

# Community Assistantship Program

*...a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)*

## Land Use Analysis of the Greater Bemidji Area

Prepared in partnership with  
The Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board

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“Effective planning and zoning practices are an important part of a community. The land use decisions made by a community shape its very character – what it is like to walk through, what it is like to drive through, who lives in it, what kinds of jobs and businesses exist in it, how well the natural environment survives, and whether the community is an attractive one or an ugly one.”

John M. Levy – *Contemporary Urban Planning, Eighth Edition*

## **Executive Summary**

The Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board (JPB) sought to analyze various land use characteristics of the community it governs. Questions were posed regarding existing land use patterns, vacant land, buildable land, housing, major employment centers, and downtown property. These questions were important to review as the JPB prepares to develop a Comprehensive Plan for the Greater Bemidji Area. The results of this study provide data and analysis that will be vital to the first steps of the comprehensive process.

## **Acknowledgements**

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GIS data provided courtesy of Brett Case – GIS Coordinator; City of Bemidji

## **1. Introduction**

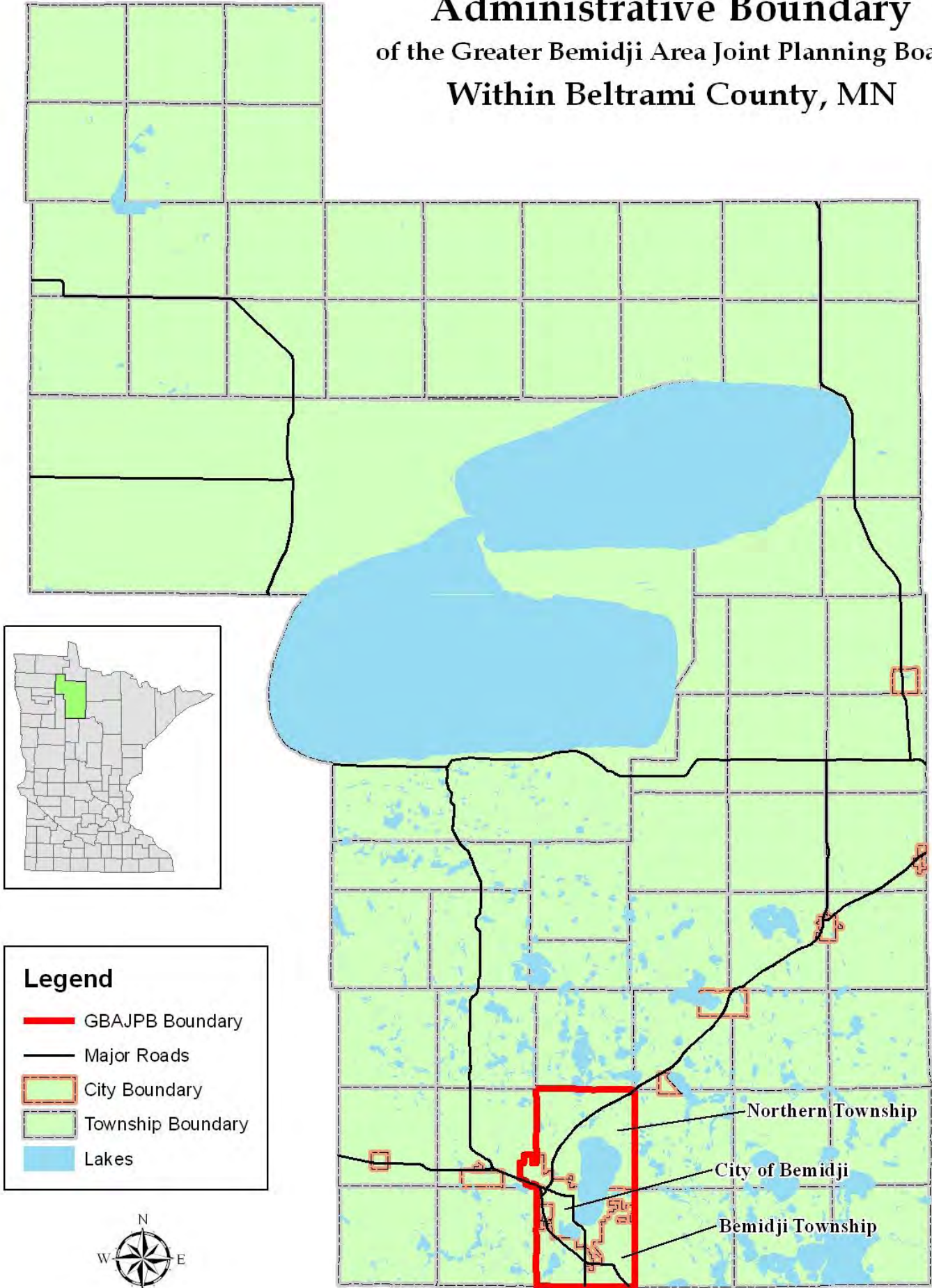
The Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board (GBAJPB or JPB) is a planning and zoning organization that consists of three local governmental units (LGUs) – Northern Township, Bemidji Township, and the City of Bemidji – all of which are located in Beltrami County, Minnesota. The JPB covers an area of approximately 73 square miles, consisting of approximately 58.8 square miles of land area and 14.2 square miles of surface water. Responsibilities of the JPB include land use controls and planning, shoreland management, subdivision controls, septic system permitting and inspection, and sign regulation.

The Greater Bemidji Area is a thriving and growing community in terms of both population and economic impact. The population (approximately 22,000) of the Greater Bemidji Area comprises about 40% of the total population of Beltrami County. The area is home to several major economic centers, local and regional government centers, The Bemidji Regional Airport providing both commercial and personal transportation services, a State University, technical college, and private college, a regional hospital and medical center, as well as retailers and manufacturing centers.

The Greater Bemidji Area acts as a regional hub for employment, manufacturing, and retail services as well as entertainment and recreational opportunities. As such, the GBA functions at a much higher population density than the actual numbers suggest. The area draws from several townships other than Northern and Bemidji, as well as from surrounding cities such as Bagley, Blackduck, Cass Lake, Kelliher, Lake George, Laporte, Red Lake, and others.

