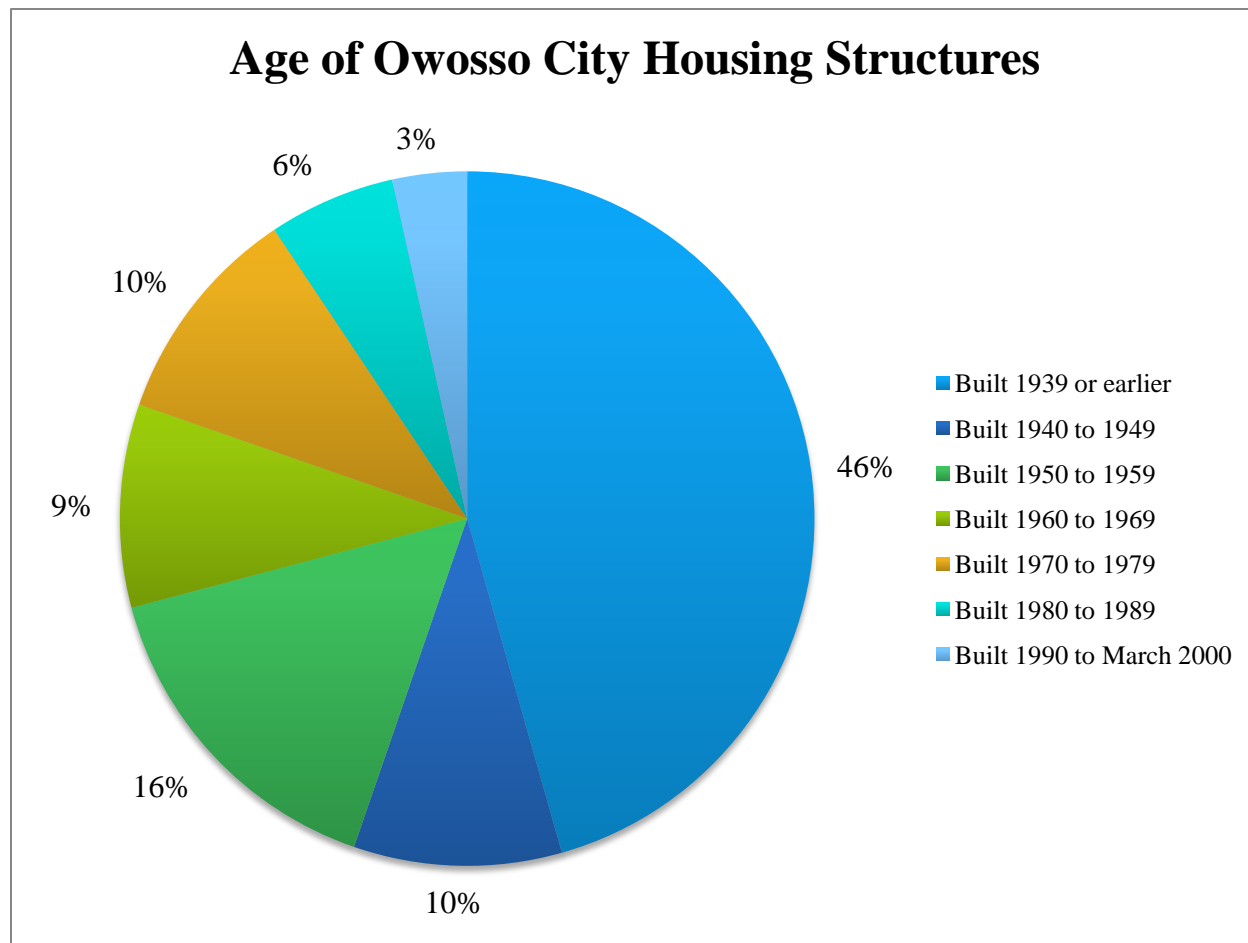


Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

The data in Graph 3.3.7 was tabulated from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census as well as the 2005-2009 American Community Survey for the cities of Owosso and Corunna, as well as Shiawassee County. All three geographical areas experienced an overall net gain in persons per unit between 1990 and 2000. However, between the years of 2000 and 2009 all three areas experienced a net loss of persons per unit. The City of Corunna had the largest loss of persons per unit, from 2.33 persons per unit in 2000 and 2.17 persons per unit in 2009, a decrease of .17 persons per unit.

3.3.6: Age of Structure

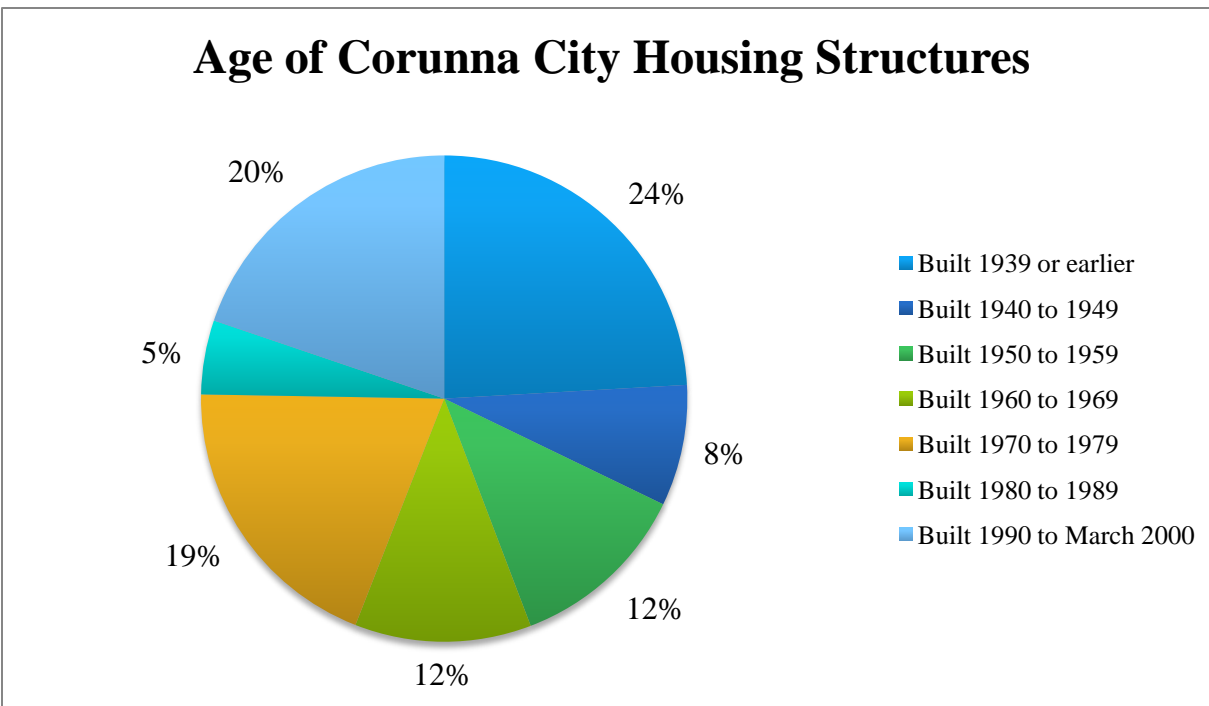
Graph 3.3.8: Age of Housing Structures



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

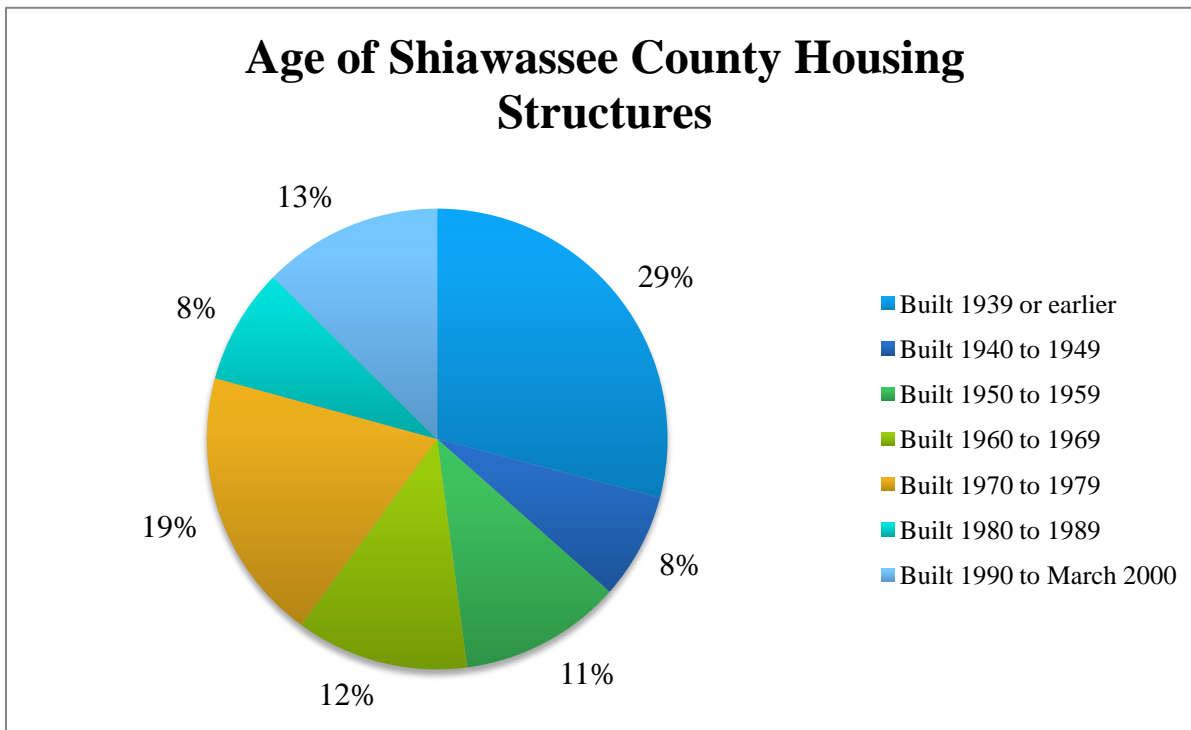
The data for Graph 3.3.8 was collected from the 2000 U.S. Census. Based upon a general comparison of all three geographical areas, Owosso, Corunna, and Shiawassee County had the largest percentage of their total housing units built in 1939 or earlier. However 45.6% of Owosso’s housing was built in 1939 or earlier, whereas Corunna only had 24.1% of its housing units built in 1939 or earlier. Shiawassee County only had 29.1% of its total housing units built in 1939 or earlier. In comparison to the other geographical areas, Owosso has the oldest supply of current housing stock at 2,877 units built in 1939 or earlier.

