



Wisconsin Rural Livability Initiative

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UW-Madison, EDA UC Wisconsin Rural Economic Summit March 2024

UW-Madison, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, in partnership with the UW-Madison Division of Extension secured funding to support the.....

With Wisconsin Rural Partnership funding, UW-Madison launches new projects to support rural and tribal communities

August 9, 2023

The Rural Livability Project

Connecting Cultural Values and Indigenous Research Towards Food System Resilience

Promoting Family-Centered and Family-School-Community Mental Health Support for Children in Rural Wisconsin Communities

Community Health Workers as a Bridge Between Extension and Rural Healthcare Systems to Support Whole Family Health and Well-Being



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When we think about rural economic prosperity we tend to think in terms of *growth*:

More jobs,
More people,
More businesses,
More income
More, more, more....



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But many rural Wisconsin communities are thriving and doing very well.....but by traditional economic growth metrics they appear to be stagnant. Is the focus on *growth* too narrow?

1st Wave: Industrial recruitment

2nd Wave: Small business development and business retention and expansion

3rd Wave: Industrial clusters and public-private partnerships

4th Wave: Focus on people and quality of life, or community livability



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4th Wave: Focus on people and quality of life, or community livability

Here is the challenge:

- What defines quality of life, or livability or even prosperity?
- These are what economists refer to as “normative” value judgments.
- Different people value different community attributes.



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Uses notions of “compensating differentials”:

Willing to pay higher “rents” and accept lower income to live in high quality of life areas.

We can use this logic to develop proxies for quality of life or livability.

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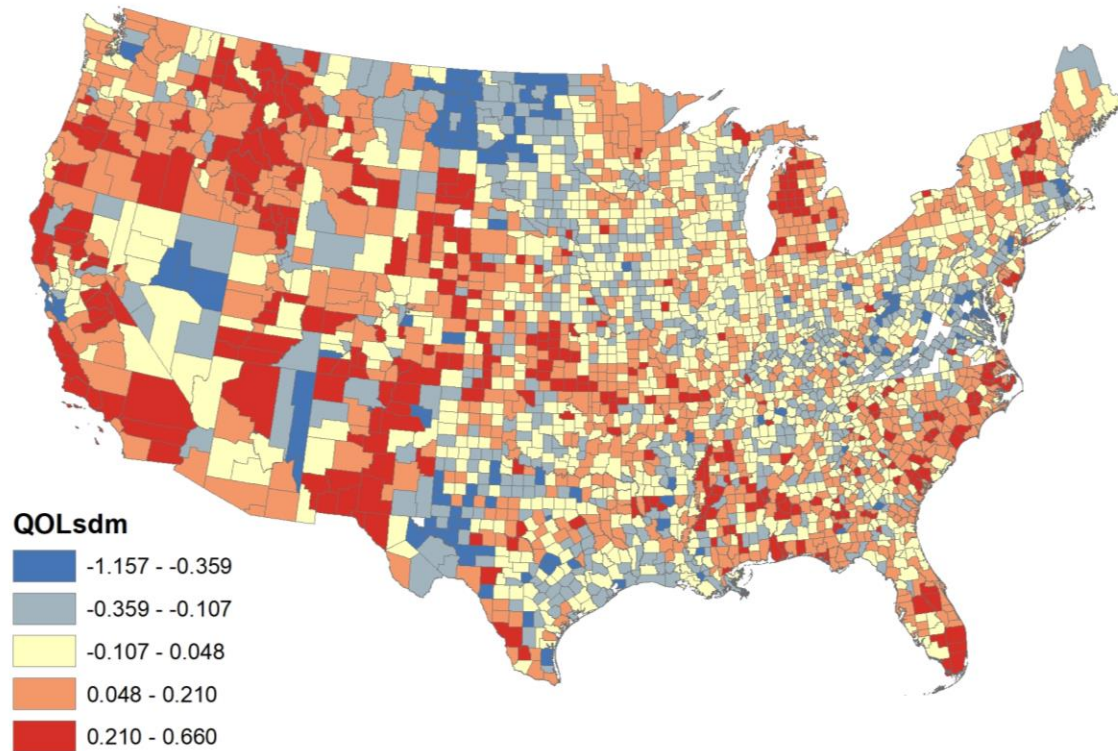
Select a small handful of socioeconomic measures associated with more prosperous areas.

Then identify communities that tend to perform “well” on these measures and study the broader characteristics of those places.