The purpose of this study is to examine various characteristics of the Greater Bemidji Area, including existing zoning and land use patterns, existing vacant land (particularly vacant residential land), availability of buildable land, existing rental properties, characteristics of major employment centers, and downtown vacancy. The study makes extensive use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) techniques and analysis as well as spreadsheets for calculations and tabulating data in order to answer important questions regarding the previously mentioned community characteristics. Going forward, the work performed for this project will assist the JPB in the development of a Comprehensive Plan that will provide an in-depth analysis of these and other important characteristics of the area, as well as provide a detailed plan for the future development of the area.

# Administrative Boundary of the Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board Within Beltrami County, MN



## 2. Existing Zoning and Land Use Characteristics

Land use in the Greater Bemidji Area is defined by 17 zoning districts. According to Article II, Section 201 of the Greater Bemidji Area Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance “these zoning districts are created in order to promote the orderly development of land within the Greater Bemidji Area, including the shoreland of its public waters.” The zoning districts and their respective codes are defined in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1 – GBA Zoning Districts**

C	Conservation
R-1	Rural
R-2	Suburban Residential (Unsewered)
R-3	Suburban Residential (Sewered)
R-4	Moderate Density Residential
R-5	High Density Residential
R-6	Multiple Family
MH	Manufactured Home Park
B-1	Low Density Commercial
B-2	General Commercial
LC	Lake Oriented Commercial
LD	Lake Oriented Development
UR	Urban Renaissance
OM	Office/Medical
U	University
I-1	Industrial Park/Light Industrial
I-2	General Industrial

These zoning districts are developed and maintained to promote growth and development within the Greater Bemidji Area while balancing this with protection of neighborhoods and property rights. Finding the appropriate balance of land to be designated for residential, commercial and industrial allows for orderly and thoughtful growth. If too much land is designated for one specific land use type, the area may develop disproportionately or it may not develop at all. As such, proper balance is required between all zoning districts.

An important part of this study was to examine the amount of land that is designated to each of the 17 districts. The results will assist the JPB in the planning and implementation of potential new districts as well as redefining the existing boundaries should it become necessary. Figure 2.2 displays the calculated results for the amount of land in each zoning district.

**Figure 2.2 – Acres in Each Zoning District**

Zoning District	Acres	% of Total
C - Conservation	5,326.90	13.7%
R1 - Rural	7,179.11	18.4%
R2 - Suburban Residential (Unsewered)	13,889.23	35.6%
R3 - Suburban Residential (Sewered)	3,835.51	9.8%
R4 - Moderate Density Residential	1,735.99	4.5%
R5 - High Density Residential	206.07	0.5%
R6 - Multiple Family	900.03	2.3%
MH - Manufactured Home Park	238.15	0.6%
B1 - Low Density Commercial	1,740.16	4.5%
B2 - General Commercial	1,067.41	2.7%
LC - Lake Oriented Commercial	75.61	0.2%
LD - Lake Oriented Development	144.61	0.4%
UR - Urban Renaissance	120.73	0.3%
OM - Office/Medical	191.25	0.5%
U - University	325.97	0.8%
I1 - Light Industrial	370.49	0.9%
I2 - General Industrial	1,660.72	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,007.96</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

While it is important to assess the *amount* of land designated to each of the zoning districts and make plans for future development needs, it is also important for a planning organization to make informed decisions as to *where* future development should occur. This is especially true when redefining existing zoning boundaries or creating new districts. The information calculated in this study provides the data that may assist in decision-making processes. At the same time, it does not provide suggestions for redistricting or for the creation of new districts. The GBAJPB Comprehensive Plan will take the next step in this process.

In addition to zoning decisions, the City of Bemidji as well as each of the two Townships will also benefit from the data calculated in this study when determining taxable land area and property taxation rates. For example, more commercially zoned properties will lead to overall higher property taxes. Likewise, more rural zoning will lead to overall lower property taxes.

On the following page is the zoning map for the Greater Bemidji Area. The oldest and most historical part of the City of Bemidji lies within the Urban Renaissance district. The major concentrations of commercial activity are within this district as well as in the two General Commercial districts to the southeast and the northwest. The large General Commercial district that juts out from the western edge of the map is land occupied by the Bemidji Regional Airport. The industrial districts southeast of the City are a part of the City’s industrial park. The Lake Oriented Commercial and Lake Oriented Development districts provide a mix of commercial and arts, entertainment & recreational land uses. The Lake Oriented Development district (a planned unit development) is primarily occupied by the Sanford Center, a regional entertainment & convention center and sports arena. Bemidji State University occupies the University district on the western shore of Lake Bemidji, and Oak Hills Christian College occupies the second large University zoned district in Bemidji Township. The remainder of the Greater Bemidji Area is primarily a mix of various residential, rural, and conservation land uses.