Graph 3.3.9: Age of Housing Structures



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Graph 2.3.10: Age of Housing Structures



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

### 3.3.7: Home Sales and Home Values

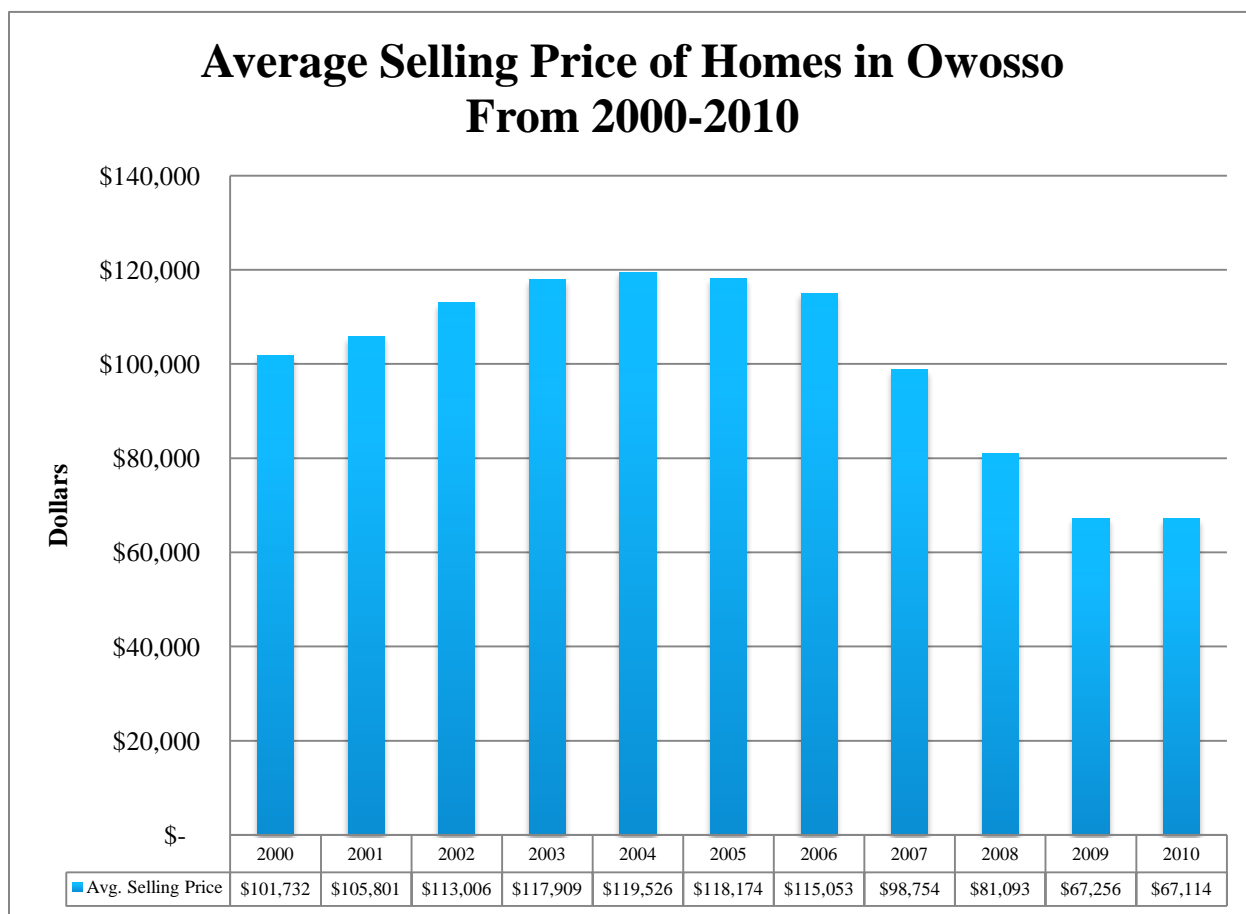
Table 3.3.4: Average Home Selling Price

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Avg. Selling Price	\$101,732	\$105,801	\$113,006	\$117,909	\$119,526	\$118,174	\$115,053	\$98,754	\$81,093	\$67,256	\$67,114
Change in Price	-	\$4,069	\$7,205	\$4,903	\$1,617	(\$1,352)	(\$3,121)	(\$16,229)	(\$17,661)	(\$13,837)	(\$142)
2004-2010 Prices = <b>-\$52,542</b> or 56%											

Source: Argus-Press, 2011

The average sale prices of homes in Owosso, as shown in table 3.3.4, were on an upward trend through the beginning of the decade. With the national housing market crash between the years of 2007 and 2008, the City of Owosso suffered a decline in the average sale prices of homes. From 2004 to 2010 average selling prices for homes in Owosso had fallen by \$52,542, that is just under half of the selling price of homes in 2004.

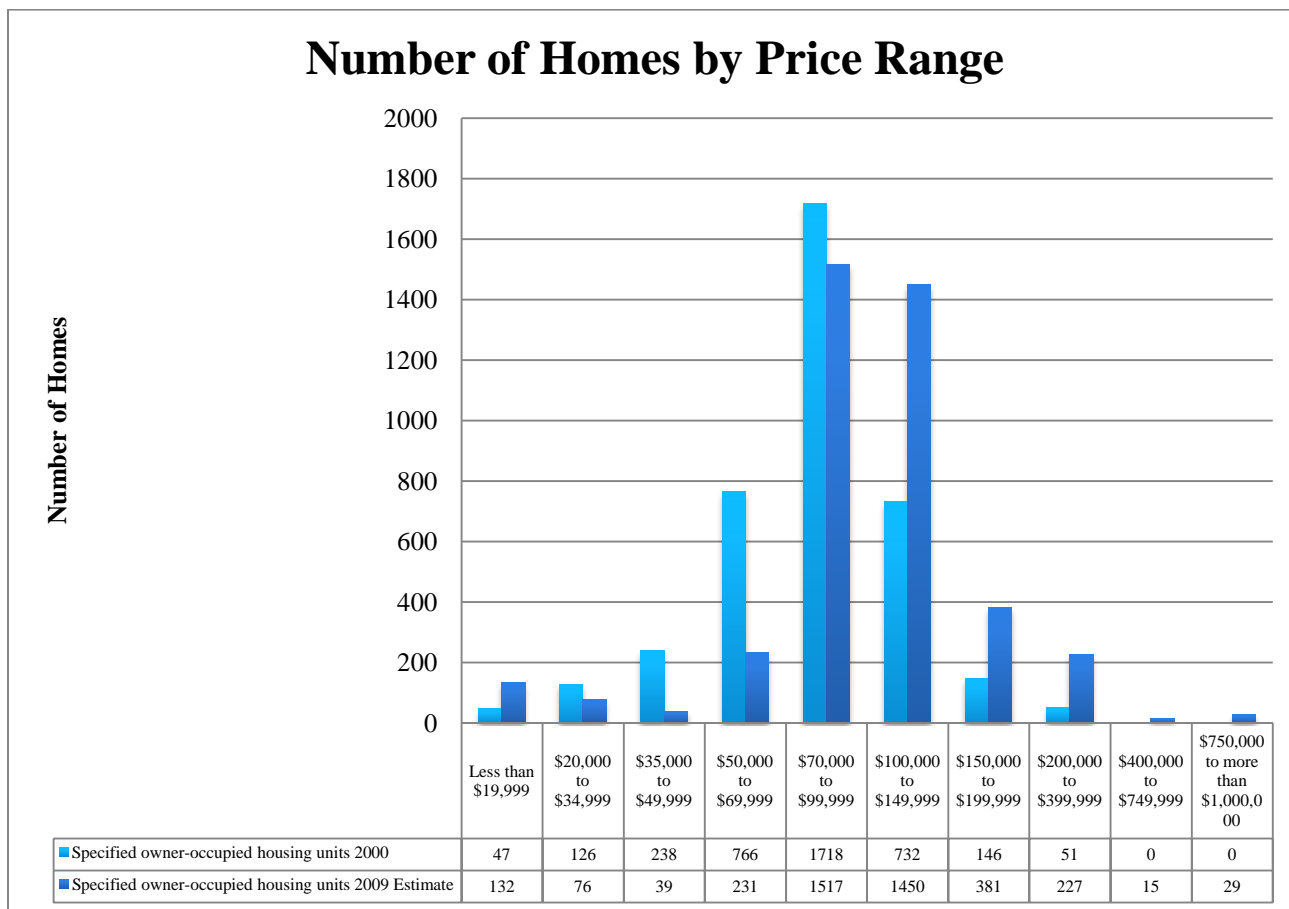
Graph 2.3.11: Sale Price



Source: Argus-Press, 2011

Table 3.3.4 shows the active household sale price at the end of each year from 2000 to 2010. The graphical representation of this data, as shown in graph 2.3.11, shows a trend of increasing home values between 2000 and 2004, followed by a constant decline over the next six years.

Graph 3.3.12: Owosso Home Values

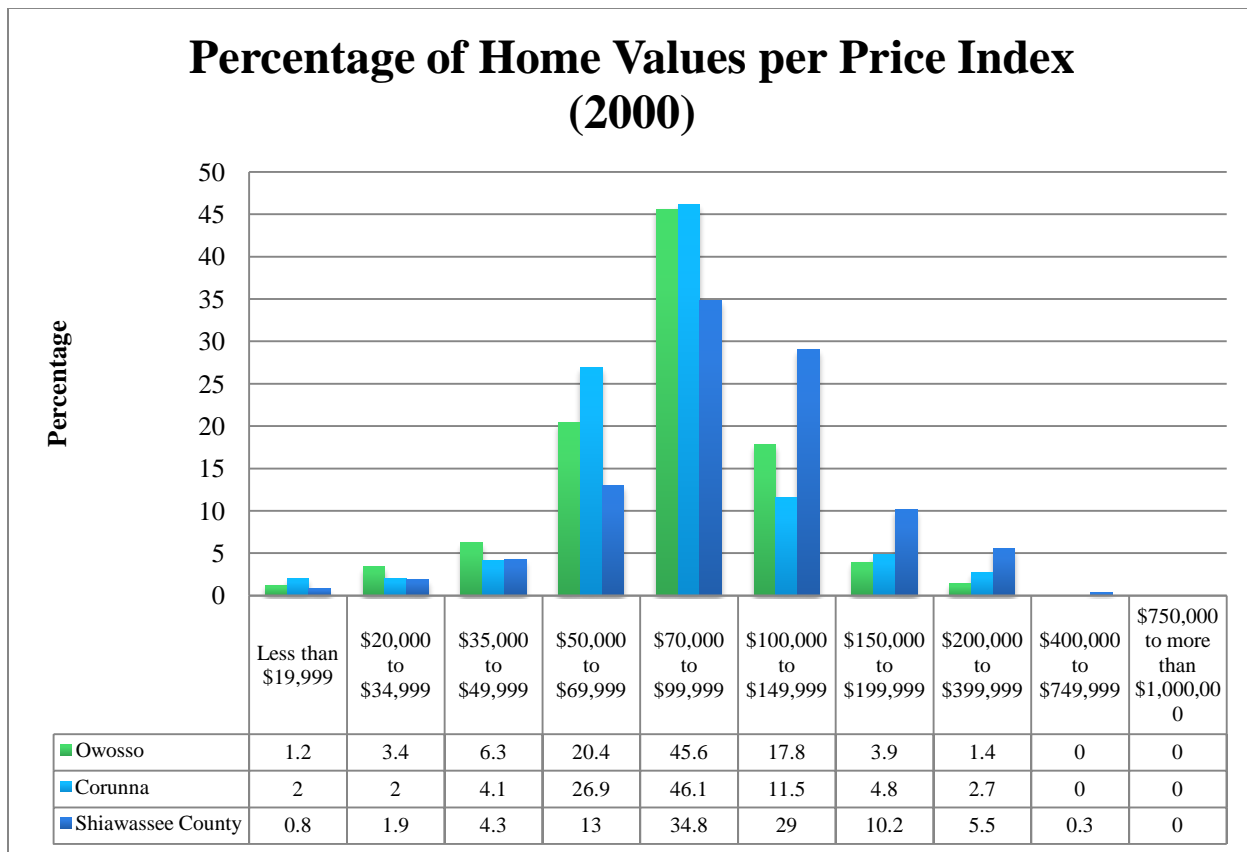


Source: 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Data on housing values was analyzed from the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey. The comparison of this data shows the number of homes by value range for Owosso. As the data from the 2000 census and the 2009 ACS are compared, the data shows there was a slow decline in the number of homes with values in the \$20,000 to \$99,999 ranges. The 2009 estimate shows that the number of homes with values greater than \$100,000 is higher than in 2000.

