

Midwest High Speed Rail Project:

Tomah Intermodal Hub and Regional Welcome Center

Mayor Paul Dwyer
City Administrator Nick Morales

12 September 2025



Tomah Comprehensive Plan 2045

SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS

Special Planning Areas (SPA) includes locations identified for either redevelopment or new development where additional sub-area planning should be considered in order to facilitate the vision and goals for these areas. Sub-area planning may take the form of detailed neighborhood land use plans, zoning code modifications, or economic development initiatives.

Canadian Pacific Railroad Property (CPP)

In 2010, the City of Tomah created a sub-area plan for portions of properties owned by Canadian Pacific Railroad. The property is a highly-visible, 60-acre parcel near the center of the community and just north of Downtown. This vacant property has been targeted for redevelopment by the city for many years. The sub-area plan recommended developing the site into an Intermodal Hub and Regional Welcome Center to help drive customer activity into Tomah's downtown businesses district and to help improve the aesthetics of the property as viewed from Superior Avenue. At the time the plan was created the State was considering plans to develop high-speed passenger rail from Minneapolis to Chicago (Midwest High Speed Rail System). Developing a new platform and station was an integral part of the planning process, including connections for bus transit and bicycle trails, on-site restaurants, and space for a visitors center. Since the sub-area plan was completed funding for the Midwest High Speed Rail project in Wisconsin has not been approved and the management from Canadian Pacific have indicated to City Officials a desire to continue to maintain the property for freight movement. The Intermodal Hub and Regional Welcome Center may become a viable idea again in the future, and if this becomes the case, the recommendations of this sub-area plan should be revisited and considered for approval as a component of this comprehensive plan.

Downtown

In 2017, the City of Tomah adopted a Downtown Master Plan covering the majority of the area designated with the Downtown Mixed Use land use category. This plan includes visioning, branding, and marketing strategies, public use and infrastructure recommendations, land use and redevelopment opportunities, and a detailed action plan. These various recommendations and strategies have been integrated into this plan and Tomah is actively working to implement the Downtown Plan.

Housing

In 2022, the City of Tomah adopted a Housing Assessment which detailed the issues, opportunities, and gaps within the City's housing market. While this assessment doesn't reflect a special planning area, it does provide recommendations for addressing the community's housing needs that dovetail with the land use strategies listed above. Increasing the community's housing affordability and availability will continue to be a high priority initiative over the planning period.



History



Tomah: A Growing Community Since 1883

- Founded in 1855 by Robert E. Gillett.
- Incorporated in 1883.
- The City is named after Thomas Carron, a fur trader from Green Bay.
- Thomas integrated into the Menominee tribe, who pronounced his name as, “Tomah.”
- He became known as “Chief Tomah.”



Home of the Ho-Chunk

- A piece of the ancestral home of the Ho-Chunk Nation.
- Ho-Chunk Nation Offices in Tomah:
 - Ho-Chunk Museum and Cultural Center (closed due to fire damage).
 - Ho-Chunk Cinema (closed during Pandemic, reopening fall 2025).
 - Ho-Chunk Youth Center.
 - Ho-Chunk Housing Agency.
 - Several Ho-Chunk residential properties.



Historic Buildings

- Former Post Office
- Tomah Public Library
- Boy Scout Cabin



Geography and Demographics



Geography

- Lake Tomah
- South Fork of the Lemonweir River
- Boundary of the Driftless region
- 7.86 square miles