# GBAJPB

Greater Bemidji Area  
Joint Planning Board

## Zoning Districts

Map 2.1



1 inch = 1 mile



### Zoning

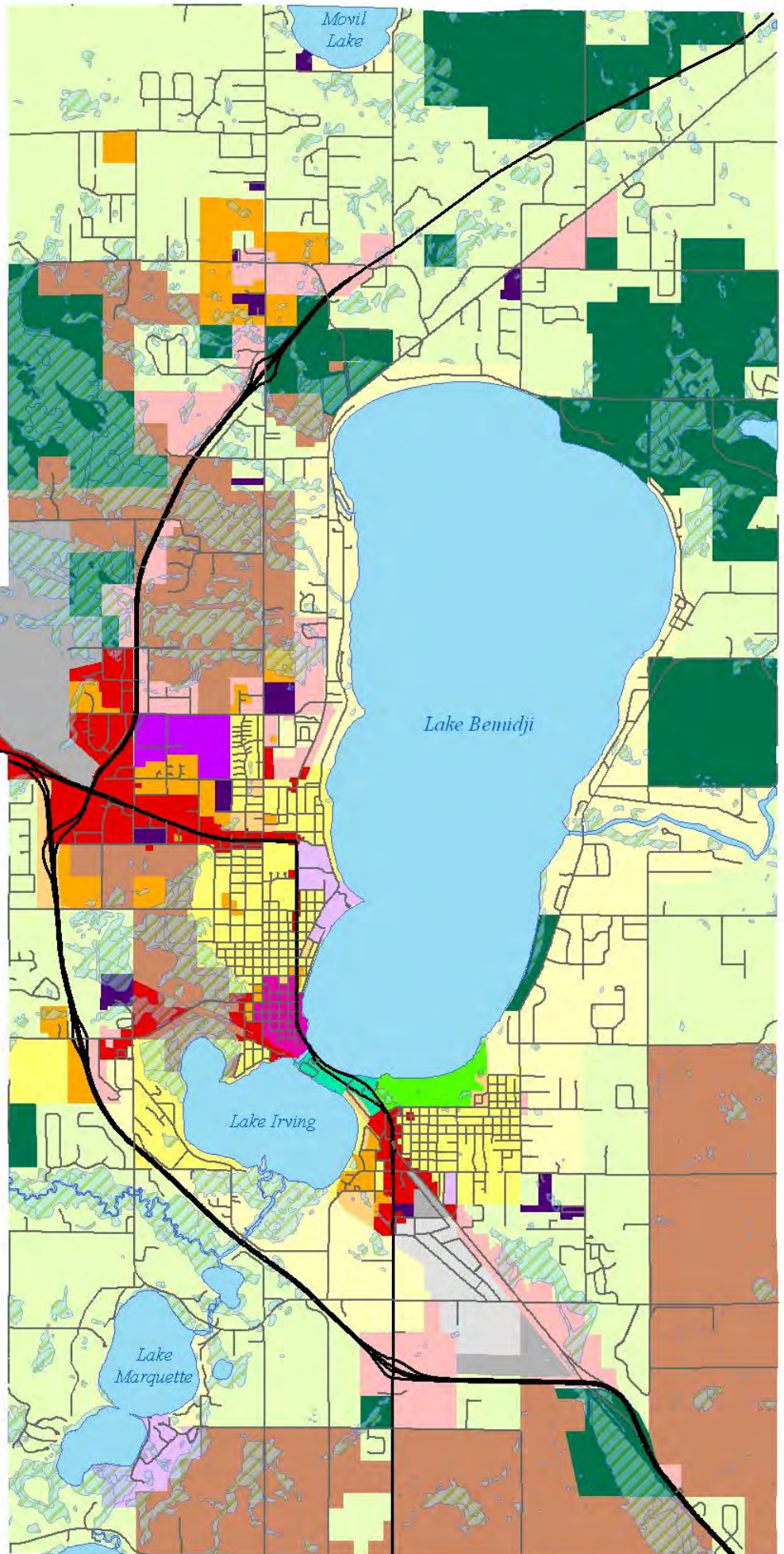
-  C - Conservation
-  R1 - Rural
-  R2 - Suburban Residential (Unsewered)
-  R3 - Suburban Residential (Sewered)
-  R4 - Moderate Density Residential
-  R5 - High Density Residential
-  R6 - Multiple Family
-  MH - Manufactured Home Park
-  B1 - Low Density Commercial
-  B2 - General Commercial
-  LC - Lake Oriented Commercial
-  LD - Lake Oriented Development
-  UR - Urban Renaissance
-  OM - Office/Medical
-  U - University
-  I1 - Light Industrial
-  I2 - General Industrial

 Lakes & Rivers

 Wetlands

### Roads

-  State
-  Other



### 3. Existing Vacant Land

Beyond the analysis of existing zoning and land use characteristics, another key piece of information is the amount of vacant land that exists in each of the zoning districts. From a planning standpoint, it is not enough to simply know *how* the land is organized. In order to make the right plans for future development within the community, the JPB must also know *where* the areas that are vacant and undeveloped are. The provision of land for development within a community is tied together among all land use types - from industrial to commercial to residential. Having a strong housing market will ultimately encourage developers to view the area as having a strong market potential for jobs, goods, and services. If there is not adequate space for residential development, the area cannot develop and prosper commercially beyond the limits of its current residential threshold.

Vacant lands are the backbone to the future of the community. Having a wide variety of vacant parcels for commercial and industrial properties can lead to an increased demand on the housing market because as more commercial and industrial businesses develop, the need for housing expands.

In some cases, the amount of vacant land available in an area can be limited by certain environmental constraints. In the Greater Bemidji Area, two constraints are the lakes and rivers which create limited development as well as the large wetland complexes that can be seen on the zoning map (Page 6) and the vacancy map (Map 3.1, page 8). Providing and encouraging a mix of zoning and land use options to the vacant lands ultimately creates depth in the economic viability of the region.

### **3.1 Overview of Vacant Land in the Greater Bemidji Area**

The methods used to determine vacant land in this study are rooted in the use of geographic information system (GIS) software and analysis. The first step in the process was to determine from the Greater Bemidji Area parcel dataset which parcels have no building value. The parcel data contains an attribute that gives the estimated value of above ground manmade structures on all parcels. As such, the initial vacant parcels were determined to be those that had “0” building value. Due to some minor real world changes that had taken place after the creation of the dataset, the entire area was verified visually based on the most recent aerial imagery available. Each vacant parcel was compared to the high resolution imagery and the dataset was edited so that any parcels that were initially deemed vacant but were found to have structures built on them were removed from the analysis. Map 3.1 on page 7 displays the vacant parcels in the Greater Bemidji Area. Figure 3.1 shows the calculated results for the number of vacant acres in each zoning district, the percentage of the total vacancy for each, and the number of vacant parcels.