Another trend to note is that in 2000 the number of homes with values in the range of \$50,000 to \$69,999 was relatively high; the 2009 estimate shows that the number of homes in that value range dropped dramatically.

Graph 3.3.13: Home Values Geographical Comparison



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

The data in Graph 3.3.13 shows a comparison of the percentage of homes with certain values in 2000. The data compared is from the 2000 U.S. Census. A notable trend is that Owosso and Corunna have a close relationship in the percentage of homes in each data range. Both Owosso and Corunna have large percentage of their housing stock valued between the ranges of \$50,000 to \$99,999, with the single largest percentage of their housing stock valued between the combined ranges of \$70,000 and \$99,999. For the City of Owosso, 45.6% of their housing stock and 46.1% of Corunna’s housing stock lies within this range. Shiawassee County also has a large percentage of its total housing stock valued between the same dollar ranges as Owosso and Corunna; however Shiawassee County has more houses valued between the ranges of \$100,000 and \$199,999, a total of 30.2% of its total housing stock.

### 3.3.8: Summary

The housing data for the City of Owosso shows many notable trends. The number of vacant properties in the City of Owosso has increased by 5.31% between the years of 1990 and 2009. In 2010, one in 312 housing units in the City of Owosso was in foreclosure. Out of the 6954 housing units in the City of Owosso, 22 units were in foreclosure by the end of 2010. This indicates a minor problem in the city, but is not to the level of a major concern. The foreclosure rate of Owosso is higher than the National average but less than both Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. The average persons per household increased from 2.21 persons per household in 1990 to 2.45 in 2000. From 2000 to 2009 the number of persons per household decreased from 2.45 to 2.36. The trend increase followed by a decrease, as seen in Owosso, is comparable to that of Corunna and Shiawassee County. Compared to the City of Corunna and Shiawassee County, the City of Owosso had the largest increase in vacant housing over the 19 year period. Much of the housing stock of Owosso is over 70 years old, 46% of the housing units in Owosso were built before 1939. Average home values have decreased in the past decade. From the peak of home values in 2004 to the latest data available in 2010, the average value of homes has decreased by \$52,542.



Figure 12: Home in Owosso

## Chapter 4: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

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## 4.1: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis and Focus Group

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted with local residents in order to identify their thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards the City of Owosso. This analysis was conducted in a small focus group setting to provide an opportunity for residents to identify issues and concerns and discuss them as a group. While a small number of participants did provide for a rich conversation, it is important to note that the views of the focus group may not necessarily be representative of the entire community.

### 4.1.1: Methodology

The goal of the focus group was to identify citizens in the City of Owosso who were interested in providing feedback on the city. This feedback was collected in an effort to aid the city's master plan process. Suggestions of possible participants were collected from city officials, community group leaders, and average citizens. A total of nineteen potential participants were identified, and seven residents ultimately participated in the focus group.

The focus group was conducted in the Owosso City Hall Chambers on the evening of Thursday, February 17. Two practicum group members facilitated the session, one served as group notetaker, and two recorded more in-depth comments from the participants. A brief description of a traditional SWOT analysis was provided to the participants, and generic open-ended questions were asked of participants to start the focus group. Participants were occasionally asked to expand upon their feedback in order to provide more depth and clarification to their thoughts. The setting was intentionally casual, and residents were encouraged to discuss issues raised by other participants. Participants were encouraged to be open and honest and not hold back their comments.



Figure 13: Focus Group

Once participants finished the SWOT analysis, they were able to provide closing comments, expand upon originally expressed ideas, or make new additions to their lists. Participants were asked to fill out a form which asked for their age, sex and the length of time they lived in Owosso. They were also provided with an opportunity to write down any additional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats on their forms. They were given the opportunity to write additional thoughts in case they did not feel comfortable sharing their concerns in the group setting. Prior to reviewing the results of the focus group, some basic information about the participants will be reviewed.

### 4.1.2: Participant Information

There were a total of seven residents who participated in this focus group. There were four male, and three female participants with ages ranging from seventeen to seventy seven. One participant had lived in the city eight years, but the average residency of participants was 25.7 years. While one participant was on the local planning commission, the other participants might be appropriately categorized as interested and concerned citizens.

### 4.1.3: Results

The focus group yielded interesting and insightful feedback on the City of Owosso. While much of the information discussed by the focus group had previously been identified by the practicum team, there were several helpful surprises generated by the residents. The following represents a summary of the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified by the Owosso residents. The ideas below are the ideas that were discussed or referenced by the participants the most often or identified as the most important by individual residents. For complete information regarding the comments generated by the focus group, please see the appendix A.4.

#### **Strengths:**

- Recreation
  - Shiawassee River: beauty and use
  - City Parks
- Memorial Healthcare
  - The only hospital in the region
  - Helicopter that can transport people who require special emergency treatment
- Arts and Entertainment
  - Art Center
  - Curwood Castle
  - Owosso community players
  - Community theater
  - NCG movie theater
  - High school marching band
  - Woodard Station
- Local Businesses
  - Small, family owned businesses
  - Local newspapers: The Independent and the Argus Press
  - Large business headquarters: Indian Trails
  - Downtown
- Neighborhoods
  - Neighborhood feel
  - Housing stock
  - Low crime rates
  - Good place to raise a family
- Education
  - Baker College
  - Good public schools
- Local Institutions

- Private foundations such as the Cook Foundation
- Steam Railroad Institute (SRI)
- Services
- Location relative to Flint and Lansing
- Airport
- Farmers market

**Weaknesses:**

- Lack of community identity
  - Lack of promotion regarding what the city has to offer
  - Lack of a city plan
  - No downtown ‘anchor’ to provide identity for downtown
  - A ‘drive through’ town
- Poor communication between different sectors of the community
  - Many groups/individuals with their own agendas
  - Finger pointing when there are problems in the community
  - A lot of negativity
- Employment issues
  - Lack of jobs
  - Lack of diverse jobs
  - Leaving base of students
- Community is averse to change
  - Close minded individuals
  - Lack of diversity
- Space Issues
  - Parking spots are too small for the average person’s truck
  - Many areas are not walkable
  - There is a lack of policy enforcement in some areas
  - No places for young people to ‘hangout’
  - Many empty buildings downtown
  - Aging housing stock
- River upkeep and beauty

**Opportunities:**

- Creating a community identity
  - Currently there is a more neutral identity for the community
  - Create a theme for the city
  - Capture tourism base
  - “Day trip area”
  - Bedroom community
  - Advertising – “It’s worth the trip”
  - Only Owosso in the entire world
  - Improved marketing

- Improve aspects of the community that can be done so relatively easily. For example, the water tower in town gives an image of a rundown city; repainting could help the city's image.
- Place for conventions – specifically around the Steam Railroad Institute
- Place for recreation – activities involving the river (Rails to Trails), potential development of a travel R.V. Park
- Work to integrate Baker College into the community
- Work to foster a volunteer environment

**Threats:**

- Economy
  - Tough business climate
  - Loss of local businesses
  - Outsourcing
  - Big box stores outside of town
  - Chance of losing the Steam Railroad Institute
  - Fiscal issues of the federal government: falling revenue, inflation
- Loss of population
  - Bigger cities are a talent draw
- Many individuals are stuck in their old ways
  - Lack of partnerships and communication
  - Lack of change in the community due to fear
- Servicing older population

**4.1.4: Summary**

There are several common themes that arose during this focus group. Most of the strengths included characteristics that made Owosso unique in the region, such as the Shiawassee River running through the downtown, the Steam Railroad Institute, Baker College, Memorial Healthcare and cultural attractions such as Curwood Castle and the local movie theater. Other strengths included the way that residents felt while in their community; they felt connected to local individuals and business owners, and they felt like the city was one large neighborhood.

The primary weakness identified by the community was a lack of identity. The residents were not able to articulate what Owosso was as a community, or what it should be to outsiders. To the focus group participants, this lack of identity posed a threat to the community's growth and prosperity. There were also concerns about the mentality of many residents and groups within the city. The focus group participants acknowledged that great work was already being done within the community, but these individuals acted within their own silos. There was little to no communication between groups, and most individuals and groups appeared unwilling to change.

When addressing opportunities, the largest and most consistently addressed opportunity was the chance for the community to take a look at itself and identify what it wanted to be. The development of a community identity was key to future actions for the focus group participants. While the opportunities discussed provided hope for the future, the reality of the current economic environment was a threat to community residents. Falling home values, inflation, and

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low employment rates were all concerns for the focus group participants. With regards to low employment, the focus group participants were concerned about the loss of talent within the city.

While these are just the observations of seven individuals within the City of Owosso, they do cover a wide range of issues that are representative of concerns in many small town Michigan communities. The issues were raised by concerned citizens who wanted to see improvement in their hometown. While the implications of these findings are limited due to the small size of the focus group, they do provide valuable information that will be used throughout the development of the practicum group's recommendations.

## Chapter 5: Findings

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## 5.1: Findings and Implications

The story of Owosso is similar to the current story of many cities across the State of Michigan. Like many other Michigan cities, Owosso has been a community in decline for several decades. The city began as an agricultural community, and transitioned to manufacturing when the automotive industry rose to prominence. As the automotive industry began to experience difficulties, so did many blue collar communities across the state. The City of Owosso was hit extra hard due to its proximity to prominent manufacturing facilities in Flint, Saginaw, and Lansing. The region's over reliance on manufacturing has left many cities in a difficult position as the country continues to transition to a knowledge based economy.

Compounding these problems is the lack of a shared vision and plan for the city's future. The city has operated since its founding without a master plan, which has left development largely unguided and unfocused. The process that accompanies the development and maintenance of a master plan allows a community to explore its past, present and potential future. Without this process, it is difficult for a city to chart its own path and put policies in place to achieve community goals. By starting this process now, the City of Owosso is provided with the unique opportunity to intentionally impact its own future. This process begins with the examination of current data and trends. An examination of this information allows a community to assess where it stands today, and identify issues it should think about in the future.

One trend of note for the City of Owosso is the loss of population over the last thirty years. Population loss can be a serious concern for a community with both short term and long term implications. One of the most immediate effects of a declining population is the loss of a local tax base. This is of particular concern for communities during difficult economic times as it means less money for infrastructure maintenance and public services. Population loss also has the long term effect of contributing to an image of a city in decline. The perception of a declining community is unattractive to most potential newcomers. It may also foster an unwelcoming business climate, as most businesses are drawn to stable or up-and-coming areas. The image component to population loss should not be overlooked, as it can have a powerful impact on the future of a community.



