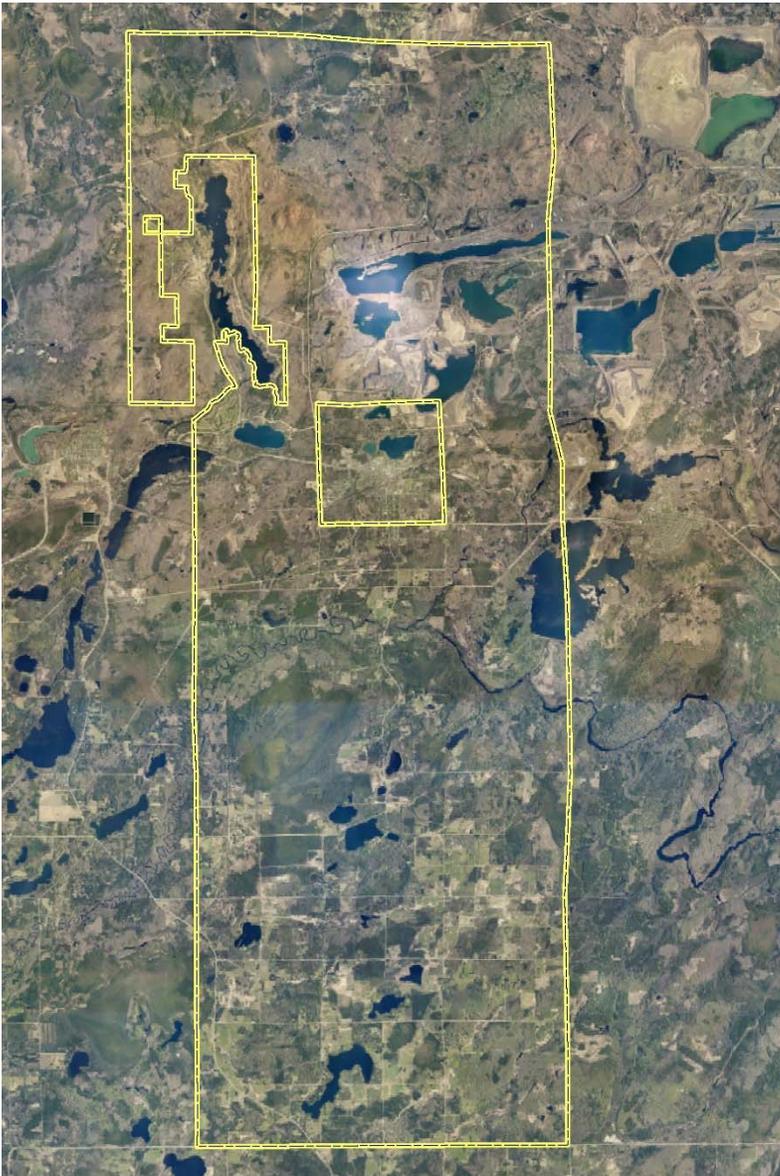


Comprehensive Plan

East Range Communities Town of White, Minnesota

SEH No. ERJPO 135866 4.00

June 16, 2017



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Appendix A - Report for East Range Joint Powers Board Comprehensive Plan Survey

Comprehensive Plan

East Range Communities

Prepared for Cities of Town of White, Aurora, Biwabik and Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota

1.0 Introduction

This plan is the policy framework the town will use to guide Town leaders in future decision making efforts. This plan recognizes and builds upon past and existing planning efforts and is based on community input.

1.1 Comprehensive Planning Authority & Purpose

Minnesota State Law grants each individual Town the authority to plan for its future. According to Minnesota Statute 462, a municipality may carry on comprehensive municipal planning activities for guiding the future development and improvement of the municipality and may prepare, adopt and amend a comprehensive municipal plan and implement such plan by ordinance and other official actions in accordance with the provisions of Sections 462.351 to 462.364.

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to identify a broad range of issues and opportunities that affect the community and to present a future vision, goals, and implementation objectives for a wide range of topics that affect the Town of White, MN.

A community comprehensive plan serves the following functions¹:

- The plan provides continuous guidance over time to Town staff and elected officials regardless of personnel changes
- The plan frames and balances competing interests and issues in order to strike a balance among the many competing demands on our lands. Orderly and rational development provides the greatest benefits to individuals and the community as a whole, and avoids nuisance conflicts between land uses.
- The plan helps protect public investments with well-planned, orderly and phased development patterns that provide efficient public services.
- The plan allows communities to plan for the protection of valued resources and environmental features and avoid destruction or degradation by inappropriate development.
- The plan provides guidance for shaping the appearance of the community within its unique context.
- The plan promotes economic development and contains information that guides the investment of prospective developers.

¹ Modified from "The Purpose of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan" by Gary D. Taylor, Iowa State University.

- The plan provides justification for decisions. Plans provide a factual and objective basis to support zoning decisions and can be used by communities to defend their decisions if challenged in court.
- The plan encourages community input and investment in the future vision. The comprehensive planning process provides citizens an opportunity to brainstorm, debate, and ultimately influence the future of their community.

1.2 How to Use this Plan

The Town of White Comprehensive Plan presents a vision for the Town's future, and an agenda for community action. The individual sections outline in more specific terms the goals and strategies to ensure the Town of White retains livability, grows in a way that supports the values of the community, enhances market strength, and continues to be sustainable.

The Plan is a living document to be used for the day-to-day activities of Town officials and staff, and should be referenced as needed to justify specific actions. Elected officials, appointed officials, and town staff should have easy access to the Plan, and should explicitly reference in land use decisions. As a living document, town officials should periodically review the Plan's priorities, and check with community residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to ensure that the document remains current. Reviews should be conducted regularly and amendments made as necessary between updates, assessing the town's progress toward the vision and the validity of the vision as community circumstances change and unforeseen events arise.

The plan provides specific recommendations to direct and manage the Town of White's growth and development. Some of the changes will come in the form of reinvestment and redevelopment while others will come should the Town decide to expand its land base. As with all land use decisions, implementation of these growth and redevelopment recommendations will have different levels of benefit and impact on community members.

Previous Comprehensive, Strategic, and Other Planning Efforts

The Town of White has been proactive in establishing and maintaining a Strategic Plan. Many items in this plan address the Town's overall appeal and competitiveness from an economic standpoint, including a detailed assessment of community strength and weaknesses.

1.3 Community Participation

Development of the Comprehensive Plan included citizen participation to build local capacity and benefit from the knowledge of the local community. The process and tools used included:

- Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee Meetings
- Project web page
- Community survey
- Issues, Opportunities and Visioning Workshop
- Town Board Meeting



1.3.1 Community Participation Survey (July-August 2016)

A survey of the region was completed for the Comprehensive Plan process. Surveys went to the overall East Range, as well as specifically to the communities of Aurora, Biwabik, Hoyt Lakes and the Town of White. Nearly 14 percent of the responses (63) came from Town of White residents. It is generally well reflected that the regional atmosphere and the small town feel is something residents enjoy.

2.0 Issues, Opportunities & Vision

Issues and opportunities were identified through meetings with the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee, the on-line community survey and community workshops. Themes identified through these activities include:

- Continue providing areas for larger lot, single family housing, especially related to recreational, north-woods oriented settings.
- Provide for growth and or redevelopment of commercial and industrial facilities.
- Current zoning and land development regulations adequately address redevelopment and growth opportunities.
- There is strong support for broader, Iron-Range economic development initiatives such as expansion of mining (ferrous and non-ferrous) logging and wood products manufacturing, etc.
- Continued investments and expansion of Giants Ridge are important.
- Coordinate investments and expansion in active, outdoor recreation facilities such as multi-seasonal trails, camping and boating are important.
- The four East Range communities, including the shared school, need to continue moving towards more shared services/staff such as:



Fire/Rescue/Police

Recreation

– Administrative Services

- Established bus routes that run between East Range and West Range a few times per day.

2.1 Goals

Each Plan Element within the Comprehensive Plan will include a series of goals and policies in order to formulate measurable steps for achieving the community's overall vision. The goals establish long-range aims for the town and are intended to serve as guides for the Comprehensive Plan. They represent general statements that identify community aspirations or desired conditions.

2.2 Policies

Each goal is accompanied by several policy statements. Policies describe actions aimed at achieving each of the Plan Element's goals. Policies will be developed following the review and refinement of Plan Element Goals.

3.0 Community Profile

The community profile section provides a summary of background information and relevant demographic and economic information based on 2010 Census data. The analysis of this data is important to understanding historical conditions and future development and growth potential for the Town of White.

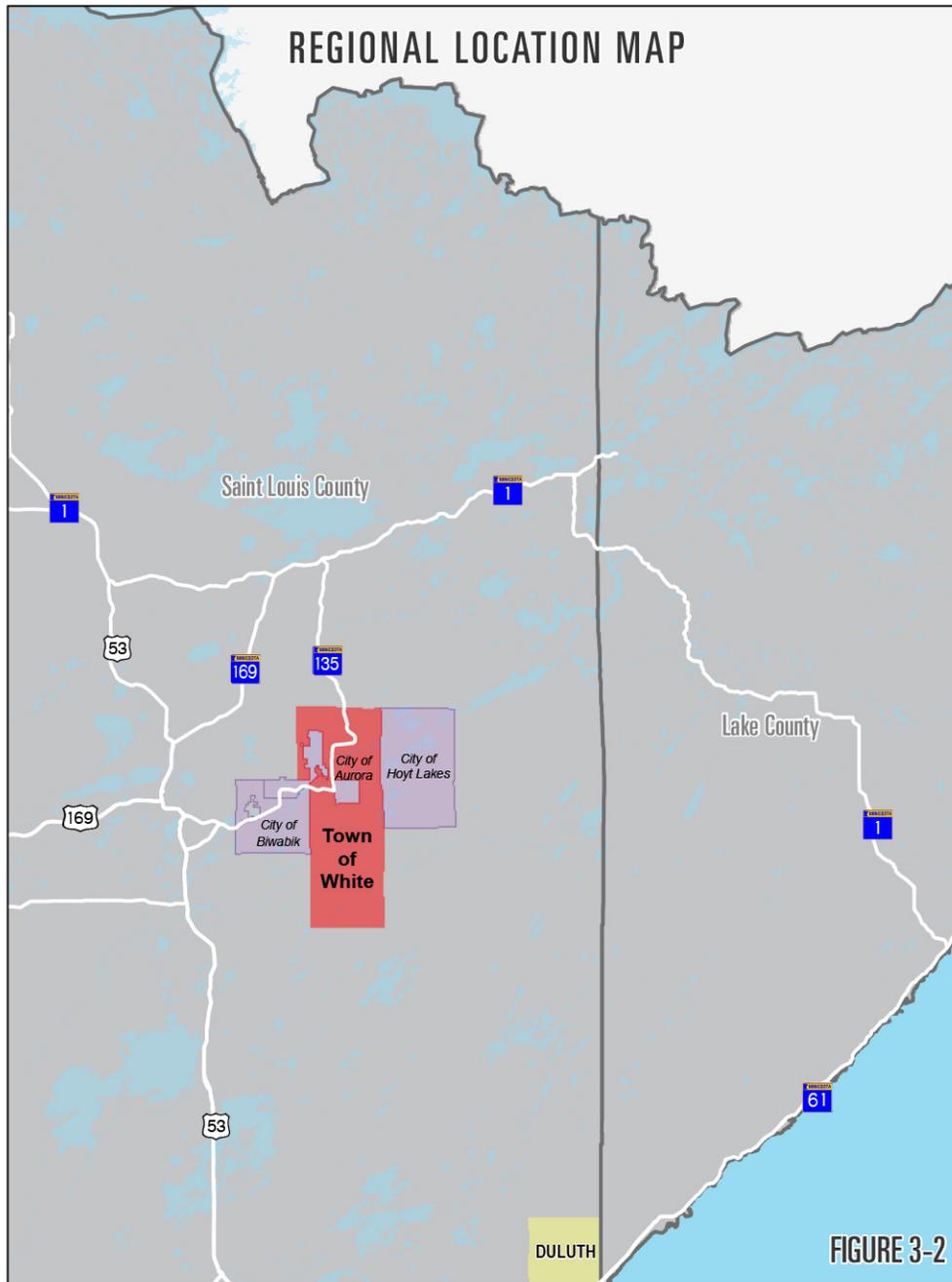
3.1 Regional Setting

Established in 1906, the Town of White (White Township) is located within Saint Louis County on northern Minnesota's East Range. It is the 2nd largest township in the State of Minnesota. With over 100 miles of roads (maintained by the township) and covering 36 square miles, the township is also unique in that it fully encompasses the City of Aurora and a portion of the City of Biwabik.

Figure 1 – Statewide Location Map



Figure 2 – Regional Location



3.2 Demographic Projections and Trends²

One of the most important components of a comprehensive plan is a profile of the population with the community and its surrounding areas. Both historical data and long-range trends need to be considered. Census data is one of the most valuable tools in creating a community demographic profile. By collecting and analyzing this information, growth and development trends can be identified. Historical and future trends can help provide

² ACS 2014 is the most recent Census data available and is used when available. 1990, 2000, 2010 Decennial Data.

predictions of future conditions. The information provided in this section will provide a framework for updating the comprehensive plan by attempting to meet future needs for the Town of White over the next 20 years.

This section represents an analysis performed with data that was available at the time of the study. The following pages contain demographic data obtained from a variety of local, state, and national sources. During the authoring of this section, both the US Census Bureau and the Minnesota State Demographer's Office had released basic demographic estimates for the year 2013. However, these annual estimates are based on limited basic counts, such as population and household levels.

For more detailed demographic variables, the 2010 Census is viewed as the most reliable data source. The Census is an accurate benchmark for demographic data, though it provides a limited scope for demographic variables such as income and housing costs. Therefore, the American Community Survey will be used to provide detailed demographic characteristics. It is important to note that the American Survey is an estimate, based on sampling data, there is a margin of error that exists.

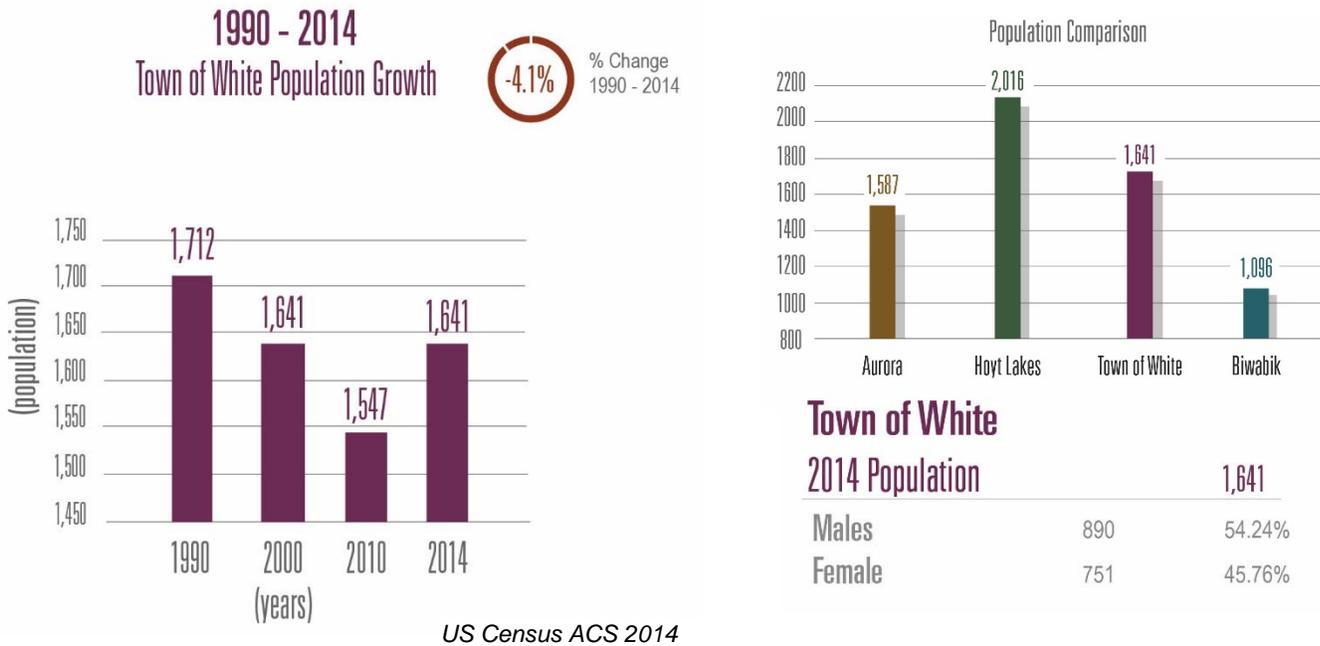
This chapter contains demographic data that was available and obtained from various local, state, and national sources. The assumptions made in this chapter were derived from extracting the City of Aurora Census data from White Township Census data.

A portion of the City of Biwabik is located within the township boundary. The contents of this section does contain a portion of Biwabik's population and demographic characteristics. It is our understanding that the Town of White has never had demographic, and socioeconomic data completed that only reflects the limits of the Town of White. Population and demographic data has been compiled by the US Census Bureau, however, the data reflects the entire boundary of White Township; which includes Aurora, and the eastern half of the City of Biwabik city limits.

3.2.1 Population

One of the most important components of a comprehensive plan is a profile of the population within the community and surrounding areas. Both historical data and long-range trends need to be considered. Census data is one of the most valuable tools in creating a community demographic profile. By collecting and analyzing this information, growth and development trends can be identified. Historical and future trends can help provide predictions of future conditions. The information provided in this section will provide a framework for updating the current comprehensive plan by attempting to meet future needs for the Town of White over the next 20 years.

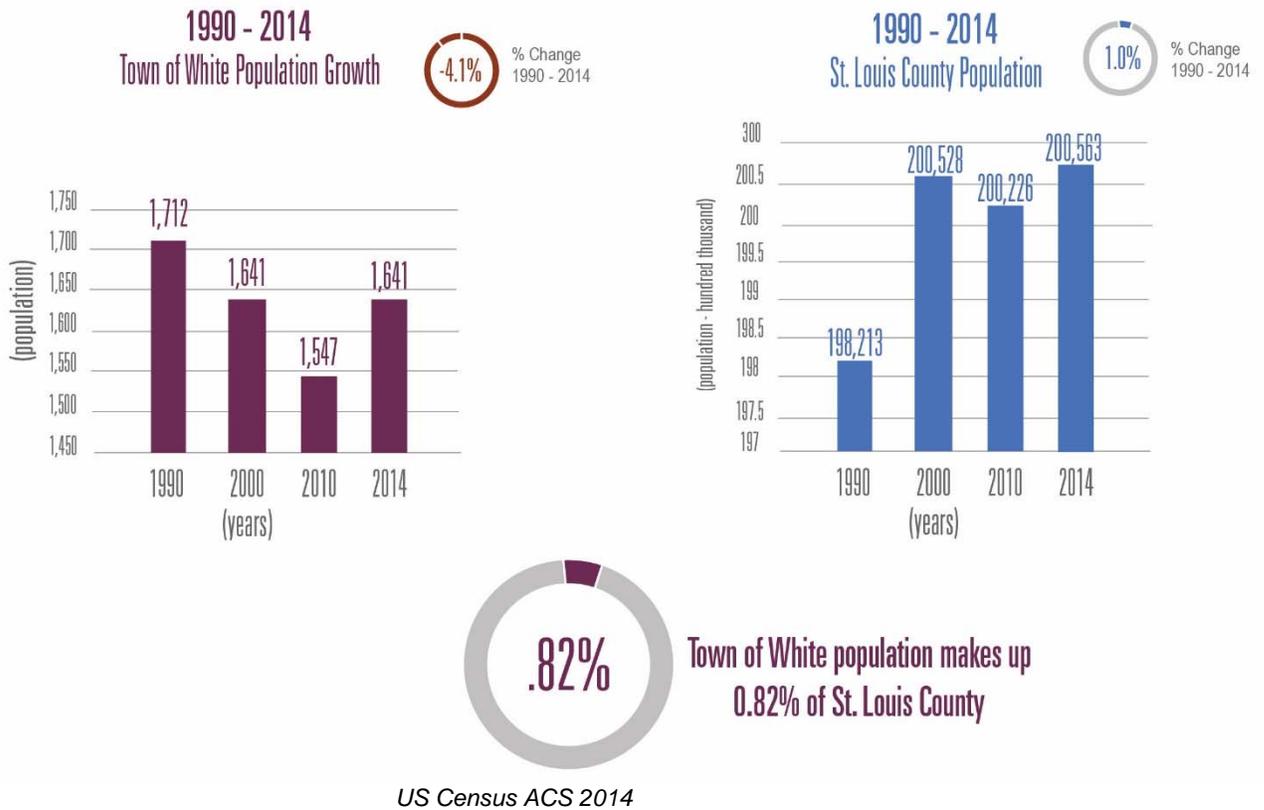
Figure 3 – Population Growth 1990-2014



3.2.1.1 Population Growth

Figure 4 compares population growth for the Town of White and St. Louis County between 1990 and 2014. In general, there has been a steady population decline in the Town of White from 1990 to 2010. As of 2014, the Town of White saw an increase in population from 1,547 in 2010, to 1,641 in 2014 at a rate of change of 6.08 percent. The greatest population decrease in a 10-year period (-5.73%) for the Town of White occurred between 2000 and 2010. St. Louis County’s population essentially remained stagnant and showed minimal growth between 2000 and 2014.