# GBAJPB

Greater Bemidji Area  
Joint Planning Board

## Vacant Parcels

Map 3.1



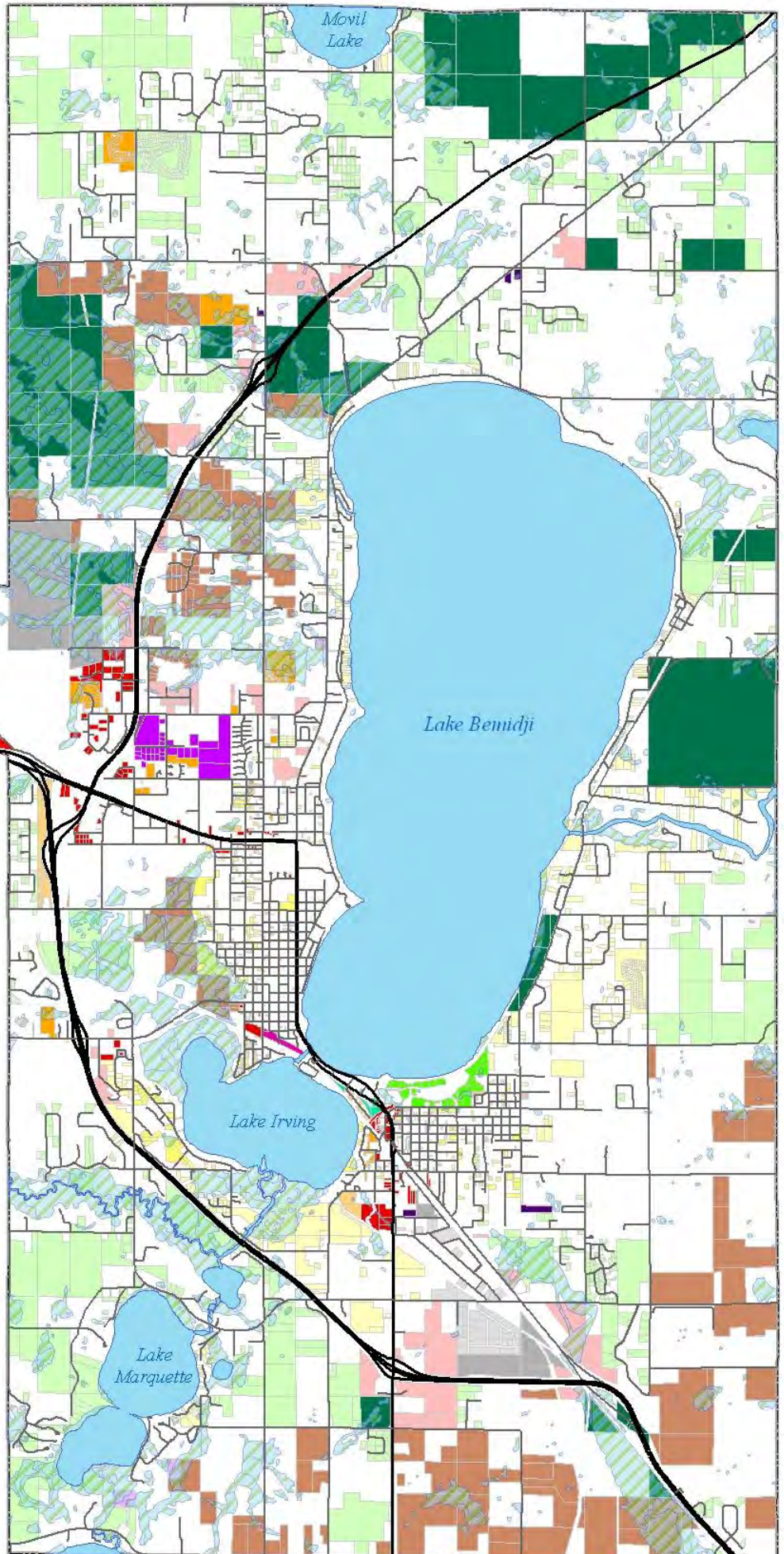
1 inch = 1 mile

### Vacant Parcels

- B1 - Low Density Commercial
- B2 - General Commercial
- C - Conservation
- I1 - Light Industrial
- I2 - General Industrial
- LC - Lake Oriented Commercial
- LD - Lake Oriented Development
- MH - Manufactured Home Park
- OM - Office/Medical
- R1 - Rural
- R2 - Suburban Residential (Unsewered)
- R3 - Suburban Residential (Sewered)
- R4 - Moderate Density Residential
- R5 - High Density Residential
- R6 - Multiple Family
- U - University
- UR - Urban Renaissance
- Lakes & Rivers
- Wetlands
- GBAJPB Boundary

### Roads

- State
- Other



**Figure 3.1 – Vacant Land by Zoning District**

Code	Zoning Class	Vacant Acres	% of Total	# Parcels
B1	Low Density Commercial	673.73	4.9%	104
B2	General Commercial	160.68	1.2%	222
C	Conservation	3,137.94	22.7%	53
I1	Light Industrial	138.33	1.0%	80
I2	General Industrial	642.52	4.6%	13
LC	Lake Oriented Commercial	10.32	0.1%	9
LD	Lake Oriented Development	62.65	0.5%	23
MH	Manufactured Home Park	18.86	0.9%	6
OM	Office/Medical	125.28	0.9%	30
R1	Rural	2,792.07	20.2%	135
R2	Suburban Residential (Unsewered)	4,548.55	32.9%	727
R3	Suburban Residential (Sewered)	960.57	6.9%	553
R4	Moderate Density Residential	214.12	1.5%	482
R5	High Density Residential	84.44	0.6%	64
R6	Multiple Family	213.94	1.5%	126
U	University	25.27	0.2%	2
UR	Urban Renaissance	12.03	0.1%	17
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,821.30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,646</b>

The values in Figure 3.1 above are calculated with all zoning districts taken into consideration. The large conservation district that borders the north shore of Lake Bemidji and is occupied by the facilities of Lake Bemidji State Park has been omitted from the calculation. The values in figure 3.2 below are calculated with the removal of *all* conservation district lands for the reason that vacant lands in this district are not considered available for development due to the building restrictions defined in the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance.