Figure 14: Vacant Building

In addition to a declining population, the City of Owosso has also experienced a trend of increasing crime rates. The rate of serious offenses such as murder, assault, rape, burglary and arson is higher than that of Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. Additionally, the poverty and unemployment rates for Owosso are higher than the other

comparable areas. While the median household income is increasing, it is increasing at a slower rate than the comparable areas. The combination of this data paints a picture of a community that appears undesirable and potentially unsafe. It is important to note, however, that the raw data is only one piece of this story.

During the focus group with local residents the practicum team observed participants who painted a picture of a safe community with a neighborhood feel. While there were only seven individuals participating in the focus group, this belief was unanimous among participants. While vacant buildings in the downtown may be unattractive, the community does have many attractive features which could be appealing to newcomers. It is unlikely that an average family looking to relocate to Owosso would examine ten years worth of state police crime data and thirty years of census data when making a decision on whether or not to move to the city. It is more likely that they will make a decision based on their previous perceptions, their thoughts and feelings after experiencing the community, interacting with local residents, and listening to advice of trusted advisors. This point reiterates the importance of perceptions, and how they are often more powerful than raw and abstract data.

A significant obstacle for the City of Owosso as they move into the future is the age of the city's housing stock. While an existing conditions study was not conducted as part of this report, the fact that almost half of the city's housing stock was constructed prior to 1940 raises some concerns. Housing of this age is likely to require significant ongoing cosmetic upkeep and physical maintenance. Such upkeep can be costly and time consuming. This type of housing does hold a certain appeal to segments of the population who value historic charm and architectural features. However, this older housing stock does not meet the expectations of most modern home buyers. A historic structure sounds attractive to many people until they realize that the house does not have an open floor plan, closets in every room, or modern amenities such as central air or an energy efficient heating system. Most home buyers today value modern features such as a large kitchen with an island, a main floor master suite with oversized showers and bathtubs, and two car garages (Tracey, 2010). These features are seldom found in housing built prior to 1940.

Another issue of concern related to housing is the fact that Owosso has a higher vacancy rate than the City of Corunna and Shiawassee County. This could potentially mean more neglected homes within the city. It likely means a lack of investment in many homes and a lack of updates and renovations to existing housing stock. This could lead to the potential decline in housing values throughout the city.

The issue of racial homogeneity is also a concern for the city of Owosso. The city actually experienced an increase in the percentage of white individuals over recent decades, a pattern that completely contradicts county and statewide trends. This lack of diversity can leave the community racially isolated and leave residents less prepared to function in an increasingly



global economy. The community is missing out on potential valuable contributions and perspectives from individuals with different life experiences.

The issue of education in the City of Owosso has positive and negative aspects. Current trends of educational attainment for individuals 25 and older raise some concerns. While the rate of individuals in this age demographic who have completed high school are higher than comparable areas, the rate of individuals who have completed at least some college are lower than Corunna, Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan. This raises concerns as to whether or not the current residents of the City of Owosso can remain competitive in the new economy. Good news for the City of Owosso, however, is that their rates of individuals who are currently enrolled in college are higher than comparable areas. This bodes well for the community, as the number of individuals aged 25 and older who have completed at least some college is expected to increase over the next several years. If this trend holds, the city can expect to pass other comparable areas in college level educational attainment within several years.

The importance of education to individuals and communities as a whole cannot be overstated. Higher levels of education are correlated with higher earnings, higher levels of civic participation, and lower levels of poverty and unemployment. Not only does this benefit the individual, but it also benefits a community by reducing the number of individuals who require social services (Baum and Payea, 2004). The issue of education in Owosso should be taken seriously, and the city should continue to explore options for improving the educational opportunities of its residents. This may take the form of improved services in the local school system, or through collaborations with local educational institutions such as Baker College.

While there are some current areas of concern for the City of Owosso, there are some notable bright spots. As previously mentioned, residents who participated in the focus group noted the presence of a neighborhood feeling in the city. Residents cited the presence of good people, churches, good schools, a sense of safety, and a downtown with small businesses as some of the contributing factors to a sense of community in Owosso. This feeling of a small town community, where everyone knows their neighbor is highly desirable to many young families. Many communities go to great efforts to cultivate such an atmosphere. This feeling of a small town that meets the needs of families is something that the city can capitalize on as it moves into the future.

The City of Owosso also has many features that make it unique to the region. The presence of features such as the Shiawassee River, Steam Railroading Institute, Baker College, Memorial Healthcare and arts and entertainment facilities provides the community with a special character and unique opportunities. These features should be recognized and celebrated by the community. The fact that the Shiawassee River runs through downtown Owosso is a huge asset. It provides not only the opportunity for aesthetic beauty, but also a chance for recreation. It is an opportunity for people to experience nature while still remaining in an urban environment. Assets such as Baker College and Memorial Healthcare are especially valuable given the

increasing importance of education and medical services in our society. Both of these features have the ability to be a draw for individuals, as well as industries, in the region. Education has the ability to be transformative to individuals and communities. As the city thinks about what it wants to be in the future, it should identify ways to capitalize on the presence of these assets. Any opportunity that the city has to foster collaborations between these institutions, or between the city and an institution, should be taken.

## 5.2: Items for Future Consideration

### 5.2.1: Meeting the Needs of an Aging Community

When taking into account all of the analyzed data from the City of Owosso, the trend of its aging population stands out as a key concern for the city's future. Owosso is not alone when facing the concern of its aging residents, as many other cities around the nation are finding themselves in the same scenario. Preparing for an aging population is not an easy or inexpensive task, which is why preparation and organizing should be considered now. The needs of elderly citizens are much more extensive than that of an ordinary citizen. Medical facilities, human services, transportation, housing and recreational activities are just some of the many issues that are relevant to seniors, and should be taken into account when planning for the future. Because the City of Owosso is the largest city in Shiawassee County, and is home to the only hospital facility in the area, it provides a great advantage for it to be a leader in accommodating an older population as well as its surrounding areas.

There are several great resources when planning for an aging population. The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development offers many different programs and funding that are available for senior housing (re)developments. There are other non-profit organizations that are involved in creating or funding housing solutions for senior citizens.

### 5.2.2: Creating a Community Image

While having conversations with individuals from the city, making site visits and observing the city, and conducting a SWOT analysis of Owosso, it can be said that Owosso lacks an overall image. If the city considered creating a current marketing campaign that would promote the many assets already existing within the city – such as the Shiawassee River, Steam Railroading Institute, and the downtown – outsiders would view Owosso in a potentially new and positive light. This strategy would make the city more marketable and encourage tourism and. Baker College and Memorial Health Center could also be included in the community brand campaign to showcase the regions educational attainment and ability to attract prospective industries. This brand made for the city would need to last many years into the future, and should be well constructed to really encompass all the benefits possessed by the city and its residents.

### 5.2.3: Creating a Community of Education

In today's business climate one of the most important features that a city can possess is a knowledgeable and skilled workforce that is capable of competing in a diverse, fast paced economy. Because of its presence, Baker College has the potential to significantly impact Owosso residents. In the future the city should evaluate what type of relationship it wishes to have with Baker College. A relationship between the campus and the city could yield benefits for both parties. This relationship could manifest physically in the form of an urban element that

connects the downtown with the campus. It may also take the form of relationship building between the city, Baker College and local businesses and institutions. Such actions could demonstrate the importance and value of a community of education.

As a way for the City of Owosso to further improve its current economic situation there are several different opportunities that the local businesses, as well as Baker College, could possibly take part in. Such opportunities might include local businesses and Baker College conducting trade specific training programs for interested students, as well as focusing these efforts around the current employment industries located within the City of Owosso. For example, Baker College offers an Automotive and Diesel technician certificate program at its Owosso campus. It would be to the benefit of many local businesses to coordinate with Baker College to advertise the need for students with this type of training. This type of work is often done by local workforce boards. An exploration of services provided by Genesee/Shiawassee Michigan Works should be conducted, and opportunities for future collaborations should be considered. Other opportunities might consist of local internships that students could take part in while attending Baker College.



Figure 15: Baker College

If the local businesses in the City of Owosso as well as Baker College work together to foster a community of education, this could have potential future benefits for the City of Owosso. These benefits might include further assisting with the educational attainment levels of the Owosso residents, as well as assisting in attracting a younger cohort of residents. As the City of Owosso moves forward with its master plan process it should consider what type of relationships it wants to foster between itself, the college, and local businesses.

#### 5.2.4: Housing

Due to the large amount of aging housing stock in the City of Owosso, many of the housing units may be in need of façade and structural improvements. In today's current housing market many of the more desirable amenities that home buyers seek are hard to find in older homes. While some members of the community may have the financial means to keep up with the expenses related to housing maintenance, other members may need additional financial assistance. With the City of Owosso's poverty levels increasing over the past decades, as well as lower median income levels compared to the State of Michigan and other surrounding communities, some community members may not be able to adequately finance home improvement projects. As a way for these community members to gain additional assistance, it is important that they are made aware of the different options available through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Such options include low-interest loans that can be used for a wide variety of different things ranging from roof repair and replacement, siding and window replacement, as well as many other things that improve the structural and aesthetic aspects of homes.

Owosso currently has a large amount of available rental housing units, as well as an increasing number of vacant housing units. As a way to combat this trend, the City of Owosso may want to

consider requiring individuals who wish to operate a rental housing unit to obtain a rental license as well as charge a fee for the application process. If the process of operating a rental housing unit is more difficult this could serve a disincentive to individuals who seek to operate additional rental properties. Other possible disincentives the City of Owosso might want to consider implementing might include, limiting the number of rental units available in the city. Mandate more frequent rental housing inspections, on an annual basis to ensure the adequacy and livability of rental units, as well as implementing an inspection fee for rental units and require an additional inspection fee every time the units are inspected.

Another possible avenue that the City of Owosso might want to consider when trying to reduce the number of vacant housing units within the city is to advertise these housing units to Baker College students. Baker College does provide a certain number of on campus housing units to its students; however, certain students might wish to live closer to campus but are unable to afford on campus housing. As an ideal alternative, if the city was to place advertisements for all of available housing units within the city at different locations on Baker College campus, this would allow the students who seek off campus local housing a chance to view all the different options that the City of Owosso has to offer.



Figure 16: Home in Owosso

### 5.3: Conclusion

The data collected and analyzed in this report is meant to provide City of Owosso staff with a point from which to start the master plan development process. Basic factors such as community demographics, socio-economic data, and housing information were examined to provide a context to past and current conditions within the City of Owosso. A basic outline of how the city can involve the public in the master plan development process was also provided in the form of a public participation plan.