Figure 4 – Population Growth (1990-2014) between Town of White and St. Louis County



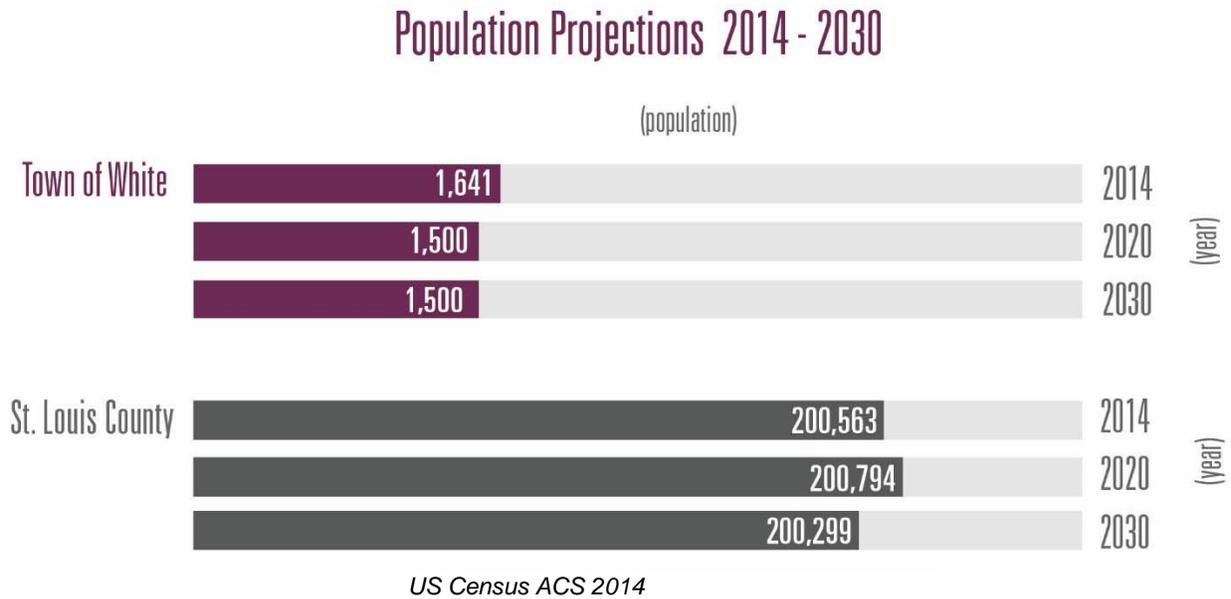
3.2.1.2 Population Projections

Preparing the population projections is a critical step in developing accurate land use forecasts. Understanding future population growth patterns for a community, particularly when combined with land utilization estimates, can assist public and private sector planners and developers in determining infrastructure needs and identifying community investment opportunities.

Figure 5 presents population projections for 2014 to 2030. Projections were based on US Census, and Minnesota State Demographer's Office data. By 2020, the Town of White is projected to lose 141 (-8.59%) and remain consistent with a population of 1,500 by 2030. In general, these projections show that the Town of White's population will continue to decline slowly.

St. Louis County is projected to grow by 231 (+0.1%) between 2014 and 2020 and lose 495 residents (+0.2%) between 2020 and 2030.

Figure 5 – Population Projections (2014-2030)



3.2.2 Households

Our assumptions show 696 households in 2014. A household refers to all persons who occupy a housing unit. Figure 6 show's household growth trends from 1990 to 2014. Our assumptions illustrate a steady increase in households, and has steadily increased from 1990 at a growth rate of 14 percent. The Town of White had 653 households in 2010, and 656 households in 2000.

This figure was developed from data that was available and obtained from various local, state, and national sources. The assumptions made in this chapter were derived from extracting the City of Aurora Census data from White Township Census data. A portion of the City of Biwabik is located within the township boundary. The contents of this section does contain a portion of Biwabik's population and demographic characteristics.

Figure 6 – Household Growth and Projections

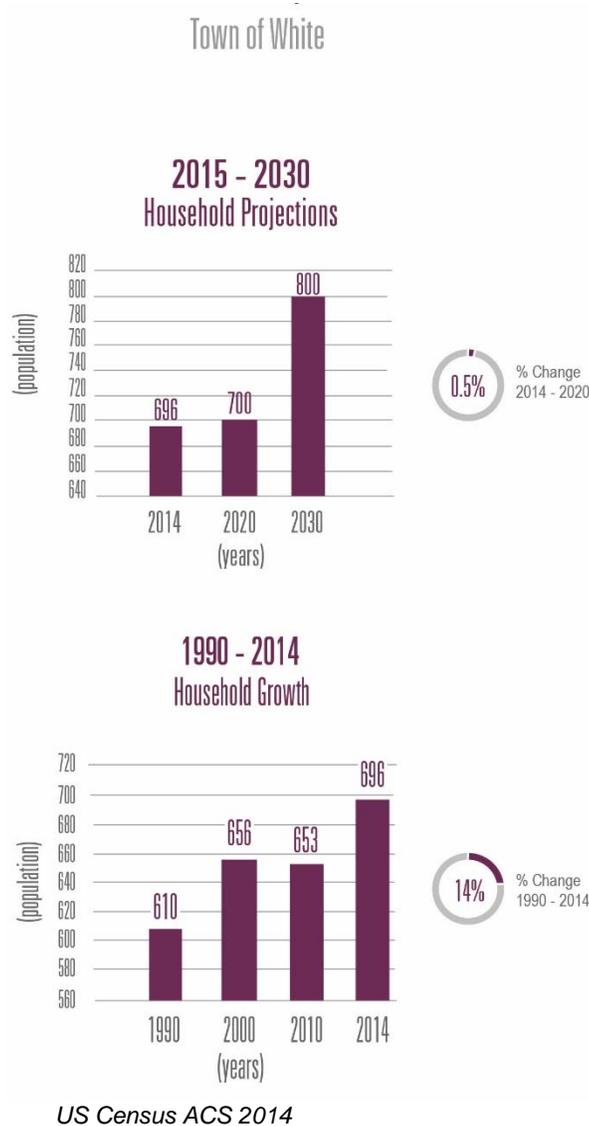


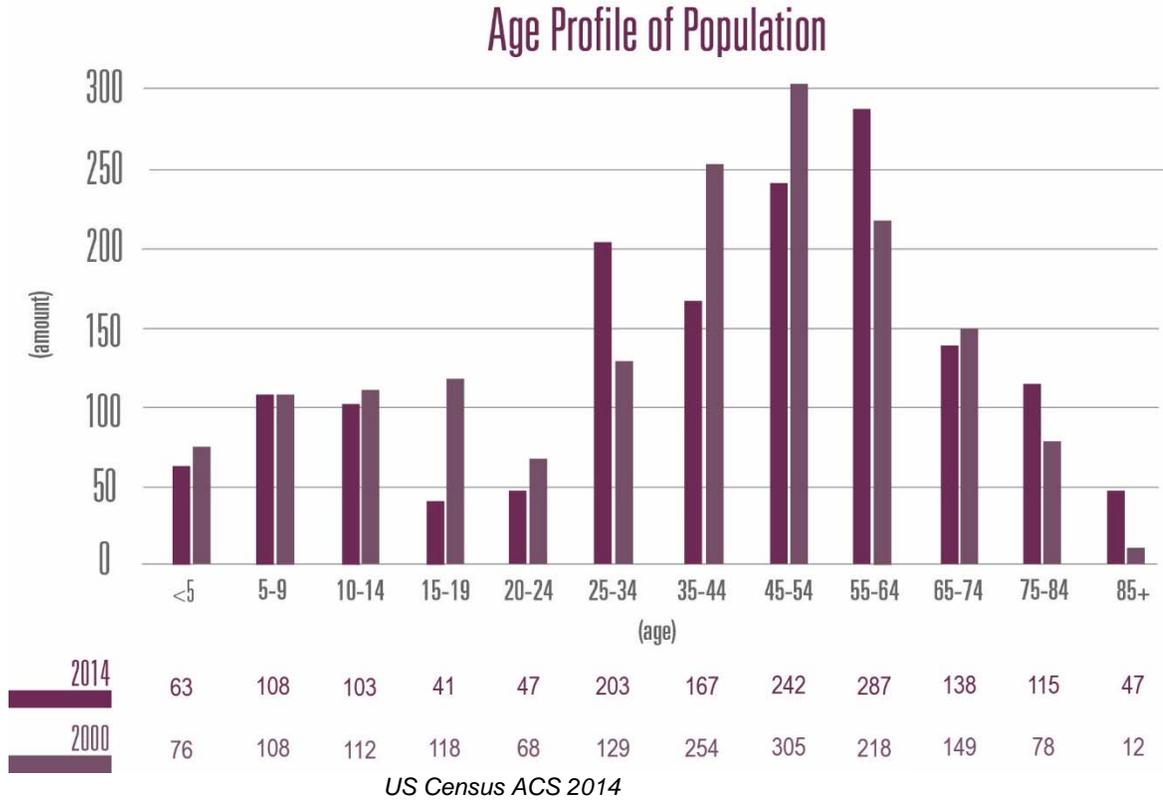
Figure 6 also shows household projections for the Town of White. The household projections predict an increase of 4 houses from 2014 to 2020 which is a gain of 0.57 percent. The number of households is expected to increase by 100 units at an increase of 14.29 percent. Given the projected population decrease, couple with the project household increase, we should expect to see smaller household sizes to account for these projections.

St. Louis County sees an increase in households from 2014-2020 with an increase in 2.4 percent. Unlike White Township, it's projected that the County will continue to increase overall households at a rate of approximately 3 percent. This illustrates the trend towards a preference for vacation oriented and rural, north-woods retirement housing.

3.2.3 Age

Demographic information pulled from the 2010 Census allows for some analysis of changing age patterns for the Town of White. The following figure 7 compares population by age in 2000 and 2014. Over the last 14 years, the Town of White has seen a modest decline in children under 5 years of age (-6.25%). This decrease can be attributed to the fact that the 25 to 34 year age group are typically without younger children.

Figure 7 – Age Range of Population



Demographic analysts have been talking about the impact that is occurring as the generation move through the aging cycle. This discussion has been occurring for years. This trend is evident in the Town of White. In 2014, a gain of 68 people in the 55-64 year old age group was seen. The Town of White had a loss of 77 people in the 15-19 age group, a loss of 21 people in the 20-24, and a vast loss of 87 people in the 35-44 age range. Population increase of 37 people occurred in the 75-84 age group as well as a similar increase of 35 people in the 85+ age category. A notable increase is seen in the 25-34 age group of 74 people.

Typically the 25 to 34 year-olds are usually first-home buyers with or without younger children while the 20 to 24 year olds are typically renters. The 30 to 49-year-olds are a bit more established in the community, included in the move-up homeowner market with children enrolled in the school system from kindergarten to 12th grade. However, this age group also tends to be more mobile. Persons between 50 and 64 and young seniors between 65 and 74 tend to be empty nesters and begin to down-size seeking a variety of housing options from smaller homes to townhomes and condominiums. Seniors, 75 and older have a number of planning considerations for the town including passive recreation opportunities, senior housing, and medical services.

3.2.3.1 Median Age

The median age of White Township in 2014 was 48.3. The median age assumption includes Biwabik and Aurora demographic information.

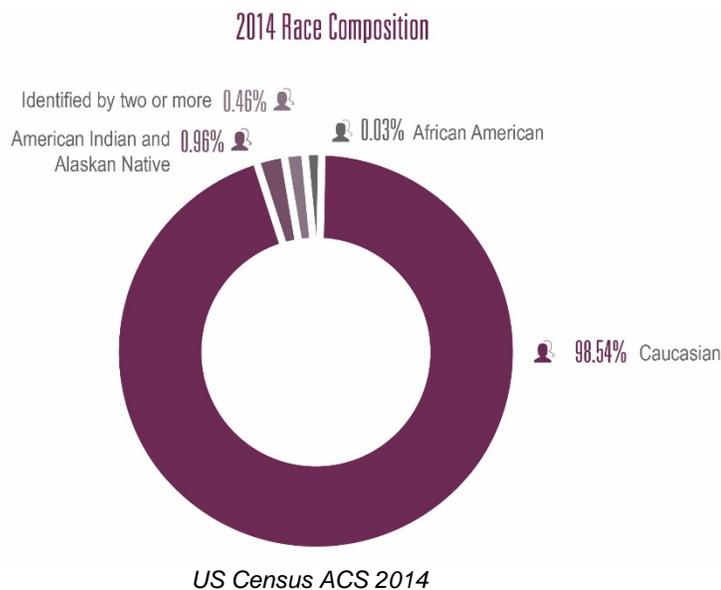
3.2.3.2 Gender

The total population in 2014 consists of slightly more males than females. Males total 50.60 percent of the population while females total 49.40 percent.

3.2.3.3 Composition (Race, Education)

As reported by the 2010 Census, shown in Figure 8, the Town of White is predominately white (98%). The second highest group American Indian and Native American (0.96%) That indicates that the Town of White still has primarily a homogenous cultural make-up with 1.45 percent of the population reported as minority.

Figure 8 – 2014 Race Composition



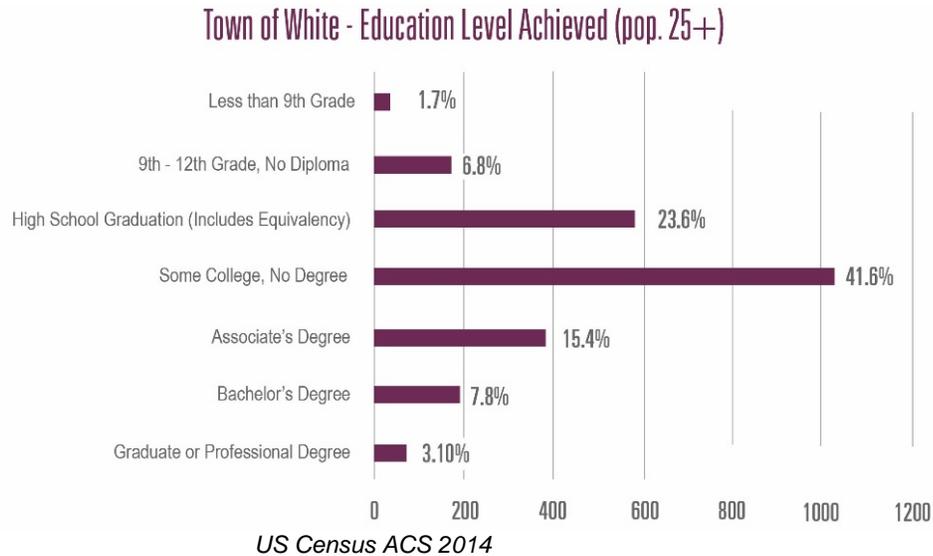
3.2.3.4 Education

Education attainment is an indicator of the level of skills and training the residents of an area have reached and is an important factor in economic development, business growth and employment.

The Town of White is part of the Mesabi East School District 2711 and includes the Mesabi East High School (7-12) and the Mesabi East Elementary School (PK-6). Located among the pines, lakes, and mines of Northeast Minnesota, the Mesabi East School District provides quality education for students of all ages. Serving the cities of Aurora, Biwabik, and Hoyt Lakes as well as the surrounding rural communities, Mesabi East's primary focus is to help youngsters fulfill their highest potential as students and as people.

Figure 9 shows that approximately 91 percent of Town of White residents have at least a high school diploma.

Figure 9 – Education Attainment



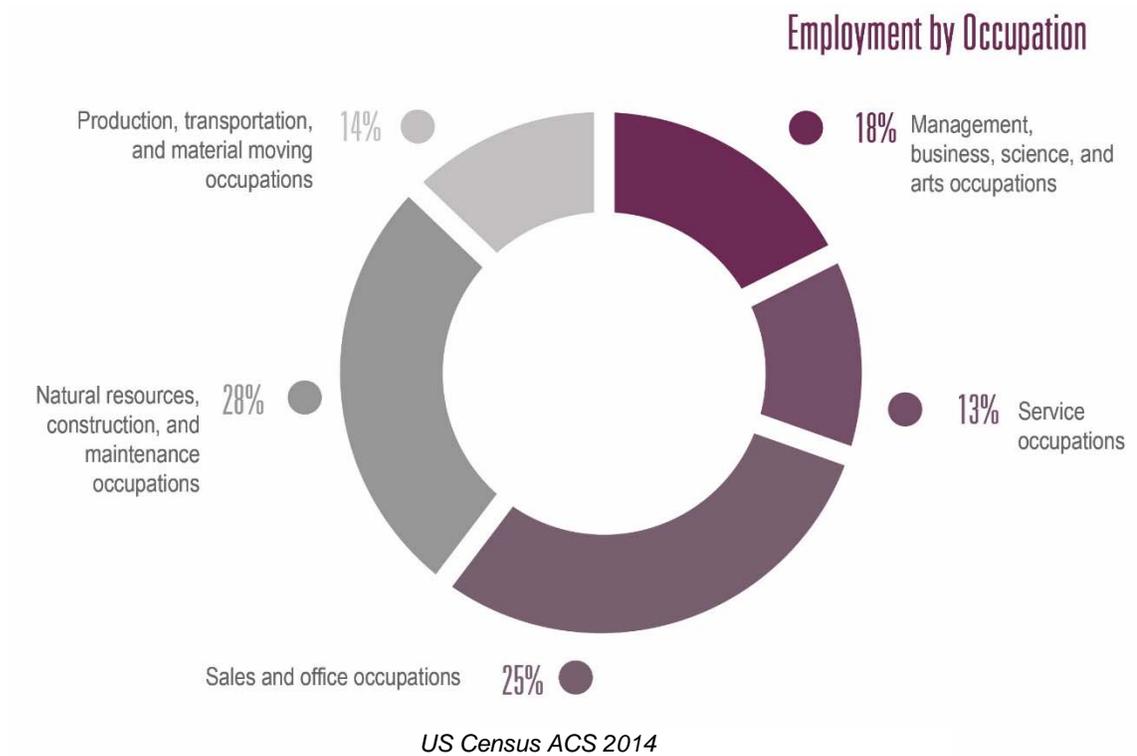
The MN Department of Education states that Minnesota ranks 2nd nationally in percentage of 24-64 year olds with an Associate's Degree or higher. The number of degrees earned has doubled over the past decade.