**Figure 3.2 – Vacant Land with Conservation District Removed**

Code	Zoning Class	Vacant Acres	% of Total	# Parcels
B1	Low Density Commercial	673.73	6.3%	104
B2	General Commercial	160.68	1.5%	222
I1	Light Industrial	138.33	1.3%	80
I2	General Industrial	642.52	6.0%	13
LC	Lake Oriented Commercial	10.32	0.1%	9
LD	Lake Oriented Development	62.65	0.6%	23
MH	Manufactured Home Park	18.86	1.2%	6
OM	Office/Medical	125.28	1.2%	30
R1	Rural	2,792.07	26.1%	135
R2	Suburban Residential (Unsewered)	4,548.55	42.6%	727
R3	Suburban Residential (Sewered)	960.57	9.0%	553
R4	Moderate Density Residential	214.12	2.0%	482
R5	High Density Residential	84.44	0.8%	64
R6	Multiple Family	213.94	2.0%	126
U	University	25.27	0.2%	2
UR	Urban Renaissance	12.03	0.1%	17
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,683.36</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,593</b>

When the vacant conservation lands are removed from the analysis, the results show that the top five zoning districts in terms of amount of vacant land are, respectively, R-2 Suburban Residential (Unsewered), R-1 Rural, R-3 Suburban Residential (Sewered), B-1 Low Density Commercial, and I-2 General Industrial (however, much of the vacant land zoned I-2 is owned by the Bemidji Regional Airport and lies within airport safety zones).

### 3.2 Vacant Residential Land

The results of this analysis show that the Greater Bemidji Area has an ample amount of vacant residential land in order to develop new homes as the economy continues to grow, which will allow for an increase in population. The current rate of residential development in the area does not exceed the threshold of available land. Figure 3.3 shows the amount of vacant acres in residential zoning district as well as the number of vacant parcels in each zoning district. These vacant parcels are based on the current density requirements of each district. As the community changes and certain areas are rezoned into higher density residential, the total number of available parcels will shift and increase.

**Figure 3.3 – Residential Vacancy**

Code	Residential Zoning Class	Vacant Acres	# of Parcels
R1	Rural	2,792.07	135
R2	Suburban Residential (Unsewered)	4,548.55	727
R3	Suburban Residential (Sewered)	960.57	553
R4	Moderate Density Residential	214.12	482
R5	High Density Residential	84.44	64
R6	Multiple Family	213.94	126
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8,813.69</b>	<b>2,087</b>

Another key piece of information gathered as a part of this study was the maximum number of new homes that could potentially be built in the area. This was determined based on the assumption that only one house is allowed per residential parcel. As such, the total number of new homes that could potentially be built is 2,087, equal to the total number of vacant parcels (within existing zone requirements) as illustrated in Figure 3.3 above. Likewise, the number of vacant parcels for each of the six residential districts is also the same value as the number of new homes for each district.

### 3.3 Rental Properties

The City of Bemidji requires that all rental properties be licensed through the Building Department. The City keeps track of this information in a database that was provided for the purposes of this study. The rental information available for Northern and Bemidji Townships is less accurate and an update of this information should be performed prior to the development of the Greater Bemidji Area Comprehensive Plan. The data available at this time lists 990 rental properties in the Greater Bemidji Area, the majority of which are located within the City limits. Rental properties have become a major source of housing for

individuals and families as the economy has shifted. The 990 rental properties are primarily single family homes that have been converted to rental properties. With the demand on the area, high quality multiple family units, housing for young professionals and retirees continue to be a need.

#### 4 Availability of Buildable Land

Although vacant parcels indicate availability of land, there are many other constraints that keep a property from being “buildable”. Those constraints consist of impervious surface limitations, setbacks, density and environmental limitations. The availability of buildable land in the Greater Bemidji Area was calculated by taking the amount of vacant land in each zoning district and the percentage of impervious surface coverage allowed in each district. The Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance states that when developing a parcel, only a certain percentage of that parcel may be covered by impervious surfaces (buildings, pavement, etc.). In some districts 100% impervious coverage is allowed, while others only allow 25%, and the Conservation district does not allow any impervious coverage. Figure 4.1 lists the percentages allowed for each of the zoning districts.

**Figure 4.1 – Percentage of Impervious Surface Allowed Per Parcel**

Code	Zoning District	Max Pct Impervious
B1	Low Density Commercial	60%
B2	General Commercial	80%
C	Conservation	0%
I1	Light Industrial	70%
I2	General Industrial	60%
LC	Lake Oriented Commercial	70%
LD	Lake Oriented Development	60%
MH	Manufactured Home Park	40%
OM	Office/Medical	50%
R1	Rural	25%
R2	Suburban Residential (Unsewered)	25%
R3	Suburban Residential (Sewered)	30%
R4	Moderate Density Residential	40%
R5	High Density Residential	40%
R6 sewer	Multiple Family Sewered	70%
R6 unsewer	Multiple Family Unsewered	25%
U	University	30%
UR	Urban Renaissance	100%

Combining the above information with the amount of vacant land available in each zoning district is the first step in determining the amount of buildable land. The Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance also includes a shoreland ordinance which defines buffer zones around lakes and rivers in which only 25% impervious surface coverage is allowed, regardless of which district the land may be in. In order to accurately determine the amount of buildable land, this must also be taken into consideration. Figure 4.2 shows the amount of vacant land that lies within the shoreland buffer and the results for the amount of buildable land in each district in both acres and square feet.

The R-6 Multiple Family district is split here into sewerred and unsewerred classes due to the fact that the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance defines different maximum impervious coverages for each type.