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Ranking	Nonmetro Counties: QoL
1	Mineral County, CO
2	Hyde County, NC
3	Watauga County, NC
4	Loup County, NE
5	Jim Hogg County, TX
6	Madison County, ID
7	Custer County, ID
8	Butte County, SD
9	Golden Valley County, MT
10	Athens County, OH
11	Meagher County, MT
12	Webster Parish, LA
13	Crowley County, CO
14	Colleton County, SC
15	Lake County, MI
16	Whitman County, WA
17	Bertie County, NC
18	Dawes County, NE
19	Russell County, KS
20	Grant County, NM



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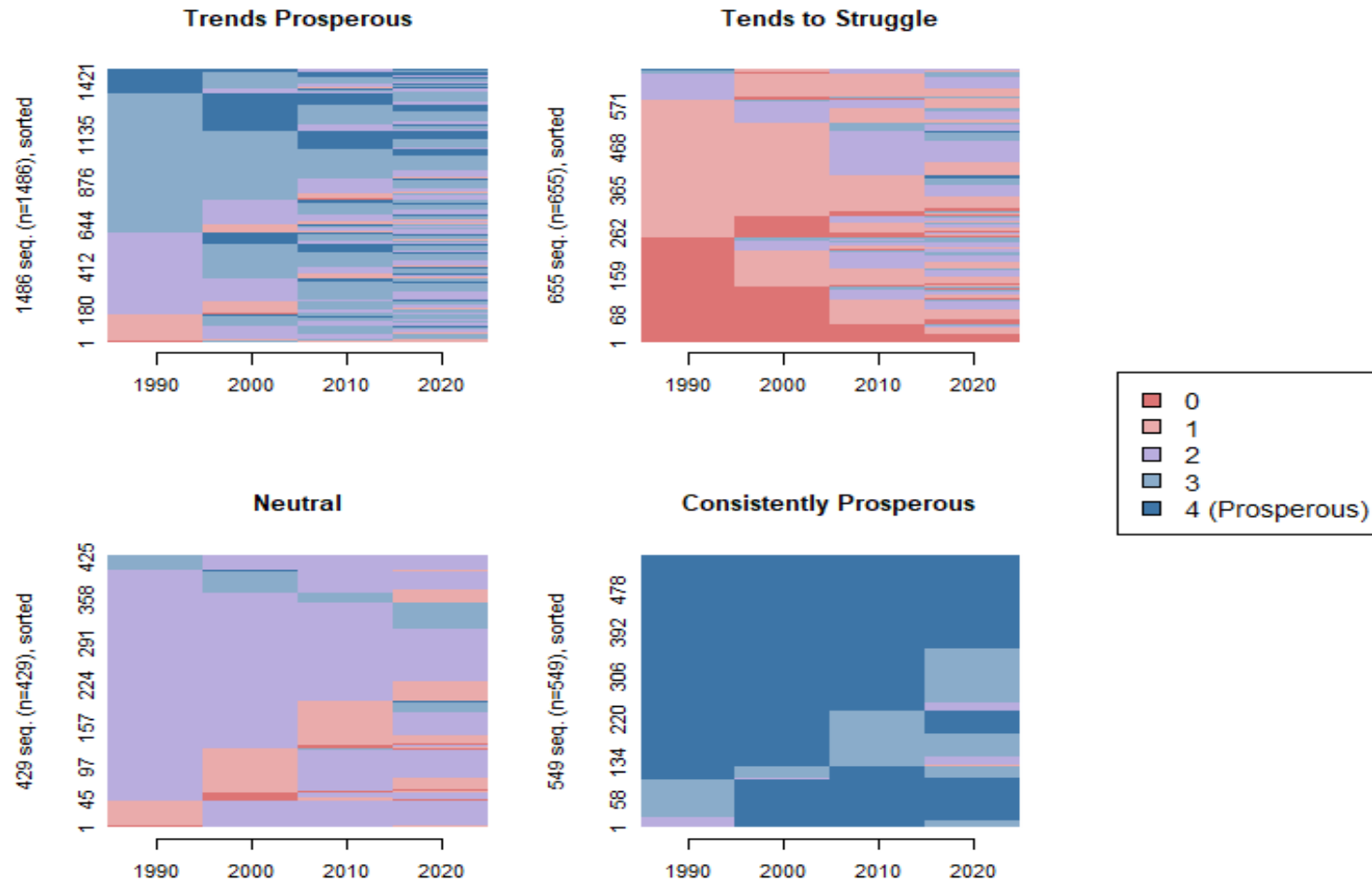
1. Poverty rate
2. Unemployment rate
3. High school dropout rate
4. Housing problems indicator
 - a. No plumbing
 - b. No kitchen
 - c. High occupancy (>1.01/room)
 - d. High cost (>30% rent or owner costs)