3.2.4 Employment

Type of employment is also considered when analyzing demographic data about a study area. Figure 10 shows categories of industry for employed persons over the age of 16 in 2014. The natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations employ 28 percent of the people which is the largest percentage of workers followed by sales and office occupations (25%), while management, business, science, and arts occupations follow at 18 percent. Production, transportation, and material moving occupations employ 14 percent of the population. Similarly, service occupations employ 13 percent.

The data suggests continued diversity in job types within the Town of White, i.e., employment not dominated by any one industry.

Figure 10 – Employment by Occupation

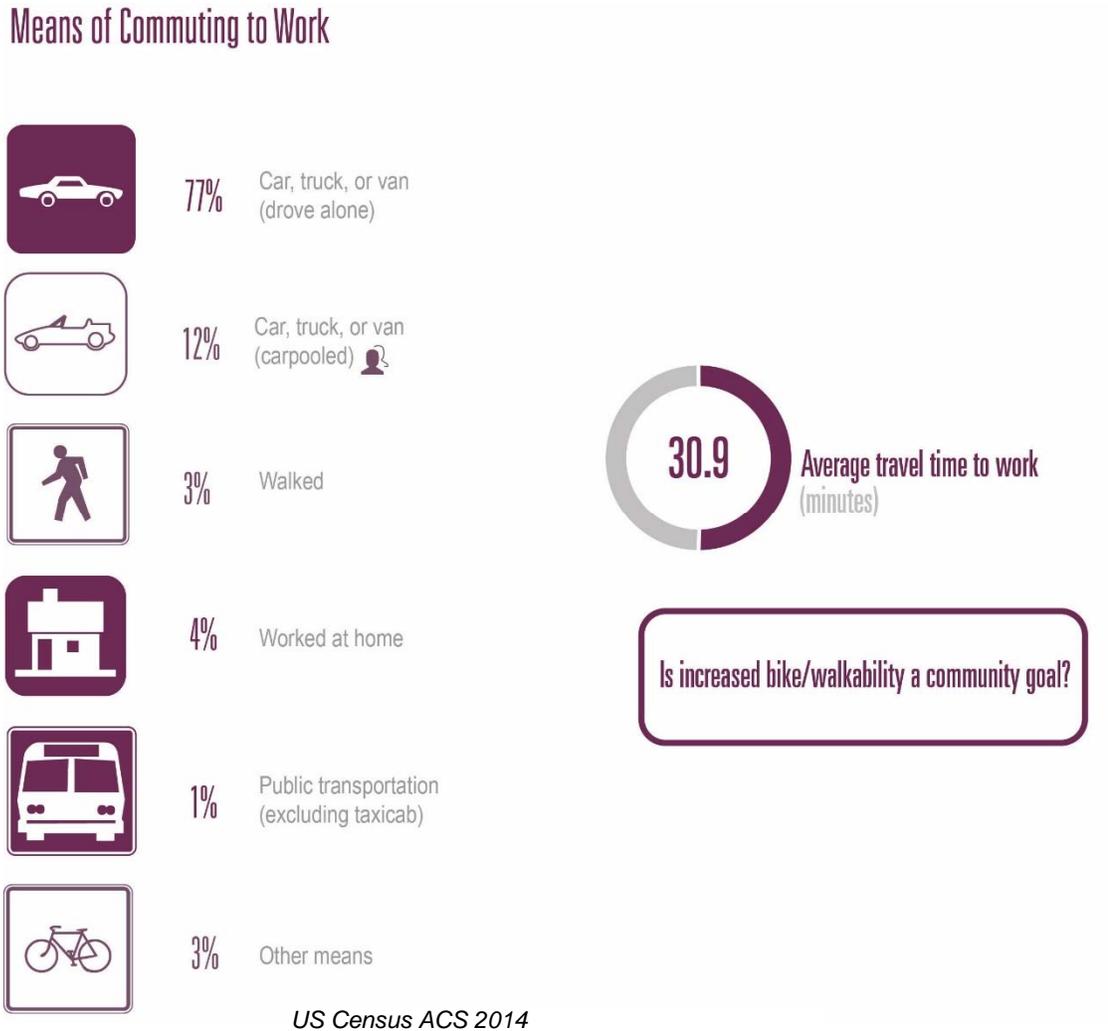


3.2.5 Commuting to Work

Figure 11 summarizes the means by which people commute to work. Currently there are 728 workers 16 years of age and over. Of those workers commuting to work, the majority drives alone (77%), while the second highest carpool with one other person to work (12%). While the majority of people drive alone to work, this number implies that the remaining population is open to other means of transportation modes. Only 3 percent walk to work; which implies a great distance from their household to their place of employment.

The figure below includes the City of Aurora and the eastern half of Biwabik that is located in White Township. The township was studied in its entirety. White township is one of the largest townships in Minnesota. This vast area is studied to help determine the modes of transportation and develop goals and policies for possible opportunities.

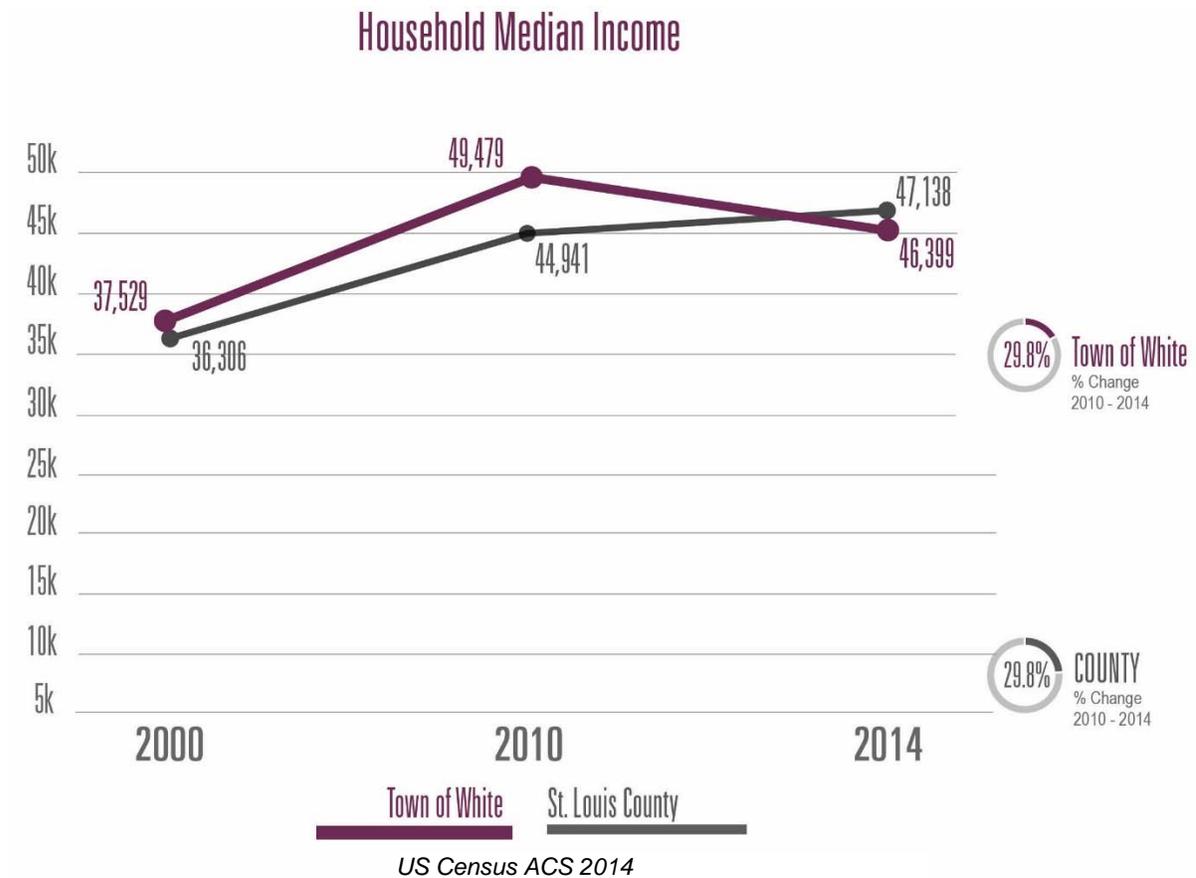
Figure 11 – Means of Commuting to Work



3.2.1 Household Median Income (HMI)

Figure 12 describes median household income levels of households in a given area. If all incomes of all households were listed from lowest to highest, this figure is the income in the middle. For this figure, the entire township was studied. In the Town of White, the estimated median household income for 2014 was \$46,399, which was a 23.6 percent decrease over the median household income of \$49,479 in 2010. In comparison to St. Louis County, an estimated median household income for the Town in 2014 was slightly higher (\$49,545) than the counties at \$47,138.

Figure 12 – Household Median Income



4.0 Land Use

4.1 Introduction

Land Use establishes the foundation for the other elements of the comprehensive plan. How land within the town is used determines many aspects of the community. Roads and streets, town services, economic development, housing, parks and open spaces are developed, maintained and expanded according to the needs generated by the particular types and characteristics of White’s land uses. In addition to establishing specific land use types the Land Use Plan also establishes the community’s growth strategy and policy framework over the next 20 years.

How a community addresses its priority issues usually defines the land use element of its plan. It guides decisions about buildings, streets, parks, natural areas, commercial and industrial development, housing and civic functions.

The Land Use Plan helps the community respond to individual development and redevelopment requests. It contains a combination of text and maps which include the goals and policies that will address future land use patterns.

4.2 Smart Growth Principles

Smart Growth Principles provide the Town of White with a way to promote efficient and sustainable land development patterns that optimize past infrastructure investments while

consuming less land that is otherwise available for open space and natural resource conservation and preservation.

The following overall principles describe how development should use land efficiently, be environmentally and economically sustainable, and reinforce the quality and character of the Town of White. These principles differ from planning practices that are more reactive to political dynamics or shifting market forces that tend to minimize or disregard long-term socioeconomic, environmental, and community choices that alter land use decisions.

Smart Growth Principles, applied to overall town policy, should help White to take advantage of opportunities from which the public will benefit because of environmental sustainability, economic efficiency, and enhancement of community and civic life. The principles described below, as well as the goal and policies outlined in this chapter establish patterns that should guide the continued development of the Town of White.

The goal of Smart Growth Principles is to achieve the following:

1. Full and Efficient Use of Urban Services – To maximize investments in civic infrastructure such as sewers and streets, lower density development is expected to continue to occur throughout the Town while medium and higher density growth should take place adjacent to areas with urban infrastructure, including water and sanitary sewer system. Much of this growth may not occur within the more rural areas of the Town, but rather be pushed towards Aurora and Biwabik as the necessary infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher density development.
2. Mix of Land Uses – provides logical uses for sustainable and healthy active living in close proximity. The concept of single-use zoning grew out of the need to separate living spaces from major industries to protect the health of residents, and this practice is still a valid policy today in some cases. Mixing compatible but different uses in modern settings creates more interesting, livable, and efficient communities. However – due to the geographic expanse of the Town, it is recognized that this type of development may be limited to areas of applicability, including those areas surrounding surface water bodies, and those areas adjacent and connected to urban infrastructure, such as water and sewer systems.
3. Community plans and land development policies that allow for mixing a range of appropriate uses provide greater flexibility for development opportunities. They also provide increased market flexibility allowing the development community to respond to changing trends and shifts in consumer preferences.
4. Housing Opportunities and Choices – creates housing types that will meet changing housing needs and preferences. There is a strong sense of an aging population, so additional senior housing options will be important to evaluate. The Town should provide opportunities for people at all stages of life to find places in the community.

5. Preserves Open Space and Vital Environmental Areas – White’s environment, including numerous lakes, basins, as well as Stephens and First Creeks, and Embarrass and Saint Louis Rivers, are several of White’s greatest assets. By preserving open spaces and environmentally sensitive areas, the Town balances the built and natural environment and provides habitat for plants and animals, recreational opportunities, and places of natural beauty. Open spaces also add real property value to adjacent development.

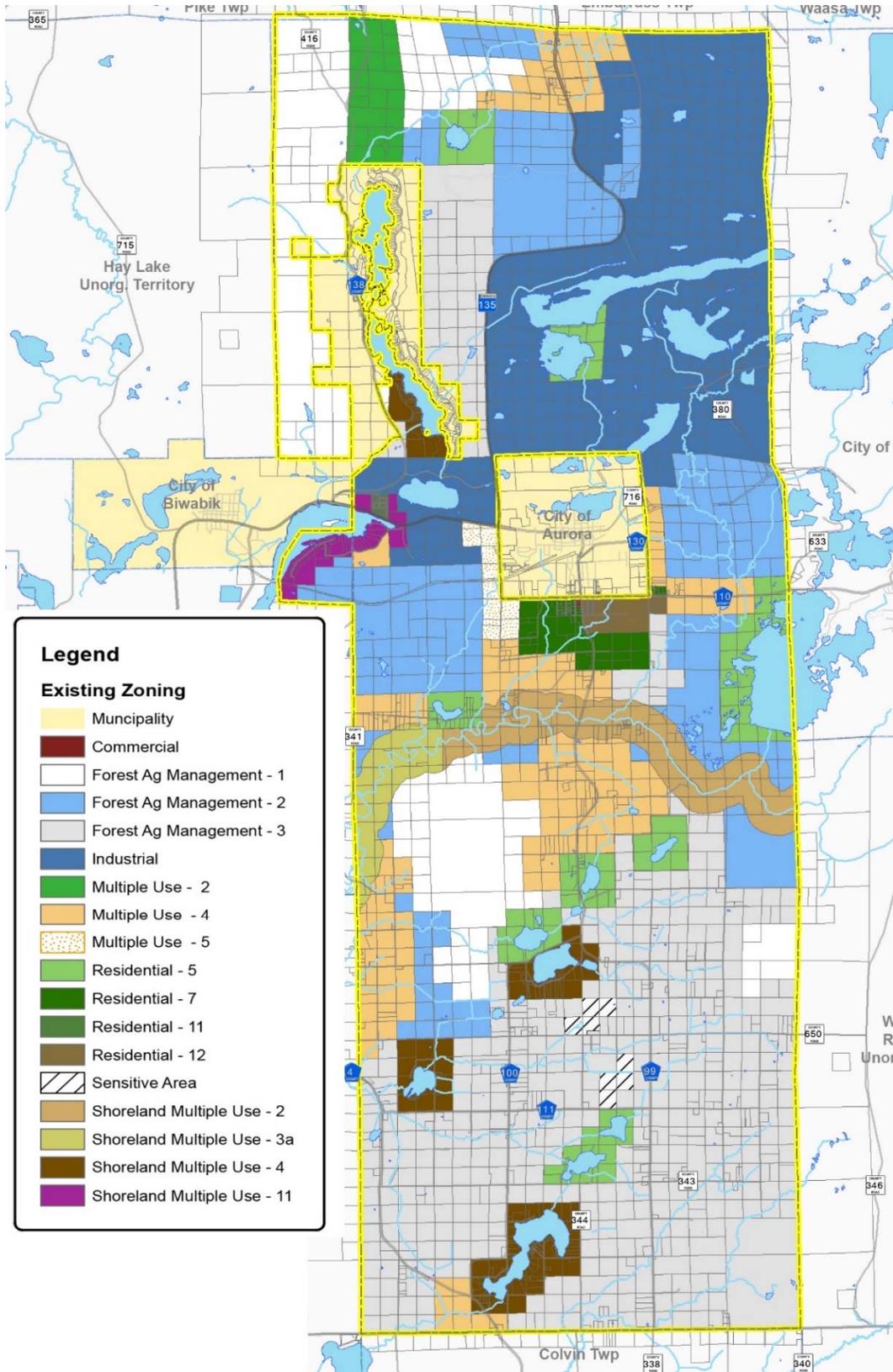


6. Achieves Community and Stakeholder Collaboration in Development Decisions – The Town of White is a great place to live, work, and play any time of the year. Town government should stay close to its constituents through techniques that measure the priorities of its residents. Issues and ideas voiced by the community cannot be considered and acted upon without the collaboration of citizens and their government. Partnerships between neighbors, businesses, foundations, nonprofit organizations, schools, developers and the Town will support and accelerate implementation of this Plan.

4.3 Existing Zoning and Land Uses

Understanding the patterns of land use in a community lends insight about predominant development types as well as potential deficiencies. Land Use analysis can provide insight into opportunities and constraints for future growth and development based on the need to preserve open space, protect fragile environmental features, and ensure that the character of the community is maintained. In situations where a community hasn’t mapped its existing land uses, the zoning map can serve as a substitute, albeit districts regulating various degrees of intensity per use (highway and neighborhood commercial, etc.) often need to be combined to illustrate more general patterns. This is the case in the Town of White where the existing zoning map together with aerial photography have been used to understand land use patterns and urban design features.

Figure 13 – Existing Zoning



From Saint Louis County, MN Map data

4.4 Land Use Patterns

Development outside of the incorporate communities of Aurora and Biwabik, within the Town of White is very low density (approximately 32 people per square mile). Most of the development in the rural portions of the Town has taken place immediately surrounding the community's numerous lakes and streams. The remaining portions of the Town are largely Open Space, or Industrial uses related to the mining industry in the northern half of the Town.

4.4.1 Issues and Opportunities

Following is a summary of key issues and ideas expressed by the Community during the current planning process:

- Protect natural resources
- Develop affordable housing choices
- Promote recreation resources

4.5 Comprehensive Plan Development Framework

The framework for the Comprehensive Plan emerges from a program based on the Smart Growth Principles outlined earlier, market realities, existing projects and priorities, and community-wide goals. The framework establishes an overall structure for the Plan and includes:

- Promote well-planned growth by encourage higher density development to occur in areas served by appropriately sized infrastructure, and retaining the rural character of the community.
- Support transportation connectivity
- Strengthen recreation amenities

The framework land use category elements are illustrated in Figure 14, Future Land Use Plan Map and Table 1. The Plan is intended to serve as a guide to the Planning Commission and Town Board in land use related decisions. Residents, businesses, and land owners should understand the future land use map is intended to direct development to certain areas where facilities and services are available and where land uses are compatible with one another.

As a decision-making tool it is important that the Land Use Plan be regarded as general in nature and should not be used for site-specific decisions. It is for this reason that only general locations for designated land uses are mapped.

4.6 Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Plan looks at development patterns for 20 years into the future. It represents the direction endorsed by the Town based on what is currently known and desired for the future. The plan describes the future land use designations for the Town and its growth areas. Future land use designations are products of past, present and anticipated future influences.

The Future Land Use Map is intended to serve as a guide for land use decisions and it provides for the basis for creating and/or changing zoning district boundaries or zoning ordinance language. It will also assist in guiding public investments in infrastructure, including roads and sewer and water service extensions. Modifications to the Future Land Use Map should be carefully considered after analysis and examination against the broader community vision, principles, and goals, and policies found within the plan.