**Figure 4.2 – Amount of Buildable Land**

Code	Zoning District	Total Vacant Acres	Vacant Acres in Shoreland Buffer	Total Buildable Acres	Total Buildable Sq Ft
B1	Low Density Commercial	673.73	14.50	399.16	17,387,549.25
B2	General Commercial	160.68	6.73	124.84	5,438,140.60
C	Conservation	3,137.94	370.60	0.00	0.00
I1	Light Industrial	138.33	0.00	96.83	4,218,039.35
I2	General Industrial	642.52	0.00	385.51	16,792,861.95
LC	Lake Oriented Commercial	10.32	9.47	2.96	129,050.77
LD	Lake Oriented Development	62.65	43.50	22.37	974,281.75
MH	Manufactured Home Park	18.86	0.70	7.44	324,038.42
OM	Office/Medical	125.28	0.00	62.64	2,728,606.22
R1	Rural	2,792.07	124.92	698.02	30,405,612.82
R2	Suburban Residential (Unsewered)	4,548.55	848.21	1,137.14	49,533,691.59
R3	Suburban Residential (Sewered)	960.57	281.23	274.11	11,940,219.05
R4	Moderate Density Residential	214.12	45.03	78.90	3,436,691.53
R5	High Density Residential	84.44	10.86	32.15	1,400,338.50
R6 sewer	Multiple Family Sewered	117.26	7.29	78.80	3,432,494.10
R6 unsewer	Multiple Family Unsewered	96.68	28.91	24.17	1,052,823.74
U	University	25.27	21.84	6.49	282,723.52
UR	Urban Renaissance	12.03	10.37	4.25	185,168.63
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>13,821.30</b>	<b>1,824.14</b>	<b>3,435.77</b>	<b>149,662,331.78</b>

## 5 Characteristics of Major Employment Centers

This study has shown that there is adequate land available for housing. The next step is to look at the number of employment centers in the Greater Bemidji Area. A strong housing market is dependent on a strong employment market. Several reports were reviewed from other communities to analyze and compare the Greater Bemidji Area’s market.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority, in March 2011, conducted an analysis of the largest employers in the City of Boston (Lima, et al. 1-12). Their analysis focused on the largest private sector companies with 500 or more employees and used data gathered from major databases such as InfoUSA, the American Hospital Association (AHA), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), and Manta.

The Boston study grouped employers into two categories – those with 1,000 or more employees and those with 500 to less than 1,000 employees. The study found that the first group accounted for roughly 23% of all of Boston’s private jobs, and that the second group comprised roughly 6% of all private jobs.

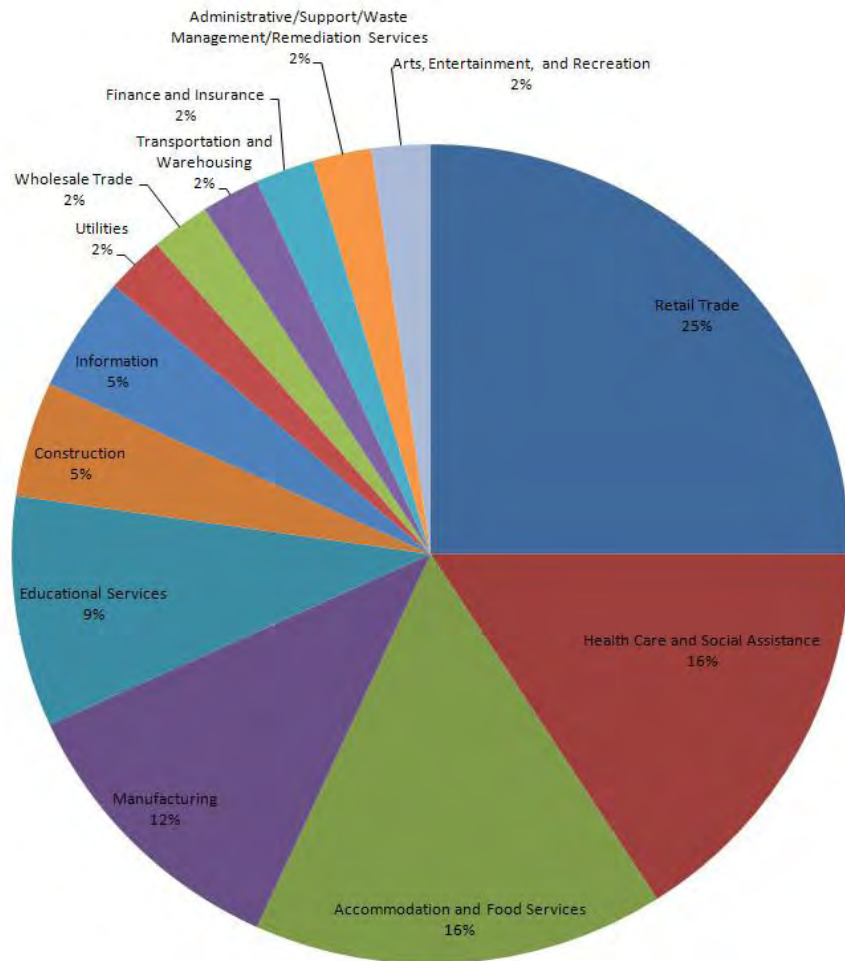
Grouping the companies in the Boston study by industries revealed that those with 1,000 or more employees are concentrated in three specific industries: Health Care, Finance and Insurance, and Higher Education, in order from most to least employees. The top three companies in the second category with

500 to under 1,000 employees were different, with Finance and Insurance first, Legal Services second, and Food Services third.

Although there are major fundamental differences between the City of Boston and the Greater Bemidji Area, the results of the GBA study do show some similarities to the Boston study. When grouping the employers into two categories – those with 50 or more employees, and those with 20-49 employees – it can be seen that the top three industries in the first category are Retail Trade, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Accommodation and Food Services. Health Care was the highest in Boston, while Health Care (and Social Assistance) is the second highest in the GBA (See Figure 5.1).