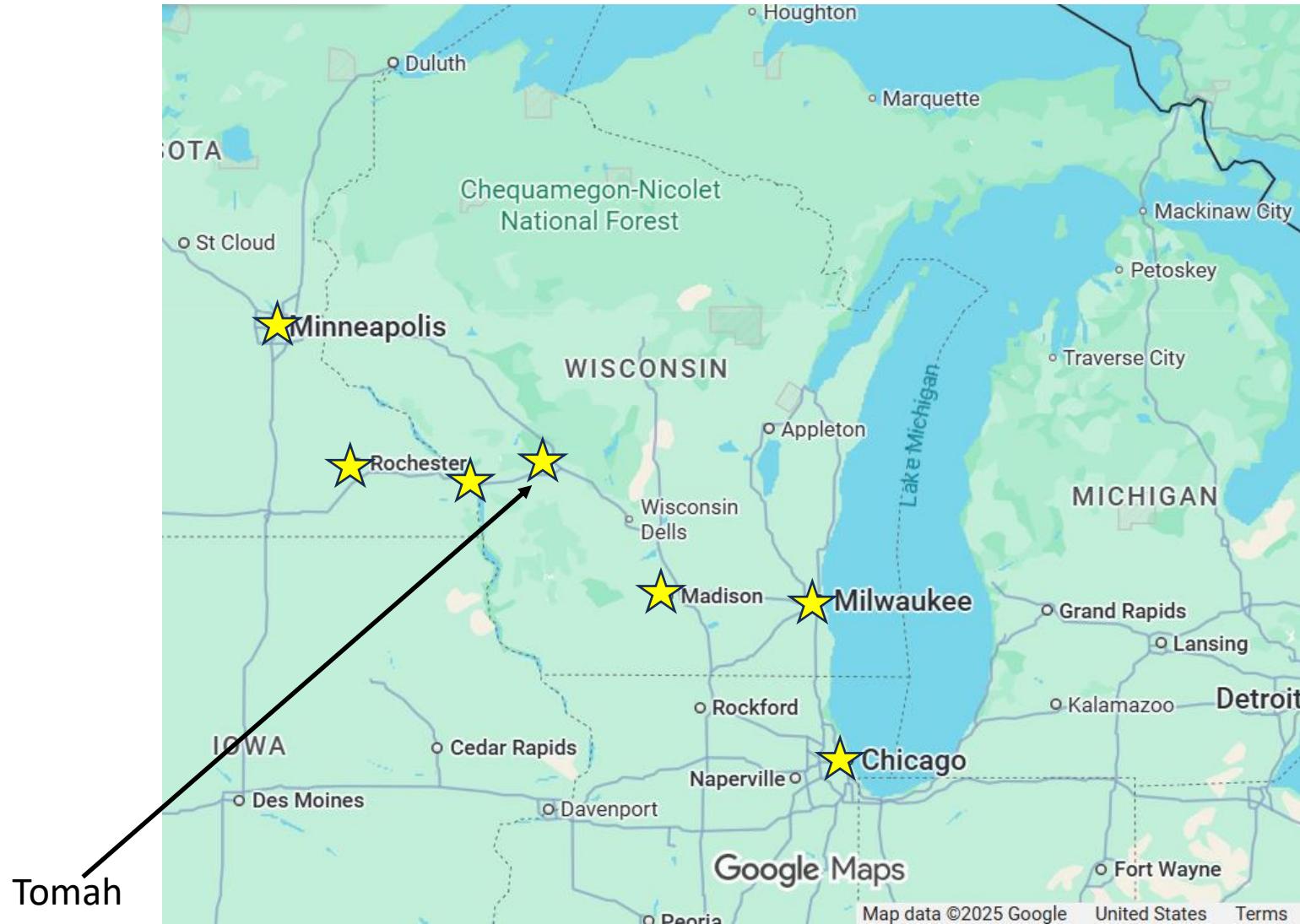
Demographics

- Population: 9,570
- Transients: 20-30,000
- Median household income: \$51,304
- Median family income: \$63,940
- Population below poverty line: 6.7%
- High school grads: 92.3%
- Bachelor's degree and higher: 23.3%