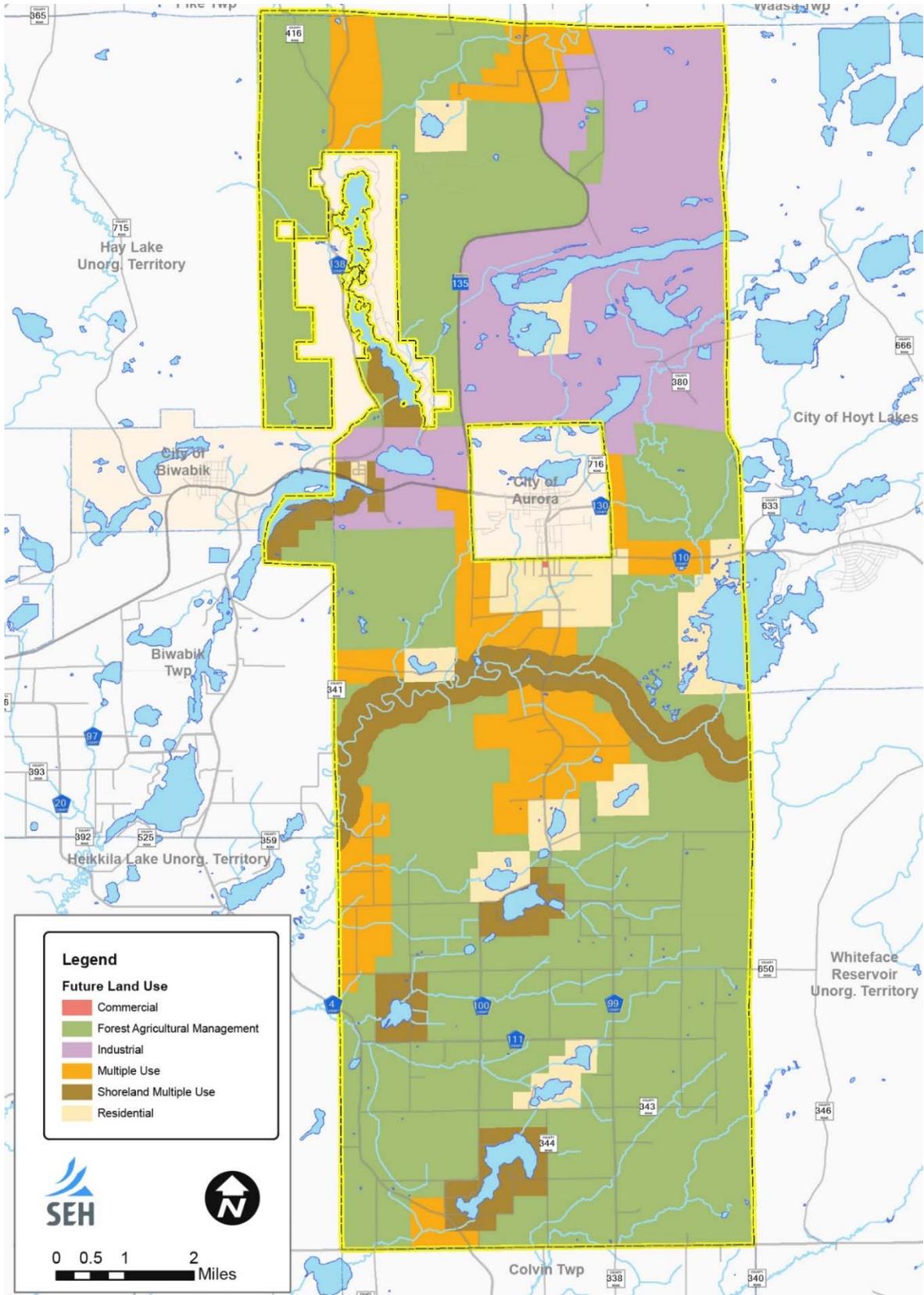
Based on population projections, it is not anticipated that developed uses will change rapidly in the area. For this reason, there is not a large shift of projected acreage associated with future land use categories. In general – additional development pressure near the Giants Ridge area is most likely to occur, along with some pressure to the periphery of Aurora.

**Table 1
Land Use Classifications**

Land Use Classification	Acres	Percent
Commercial	6.8	0.01
Forest, Agricultural Management	36,474.5	54.8
Industrial	12,197.4	18.3
Multiple Use	7,434.1	11.2
Shoreland Multiple Use	5,890.1	8.8
Residential	4,915.9	7.4

Of the total 66,618.8 acres, the Town of White is planned for approximately 4,916 acres exclusively for moderate to low density residential uses with an additional 49,798 acres available for low density rural or waterfront residential use. The small amount of commercially designated land (6.8 acres) reflects the disperse nature of residential development as well as the potential (through conditional use permit) for commercial development within the Multiple Use areas.

Figure 14 – Future Land Use Map



4.7 Future Land Use Categories

The Future Land Use Map contains a variety of categories to address the full range of land use types found in the Town of White today, as well as those likely to occur in the future. The categories have been more clearly defined to reflect a wider range of density and uses. Each land use category is described in detail and illustrated on the Future Land Use Map (Figure 14). It is recognized that not every parcel of land within each designation will be buildable due to wetlands, floodplains, soil types, slopes and other natural constraints.

1. Commercial – identifies commercial land uses including retail, restaurant and lodging businesses that serve neighborhood, community and regional markets. In addition, uses would include professional offices and personal services. These areas are located to provide convenient access for customers.
2. Forest Agricultural Management - identifies lands that contain forested or other naturally vegetated open spaces that include low density residential or are undevelopable, due to environmental constraints or proximity to heavy industrial or mining operations.
3. Industrial – identifies lands that contain light manufacturing, assembly, office/warehousing, industrial uses. The location of these businesses is concentrated and separate from other businesses to reduce disruption that could be caused if each business was scattered throughout the town. Uses include mining, manufacturing, warehousing, assembly, and other similar businesses that provide goods and services.
4. Multiple Use – identifies rural lands that contain a variety of uses or mix of uses at very low densities and intensities.
5. Shoreland Multiple Use – identifies lands adjacent to lakes and streams that contain a mix of uses that are compatible with water resources and are consistent with adjacent land uses and the recreational and natural attributes of the water body.
6. Residential – identifies areas that will be predominately single-family detached homes at densities ranging from 1 - 6 dwelling per acre. Attached and clustered, recreational, seasonal and year-round housing may also be included.

4.8 Goals and Policies

The foundation of White’s Land Use Plan rests on several goal statements. Policies are built upon this foundation.

1. Goal: Maintain an official Land Use Plan that embodies principles of smart growth in identifying the most appropriate locations for development and redevelopment.

Policies

- a. Prepare and adopt a Land Use Plan that designates land use areas and guides development to appropriate areas in order to ensure desirable land use patterns and minimize conflicts.

2. Goal: Support the compact, efficient, and orderly growth of urban development.

Policies

- a. Encourage compatible mixed-income development to enhance neighborhood completeness, promote economic development and strengthen sustainability and resiliency.

3. Goal: Plan land uses and implement standards to minimize land use conflicts.

Policies

- a. Review all applicable ordinances and policies to ensure that they do not deter desirable, self-supporting development.
4. Goal: Plan for the revitalization of economically and socially vibrant mixed use and commercial business areas.

Policies

- a. Retain and attract the appropriate mix of retail/service business activity and housing opportunities in higher density activity hubs.
 - b. Encourage and support innovative housing opportunities in higher density developed areas.
5. Goal: Support mixed use development that is focused on integrating land uses such as medium density residential, commercial, office, light industrial, public and semi-public, indoor recreation, parks, and open space in an appropriate and mutually supportive manner.

Policies

- a. Encourage compatible residential development and redevelopment to reduce blight, increase housing choice and improve tax base.
 - b. Encourage compatible mixed use and mixed-income development to enhance neighborhood completeness, promote economic development and strengthen sustainability and resiliency.
6. Goal: Plan for the orderly, efficient, and fiscally responsible growth of residential and mixed use development.

Policies

- a. Ensure all development can be adequately served by critical public facilities and services.
7. Goal: Promote continued development of high quality, high value commercial, office, technology, industrial, mining and natural resource-related businesses that enhance the Town's economy through improved tax base and expanded opportunities for living wage jobs.

Policies

- a. Encourage compatible residential development to reduce blight, increase housing choice and improve tax base.
 - b. Encourage compatible mixed use and mixed-income infill to enhance neighborhood completeness, promote economic development and strengthen sustainability and resiliency.
8. Goal: Support development that enhances community character and protects natural resources.

Policies

- a. Adhere to specific site design restrictions for properties that are environmentally sensitive or have high visibility.
9. Goal: Protect, conserve, and enhance the Town's natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas for the community's long-term environmental and economic benefits.

Policies

- a. Encourage maintaining wetlands and natural drainage systems when accommodating new growth and reestablishing wetlands and natural drainage systems through redevelopment projects, when appropriate.
- b. Support development patterns that protect both surface and groundwater from hazardous waste, fertilizers, and pesticides.
- c. Require sedimentation and erosion control techniques during development and redevelopment projects and encourage innovative techniques, such as the use of rain gardens, and other low impact development and best management practices where appropriate.
- d. Require the management of stormwater runoff in accordance with local and state requirements, as well as drainage needs.
- e. Retain, enhance or restore vegetative buffers with native plant species along the streams, lakes, wetlands, and ponds.

5.0 Housing

5.1 Introduction

Housing plays an essential role in the vision for the future of White. It provides a visual indicator of the community's character, including prosperity and vitality. Housing provides a significant base for local taxes, so having a clear understanding of current housing inventory (quantity and type) along with current and future population projections will assist the Town in addressing ample housing to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Many people spend a significant amount of income on shelter, and much effort is invested to transform the space they live into their personalized home. Residential areas set the tone for community character, quality of life and citizen morale. Housing markets, development, and reinvestment are influenced by many interconnected economic, social, and political factors. Local policy influences the community's ability to meet the housing needs of its changing citizenry.



5.2 Existing Conditions

The Town of White has a total of 843 housing units in 2014 which is a nearly 100 unit increase from 2000. Of the total housing units, 696 were occupied and 147 or about 17 percent were vacant. Vacancy rates have increased slightly since the 2000 and 2010 Censuses. A healthy vacancy rate is typically near the 5 percent level, which will help to promote competitive rates, provide choice, and allow for housing turnover. Of the total occupied housing units in 2014, 85 percent were owner-occupied while 15 percent were renter-occupied. This is in comparison to nearly 88 percent being owner-occupied in 2010. This would indicate that rental units are rising while ownership is decreasing.

The majority of housing units in the Town of White are single family dwellings (77.9%). Mobile home structures make up about 14 percent of housing units in the Town. Maintenance and preservation of existing housing supply will continue to be important to the vitality of the community. Typical of the building boom throughout the 1990s to the early 2000s, reflecting the migration of residents away from urban areas to smaller communities within commuting distance, the Town of White shows a notable dip in the mid-2000s due to stalled population growth and economic factors that hit the country as a whole.

5.3 Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles reflect the community's desire to provide a diverse range of housing options to all residents:

- Provide available housing to attract both renters and homeowners from young adults to seniors.
- Provide a range of housing options that make it affordable for young families and adults and seniors to live.
- Provide a diversity of single family home and rental unit standards that contribute to the aesthetics of the community as a whole.
- Provide the means for rehabilitating older, viable housing stock at various locations throughout the Town of White.

5.4 Housing Mix and Types

Providing a balanced mix of housing will satisfy the needs of both existing and future Township residents. With the trend towards an older population within the next 20 years, providing lifestyle housing options, particularly multi-family housing, will be critical to attracting young professionals as well as retaining empty nesters and seniors.

5.5 Future Needs

With a slightly declining population and a housing market with an elevated vacancy rate, there will not likely be a strong push for significantly housing growth. The quantity of housing units in the Town is likely sufficient for the foreseeable future; however, the maintenance, upkeep and overall quality of those housing units may pose market concerns for potential buyers.

5.6 Goals and Policies

The following section provides goals and policies that will help ensure new residential neighborhood development serves existing and future residents of all ages and economic levels.

1. Goal: Provide a balanced housing supply available for people at all income levels with a variety of product types that meet the life-cycle needs of all Town of White residents.

Policies

- a. Encourage the development of a variety of housing types, densities, and styles at price ranges for all income levels and ages to meet current and future community needs.
- b. Plan new residential areas as complete neighborhoods with a range of housing types, densities and price points.
- c. Support development of new and renovated affordable housing.

- d. Work collaboratively with industry and business to identify and provide safe, decent and affordable housing to meet the needs of their workforces.
 - e. Engage the Development Community, including realtors, builders, lenders and landlords to provide code-compliant, attractive and affordable housing that meets the diverse needs of the community.
2. Goal: Establish a community of well-maintained housing and neighborhoods.

Policies

- a. Continue to evaluate the condition of existing housing stock to address code violations and eliminate blight.
 - b. Continue to explore funding programs for blight reduction.
 - c. Expand and accelerate programs to rehabilitation and/or demolish older, blighted residential properties.
3. Goal: Provide for resilient housing design, construction, renovation, and management that maximizes cost effective energy efficiency and minimizes exposure to climate risks.

Policies

- a. Encourage resilient housing construction design, renovations, and management that maximizes lifecycle cost effective energy efficiency and minimizes exposure to climate risks.

6.0 Transportation

6.1 Introduction

The Town of White will need to prepare the community to manage and accommodate ongoing development. As part of this effort, the transportation system is an important element, which must meet the existing and future travel demands of the public. The role of the Town of White transportation system is primarily to bring people (residents and visitors) into and out of the community, as well as provide a means by which individuals can circulate about within the community from one location or activity to another.

It is imperative that transportation improvements and future land use be planned and implemented in conjunction with one another. Therefore, the purpose of this transportation chapter is to acknowledge the current trends in development, to identify existing conditions and issues/needs of the transportation system, set transportation goals and policies, and to make recommendations that will help guide the Town in decision making to meet the needs of the community in the future.

6.2 Existing Conditions and Issues Identification

6.2.1 Existing Conditions

The existing transportation system for the Town of White has primarily been developed to accommodate through traffic along St. Louis County Highways 100 and 110, and State Highway 135. During the summer months, White's transportation system also accommodates tourist traffic. Currently, the roadway system provides adequate service to existing developments, and provided the projected changes, the size of the system should be adequate for the foreseeable future. Therefore, equally important is providing routine maintenance of the existing roadway system.

Roadways in the southern portion of the Town see relatively small amounts of traffic – with some stretches seeing as little as 50 cars per day. The heaviest travelled portion of the town

is in the vicinity of Aurora – where east of the Town between Aurora and Hoyt Lakes over 3,000 vehicles per day are seen. This is also more pressure on the north end of the Town – where over 1,800 vehicles per day are seen along Highway 135. Based on these vehicle counts, the existing roadway structure has adequate capacity.

Functional classification is a system by which roadways are grouped according to the function they are intended to serve. Basic to this process is the recognition that individual roadways do not function independently, but rather most travel involves movement along a network of different functional types of roads. Functional classification assists in determining what role each roadway should perform prior to determining its design features, such as street widths, design speed, and intersection control. However, it is critically important to recognize that there is flexibility in the design of a street relative to its functional classification.

6.2.2 Functional Classification

Functional classification is also an important consideration in the development of local regulations for land development. As appropriate, the mobility of higher classified roadways should be protected by careful management of site development and access spacing standards. Transportation problems can occur when a street's design and the management of access to the street are inconsistent with the functional and operating demands imposed by the surrounding land uses. Further, safety challenges often arise when the design of a street does not respond appropriately to the context of the adjacent land uses.

Functional classification is not a one-size fits all approach for roadway design, but rather provides a means for identifying roadways which are oriented toward providing mobility for through-trips (Principal and Minor Arterials) versus those that are oriented more toward providing accessibility or land access (Collectors and local streets). The areas of the Town outside of Aurora and Biwabik are generally very low density development. These areas are well served by roadways classified as Local Streets and Collectors which are both present in residential neighborhoods with the same adjacent land use.

As one travels from residential area to areas of more intense commercial or industrial activity, a different, larger scale street, typically a Minor Arterial, is needed to safely accommodate larger traffic volumes and a mix of trucks, and cars. Transforming a street from one type to another type requires an integrated design approach that addresses both street infrastructure and the uses and design of buildings fronting on that street. The planning and design of streets must consider land use context, prioritizing access to uses such as schools, recreational, commercial and employment areas.

Figure 15 – Existing Functional Classifications for the Town of White, Northern Area

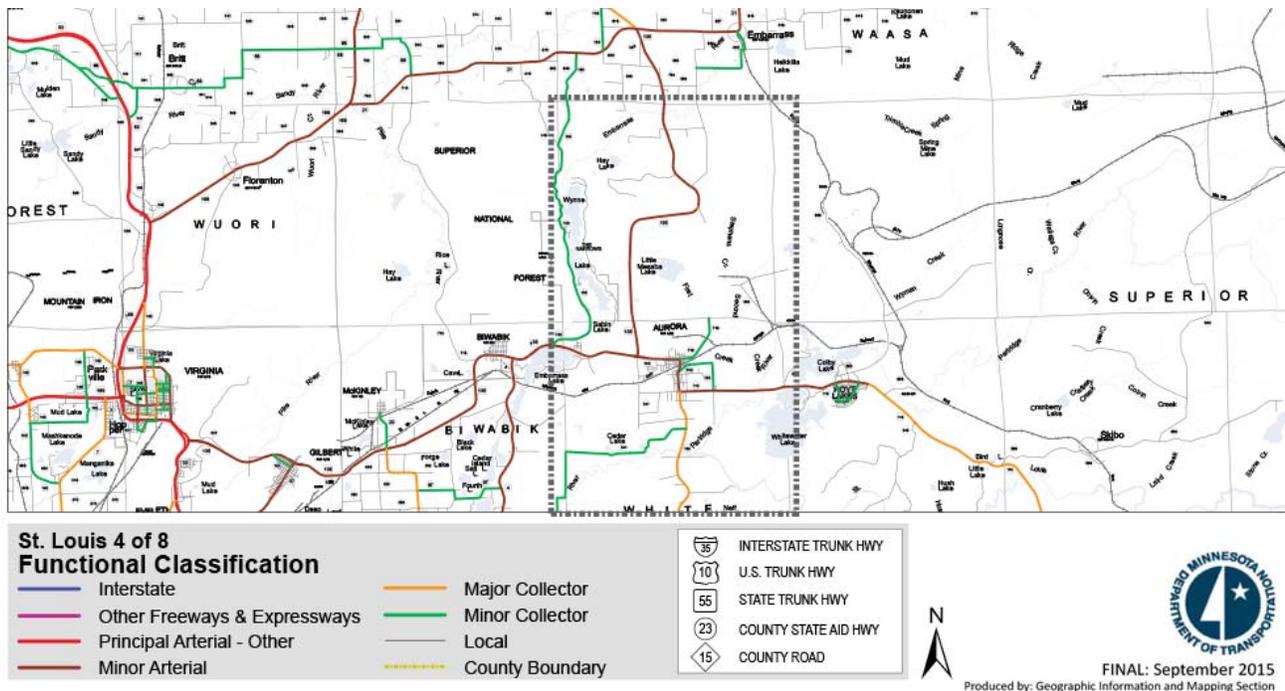
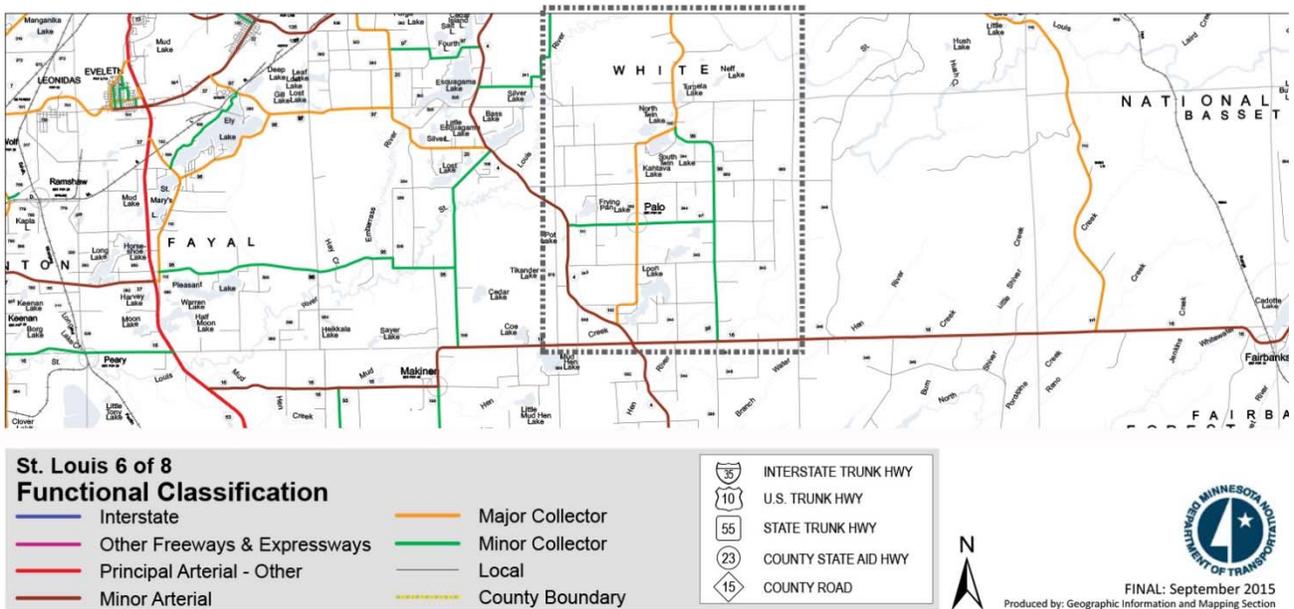


Figure 16 – Existing Functional Classifications for the Town of White, Southern Area



6.2.2.1 Minor Arterials

Minor Arterials are streets that link rural principal arterials to larger towns and other major traffic generators capable of attracting trips over similarly long distances. This type of roadway is intended to provide service for trips of moderate length (greater than 2 miles) at a lower level of mobility than principal arterials. However, minor arterials typically have a greater focus on mobility than land access. Minor arterials are of regional importance because they relieve traffic on or substitute for principal arterials where necessary.