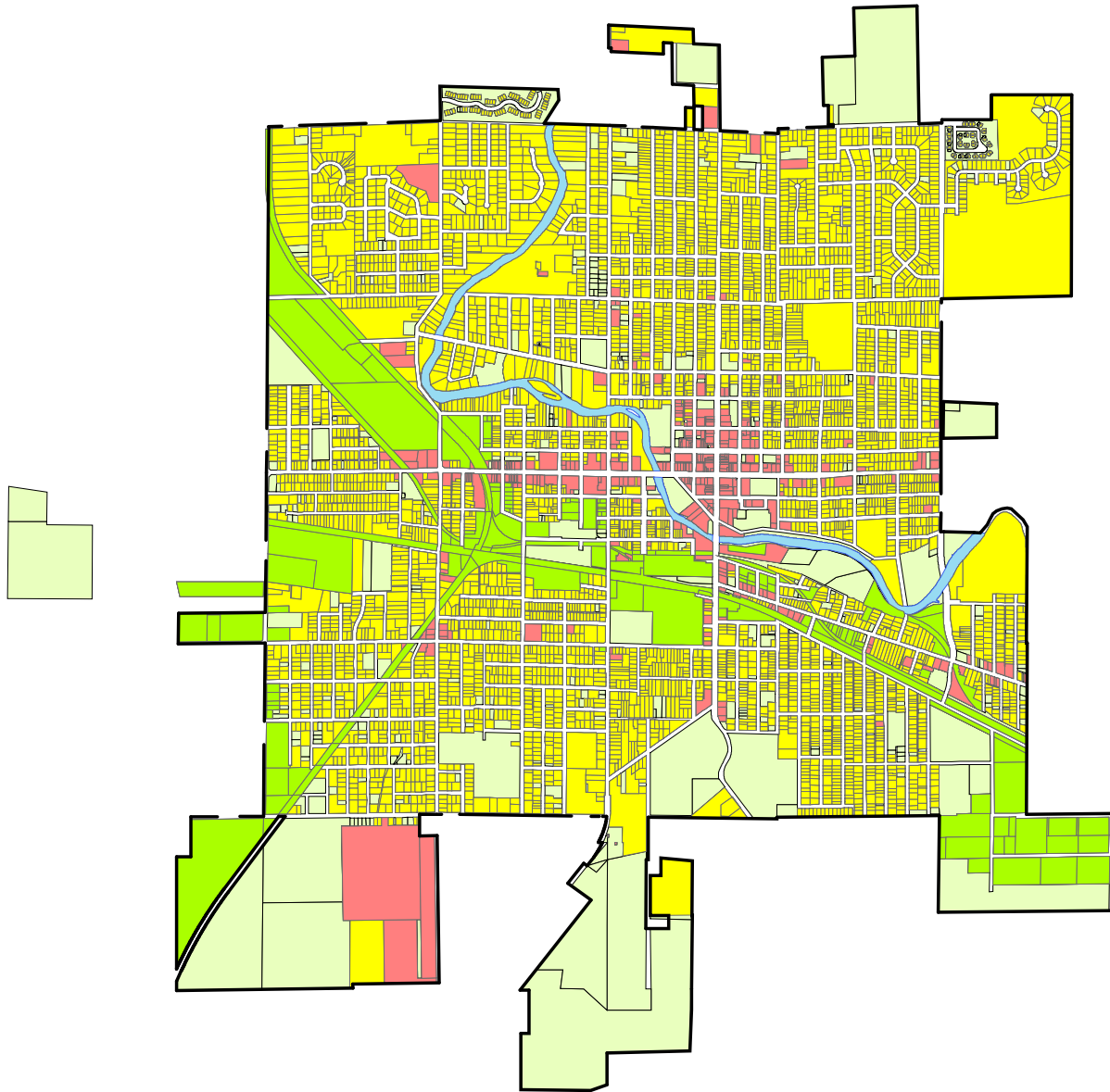
As the city moves forward with the master plan process, it will need to explore other current factors such as transportation, infrastructure, utilities, natural features and existing land uses. Once all of the current data is examined, the city can begin to plot its course for the future. With a firm understanding of its current conditions, a clear vision for the future developed by the local citizenry, and hard work by the members of the Owosso Community, the City of Owosso can pursue its goal of a more prosperous future.