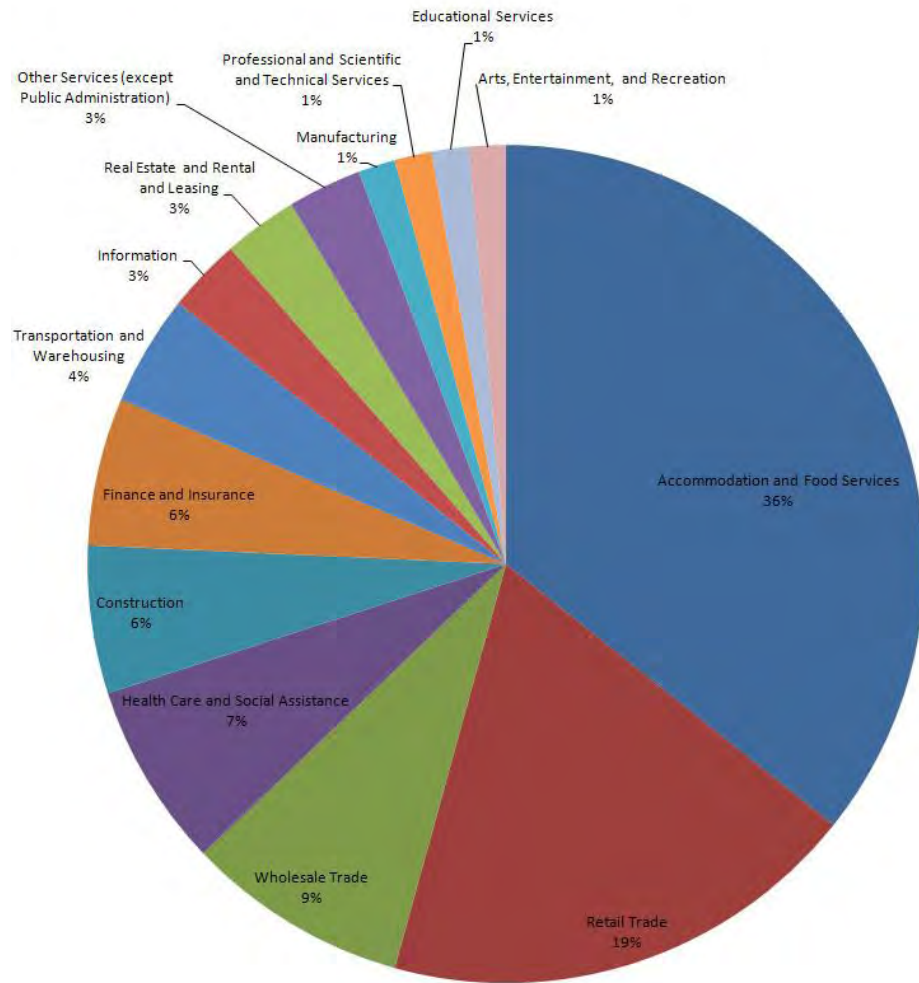
The top three industries in the 20-49 employees category change to Accommodation and Food Services first, Retail Trade second, and Wholesale Trade third. In the Boston study, Food Services was the third highest, while Food Services (and Accommodation, i.e. hotels) is the highest in the GBA (See Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.1  
Employers with 50 or  
More Employees**





**Figure 5.2  
Employers with  
20-49 Employees**



The amount of land occupied by each industrial sector in terms of parcel occupancy was also calculated and the results are shown below in Figure 5.3. The Transportation and Warehousing sector is highest because of the large amount of land occupied by the Bemidji Regional Airport.

**Figure 5.3 – Amount of Land in Each NAICS Sector**

NAICS	Sector	Acres
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	939.4
61	Educational Services	767.4
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	187.5
23	Construction	185.6
44	Retail Trade	152.3
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	128.4
32-33	Manufacturing	44.4
72	Accommodation and Food Services	33.7
42	Wholesale Trade	33.1
22	Utilities	15.0
51	Information	12.6
52	Finance and Insurance	9.8
56	Administrative, Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services	3.1
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	1.6
53	Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing	1.0
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	0.2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,515.1</b>

## 6. Downtown Vacancy Analysis

Maintaining an attractive and economically prosperous downtown is another important part of a community and is seen as a priority in the Bemidji area. In order for a downtown to be active and successful, it must have a strong mix of compatible land uses. Retail and service businesses act as key traffic generators in a downtown. Food and entertainment businesses complement retail and service businesses by acting as pedestrian generators. A mix of uses increases opportunities for daytime, evening, night time and weekend activities by allowing for easy and convenient access from the retail to the service businesses downtown. Providing residential space in the downtown area is also important since downtown residences lead to increased foot and bicycle traffic potential as well as increased purchasing before and after work hours which promotes an overall healthier commercial environment. Downtown development and growth in Bemidji is promoted and supported by the efforts of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA).

Even as the Greater Bemidji Area has seen some of its most prominent commercial development (retailers, chain restaurants, banks, etc.) occurring outside of the downtown area, some downtown business owners say that the downtown is stronger now than it has been in the past 10 years (Wesley A1). With a mix of specialty shops, restaurants and pubs, branch banks, convenience stores, wholesalers, grocers, home furnishings stores, and rental housing, downtown Bemidji is an economically significant part of the community.

A part of this study sought to develop a snapshot of current vacancy in the downtown area in order to gain a better understanding of its economic prosperity and provide valuable information for future planning and development. From a development standpoint, vacant spaces in a downtown area should be seen as opportunities because they allow for new businesses and public services to start or relocate to the downtown area. However, vacancy at a high rate will send a negative message to the general public as well as to prospective businesses. Maintaining a database of the vacancy in the downtown can provide prospective business owners with better decision making tools.

The overall vacancy rate in downtown Bemidji is 6.15 percent. This calculation is based upon parcels that are either partially vacant or entirely vacant. According to a study done by the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation – Rochester, NY – in August of 2010, “the 5 percent vacancy mark is considered a bellwether in the real estate industry” (“Survey of Downtown Rental Housing”). The study also makes reference to national vacancy rates for *rental* properties, and states that in the second quarter of 2010 the rate was 10.6 percent. According to information from the City of Bemidji rental database, the vacancy rate of rental properties in the downtown is very much less than the national average. Figure 6.1 shows the results of the downtown assessment.

Figure 6.1

	# Parcels	# Acres	% of Total Parcels	% of Total Acres
Occupied	179	40.7	68.8%	70.6%
Vacant	7	3.0	2.7%	5.3%
Partially Vacant	9	2.1	3.5%	3.7%
Open Space	10	1.3	3.8%	2.3%
Parking	55	10.5	21.2%	18.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## **7. Conclusion**

Land use analysis of the Greater Bemidji Area shows a diverse community with a strong mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, and a thriving downtown. Understanding the difference between the total number of parcels currently available for development and the potential for increased density is important. Rezoning some land to higher density will promote additional residential development. By increasing residential development opportunities, further analysis of expanding infrastructure will also need to be considered.