In White the minor arterials provide the backbone of the transportation network through and around the core of the city. The following are minor arterials in the Town:

- Trunk Highway 135
- Highway 110
- Highway 4

6.2.2.2 Collectors

Collectors convey traffic from Local Roads to the Arterial network. There are Major Collectors and Minor Collectors. Major Collector routes are longer in length, tend to have fewer direct accesses and higher speed limits resulting in higher traffic volumes.

Highway 138 that links the Giants Ridge area is classified as a Minor Collector in Biwabik, as is Highway 130, 341 and 716 near Aurora. Highway 100 is a Major Collector south of Aurora.

6.2.2.3 Local Streets

Local streets provide the highest level of direct property access and typically carry lower traffic volumes at slower speeds (30 mph or less). Local streets facilitate the collection of short trips at low speeds and convey them to Collectors and Minor Arterials. In addition to providing direct property access, they interconnect residential neighborhoods, secondary commercial and industrial nodes. The local street network provides circulation and access for the residential and some commercial areas. The local streets range from 24-feet to 44-feet in width and generally serve as an interconnected grid.

6.2.3 Roadway Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction over the system of roadways in the Town of White is shared among three levels of government (state, county, and local/city). Roadway jurisdiction is an important factor because it affects a number of critical organizational functions and obligations including regulatory, maintenance, construction, and financial commitments. The system includes the US and state trunk highway system, managed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) and County Road system, managed by Saint Louis County, Municipal State Aid streets and local streets, managed by the Town or respective City's.

6.2.4 Trucking

Local trucking occurs through the Town of White. For the most part, trucks passing through remain on County and State roadways.

6.2.5 Aviation

There are no commercial airports in the Town. The nearest commercial airport is the Range Regional Airport in Hibbing – approximately 36 miles west of Aurora.

6.2.6 Water

Waterways are not particularly used for water travel, other than recreational uses.

6.2.7 Transit

Public transportation service plays an important role for people who are unable to drive, especially those without access to personal vehicles, children, individuals with disabilities, and older adults. The U.S. transportation infrastructure focuses on motor vehicle travel (e.g., passenger cars, vans, SUVs, pickup trucks, and other light trucks) and provides limited support for other transportation options. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2013

approximately 86 percent of all workers traveled to work by private vehicle, and 76 percent drove alone. Also in 2013, 69 percent of urban households had access to public transit and 14 percent of rural households. Although using public transportation has historically been safer than travel in passenger vehicles, passenger vehicle travel has grown more quickly than other modes of travel. Motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of injury-related death for many age groups. In 2013, motor vehicle crashes were the second leading cause of death in individuals aged 13 to 25 years. Public transportation systems also provide opportunities for increased physical activity in the form of walking or biking on either end of the transit trip (e.g., from home to bus stop or from train stop to office) and reduced motor vehicle travel.

Arrowhead Transit offers a Dial-A-Ride service to the arrowhead region of Minnesota. They also offer a route through Hoyt Lakes, Aurora, Biwabik and Virginia weekday mornings and afternoons.

6.2.8 Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

Pedestrian improvements generally include trails and sidewalks. Within the developed portion of Aurora and Biwabik, sidewalks are generally available. Most areas within the Town are not developed at a density to support sidewalk development.

The Mesabi Trail runs through the Town and is a regional draw that extends throughout the Iron Range and Superior National Forest. This trail runs along Highway 100/135. Future connections are continuing to be built to the trail, and as these occur future promotion of the tourism opportunities the trail offers should be promoted.

6.2.9 Railroads

The Duluth, Missabe and Iron Range Railway traverses through the Town of White. The primary mission of this railroad is to move iron ore from the Missabe Range taconite plants to ore dock facilities in Duluth and Two Harbors, or to connecting railroads in Superior, Wisconsin.

6.3 Needs and Issues Identification

One of the most important steps in the transportation planning process is the identification of issues, concerns, and deficiencies. It is important that an analysis of the transportation system needs and issues is based on both an evaluation of the existing transportation system and an understanding of how the traffic will likely grow in the future.

Establishing the key needs and issues also provides the groundwork for defining transportation goals and policies, which, in turn, serve as a guide for future decision-making. Below is a summary of transportation needs and issues for the Town of White that were gathered during the planning process:

Develop more of a recreational identity through the expansion of motorized and non-motorized trails and activities.

Continue to rebuild local streets and roads and maintain them.

The Town has identified priorities to include Twin Lakes Loop Road, Twin Lakes Parking Lot, and Stepetz Road.

6.4 Goals and Policies

Transportation goals and policies will help guide priorities for future investment, either as a publicly-maintained local system or in partnership with regional or state transportation

agencies. These transportation goals, and policies provide the City with a means to measure the performance of the transportation system over time, and as necessary, an opportunity to reassess, revise and/or supplement the desires of the community.

The goals indicate a specific policy direction and assist in organizing individual objectives and more defined policies. The policies provide more detailed action plans that are necessary to prioritize and initiate a goal and may include initiation or continuation of a program or implementation of a specific project. The following goals and policies are not ranked or presented in order of importance or need.

6.4.1 Goals

1. Goal: The transportation system in the Town of White shall facilitate safe and efficient movement of residents, visitors and goods and services within and through the community.

Policies

- a. Provide adequate roadway and intersection capacity to accommodate anticipated growth of the community and resulting forecasted vehicular traffic volumes.
 - b. Establish a pedestrian network connecting residential, educational, commercial/retail, employment and recreational destinations throughout the higher density portions of the Town, where practical.
 - c. Establish trails and on-street routes for the use of bicycles as a year-round mode of transportation.
2. Goal: Continue to establish and maintain a safe, coordinated and interconnected multimodal network of streets, walkways, bikeways and trails.

Policies

- a. Encourage interconnected streets and patterns of development to create more convenient multimodal travel options for residents that will also foster a sense of neighborhoods, while maintaining acceptable traffic volume levels.
 - b. Maintain and, where possible, improve multimodal access to existing and planned land uses that support successful business and residential developments, while also managing safe traffic operations.
3. Goal: Balance transportation needs with environmental factors and the desired land uses as identified in the Future Land Use Plan.

Policies

- a. Support land uses in existing and emerging town centers and primary thoroughfares with an adequate supply of on-street parking.
4. Goal: Transportation planning shall be a collaborative effort among the Town of White, surrounding Iron Range communities, Saint Louis County, and MnDOT.

Policies

- a. Plan for and preserve future opportunities for necessary transportation system improvements, including multimodal routes and facilities. Require adequate right-of-way dedication for new and/or expanded roadways including non-motorized facilities based on the planned function under future conditions.
- b. Realize necessary transportation system improvements in a cost effective and timely fashion.

- c. Encourage business owners, residents and community groups to be active participants in seeking funding by contacting local, state and federal decision makers in support of transportation funding.

7.0 Utilities and Community Facilities

7.1 Introduction

Community utilities and facilities serve as the framework on which a community is built and maintained. Utilities include water, sanitary sewer, electric and storm sewer systems. They also include electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, and solid waste disposal systems.

Community facilities provide public or semi-public uses such as government services (administration, police, fire and public works). Other community facilities include public schools, libraries, community centers, museums, religious institutions, or other uses that are open to public use for little or no profit.

Planning for such facilities is important because these facilities help to form community identity and social interaction along with providing essential services for the community's businesses, employees, residents and visitors. As the Town continues to evolve, it will be important to plan for future expansion of these facilities to serve the population. The following list of facilities supports the quality of life for residents of the Town and are important to its economic development:

The need for and capacity of these essential services depends on the physical size of the community, population, and expected growth. In addition many retail and service businesses, industrial companies, as well as potential residents, look to the availability of these facilities when considering locating or expanding in a particular community.

7.2 Guiding Principles

- Provide high quality, cost effective utility services to the community, including continued consideration of an East Mesabi Joint Water System.
- Support controlled development through the use of public service extensions.

7.3 Existing Conditions

7.3.1 Town Utilities

The Town of White partners with the City of Aurora for municipal water and sanitary sewer systems.

7.3.1.1 Water System

The Town of White taps into the City of Aurora's municipal water system. The City of Aurora obtains its water from a surface water source in the St. James Mine Pit. The City operates a treatment facility with filtration, disinfection and fluoridation.

The City has two water storage reservoirs. There is a 300,000 gallon storage tank associated with the treatment process (chlorine contact time), and the City and Town of White have a 500,000 gallon elevated storage tank. The capacity of the system is 800 gallons per minute and .864 million gallons per day. Water mains range in size from 4 inches to 10 inches.

Biwabik, Aurora, Town of White and Hoyt Lakes are currently planning a water system that would connect all the East range communities to one water system.

- The water would be supplied from the Embarrass Pit.

- A trunk water distribution line would transmit treated water from the Embarrass Pit source to each member community.
- The system would consist of a conventional surface water treatment plant with iron and manganese removal and a clear well for chlorine contact time and pumping into the distribution system.

7.3.1.2 Sanitary Sewer Service

The Town of White is tapped into the City of Aurora's wastewater system. The City of Aurora's wastewater system consists of activated sludge with filtration with a .9 million gallons per day capacity. Demand is approximately .24 million gallons per day. Sanitary sewer sizes range from 6 inches to 30 inches.

7.3.1.3 Stormwater Management

The Town's storm water utilizes a series of culverts and ditch draining for storm water management.

7.3.1.4 Electricity

The Town receives its power supply from Lake Country Power.

7.3.1.5 Solid Waste Management

East Mesabi Sanitation provides waste collection for the Town of White.

7.3.1.6 Natural Gas

The Town of White's natural gas is provided by Minnesota Energy Resources Corp.

7.3.1.7 Telecommunications (Telephone, Cable and Internet)

A number of companies provide telecommunications services to the Town of White, including Frontier Communications, Mediacom, Lake Communications and CenturyLink.

7.3.2 Town Government and Administration

The Town of White is considered an urban township and is governed by an elected body of three supervisors serving three-year rotating terms.

The Town Clerk/Office Manager and Treasurer are located on the 2nd floor of the City/Town Hall in Aurora.

7.3.3 Community Center

The Loon Lake Community Center is available for rent and use by community groups. This is a multi-use facility located in Palo. It was constructed in 1957 as a school. Future improvements include renovating the gym floor, roof repairs, floor tiles and technology upgrades.

During the first weekend of February annually, the Town hosts Laskiainen (Finnish Sliding Festival). There are crafters, winter sports, a marketplace, music, ethnic foods, skating, Vipu Kelkka (whip-sled), and sliding down the iced hill.

7.3.4 Public Works Department

The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining the Town's infrastructure, buildings, equipment and open space, and for providing services to meet other essential needs of the Town.

7.3.5 Fire Departments

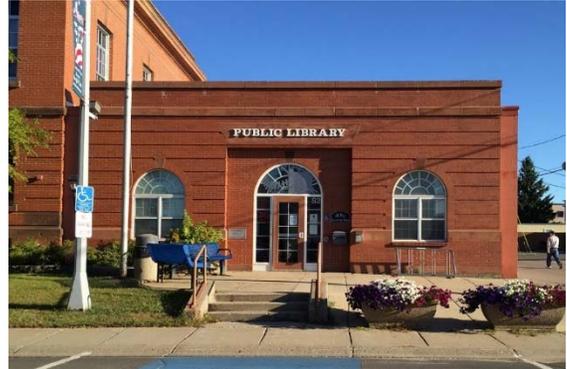
The Palo Regional Volunteer Fire Department currently has a 15-member volunteer fire and rescue/emergency department.

7.3.6 Police Department

The Town utilizes the St. Louis County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement coverage.

7.3.7 Public Library

The East Range's library is located in Aurora and is one of the few communities in the region to have a public library.



7.3.8 Parks and Recreation

The Town has several park facilities. More on this will be in the recreation section of the Comprehensive Plan.

7.3.9 Schools

Independent School District No. 2711 Mesabi-East, serves the Town. Combined enrollment for Mesabi-East is 888.

Post-secondary education is available at the following schools:

- Range Technical College – Eveleth, MN
- Mesabi Community College – Virginia, MN
- University of Minnesota – Duluth
- College of St. Scholastica – Duluth, MN

7.3.10 Health Care Facilities

Essential Health – Northern Pines Clinic is located in Aurora, and provides the region with health care services.



7.3.11 Child Care Facilities

Limited licensed child care facilities are available, with many of the locations being in incorporated communities.

There is limited capacity given the geographic territory and population being covered, which can be a challenge for dual-earner households with children.

7.4 Goals and Policies

Outlined below are goals and strategies for White's Utilities and Community Facilities.

1. Goal: Provide public utilities to all residents in a safe, efficient, resilient and cost-effective manner.

Policies

- a. Maintain an infrastructure replacement program for the city.

- b. Use the city's Capital Improvements Plan for planning and budgeting of public service improvements.
 - c. Coordinate with neighboring communities to provide shared-service arrangements where and when applicable.
2. Goal: Prioritize infilling on vacant land and redevelopment of blighted or disused properties to better utilize existing utility facilities, over greenfield expansions or annexations, where facilities and service need to be extended.
 3. Goal: Avoid environmentally sensitive areas when extending and constructing utilities and community facilities. Develop utilities with concern for aesthetic appearance and integration with surrounding environments.

Policies

- a. Place overhead utilities underground when feasible
 - b. Establish proper buffer zones between overhead utilities, substation, and treatment facilities and residential and commercial uses.
 - c. Encourage consolidation or grouping of street-side mail boxes to promote more efficient service and maintenance.
4. Goal: Maximize the economic development benefits of coordinated infrastructure improvements, such as street reconstructions with sewer, water, power, and functional streetscaping.
 5. Goal: Strengthen a strong sense of place in the mixed use and commercial districts by supporting and promoting area recreation, arts and culture organizations, facilities and events.

Policies

- a. Explore opportunities for public private partnerships in the development, operations and maintenance of arts, cultural and entertainment programs and facilities.
- b. Promote opportunities for arts and culture, and entertainment.
- c. Actively pursue the development of programs and facilities that provide healthy activities of interest to youth, teens and young adults.
- d. Continue to support programs and facilities serving senior citizens.
- e. Continue to support existing arts, culture and popular entertainment organizations, programs and facilities.

8.0 Mining, Timber, and Natural Resources

8.1 Introduction

Iron ore was discovered on the Mesabi Iron Range in the 1890's, after gold miners had combed through the area. Miners discovered a rich blue ore, and more ore was discovered in close proximity, so plans for a community began and the regional settling began.



8.2 Mining

The Town lies within what is known as the Mesabi Iron Range, which was formed by a large and very shallow fresh water sea in prehistoric times. The sea left behind iron sediment. This range extends from Babbitt, Minnesota to east of Grand Rapids, Minnesota – over four miles wide and 100 miles long. Most of the mining within this range has been done from open pits – and this area has historically produced about 90 percent of the iron ore produced within the US, and about one third of the ore produced globally.

8.3 Current and future mining areas

The Mesabi Nugget mining operation lies largely within the Town, however, this is not currently operating. The plant went through a shut-down that began in early 2015 and become indefinite in the middle of 2015. The process at this facility was unique – the first of its kind in Minnesota, whereby iron ore concentrate that was being recovered from old mine sites was being converted to nearly pure iron nuggets used to enhance scrap metal in steel mills. In May 2015, it was anticipated that the idling would be for a minimum of two years.

PolyMet Mining is working to develop a mine using the former Erie and LTV plant as part of its operation. This is a large, multi-phase development that would include mining for Copper and Nickel. PolyMet is hopeful they will have obtained a permit to mine by late 2017. Construction of necessary plant and infrastructure components would then take about two years. In Phase 1, there is anticipated to be about 300 new full-time positions with this project.

8.4 Timber

Logging is an important industry to the economics of the region. There are 3,300 acres of Minnesota DNR Forestry land in the Town. The Superior National Forest surrounds much is also partially located within the Town.

8.5 Tourism

The tourism industry and potential of the Town of White largely revolves around the recreational industry. The Mesabi Trail – a large regional paved trail system that has become a tourist destination itself, connects the Cities of Biwabik and Aurora through the Town.

Giants Ridge Golf and Ski Resort, a world-class destination for year-round sports, is adjacent to the Town in Biwabik. In addition, there are many snowmobiling and ATV trails on which to recreate.

8.6 Natural and Cultural Resources

Natural resources are significant in the Town of White and the region generally. They contribute to the health and safety of the residents. Many natural resources also act as recreational amenities for residents and landowners, which contributes to the quality of life in and around White.

Cultural resources are important because of the history they hold. These resources are often able to tell stories about past events and residents that have been influential to the Town, in addition to shaping current events.

8.7 Environmentally Sensitive Areas

It is generally more desirable, both environmentally and economically, to avoid steep slopes and disrupting natural drainage ways with construction and land development. Problems with

erosion and runoff pollution can occur with development on steep slopes, and flooding and wet basements can occur with drainage way disruptions.

8.8 Threatened and endangered species

St. Louis County is home to many animal and plant species, as well as natural communities. There are several spots of vascular plants that are rare or endangered species, as well as protected waters.