# Appendix

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## A.1: Spatial Maps

### A.1.1: Zoning

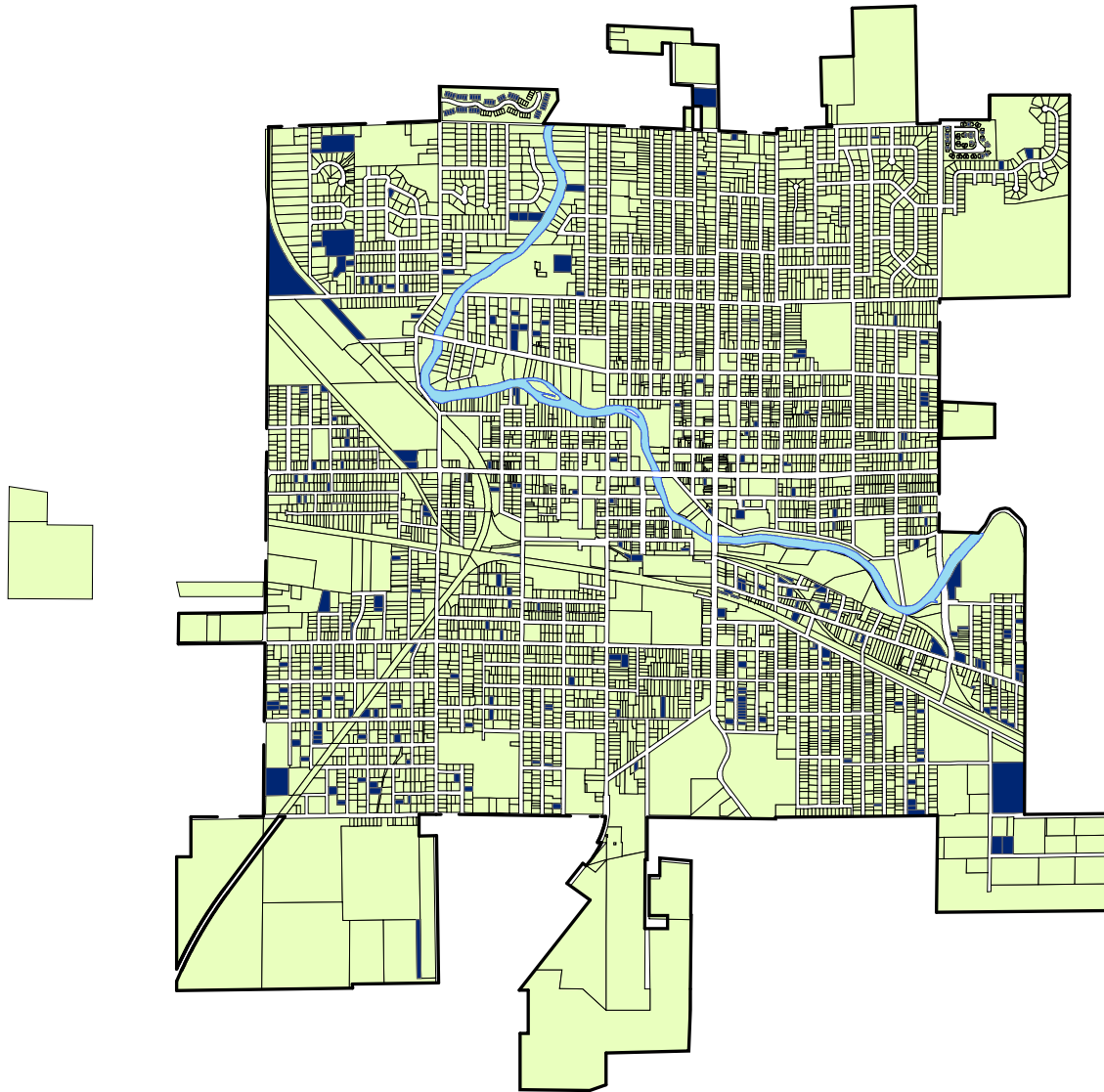


Residential- **Yellow**

Industry- **Green**

Commercial- **Rose**

A.1.2: Residential Vacant Parcels

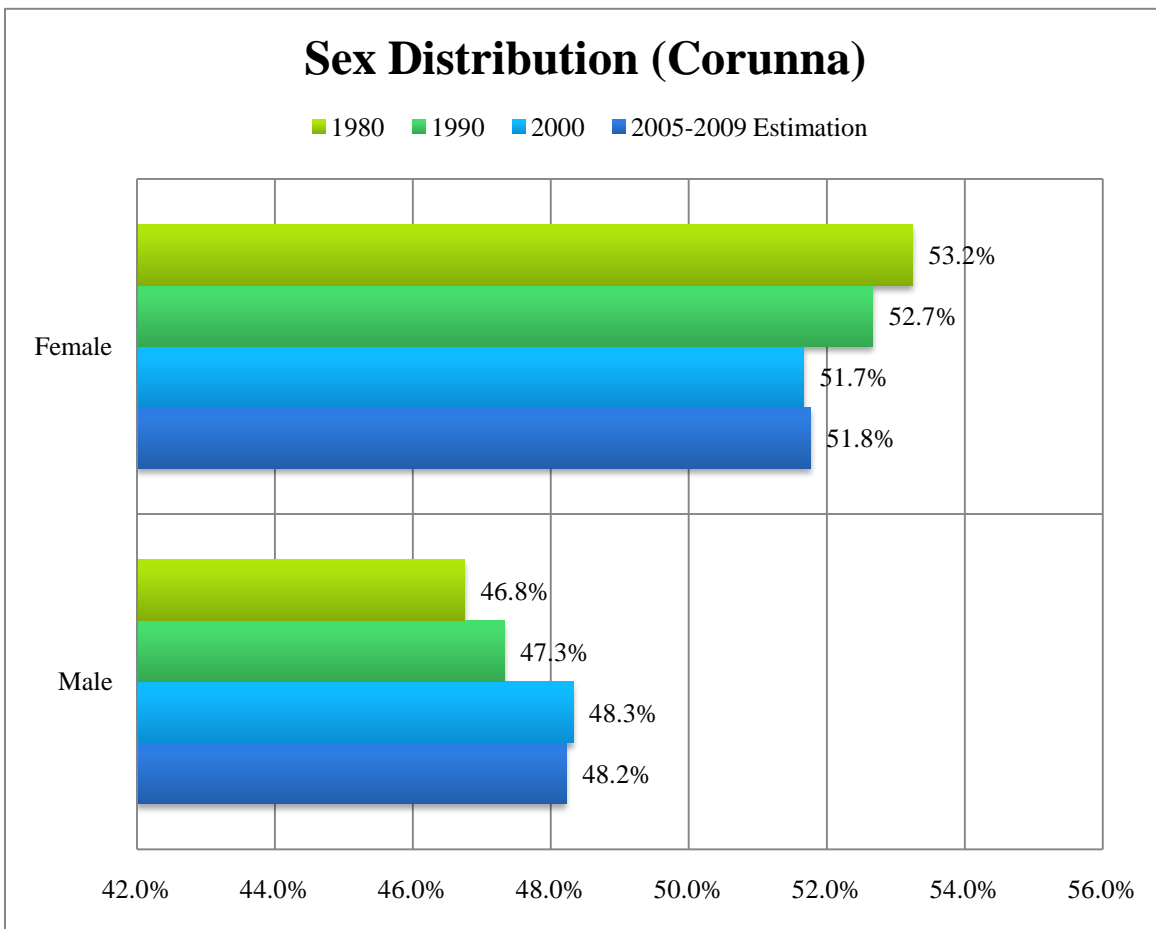


Residential Vacant Properties- **Dark Blue**

All Other Properties- **Tan**

## A.2: Sex Distribution

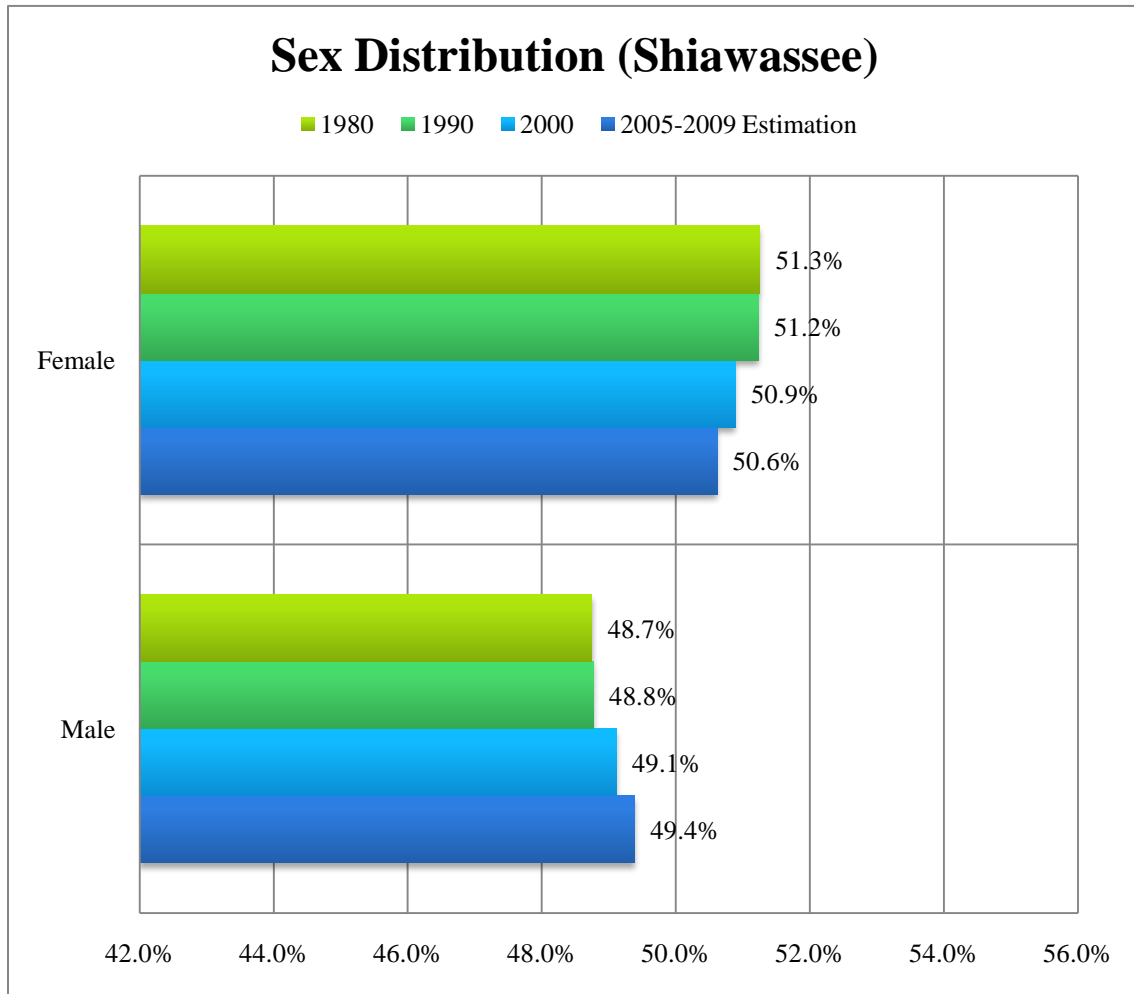
### A.2.1: Sex Distribution for the City of Corunna



Source: 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

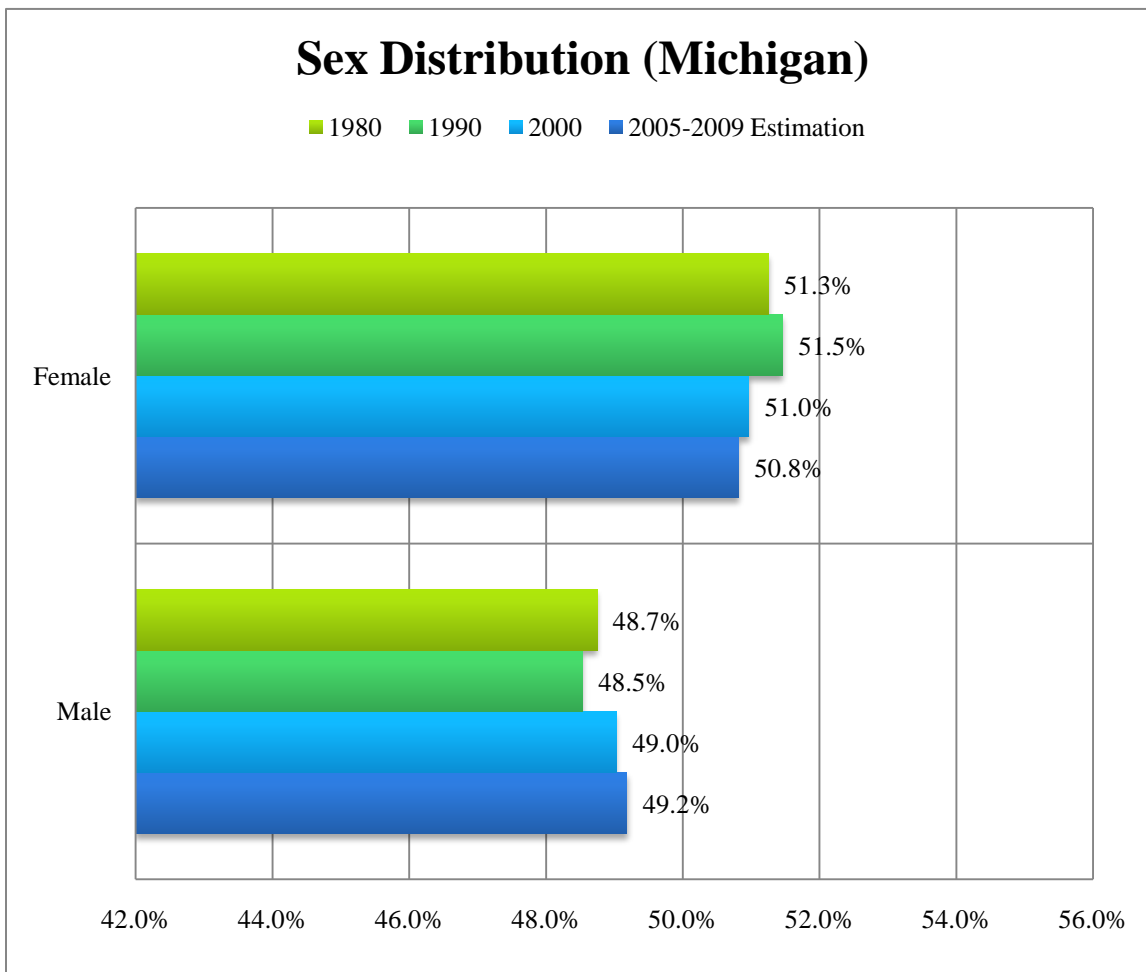


A.2.2: Sex Distribution for Shiawassee County



Source: 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

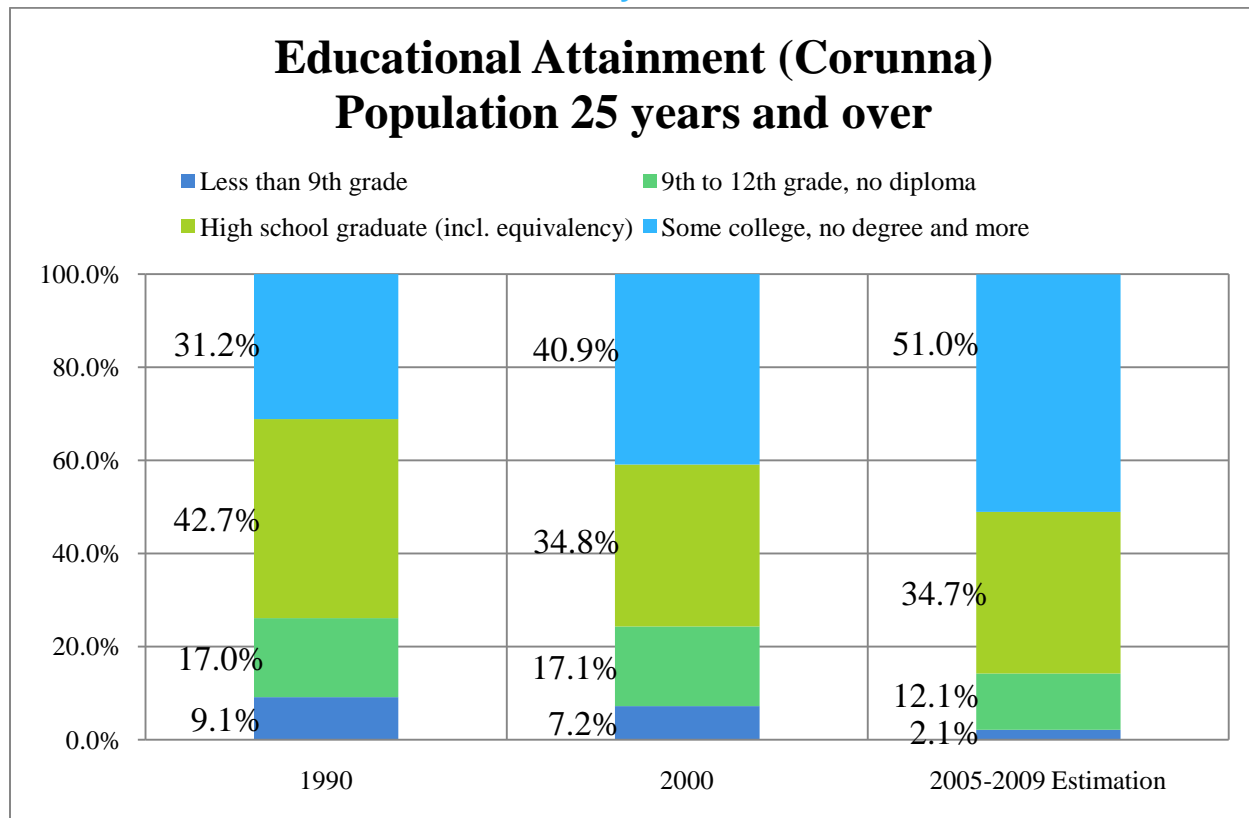
A.2.4: Sex Distribution for the State of Michigan