Prosperity = scores better than the nation on all 4 of these variables



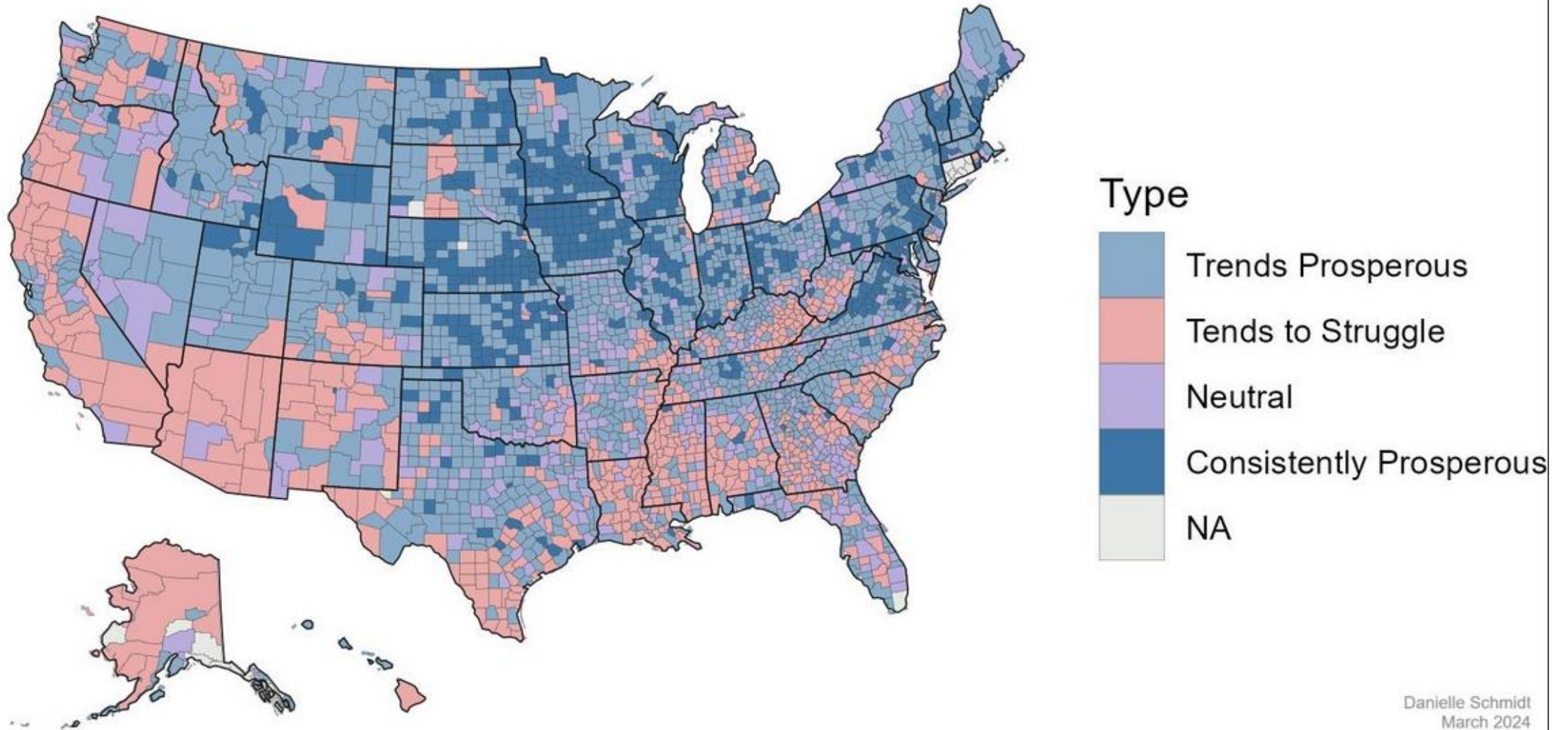
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Across the U.S.
there are
72 nonmetropolitan
counties that are
consistently
prosperous.....

Cheyenne	CO	Dickinson	MI	Hamilton	NE
Grand	CO	Kittson	MN	Johnson	NE
Audubon	IA	Lac qui Parle	MN	Polk	NE
Sac	IA	Redwood	MN	Cheyenne	NE
Winnebago	IA	Roseau	MN	Red Willow	NE
Butler	IA	Sibley	MN	York	NE
Cedar	IA	Chippewa	MN	Adams	NE
Delaware	IA	Koochiching	MN	Dodge	NE
Fremont	IA	Lyon	MN	Los Alamos	NM
Carroll	IA	Brown	MN	Genesee	NY
Hamilton	IA	Goodhue	MN	Mercer	OH
Marion	IA	Meeker	MN	Preble	OH
Poweshiek	IA	McLeod	MN	Putnam	OH
Sioux	IA	Perry	MO	Auglaize	OH
Shelby	IL	Sargent	ND	Hancock	OH
Ellsworth	KS	Ransom	ND	Beaver	OK
Gove	KS	Trails	ND	Stanley	SD
Hodgeman	KS	Clay	NE	Hughes	SD
Ness	KS	Cuming	NE	Lake	SD
Republic	KS	Deuel	NE	Buffalo	WI
Trego	KS	Gosper	NE	Shawano	WI
Clay	KS	Hooker	NE	Waupaca	WI
Kingman	KS	Pierce	NE	Jefferson	WI
Kennebec	ME	Butler	NE	Wood	WI



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What defines rural quality of life, or livability, or prosperity?

This will vary by community and each community must identify its “comparative advantage”.



Thanks for your time and attention.....

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