These species are listed by the USFWS as threatened or endangered for St. Louis County, MN:

- Canada Lynx
- Gray Wolf
- Northern Long-eared Bat
- Piping Plover
- Rufa Red knot

These species are protected, and as such, are preserved to the extent possible.

8.9 Stream corridors

The St. Louis River and its tributaries flow through the Town of White.

8.10 Surface water

Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, intermittent waterways, and natural drainage ways make up the surface waters of the Town. These resources are all water bodies, standing still or flowing, navigable and intermittent, including natural drainage ways that collect and channel overland rainwater or snowmelt runoff. Natural drainage ways are characterized by intermittent streams, threads, rills, gullies, and dry washes that periodically contribute water to first-order streams. There are also many artificial drainage ways where the natural drainage ways have been altered by human activity. All of these features have the ability to transport sediment and pollutants and are affected by their watersheds, the land that surrounds them.

There are numerous lakes within the Town of White, including:

- Hay
- Miller Pit West
- Little Mesaba
- Whitewater
- Neff
- Turpela
- Cedar
- Frying Pan
- North Twin
- South Twin
- Kahtava
- Loon
- Hautala

8.11 Floodplains & Wetlands

There are a number of wetland areas within the watersheds that can affect water levels of rivers and creeks flowing through St. Louis County. Wetlands are defined as an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions. Wetlands may be seasonal or permanent and are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes, or bogs. Wetland plants and soils have the capacity to store and filter pollutants, replenish groundwater supplies, store floodwaters and maintain stream flows.

There are wetland areas throughout the Town primarily following surface waters.

The Town has not been mapped by FEMA for floodplains.

8.12 Wildlife Habitat

Scattered throughout St. Louis County are various federal, state, and local wildlife, fishery, natural and scientific areas. These often encompass one or more of the sensitive land areas discussed previously (e.g., wetlands, forests, shorelands, prairies). These areas are managed as open space to provide important feeding, breeding, nesting, cover, and other habitat values to a wide variety of plant and animal species. One such area is the Darwin S. Myers Wildlife Management Area on the far northern edge of the Town. This consists of over 745 acres and is a former commercial rice paddy.

8.13 Goals and Policies

1. Goal: Protect the resources and ecological value of the water bodies within the Town of White.

Policies

- a. Work to ensure the needs of mining and timber producers are met, while balancing the need to retain the integrity of the natural resource base in and around the region.
2. Goal: Encourage intergovernmental and private sector coordination and collaboration for natural resources planning, mitigation and restoration efforts.

Policies

- a. Continue to coordinate with and work with local mining companies on issues that are vital to public and private interests.
- b. Work cooperatively with the DNR and mining representatives to determine potential impacts to natural resources with the expansion of mining operations.
3. Goal: Support the preservation of non-renewable natural resources and the wise, well-planned utilization / consumption and re-establishment of White's renewable resources.

9.0 Recreation & Open Space, Tourism, Cultural Arts & Resources

9.1 Introduction

The natural landscapes and rural, north-woods character of St. Louis County provides numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation. The Town of White is uniquely situated adjacent to miles of walking and hiking trails, off road/off highway vehicle trails, cross country skiing trail, and numerous town, state and federal parks. An outstanding park and recreation systems are the gateway to healthy, prosperous, and connected communities.

With White's close proximity to almost endless trail options, the town is in a great position to strengthen the connections to nature for its residents, and to invite visitors alike to contribute to the success of the vibrant community.

9.2 Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Health. Parks and recreation play a major role in active, healthy lifestyles. Endless opportunities to capitalize on these powerful assets exist right outside your door. Whether it's biking down the Mesabi Trail, playing at Embarrass or Pineville Parks, cross country skiing, or using the shooting range, Town residents have an existing park and trail networks that can provide the essential places for people to exercise.

The National Recreation and Parks Association states, "The scientific evidence is mounting that parks and recreation are building healthier communities and top health officials in the country – U.S. Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – validate that parks and recreation are a critical solution for our nation's health epidemic." (<http://www.nrpa.org/About-NRPA/Impacting-Communities/Health-and-Wellness/>) In addition to the existing park and trail network providing a location to promote healthy lifestyles, connecting people with nature is proven to improve mental health.

Conservation. Preservation of public parks and recreation is vital to not only our environment, but to the area's economy, beautification, and community health. Protecting such natural resources is on everyone's mind. Protecting our park systems, open spaces, and natural resources are viewed as essential, including the values that conservation of these resources will bring to us; clean water, clean air, habitats, and much, much more.



People are engaging in environmental stewardship across the county. We are practicing such stewardship to ensure that our future generations can enjoy the benefits of a well-protected environment.

Social Equity. The true philosophy of public space is the idea that it's available to all – no matter what their age, ability, gender, or affluence is – and have adequate access to the facilities, programs, spaces, and places that makes our communities and lives great. The National Recreation and Parks Association states the benefits of social equity to public parks and recreation includes public enjoyment and engagement, quality recreation time with family and friends, improvement of mental and physical health, and measureable decreases in rates of crime and other detrimental activities.

Property Values. Studies have shown that proximity to parks have an impact on property values. Proximate principle written by John L. Crompton measures the economic value urban parks and open spaces has on property values. The real estate market continues to demonstrate that many people are willing to pay a larger amount for property that is located within close proximity to park networks than for homes that aren't within a vicinity of such amenities.

Tourism. The Mesabi Trail brings people from across the region through the Town of White. This trail systems expands several hundred miles through multiple communities and serves as a destination. Additionally, surrounding resources bring people from all over to go fishing, boating, hiking, and ATV riding. These people are brought here by the parks and natural resources that are unique to Minnesota, and only located in the Iron Range.

Community Connections and Placemaking. Parks are the front step of any community, and are the focal point of many neighborhoods and town squares. These networks and systems help define the “place” and feel of the town to visitors and residents. Parks are places for celebrations, gatherings, and social interactions. Research has shown that residential areas adjacent to park networks maintained higher property values, and had reduced criminal activity.

9.2.1 Parks and Trails

As the Town continues to evolve, park and recreation facilities will need to accommodate such growth and respond to a range of active and passive recreational needs. The town currently manages Embarrass and Pineville Parks, as well as the Twin Lakes Pavilion and Grounds, and the Loon Lake Community Center, and houses a portion of the Mesabi Trail.

Open space provides scenic opportunities and a way to preserve the character of the town. Open space is defined as primarily undeveloped areas within the fabric of town development. These spaces include natural plant communities, shore lands, wetlands, water bodies, wildlife management areas, and water fowl production areas and wildlife refuges, etc.

The park and trail system foster’s a positive image of the town’s commitment to providing a recreational system that helps define the community’s quality of life. An outstanding park, trail, and open space system promotes a sense of community and engages residents with its neighbors, and with nature. The system promotes a healthy community by making active living a routine part of daily life.

White’s parks, trails, and open spaces provide the community a wide range of recreational opportunities. This network helps to maintain property values, preserve valuable wildlife habitats and provides scenic landscapes. With the inventory of park, trail and open spaces, the town is in a great position to strengthen the connections to nature for its residents and visitors.

9.2.2 Recreation Programs

Research has shown the importance of staying active, socially engaged and physically fit. This is especially significant as Americans are becoming an aging population and who, both young and old, are experiencing health-related issues associated with lack of exercise, such as obesity. In addition, there has been a growing tendency towards singular entertainment and non-direct communication with easier access to the internet.

Recreation programs provide a community tool to address these issues by:

- Providing opportunities to socialize with other members of the community
- Providing health related benefits
- Stimulating local economy
- Providing healthy rather than destructive past-time opportunities for youth

9.2.2.1 Parks

Existing Conditions

Embarrass Park – This facility is located in Embarrass at the far northern portion of the Town.

Pineville Park – this facility is located on the north side of Pineville, near Biwabik, and has a basketball court and field area.

Shooting Range – Part of the East Range Sportsman’s & Conservation Club, this facility is along Forestry Road 665.

Twin Lakes Pavilion and Grounds – Located at Twin Lakes Beach, this pavilions is available for rental during the summer months.

Loon Lake Community Center – located in Pale, this is a former school. Annually the Finnish Sliding Festival – Laskiainen – is held here.

Giants Ridge is a vacation resort that is among Minnesota’s finest. This is adjacent to the Town of White but within the City of Biwabik. Primary recreation activities are golfing and skiing. There are two golf courses that are ranked among the top 5 in Minnesota by Golf Digest, and 35 alpine ski runs, as well as snowshoeing, snow tubing, fat tire mountain biking, and alpine racing.

9.2.2.2 Trails

The Town of White is located on the Mesabi Trail. This facility is currently over 120 miles of paved bicycle trails. Future plans are to expand this to over 145 miles that connect 28 communities, which will make it one of the longest paved trails in the US. The trail is itself a tourist destination.

9.2.2.3 ATV and Snowmobile Trails

There are groomed ATV and snowmobile trails that travel throughout the Town. Trail users are able to stop in nearby communities for goods and services. These trails connect to a regional system that will take riders throughout northern Minnesota.



9.2.3 Open Space

Much of the areas surrounding current mining operations are left as Open Space. When mining activity ceases over an area, the use of that area also typically reverts back to open space. The Laurentian Vision Partnership is strategic is developing post-mining land use plans for lands that are being mined.

9.2.4 Trail Plan

9.2.4.1 Trail Service Level

Service level of a trail refers to capacity of the trail or trail system to meet the needs and expectations of a given population or user group within a defined geographical area. The following describes the hierarchy of six service levels. The service level within a trail system

increases as user groups become broader, more specialized and/or more resource dependent. Also included in this section is a description of private trails.

9.2.4.2 State Trails

State trails are typically destination trails and serve a statewide population. Travel time to a trailhead is often one to four hours. State trails are a minimum of 20 miles long and traverse high quality natural resource and scenic landscapes. Abandoned railroad corridors are often developed to accommodate state trails with connections to state parks or regional, county or local attractions.

9.2.4.3 Regional Trails

Regional trails serve multiple cities and/or counties in greater Minnesota. It takes about 30 minutes or more to travel to a trail head. Typically, the trail must be long enough for at least an hour of non-motorized recreational travel which is about 5 miles of walking or 20 miles of bicycling. Given the highest priority are those trails showing scenic qualities and a diversity of natural resource attributes. High priority is given to connections between State Trails and urban centers, parks, and other trail systems. Regional trails should provide a multi-modal surface.

9.2.4.4 County Trails

County trails differ from local trails in that they are typically located within county parks. Lengths can vary considerably. They are frequently designed for specific uses, i.e., mountain biking, skiing, interpretive trails, etc.

9.2.4.5 Local Trails

Local trails provide “close-to-home” opportunities (typically within a five-minute drive or 10 minute walk), and often have direct access from neighborhoods. Trail linkages to county, regional, and state trails are desirable. Local trails have the following characteristics:

- Mostly non-motorized.
- Lengths vary from 1/4 mile to numerous miles of interconnected trails within a site or between communities.
- Most often cities and townships have jurisdiction and funding responsibilities for local trails.

9.2.4.6 Blue Trails

Blue trails are dedicated stretches of rivers or waterways that enjoy special clean water protection and are destinations for boating, canoeing, fishing, and other outdoor recreation. They provide opportunities for people to discover rivers and waterways and help connect urban and rural communities to the outdoors. Blue trails also provide:

- Healthy recreation and educational opportunities for people of all ages.
- Connections for people to access special protected areas such as wildlife refuges, parks, and forests.
- Opportunities to build partnerships and support for natural resource conservation.

9.2.4.7 Private Trails

Private trails are those that traverse private land as part of larger trail system. The most common are grant-in-aid snowmobile trails, which traverse private land through agreements secured by local snowmobile clubs and are important to maintaining the network for snowmobiles in the state.

9.2.5 Cultural Arts

The Town's most noteworthy celebration is Laskiainen, held annually in February. This Finnish Sliding Festival is held at the Loon Lake Community Center. The festival features ice hill sledding, music, ethnic foods, Vipu Kelkka (whip sled), crafts and winter sports.

9.2.6 Community Issues, Perceptions, and Ideas

In general, the park and recreation system serves the community well. The majority of ideas and issues generated were regarding the desire for additional trail segments. The survey distributed as part of the planning process identified that over 60 percent of respondents thought that park and recreation services in the region are well-maintained, offer a good selection of year-round activities, are adequate in number and size, and the trail system serves the four regional communities well.

During the annual Town meetings, it has been identified that future improvements with activities such as baseball, swimming lessons, disc golf and a skate park are those most desired by the community.

9.2.7 Future Park Needs

Using a National Park Standard of 10 acres of parkland and open space per 1,000 people, the current park system, far exceeds the national standard. While this is a general "rule of thumb" it seems based on survey results that residents are generally satisfied with the accessibility of area park and recreation facilities. The current size of the facilities should be sufficient to meet future demand.

9.3 Goals and Policies

Outlined below are goals and policies for the park, recreation and trail system. Goals provide general statements intended to be attained through implementation of strategies. Strategies, in turn are detailed actions necessary to initiate or actualize a proposed goal.

1. Goal: Provide high-quality year-round park, recreation and trail facilities and programs that meet the Town of White's evolving needs.

Policies

- a. Continue to establish, administer and maintain a community-wide park and recreational system that provides a variety of high-quality facilities to fulfill the expanding needs and expressed desires of the community.
- b. Engage with specialized recreational users and sports groups to refine and improve the design of park facilities and recreation programs.
- c. Explore additional multigenerational and multi-seasonal recreational opportunities, including indoor spaces.

2. Goal: Provide a safe and welcoming environment within the Town's park facilities and open spaces.

Policies:

- a. Periodically undertake a safety assessment of park facilities and equipment and make necessary improvements in a timely fashion.
- b. Coordinate user safety assessments and improvements with Police and Fire Departments to ensure consideration of appropriate response and access by public safety personnel.

3. Goal: Strengthen the Town of White's role as tourist destination within the Arrowhead and East Range region.
4. Goal: Enhance and enrich the Town of White's community identity through various forms of expressions of cultural arts.

Policies:

- a. Provide social gathering places that are stabilizing and strengthening elements in creating a strong sense of community identity.
 - b. Support the effort to educate residents about different ethnic arts and cultural traditions, and for building multi-cultural understanding.
 - c. Increase public awareness of cultural programs and services through media, use of new technology, Town publications, community partnerships, and through increased accessibility to public artwork.
 - d. Support and promote arts and cultural groups, resources and opportunities as a component of economic development.
5. Goal: Facilitate partnerships and collaborations with other public agencies, community based groups, and the private sector to expand opportunities for cultural arts within the Town of White.

Policies:

- a. Collaborate with Mesabi East School District, Mesabi Technical College and other jurisdictions to present quality arts programs and performances to the community.
- b. Pursue, where appropriate, county, state and federal funding opportunities for cultural arts.

10.0 Economic Development

10.1 Introduction

Economic development is a critical use of a community's fiscal, social, and physical resources in a long-term process aimed at preserving and improving the life and livelihood of each member of the Town.

Those elements necessary to support economic development include:

- Sufficient and suitable land;
- Appropriate and adequate infrastructure;
- Available and trained workforce.

Another important element to both supporting and attracting economic development is maintaining a high "quality of life" which, along with all these other elements, must be addressed if the Town is to attract new residents to the community.

The volatility of economic development opportunities also must be understood and anticipated. It is quite likely that major new social, economic, or development opportunities or influences may arise that were unforeseen when policies were first formulated. Because of this, the planning process needs to continue provisions for the periodic review of the impacts of major changes in the Town, in the County and neighboring communities to assure that desirable change can be accommodated and undesirable change avoided.

10.2 Existing Conditions

In terms of economic development, the Town is largely dependent on the developed communities of Biwabik and Aurora for its economic pulse. In general, there is a strong desire for increased businesses in these communities, so that empty buildings are occupied, and there are more active and vibrant areas.

Significant economic development initiatives potentially impacting the Town of White and other East range communities in various stages of planning, design, funding, permitting or execution include:

- Laskin Energy Park build out (eastern 1/3 in Hoyt Lakes, western 2/3 in Town of White)
- Mesabi Nugget in T of W, future mining will be in Hoyt Lakes
- LTV – future home of Poly Met in Hoyt Lakes
- Mesabi Nugget

10.2.1 Labor Force

Labor Force charts and tables are generally shown earlier in this Plan. Briefly to touch on some of the key points, in the Town, the percent of residents with Bachelor or Graduate Degrees significantly lags St. Louis County, however there is a high percentage of residents with at least a high school degree.

The Town's population has a median age of 48.3, much higher than St. Louis County's median age of 39. However, the population of White is projected to decline slightly through year 2030, while the County population is projected to remain near its current mark.

The Median Household Income in White is approximately \$46,399, compared to St. Louis County's MHI at over \$47,138.

In October of 2016, the Unemployment Rate in St. Louis County was 4.6 percent, compared to 3.2 percent of Minnesota and 4.7 percent for the US.

10.2.2 Economic Base

The natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations employ 28 percent of the people which is the largest percentage of workers followed by sales and office occupations (25%), while management, business, science, and arts occupations follow at 18 percent. Production, transportation, and material moving occupations employ 14 percent of the population. Similarly, service occupations employ 13 percent.

10.3 Economic Strengths and Weaknesses

The following are strengths and weaknesses in attracting and retaining businesses and industries to the Town of White. It is important that the community continue to work on strengthening its position to meet future business and industry needs that may arise.

10.3.1 Strengths

- Environmental Quality (peace and quiet, rural environment, natural resources).
- Low wage scale, low land costs, and lower business and property taxes.

10.3.2 Weaknesses

- Lack of financial resources for development assistance.
- Mining Industry stability

- Aging Population
- Declining Population

10.4 Assessment of Future Conditions

Future commercial and industrial development in the Town of White is most likely to occur near Biwabik and Aurora, or be related to future mining operations in the northern half of the Town.

10.5 Economic Development Tools, Programs and Agencies

There are a variety of tools and resources available to White in terms of economic development resources – including tax increment financing (TIF), establishing a port authority, establishing an urban renewal district(s), use of eminent domain and obtaining technical, and funding assistance.

Specific programs include:

- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)
 - Minnesota Investment Fund
 - Greater Minnesota Business Development Public Infrastructure Program
 - Transportation Economic Development Program
 - Contamination Clean-Up Program
 - Redevelopment Grant Program
 - Workforce Housing Program
- Federal Community Development Program
- Federal Environmental Brownfield Program
- Minnesota Bonding Bill Program

Local and regional programs and agencies include:

- Iron Range Resources (IRRRB)
 - Commercial Redevelopment Program
 - Comprehensive Plan Program
 - Development Infrastructure Program
 - Cultural and Tourism Program
 - Application Fund Program
 - Workforce Development Program
 - Business Loan Program
 - Business Energy Retrofit Program
- Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency
- Laurentian Chamber of Commerce
- Center for Small Towns
- National Main Street program

10.6 Goals and Policies

The following are the generalized economic development goals for the Town of White.

1. Goal: Improve the Town of White's economic climate and varied employment opportunities.

Policies

- a. Encourage economic diversification to improve resiliency to economic shocks and transformations that are outside the Town's control.
- b. Prioritize recruitment of living-wage job businesses.

2. Goal: Provide a mining and natural resource management-friendly business environment.

Policies

- a. Work collaboratively with existing core industrial and business sector leaders to identify niche business opportunities.
- b. Continue marketing and developing existing and new business/industrial park development.
- c. Continue to recruit and support new office and industrial businesses that provide living wage jobs

3. Goal: Establish a superior quality of life for the Town of White's residents and business owners.

Policies

- a. Prioritize recruitment of living-wage job businesses.
- b. Ensure high-speed internet is accessible throughout the Town.