Source: 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

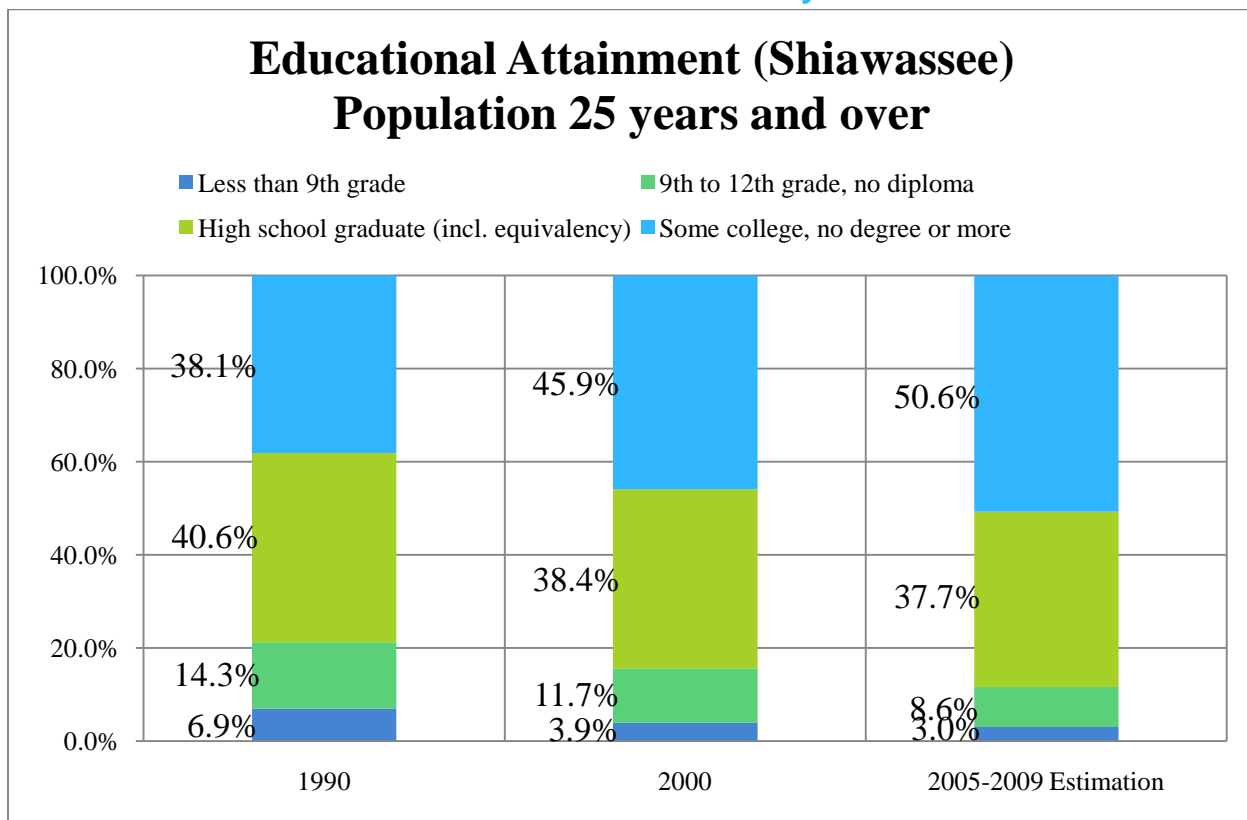
### A.3: Education

#### A.3.1: Educational Attainment for the City of Corunna



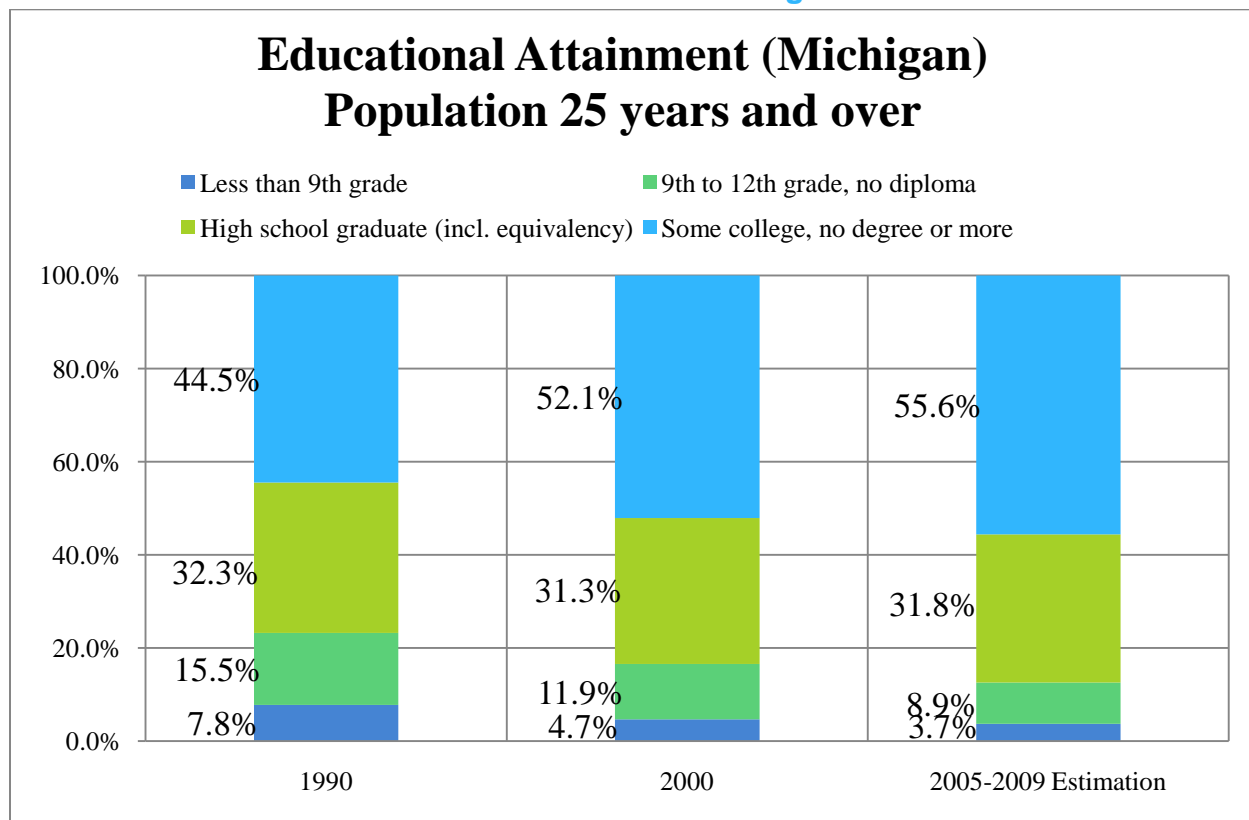
Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

A.3.1: Educational Attainment for Shiawassee County



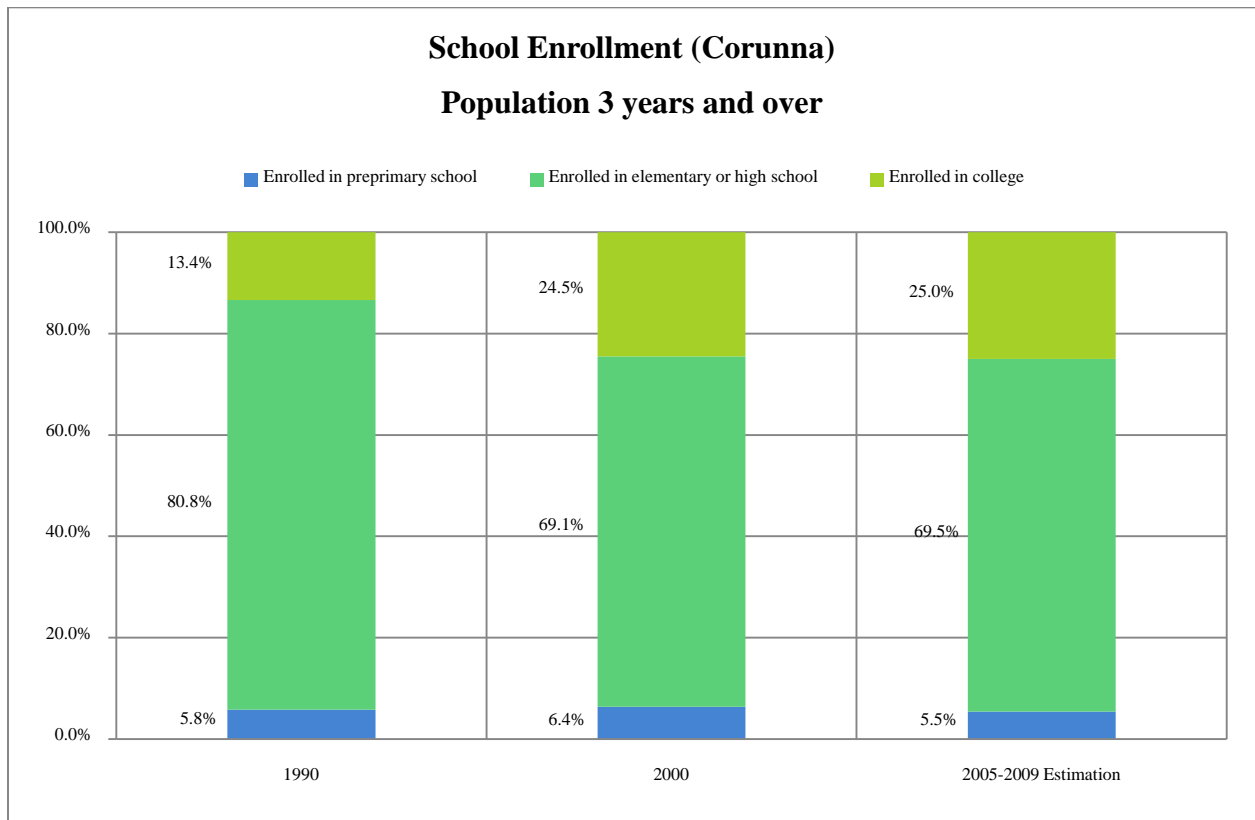
Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