There are vacant parcels for commercial and industrial development, although they are becoming fewer in number. In order to promote expansion of employment centers throughout the region, increasing these zoning districts will need to be reviewed in the comprehensive planning efforts.

The downtown is active and thriving. With a 6.15 percent vacancy rate, there are few buildings that are partially or completely vacant. Further research should be completed on square footage of leasable area as well as creating a better picture of what mix of business types are included in this area. Ensuring the longevity of the low downtown vacancy rate will be supported by maintaining the right mix of businesses in the area.

Finally, further analysis should be completed on the demographic characteristics of the Greater Bemidji Area for the comprehensive planning process.

The data gathered in this report is the start to a more comprehensive review of the area. Providing a solid understanding of the goals and objectives of the community will provide the foundation for ensuring that proper policies are in place to encourage the continued vitality of the region.

## References

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## Appendix A – Table of Major Employment Centers

Employer Name	Employees	NAICS Code	NAICS Sector
Sanford Bemidji Medical Center	500-999	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Bemidji School District	500-999	61	Educational Services
Bemidji State University	250-499	61	Educational Services
Walmart Supercenter	250-499	44	Retail Trade
Nortech Systems	250-499	33	Manufacturing
Green Mill Restaurant	100-249	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Sanford Center	100-249	71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Occupational Development Center	100-249	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Neilson Place	100-249	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Havenwood Care Center	100-249	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Northwest Technical College	100-249	61	Educational Services
Synergy Solutions	100-249	56	Administrative/Support/Waste Management/Remediation Services
First National Bank Bemidji	100-249	52	Finance and Insurance
Paul Bunyan Communications	100-249	51	Information
Target	100-249	44	Retail Trade
Menards	100-249	44	Retail Trade
Marketplace Foods	100-249	44	Retail Trade
Lueken's Village Foods South	100-249	44	Retail Trade
Lueken's Village Foods North	100-249	44	Retail Trade
J C Penney Co	100-249	44	Retail Trade
Home Depot	100-249	44	Retail Trade
Minnesota Woods Products	100-249	32	Manufacturing
Young and Davis Drywall Inc	100-249	23	Construction
Sparkling Waters	50-99	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Perkins Restaurant and Bakery	50-99	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Mc Donald's South	50-99	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Mc Donald's North	50-99	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Hampton Inn	50-99	72	Accommodation and Food Services
B J Lodging	50-99	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Bi-County Community Action Council	50-99	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Upper Mississippi Mental Health	50-99	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Stellher Human Services	50-99	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Oak Hills Christian College	50-99	61	Educational Services
Bemidji Pioneer	50-99	51	Information
Air Direct Charter	50-99	48	Transportation and Warehousing
L&M Supply	50-99	44	Retail Trade
Kmart	50-99	44	Retail Trade
Herberger's	50-99	44	Retail Trade
North Country Business Products	50-99	42	Wholesale Trade
Northland Fishing Tackle	50-99	33	Manufacturing
North Central Door Co	50-99	33	Manufacturing
Pinnacle Publishing LLC	50-99	32	Manufacturing
Knife River Materials	50-99	23	Construction
Beltrami Electric Co-Op Inc	50-99	22	Utilities
Tires Plus	20-49	81	Other Services (except Public Administration)
AmeriPride Linen and Apparel Services	20-49	81	Other Services (except Public Administration)
Taco Johns	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Super 8	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Subway Walmart	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Subway South	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services

Subway North	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Quality Inn	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Pizza Hut	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Peppercorn Restaurant	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
KFC	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Keith's Pizza North	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Keith's Old River Pizza Co	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Holiday Inn Express	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Hardee's	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Ground Round Grill and Bar	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Dairy Queen South	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Dairy Queen Paul Bunyan Mall	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Countryside Restaurant	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Country Kitchen	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Cattails Bar and Grill	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Burger King South	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Burger King North	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Arby's	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Aramark	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Applebee's Neighborhood Grill	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
AmericInn	20-49	72	Accommodation and Food Services
Bemidji Town and Country Club	20-49	71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
Sanford Bemidji Senior Behavioral Health Unit	20-49	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Sanford Bemidji Home Care and Hospice	20-49	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
North Country Peak Performance	20-49	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Hope House	20-49	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Evergreen House	20-49	62	Health Care and Social Assistance
Trek North Junior and Senior High School	20-49	61	Educational Services
Miller McDonald Inc	20-49	54	Professional and Scientific and Technical Services
First Realty	20-49	53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
Dickinson Realtors	20-49	53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
Wells Fargo Bank	20-49	52	Finance and Insurance
Security Bank USA	20-49	52	Finance and Insurance
RiverWood Bank	20-49	52	Finance and Insurance
Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union	20-49	52	Finance and Insurance
Paul Bunyan Broadcasting	20-49	51	Information
Lakeland Public Television	20-49	51	Information
FedEx Ground	20-49	49	Transportation and Warehousing
Bemidji Regional Airport	20-49	48	Transportation and Warehousing
Bemidji Aviation Services	20-49	48	Transportation and Warehousing
Simonson Market	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Raphael's Bakery	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Office Max	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Iverson Corner Drug	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Honda of Bemidji	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Harmony Natural Food Co-Op	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Gander Mountain	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Dondelinger Chevrolet Buick	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Chester Berg Toyota	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Bob Lowth Ford Inc	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Bemidji Co-Op Association	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Bemidji Chrysler Center	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Ace Hardware	20-49	44	Retail Trade
Nei Bottling	20-49	42	Wholesale Trade
Naylor's Appliances and Electronics	20-49	42	Wholesale Trade

Five Star Vending	20-49	42	Wholesale Trade
Coca-Cola Bottling Co	20-49	42	Wholesale Trade
Big North Distributing	20-49	42	Wholesale Trade
American Garage Door Supply Inc	20-49	42	Wholesale Trade
Arrow Printing	20-49	32	Manufacturing
Sovde Enterprises Inc	20-49	23	Construction
Peterson Sheet Metal Inc	20-49	23	Construction
Grizzly Truss Fabricators	20-49	23	Construction
Christiansen Industrial Developer	20-49	23	Construction