4. Goal: Provide an environment for the highest quality system of education from pre-school through 12th grade, promote undergraduate and graduate level educational opportunities and continued, life-long learning for residents.

Policies

- a. Develop a partnership with local education facilities to ensure proper education and facilities are available.
- b. Continue to collaborate with local employers and education providers to develop curriculum that presents employers with an appropriately trained workforce.

11.0 Intergovernmental Cooperation & Partnerships

The plan shall identify existing partnerships and new opportunities within the content areas.

11.1 Introduction

A range of issues cross jurisdictional boundaries that affect more than one community such as water and air – they pass over the landscape regardless of boundaries. Watersheds and other ecosystems, economic conditions, land use, housing, and impacts from growth changes affect municipal boundaries and a region as a whole.

Working together, sharing information or entering into formal intergovernmental agreements and sharing resources such as equipment, buildings, staff and revenue are all ways that communities can work together, share visions, coordinate plans and achieve results that will provide mutual benefits.

11.2 Benefits of Intergovernmental Cooperation

Below is a list of some of the benefits of Intergovernmental Cooperation:

- **Early Identification of Issues:** Cooperation enables communities to identify and resolve potential conflicts at an early stage, before affected interests have established rigid positions, before the political stakes have been raised, and before issues have become conflicts or crises.
- **Reduced Litigation:** Communities that cooperate may be able to resolve issues before they become mired in litigation. Reducing the possibility of costly litigation can save a community money, as well as the disappointment and frustration of unwanted outcomes.
- **Consistency:** Cooperation can lead to consistency of the goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities and other jurisdictions.
- **Understanding:** As communities communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another's needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them through communication and shared information.
- **Trust:** Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust and good working relationships between communities.
- **History of Success:** When communities cooperate successfully in one area, the success creates positive feelings and an expectation that other intergovernmental issues can be resolved as well.
- **Cost Savings:** Cooperation can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. Cooperation can enable some communities to provide their residents with additional services and facilities that would otherwise be too costly. Examples include shared library services, hazardous waste collection, recycling, and shared informational/data collection. When evaluating shared services, the impact on service levels must be evaluated together with potential cost savings, to ensure that existing levels of service will not be adversely affected and that projected cost savings are likely to be achieved.
- **Address Regional Issues:** By communicating and coordinating their actions, and working with regional and State agencies, County and local governments are able to address and resolve issues which are regional in nature. Examples include the construction and maintenance of highways, provision of transit service, and planning and construction of facilities for stormwater management, water supply, and sewage treatment and waste disposal.

11.2.1 School District

The Town of White benefits by cooperation with various organization and entities including the Mesabi East School District, and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

11.2.2 Adjacent Local Government Units

Neighboring governments include the Cities of Biwabik and Aurora.



The Town lies within St. Louis County, which provides many services to and through the Town.

11.2.3 Regional Agencies

The Town and other area communities depend on regional agencies to cost-effectively deliver needed services and help keep the region competitive to attract new development, private investments and tourism. Regional organizations to which the Town belongs include:

- East Range Economic Development
- Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board
- Iron Range Economic Alliance
- East Range Service Alliance (ERSA)
- East Range Joint Planning Board

11.2.4 State of Minnesota

While many facets of the state government impact the Town, perhaps the most noticeable and imminent is through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and their regulation of the area's waterways and mining industry.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation also is responsible for roadways through the Town.

11.2.5 Goals and Policies

1. Goal: Work proactively and cooperatively with IRRRB, ERJPB, neighboring and overlapping governmental jurisdictions to provide high quality, cost effective services to the East Range region.

Policies

- a. Frequently communicate with other government officials (staff, elected and appointed officials) both formally (on committees, etc.) and informally (telephone calls, emails, etc.).
- b. Coordinate with adjacent and, or relevant units of government on planning efforts (e.g., comprehensive, land use, transportation, and natural resource protection), regulations, and specific land use decisions.
- c. Where practical, share information, equipment, resources, facilities, technology, services and possibly revenue that have cross-jurisdictional use.
- d. Evaluate existing intergovernmental cooperation efforts on an annual basis and determine the need to maintain, improve, expand or dissolve existing agreements.

2. Goal: Continue to cooperate and coordinate transportation system maintenance and enhancements with State, County and neighboring communities.

Policies

- a. Continue working to ensure that the Town of White's long-term, multimodal transportation policies and plans are reflected in MnDot's Capital Improvement Plans.
- b. Continue to collaborate with Arrowhead Transit to expand service to better serve workers and downtown patrons and visitors.
- c. Continue to expand access and connectivity to regional multi use trails for year-round use.

3. Goal: Collaborate with Federal, State and regional governmental agencies to address economic and environmental opportunities.
4. Goal: Involve the school district and medical institutions in long range planning efforts and in reviewing current and future economic development proposals.

Policies

- a. Establish a formal, routine communications process with school district and medical facilities to facilitate timely information exchange.
- b. Review effectiveness of communications and collaboration efforts on an annual basis.

12.0 Implementation

12.1 Introduction

The Implementation Section serves as a priority list for implementing and realizing the Comprehensive Plan. It prescribes those actions necessary to realize the visions, guiding principles, goals and strategies highlighted in previous sections of the plan. The plan addresses many important components critical to sustaining a healthy community while preserving the town’s natural resources, small town character, and history. As change is inevitable, the plan may need to be amended to appropriately reflect land use changes.

12.2 Action Items

The Town of White’s Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide land use decisions within the town. The plan is an expression of the town’s needs and desires and provides a series of policies for assisting the community in attaining its visions, guiding principles, goals and strategies. The plan is not an attempt to predict the future, but rather an attempt to document the community’s values and ideas that the citizens of White share. The plan guides a variety of community issues including land use, transportation, parks, recreation, and trails, housing, and natural resources.

White’s final step in the comprehensive planning process is to set priorities for strategies associated with the specific Plan Sections to achieve its vision and goals. Just as many distinct strategies can speak to a given goal, a community can select a range of strategies or action items – consistent with its policies – to achieve any of its goals. Reaching an understanding of which should be given the highest priority is a key step a community should take to implement the Plan.

The following table provides a summarized list of specific implementation action items for each comprehensive plan element. The action items have been assigned a priority rating of high, moderate, or low and assigned a completion timeline in terms of a short or medium timeframe that the Town of White should undertake to implement the Comprehensive Plan Update.

The recommended action items may require substantial cooperation with others, including local governments and property owners. In addition, other local and town government priorities may affect the completion of these key actions in the time frames presented.

**Table 2
Implementation Action Items**

Plan Element	Priority	Short-Term 1-5 years	Mid-Term 5-10 years	
Land Use				
Maintain a land use map.	Medium	X		
Housing				
Continue to support housing variety and choice	High	X		
Transportation				
Renovation of TH 135	High	X		
Expand trail facilities on shoulder and off-street	Medium		X	
Utilities and Community Facilities				
Continue collaboration on East Range communities joint water system project	Medium	X		
Mining, Timber, Tourism, Natural and Cultural Resources				
Continue supporting development of new Iron Range ferrous and non-ferrous mining projects	High	X		
Recreation, Open Space, and Cultural Arts				
Support ongoing improvements at Giants Ridge	Medium	X		
Economic Development				
Support new businesses that provide living wage jobs	High	X		
Continue support for Giants Ridge	Medium		X	
Intergovernmental Cooperation				
Continue collaboration on East Range communities joint water system project	Medium	X		
Continue to support IRRB initiatives for diversifying and strengthening the East Range economy	Medium		X	

12.3 Plan Amendments and Updates

Evaluating the Comprehensive Plan is an ongoing process and will, at some time, lead to the realization that the Plan requires updating and amendments. The time that elapses between the completion of the Plan and the need to amend the Plan will depend greatly on evolving issues, trends, and land use conditions. Periodic updates will allow for updates to statistical data, and to ensure the Plan's goals, objectives, and actions reflect the current conditions, needs, and concerns. The IRRRB requires plan updates at least every 4 years. A tremendous amount of change can occur in a community over just a couple of years and the Town will be prepared to address changing conditions with timely plan updates.

Appendix A

Report for East Range Joint Powers Board Comprehensive Plan Survey

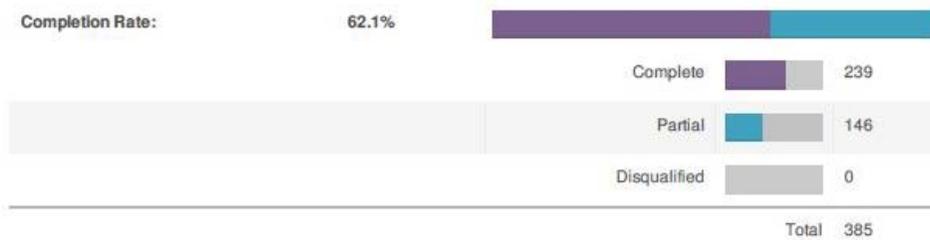
Report for East Range Joint Powers Board Comprehensive Plan Survey

Each of the following 5 communities will have their own section of summarized responses based on feedback from the survey.

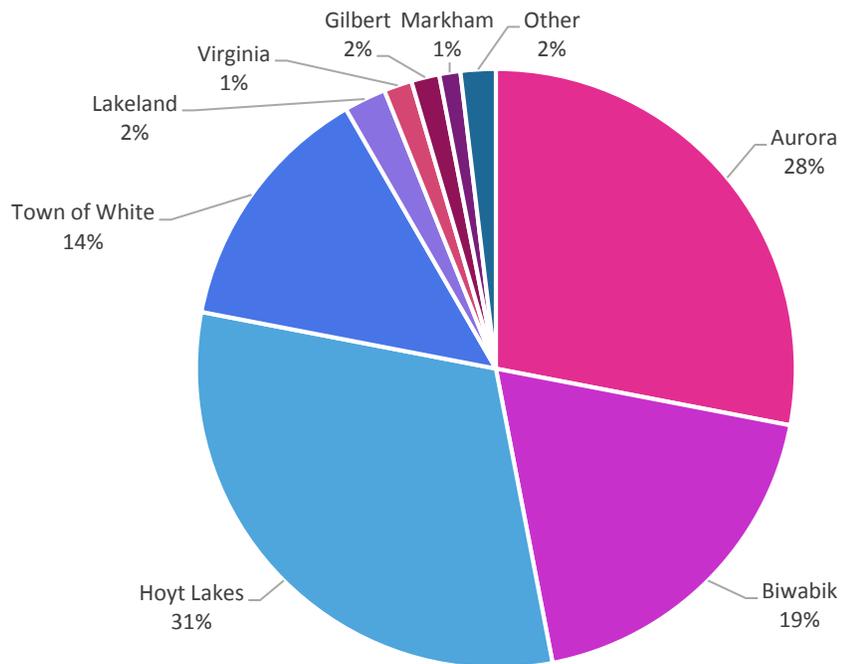
- Overall East Range
- Aurora
- Hoyt Lakes
- Biwabik
- Town of White

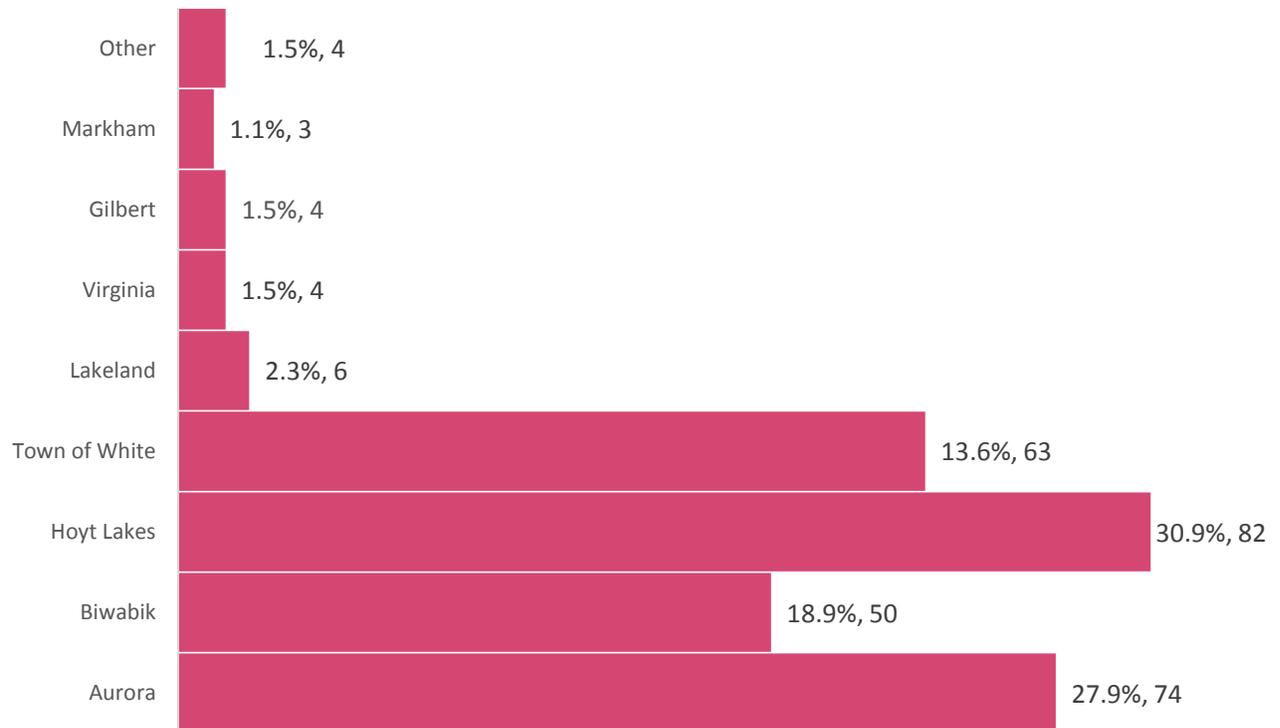
Overall East Range

Survey Count



1. What community do you live in?





2. What *WOULD* you change in the East Range communities?

Stores-Retail-Services

- Wifi throughout towns
- Water quality
- Water access on public trails
- Grocery store for all local communities
- Drug Store
- Less Dollar stores
- Mains streets where there is a business/shopping district
- Create policy for vacant store fronts
- Coffee Shops
- Brewery in town
- More small / locally owned businesses
- Farmers Markets
- Additional bus service in town
- Combine emergency services such as ambulance and fire departments by the 4 communities working together
- More competitive priced and better run trash services

Housing-Visual Standards

- Less low income housing
- Blight ordinances / policy for action
- Need more options for housing in general
- Property owners should have rules against trash and refuse in yard
- Leash Laws and enforcement of policy

Jobs-Economic Development

- Need more employers and more jobs
- Create hospitable environment for diversity of jobs in the East range area
- Combine some churches, schools and fire/ambulance services in some parts of the east range, supposedly to save money?
- Now there are too many regulations on new job creators
- Downtown tourist districts
- Shopping opportunities should be increased locally, less travel to big box stores means more, smaller, and diverse retailers to thrive
- Giants Area Ridge can be built up as a regional attraction
- Livable wage paying jobs that are separate from Mining and Industry
- Encourage jobs through industry to locate professional offices here

Tourism-Activities-Quality of Life

- More activities during already existing events; 4th of July or Water Carnival for example should be more inclusive to all neighboring communities and have a lot of participatory events
- Activities for youth need to be more available, consistent and updated
 - Youth center
 - Wifi activities
 - Cultural and heritage learning and training opportunities
 - Get high schools involved and aware of issues present in home communities and greater overall range region
 - Bowling or Swimming pools need to return to the areas
 - More sports funding
 - Children's Museum
 - Sports Dome near St. James Pit – also doubles as a train head and center for the Northern Lights Music Festival
- Update amenities like downtown corridors for shopping and dining, sidewalks, lighting, and trails.
- City Signage to help attract people off freeways
- Try to keep towns neat and clean
- Utilize Giants Ridge and Trails for tourist draw with all the Lakes around and natural environment
- Create an “Active Communities” group dealing with issues of healthy life choices; there are severe problems with smoking, drugs and drinking

- Work together throughout all communities to plan events, show the new generations how to be successful through collaboration
- “Community Night Out” get to know local police force and neighbors

3. What would you NOT change in the East Range communities? (Each asterisk represents 1 mention of the topic after the original mention)

- Community Atmosphere / Community Togetherness *****
- Small Town (feel) *****
- Working together and Sharing Services *****
- Outdoor Activities *****
- Schools *****
- Maintain local small “mom and pop” stores **
- Natural Amenities **** take advantage of the natural beauty for residents and tourists alike.
- Mining Jobs **
- Cultural Events ** - please do not stop hosting fairs, festivals, school and sports related events in our communities.

4. Please indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements?

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
There is an effective level of governmental cooperation and coordination between the 4 East Range communities	80 32.7%	115 46.9%	50 20.4%
There is an adequate supply of living wage jobs in the 4 East Range communities	5 2.0%	28 11.2%	216 86.7%
Streets and roads in the 4 East Range communities are generally well maintained	64 25.6%	60 24.0%	126 50.4%
The regional economy is sufficiently diverse to provide a variety of employment opportunities	10 4.0%	45 18.1%	194 77.9%
There is a good support system in place for entrepreneurs and new businesses	32 12.9%	119 48.0%	97 39.1%
The East Range communities are welcoming and attractive to visitors	96 38.6%	72 28.9%	81 32.5%
The 4 East Range communities are well managed	75 30.2%	132 53.2%	41 16.5%

Comments:

- Blight and vacant store fronts seems to be a huge issue consistently with all residents.
- Water and sewer treatment and service also seems to be an issue when it comes to service providers, cost and inclusion.
- Want more community events, organizations, task forces, and group projects.
- Use Giants Ridge as a planned event space and activity outpost.
- Road ways and paved hwys / county roads seem to be in bad condition, especially in winter.
- The administration needs to support local business owners and new job creators.
- Shopping center is ugly and outdated and in bad repair.
- Move from industrial and mining jobs to something more forward thinking.
- The existing hotels seem to be below par for visitors so many people camp have RV's.
- Develop enforceable visual standards for homes and businesses.
- Some discontent with city officials and administration, where their priorities lay and transparency.