A.3.3: Educational Attainment for the State of Michigan



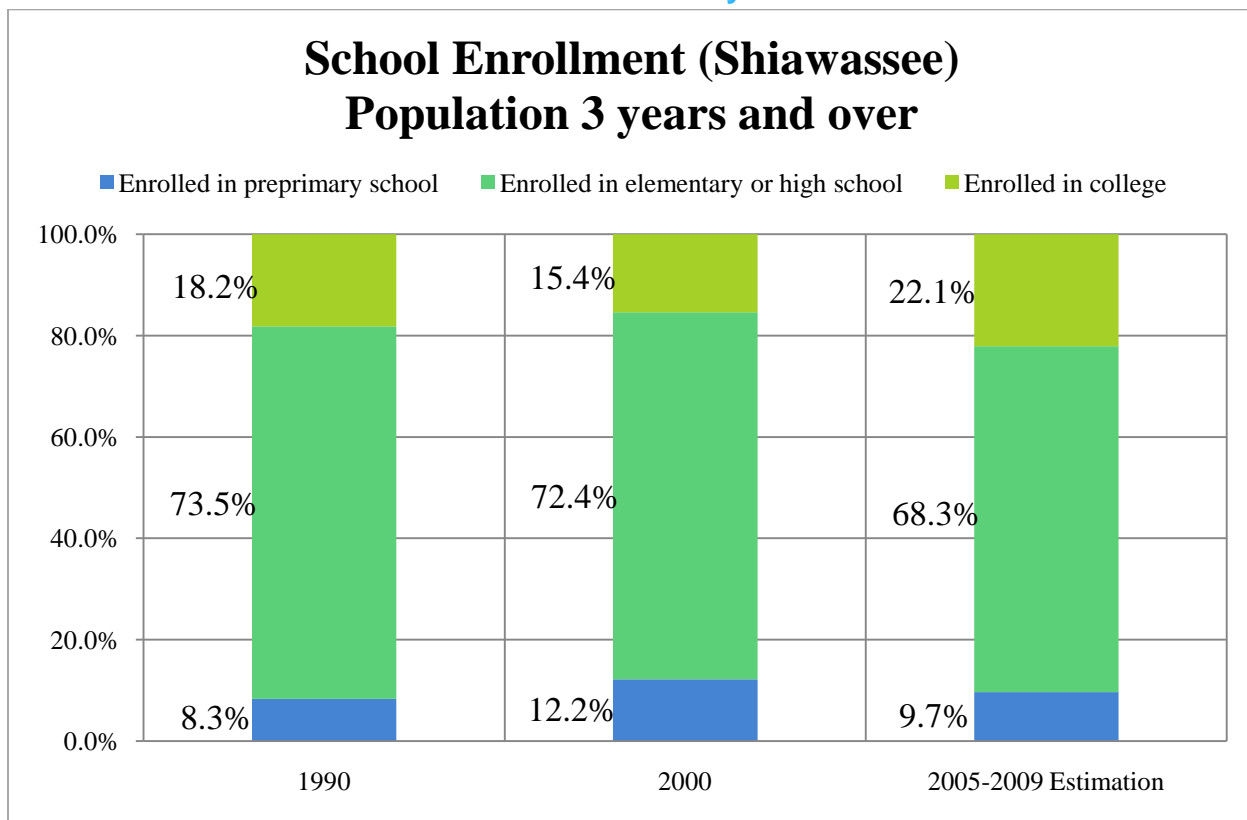
Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

A.3.4: School Enrollment for Corunna



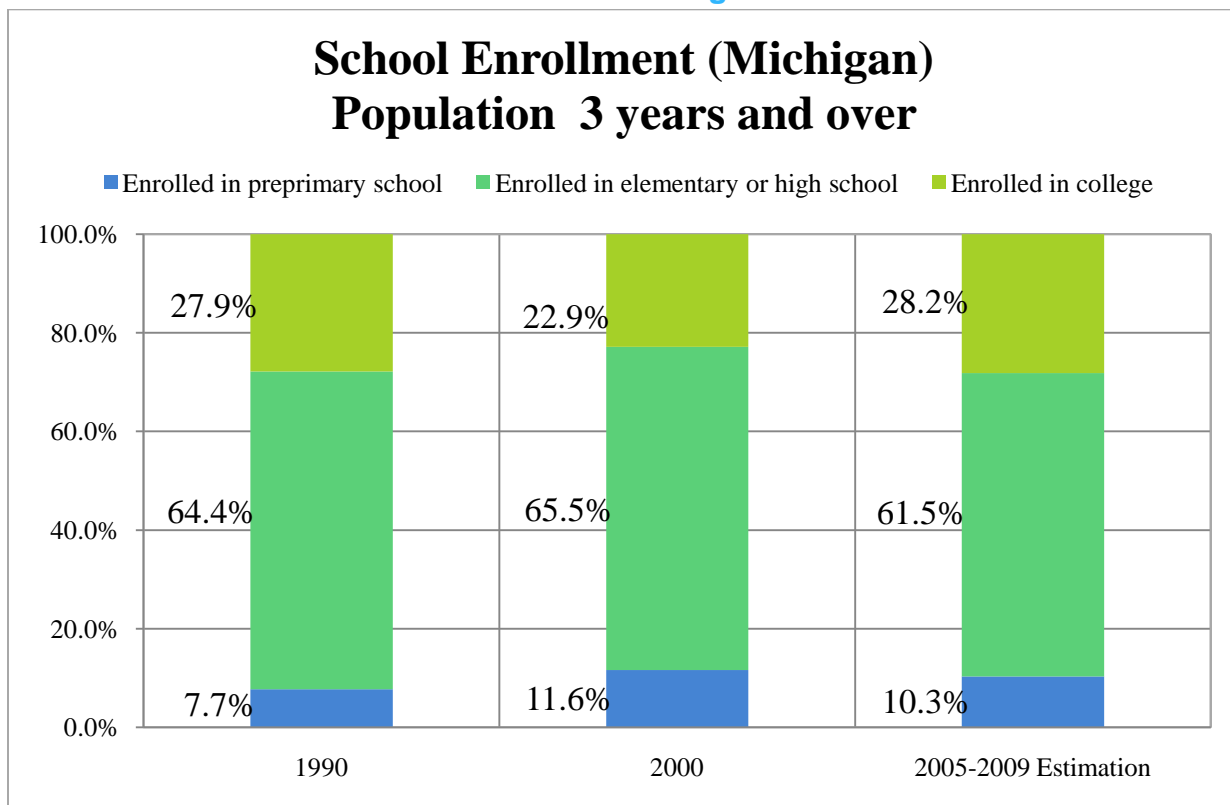
Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

A.3.5: School Enrollment for Shiawassee County



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

A.3.6: School Enrollment for the State of Michigan



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey



## A.4: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

### Owosso Focus Group Meeting

Date: Thursday, Feb. 17, 2011

Time: 7:00- 9:00 p.m.

Location: Chamber of Commerce at Owosso

Number of Participants: 7

### Strengths

Participant 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Trailer</li> <li>- Shiawassee community private foundation</li> </ul>
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beauty of the City</li> <li>- Recreational opportunity such as fishing</li> <li>- Neighborhood</li> <li>- Historical housing</li> <li>- Baker college</li> <li>- Churches</li> <li>- Local newspapers</li> <li>- Strong financial service</li> </ul>
Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Great Art Center for communities</li> <li>- Music Concert during the summer</li> </ul>
Participant 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shiawassee River</li> <li>- 4-5 hotels</li> <li>- Travel by cars</li> <li>- Colorful historical buildings</li> <li>- Variety of homes architecture</li> <li>- Strong downtown</li> <li>- Bus company</li> <li>- Water station</li> <li>- Farmer's market</li> <li>- Theater (NCG)</li> <li>- Schools (educational environment)</li> <li>- Small businesses in community</li> </ul>
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Service and water (natural resource)</li> <li>- Near location from Lansing, Saginaw and Flint</li> <li>- Upgraded airport</li> <li>- Low Crime rate</li> <li>- Increasing cooperation (between governmental agencies and township)</li> <li>- Good work forces and services</li> </ul>
Participant 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Population Style</li> <li>- Hospital</li> <li>- School band</li> <li>- Higher educational opportunity</li> <li>- Sports</li> </ul>

Participant 7	No Comment
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## Weaknesses

Participant 1	- Noise from Helicopter
Participant 2	- Some close mildness - Aging housing stocks - Lack of diverse industry and job - Lack of city plan
Participant 3	- Way far from the small communities - Problems which happens in small town
Participant 4	- Social engineering - Small parking space (in case of trucks, national standard for parking lots does not work ) - Negative perspective about the hospital service - Sidewalk along the river (Improving and controlling the river service such as dock) - Lack of attracting natural recourses such as vegetation (Picnic) - stored in downtown
Participant 5	- Lack of taking responsibility - Lack of jobs - Lack of walkability (sidewalk problems) - Inconsistency of polity - Empty buildings
Participant 6	- Living base of the students - Lack of diversity - Businesses are away from the city (People should drive for work, so it takes time) - Lack of entertaining facilities by the older population - Fire treatment
Participant 7	(No Comment)

## Opportunities

Participant 1	- Taxi service
Participant 2	- Creating own identity (e.g. Detroit) - Improving facilities such as dock, canoeing services - Baker college and downtown - Addressing new economy in old downtown (e.g. e-commerce)
Participant 3	- Advertising such as billboard - Art-walking - Increasing activities with artists - Citizen participation
Participant 4	- Lack of hotel rooms to accept visitors - Convention halls for meeting which address people from near cities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lots of meeting spaces (Baker College)</li> <li>- Transportation businesses</li> <li>- Daytrip marketing</li> <li>- Creating unique name (Owosso vs. Owossa in Oklahoma)</li> <li>- Speedway</li> </ul>
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteer from different areas</li> <li>- Developing sewer and water service (potential money)</li> <li>- Lack of promoting city (public sign, campaign)</li> <li>- City Brand marketing</li> <li>- Weekend plan in summer</li> <li>- Trains with large cultures</li> <li>- Public services by spending more expenditure (police, hospital and etc.)</li> <li>- Bringing entertainment in Downtown</li> </ul>
Participant 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sign on the street</li> <li>- Creating image for landmarks in the city</li> <li>- Increasing walkability</li> <li>- Partnership with downtown businesses</li> </ul>
Participant 7	(No Comment)

## Threats

Participant 1	(No comment)
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marking bigger city such as Lansing, Saginaw and Flint</li> <li>- Lack of change</li> <li>- Fiscal responsibility to the federal government</li> <li>- Falling revenues</li> <li>- Decreasing property values</li> <li>- Losing population which is slowly dropped in the city</li> </ul>
Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouraging Baker college communities</li> <li>- Lack of partnerships (Need of communication)</li> </ul>
Participant 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business climate (Lots of people work out of town)</li> <li>- Lack of planning</li> <li>- Awareness about the real value what business are here</li> <li>- Outsourcing</li> <li>- Change of moving SRI (some industries)</li> <li>- Long term planning for potential treats (inflation, aging population, social security, fix income)</li> <li>- Planning business services</li> </ul>
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commercial stores from outside of downtown (Wall-mart)</li> <li>- Race diversity (e.g. KKK image)</li> <li>- Parking and street sign</li> <li>- Addressing young people to the city (college students)</li> </ul>
Participant 6	(No comment)
Participant 7	(No comment)

## Closing Thoughts

Participant 1	(No comment)
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business analysis</li> <li>- Acting based on identity</li> </ul>
Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her son lives in Ann Arbor and he mentioned “Owosso has nothing here and there was no reason to come back”</li> <li>- Her Daughter and her husband transferred to Baker college from Flint</li> <li>- Need of entertaining activities for young people</li> <li>- But, what are you going to young people bring you back?</li> <li>- Empty and older building spaces with trash</li> </ul>
Participant 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need public bathroom</li> <li>- Lack of job markets</li> <li>- His children lives not in Owosso, but in big city, Tokyo in Japan</li> </ul>
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Looking in the future</li> <li>- Creating goals for development (rails and trails)</li> <li>- Capture tourism</li> <li>- Greening such as using bicycle</li> <li>- He mentioned the Blue Ribbon Committee’s report is not a practical plan</li> <li>- His children (two daughter) backed to the city for rest in two years ago</li> </ul>
Participant 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The city should open about various kinds of opportunities (e.g. Dance club)</li> <li>- Addressing more stores such as coffee shops</li> </ul>
Participant 7	(No Comment)

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