A Strategic City

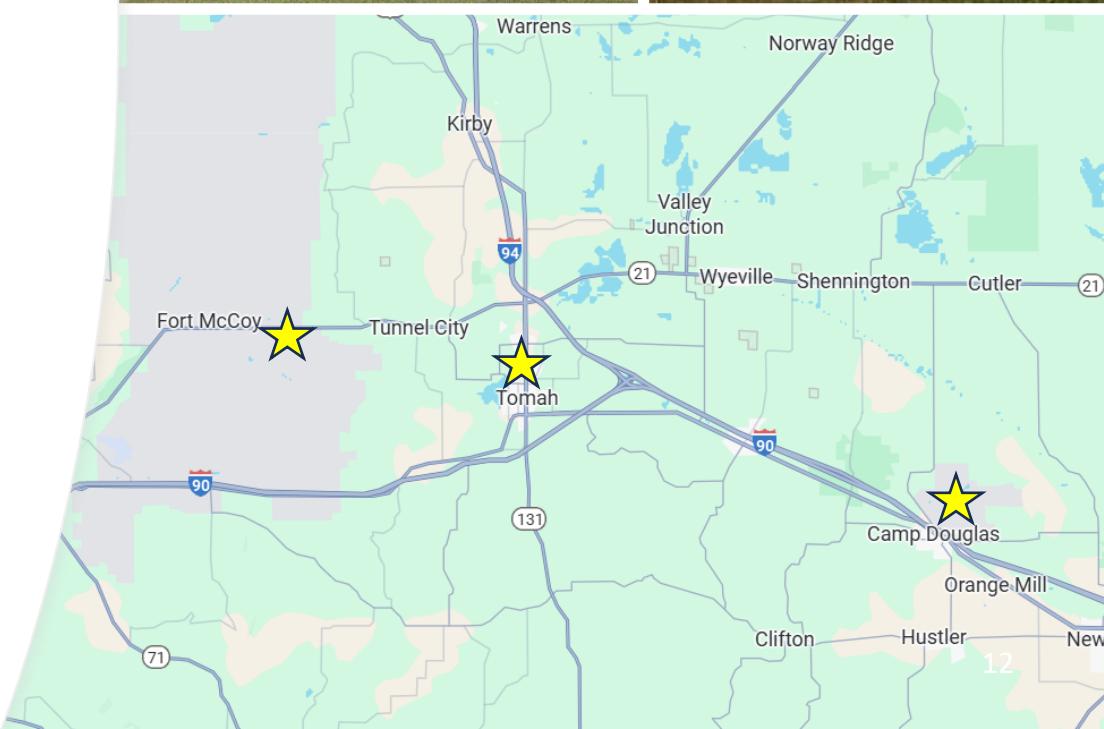


“Tomah, where the “I” divides and the people come together.”



Military Ground Lines of Communication/Supply

- Volk Field (Airbase) – 13.8 miles
- Fort McCoy – 12.4 miles
 - Permanent personnel expansion of up to 2,500 in 2026
 - Approximately 15,000 ADDITIONAL transient personnel each year for annual training exercises beginning in 2026



Strategic Partners

- Ho-Chunk Nation
 - Tomah facilities reinvestment in 2025 and 2026
- Fort McCoy
 - Muriel Boat Lift/Cuban Refugees
 - Afghanistan Airlift Refugees
 - Facility expansion in 2025
 - Personnel expansion in 2026
- Volk Field
- Veterans' Affairs Tomah Hospital
- Tomah Health Hospital
 - Personnel and facility expansion in 2025-2026
- Walmart
 - Tomah Distribution Center (National awards)
 - Tomah Supercenter
- Cardinal Glass Tomah Manufacturing Facility
 - Personnel, facility, and artificial intelligence manufacturing expansion in 2025 and 2026



Strategic Initiatives

- Operation Welcome Home (Housing developments)
 - 2022 Housing Study
 - Project Northside
 - Project Southside
 - Habitat For Humanity Cross Mod Initiative
- Operation Phoenix (Downtown revitalization)
 - 2025 Façade Improvement Grant Program
 - Project Pabst
 - Kansas State University Technical Assistance to Brownfields downtown revitalization study July-October 2025
 - Resurrection of boutique hotel plans
- Operation Tomah Strong
 - YMCA-like indoor recreation facility/community center



Where The People Come Together



Budweiser Dairyland Supernational Truck and Tractor Pull

70,000 attendees in three days



Downtown Thursday Nights

Six Thursdays during the summer drawing 2,000-5,000+ people downtown each night



Monroe County Fair

Located in Tomah, Tomah is NOT the County seat



Home of the Woodsmen



Tomah's Growth and Development Is Inevitable



The Bottom Line

The City of Tomah should not exist.

Across the State of Wisconsin, Tomah is one of the only incorporated cities that both sits in a rural county and is as big as the county seat. Tomah grew out of strategic necessity across multiple industries. Sitting on top of the I-90 and I-94 interchange connecting Chicago and Minneapolis, in between Fort McCoy and Volk Field, and bolstered by a thriving veteran community supported by a regional VA hospital, the city defies the destiny of so many other non-county seat rural municipalities.

The people of Tomah reflect this defiance. The community is passionate, determined, and resilient. It is the proud home of many Ho-Chunk, a military town that housed thousands of young soldiers passing through on their way to and from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and produces a strong working-class population with a “get the job done, and get it done right” attitude.

Tomah faces many challenges. It is not immune to the international housing crisis, nor the constrained national economic environment. However, one thing is abundantly clear:

Tomah’s growth and development is inevitable. It cannot be stopped.



Questions?

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- City Administrator Nick Morales
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