5. Regarding the 4 East Range community's parks and trails, please mark your level of agreeance with the following statements:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The east range area offers a good selection of year-round, outdoor family recreation opportunities	188 76.1%	35 14.2%	24 9.7%
Community parks are well maintained	160 64.5%	70 28.2%	18 7.3%
The 4 communities are easy to access from the trail system	137 55.5%	69 27.9%	41 16.6%
The number and types of parks and open spaces is adequate	152 61.3%	58 23.4%	38 15.3%
The off-street trail system should be improved / extended	136 54.6%	80 32.1%	33 13.3%

6. What specific park amenities or trails (if any) do you feel are need (and where) within the community?

Parks and Park Services

- Dog parks are of interest**
- Playgrounds need updating **
- Maps of park locations would be great
- Children's swimming pool****, climbing wall, alpine slides, tennis courts, rope course
- All parks need better lighting and bathrooms****

- ADA issues at most parks
- **Aurora**
 - Has only 1 adequate park
 - Continue restoration of Pine Grove Park
 - Skate park is an eye sore
- **Biwabik**
 - fields need updating (softball / baseball)
 - kid friendly options to play
 - Good park pavilion model for other towns
- **Hoyt Lakes**
 - Fisherman's Point needs improvement
 - Needs to be connected to other towns and Mesabi Trail
 - Youth hockey arena needed
 - Lacks sidewalks
 - Park on Suffolk and Guilford is dangerous and outdated
- **Twin Lakes in TOW** is mentioned as a positive area to build in

ATV and Snowmobile Trails

- Upgrades needed to ATV trails
- Trails should connect all communities, some are not accessible
- Places to stay would be nice to have along trails
- Trails between McKinley and Biwabik
- Hoyt lakes to Brimson / Two Harbors
- Create snowmobiling and Nordic trails
- Complete the trail to Babbitt
- 4 Wheel accessible map desired
- Remove atv trails that cut through parking lots
- Would like to have beach access

Bike and Recreation Trails

- Pedestrians are in danger when walking on trails that are disconnected, there are many.
- Canton and Biwabik mines would be a great place to have a trail and needs historical markers.
- Make dirt trails off 1st Ave. west making it safer (*doesn't say which community*)
- Western range region is disconnected via trails
- Create a dedicated network for safety. Not shared with cars
- Invest in Giant's Ridge mountain bike trails
- **Mesabi Trail**
 - Bike lanes
 - Finish to connect all towns
 - Paths from Aurora to Hoyt Lakes separate from highway

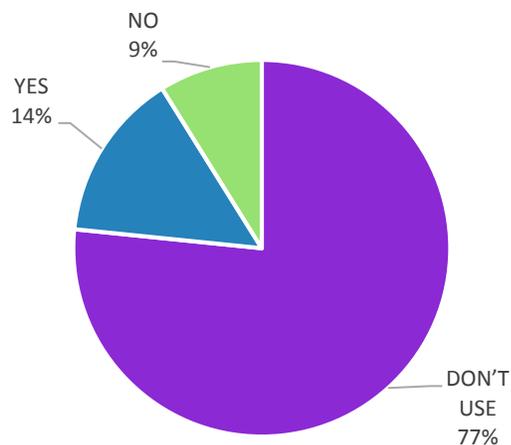
Camping / Campgrounds / Misc.

- Dog leash laws seem to give people serious anger. Need enforcement.**

- Parking access to all trail entry points
- Campground by the pit
- Campground at Palo on Lake
- Camping at Twin Lakes*
- Develop camping on the south side of St. James Pit.
- Make family friendly experiences for tourists and actually market them
- Zip Line through mines
- Stables to rent horses
- Golf Carts
- Mini Golf
- Shelter along trails is needed
- ADA access to fishing piers/docks
- Use signs to connect trails and shopping in town
- Create a true regional map with all amenities and visitor sites located
- Long year drill site improved (est. 1890 in Hoyt Lakes, it is now a FREE tourist attraction)
- **Aurora**
 - Skate Park
- **Why spend money on trails when roads are the REAL issue? ******

7. If you use a snowmobile to get around town and/or in between communities, are the facilities adequate to support snowmobiling?

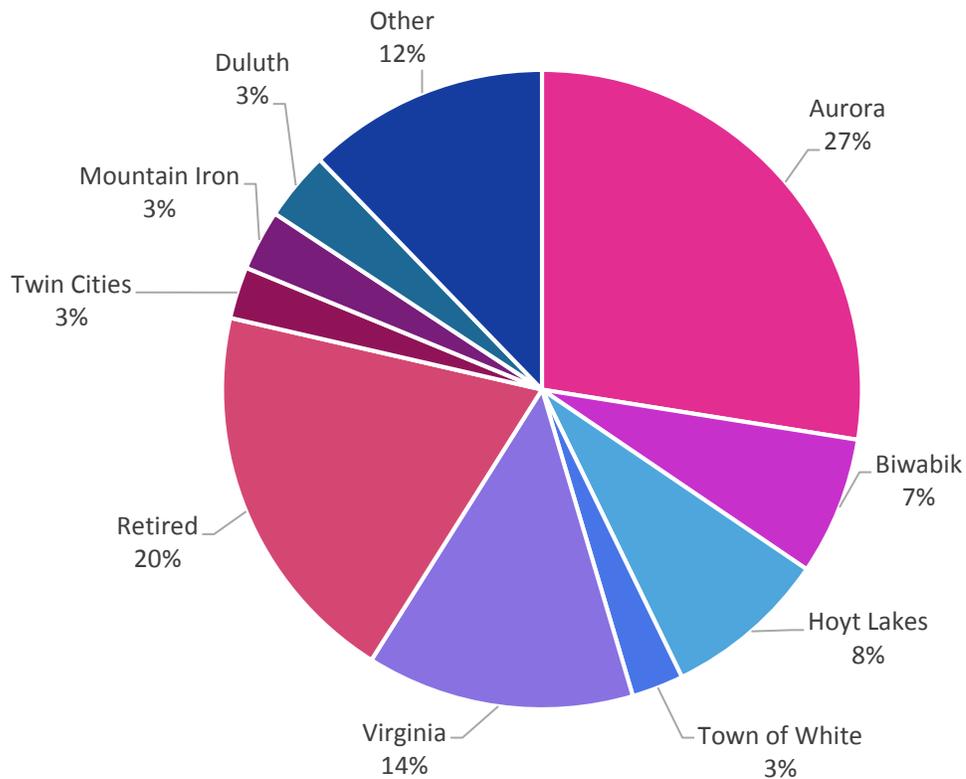
Value	Percent	Count
I do not use a snowmobile to get around town.	76.6%	190
Yes, the facilities are adequate.	14.5%	36
No, the facilities are not adequate (please explain in the Comments below).	8.9%	22
Total		248



Comments:

- Trails are blocked
- Should have more access on all roads
- Fuel access sparse without using town streets
- Need muffler / noise rules for use in town!
- Signage needed*****
- **Aurora**
 - Crossing the tracks by South Main is dangerous
- **Biwabik**
 - Not street legal for use
- **Hoyt Lakes**
 - No limiting rules for snowmobiles or atv's.

8. What community do you work in?



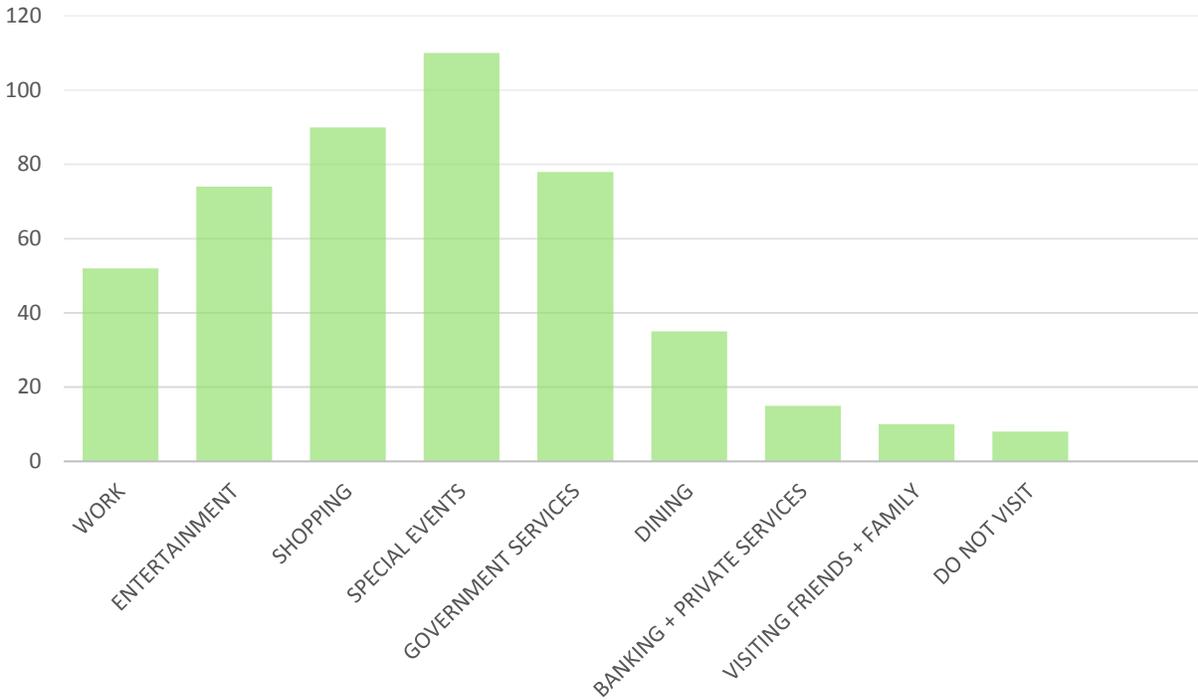
9. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I feel safe in my neighborhood	194 83.3%	29 12.4%	10 4.3%
My neighborhood is walkable	187 81.0%	28 12.1%	16 6.9%
My neighborhood is attractive	141 60.8%	61 26.3%	30 12.9%
I know many of my neighbors	154 66.1%	50 21.5%	29 12.4%
Streets and roads in my community are generally well-maintained	100 42.7%	65 27.8%	69 29.5%
New commercial business (restaurants, convenience stores) should be encouraged to locate in downtown.	197 84.9%	28 12.1%	7 3.0%

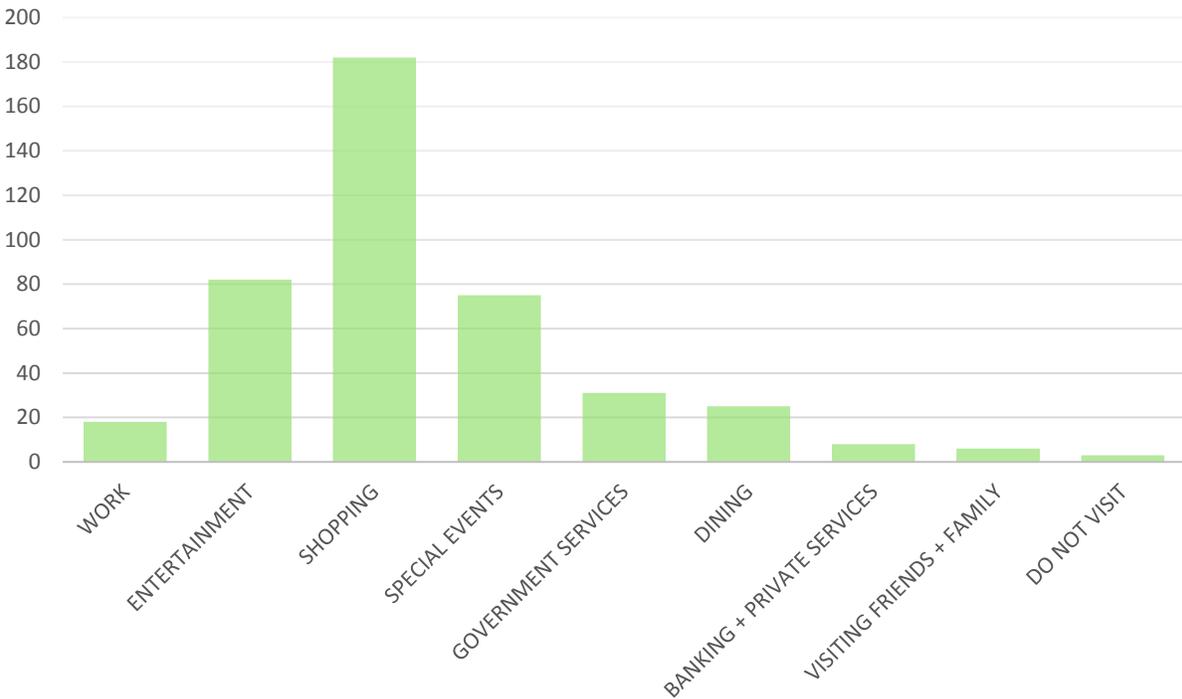
10. How often do you visit?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never
Downtown Aurora	59 25.3%	85 36.5%	58 24.9%	17 7.3%	14 6.0%
Downtown Biwabik	43 18.5%	92 39.5%	76 32.6%	16 6.9%	6 2.6%
Downtown Hoyt Lakes	58 25.0%	50 21.6%	59 25.4%	46 19.8%	19 8.2%

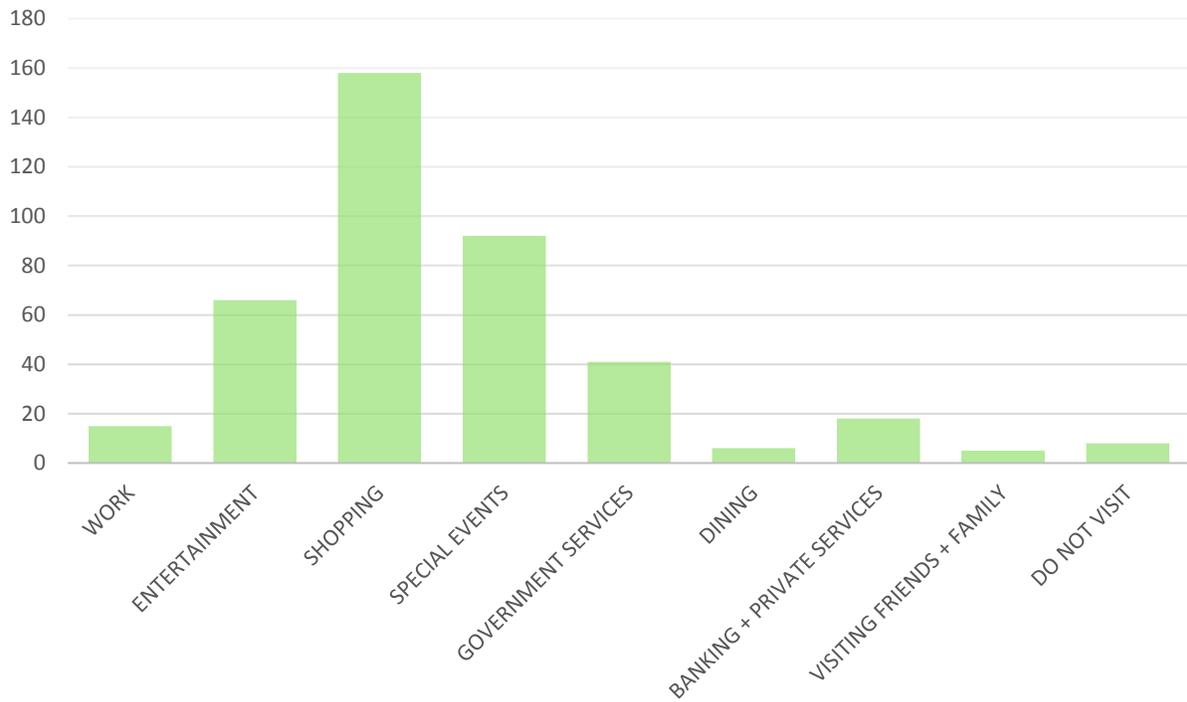
11. Why do you visit downtown Aurora?



12. Why do you visit downtown Biwabik?



12. Why do you visit downtown Hoyt Lakes?



13. Are there places in the community where there are incompatible land uses next to one another?
(Example: Industrial uses next to homes)



14. *Are there cultural assets in the community that should be protected?*

- **Aurora:**
 - Public library *****
 - Encourage 1900's look
 - Loon Lake Community Center
 - Veda Music Festival
- **Biwabik:**
 - Bavarian architecture
 - Themed living communities
 - Honk the Moose (statue)
 - Northern Lights Music Festival
 - 4th of July festival
- **Hoyt Lakes:**
 - Cross Country Ski Trails
 - Recreational Identity
 - Fisherman's Point
 - Golf and Fishing
 - Long Year Drill Site + Timber Arc Bridge
- **TOW:**
 - Laskiainen Festival (sledding annual festival)
- NO
- Local Business
- Green Spaces
- Lakes
- History

15. *Suggest a theme, art, heritage, or cultural asset in your community.*

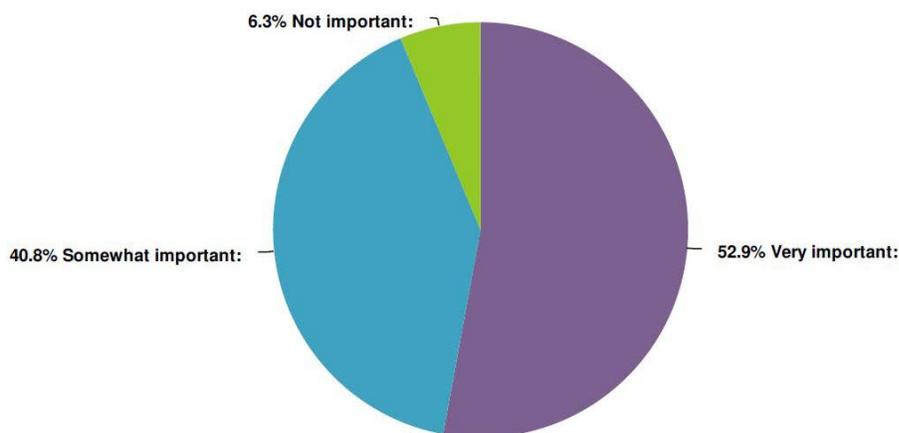
- Northern Lights Festival
- Churches
- Wahlberg
- Bavarian Theme downtown
- Christmas lights downtown (wants to reinstate)
- Railroad theme
- Astronomy in general in conjunction with the N.L.F
- Logging or Mining theme more obvious in towns
- Hockey Arena
- Gardening (club) and Agricultural activities
- Laskiainen***
- Love to have a movie theater
- Mining Pioneers

- Military and Veteran Friendly
- Cultural heritage buildings to recognize diverse European histories
- Safe family living
- The great outdoors
- Senior Citizen Center
- Weihnachtsfest- a winter carnival type event in Biwabik MN@ giant’s ridge.
- Giants Ridge Golf Course
- Concerts and Music
- Picture Display in Aurora City Hall

16. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I can walk or bike directly to the Regional Trail Network (without using a car)	126 56.8%	56 25.2%	40 18.0%
There should be bike lanes on community streets. The community should be more bike friendly.	71 31.8%	79 35.4%	73 32.7%
Existing bicycle facilities are inadequate.	60 26.7%	93 41.3%	72 32.0%

17. How important is on/off street facilities to promote tourism and a healthy life style?



Value	Percent	Count
Very important	52.9%	118
Somewhat important	40.8%	91
Not important	6.3%	14
Total		223

18. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement about individual communities:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
There is an adequate supply of well-built and well maintained quality housing choices	71 30.7%	61 26.4%	99 42.9%
More single family homes are needed	79 34.6%	96 42.1%	53 23.2%
More multi-family homes are needed	49 22.0%	87 39.0%	87 39.0%
New housing should be built in the downtowns or in existing neighborhoods to replace blighted buildings or on vacant lots	153 67.1%	45 19.7%	30 13.2%
New housing should be built in new, undeveloped locations that are outside of existing neighborhoods	88 38.9%	76 33.6%	62 27.4%

19. Is there anything you think the comprehensive plan should address? The topics that the comprehensive plan will address will include: Housing, Transportation, Land Use, Utilities, Community Facilities, Mining/Timber/Natural Resources, Parks/Recreation/Culture, Government Partnerships, and Economic Development.

- IRRRB needs to have grants again
- Need WIFI infrastructure
- Grocery Stores and Food Desert issues
- Address proximity to Duluth as bedroom community location
- Issues with illegal drug use
- Blight
- New housing is Lacking
- Address idea of density in new construction
- Dog Parks
- Slum Lords need to be penalized
- Audit the Communities. Money transparency in the government
- Partnership with schools and communities for athletic field facilities
- Community Pool
- Inter-Community Transit network
- Competitor for Minnesota Energy
- Address ambulance system and service
- Healthy Kids program
- Lower taxes
- Some communities need water and sewage
- Rebranding the cities for tourism

- Expand retirement communities
- Serious lack of child care on the east range
- Alternative energy subsidies