

Chapter 2: Values, Vision, and Present- Day Strengths and Challenges

- Introduction
- Core Values
- Vision
- Mission
- Sustainability and Smart Growth
- Present Day Greater Bemidji Area Strengths
- Present Day Greater Bemidji Area Challenges



Photo credit: John Andringa



Photo credit: True North Bemidji

VISION

We respect our differences and what we share, we strive to protect our history and diverse population and seek a sense of place.

Introduction

The Greater Bemidji Area is proud of its unique character and cultural assets. The City of Bemidji is the First City on the Mississippi and is the home of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox. The historic buildings and architecture add to the visual character of the community. This section will explore the community's cultural assets.



Photo credit: Explore MN

Core Values

The following values are important to residents of the Greater Bemidji Area, and, along with the Comprehensive Plan, provide a guide for developing implementation strategies:

The Greater Bemidji Area is an **inclusive** community valuing the culturally rich history of lands first settled by the Anishinaabe people;

Maintaining and enhancing our **northwoods character** is vital to preserving our unique sense of place as the community prepares for growth;

The Greater Bemidji Area will promote a **diverse opportunity** for housing, transportation, employment, leisure, and lifestyle choice for all residents;

Natural Resources are invaluable, so the Greater Bemidji Area will promote **resource conservation** efforts to make sure these resources will be used in a way that they remain healthy for future generations;

There will be **equity** in planning; the distribution of resources, the improvement of infrastructure, and the decision-making process will be fair and just for all residents;

As we look to the future, **respect** of our culture and history, respect for our increasing diversity, respect for our opportunities, respect for our challenges, and respect for all residents of the Greater Bemidji Area will be imperative as we prepare for growth;

The improvement of overall **health and wellness** of the Greater Bemidji Area will be a top priority, the improvement of physical health and mental well-being of all residents will ensure a vibrant and healthy community; and

Sustainability will be a continuous and ongoing endeavor as the community expands. This includes promoting healthy economic development, ensuring fair land use decisions for all, and enhancing the overall wellness of our people and environment to ensure future generations receive equal or better opportunities for success.

Vision

The vision of the Greater Bemidji Area is to be “A Model for Resiliency—Upholding Our Northwoods Character—With Respect for our Citizens and Environment.”

Mission

The mission of the Greater Bemidji Area is “Responsible Growth with Northwoods Character, preserving our history and providing diverse opportunities for success.”



Photo credit: Bemidji Pioneer

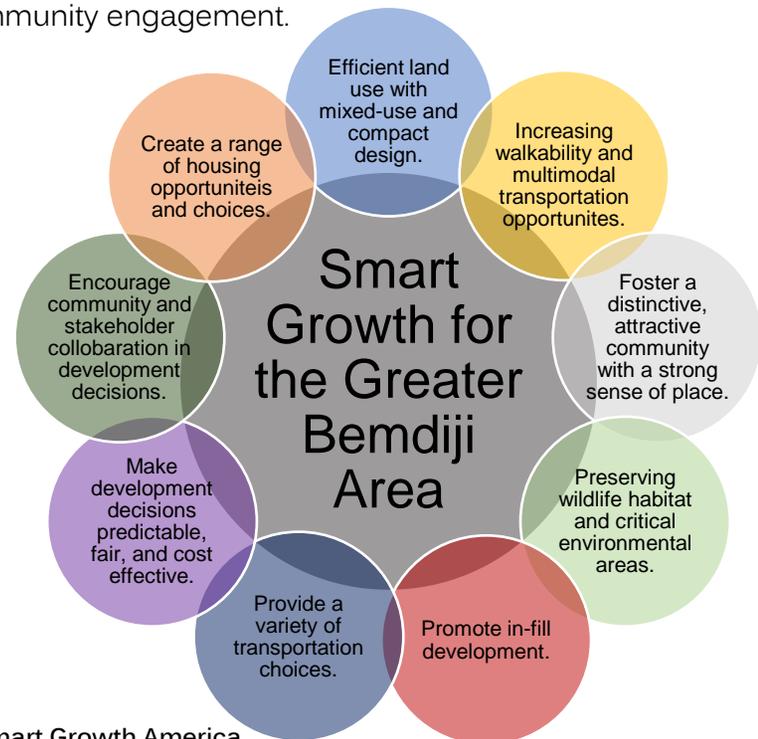
Sustainability and Smart Growth

This plan has been developed with sustainability and smart growth in mind. One of the most often quoted definitions of sustainability is from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainability can be defined differently by the individual or organization choosing to adopt sustainable practices. For this plan, a model of sustainability is being followed that includes social equity, economic feasibility, personal wellness, and environmental responsibility.



Credit: Bemidji State University Sustainability Office

As the Greater Bemidji Area is anticipated to continue to grow into the future, it is imperative that this plan identifies how the community wishes to grow. This plan was developed with smart growth principles in mind based on Smart Growth America and the American Planning Association policy guide for smart growth. Smart growth is an approach to development that encourages a mix of building types and uses, diverse housing and transportation options, development within existing neighborhoods, and community engagement.



Credit: Smart Growth America

Present Day Greater Bemidji Area Strengths

The Greater Bemidji Area is a place people are proud to call home due to its unique and vibrant community as well as the following strengths:

- The Greater Bemidji Area has a strong entrepreneur culture that continues to grow.
 - The Greater Bemidji Area is a place of opportunity for those looking for something new.
 - The Greater Bemidji Area has a strong post-secondary education system with Bemidji State University and Northwest Technical College.
 - The pedestrian trail network is continuously improving through road construction projects.
 - Continued expansion of health care services for local and regional residents will provide new jobs within the Greater Bemidji Area.
 - There are numerous state and federal agencies located within the Greater Bemidji Area and City of Bemidji as well as offices for all Beltrami County services.
- There is an abundance of parks, including Lake Bemidji State Park on the north shore of Lake Bemidji and several City of Bemidji parks on the lake shore.
 - There are expanding opportunities for arts and culture of the Bemidji area is ever expanding in the downtown district.
 - Bemidji is home to the fourth busiest airport in the State of Minnesota.



Photo credit: Bemidji Dragon Boat

Present-Day Greater Bemidji Area Challenges

- The increase in racial diversity creates challenges with racial equity and cultural differences.
 - Attracting and retaining talent in the workforce for the Greater Bemidji Area.
 - Low wage employment contributes to poverty levels.
 - Increasing population of students dealing with hunger and homelessness
 - Health issues associated with chemical dependency and mental illness is increasing.
 - Identifying and filling gaps within the housing spectrum.
 - Reliable and consistent transportation options for all residents.
 - Surrounding local government units are hesitant to embrace or seek planning and zoning or share in a cooperative land use planning approach.
- Natural hazards could pose a public safety threat to residents, visitors, and first responders.