



Pequot Lakes

Comprehensive Plan

Adopted November 14, 2018

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PEQUOT LAKES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

INTENT

This plan is an update to the 2004 and 2009 Comprehensive Plans. This plan, like its predecessors, creates a unified vision for the City as well as a framework for achieving that vision over the next decade.

The City of Pequot Lakes is committed to planning for the future. Participants in the planning process seek to build on past successes, learn from prior difficulties, and use their collective knowledge to ensure that the people, businesses and organizations of Pequot Lakes are well-positioned for continued prosperity long into the future.

HISTORY

The Central Lakes Region is rich in history, having been inhabited by Native Americans for centuries before French explorers settled in the area. Thirteen recorded prehistoric sites have been identified near the Paul Bunyan Trail alone. The Ojibwa and Dakota were present in the area until explorers entered the region and logging and railroad industries took over. The original Leech Lake Trail provided basic access to the outside world that helped establish the early City of Pequot, after being used by Native Americans to travel from the southern part of the state through the area. The Leech Lake Trail was simply widened and became the original Highway 371.

Pequot first formed as a trading town along the Leech Lake Trail, formerly a Native American and fur-traders travel route. It grew as a logging town with the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad, much like many other small towns in central Minnesota. In 1892, Crow Wing County bonded itself for a railroad from Brainerd to the northern boundary of the state, and the railroad was constructed northwest from Gull Lake into Cass County. The panic of 1893 halted any changes, but by the latter part of 1894 efforts were made to re-route this railroad and carry the line almost directly north from Brainerd.

The railroad opened Pequot and Sibley Township to logging, both of which experienced large-scale clearing of their vast pine stands from the 1890s to the 1920s. The establishment of a large sawmill near the Pequot train station brought more settlers to the area. Lake development near most train stations occurred during this time, which marked the beginning of residential growth and tourism in Pequot. A passenger stage line ran three times a week between Brainerd and Leech Lake; settlers and tourists most likely came in with this line. In 1896, School District 41 formed and the Pequot Post Office was established with F. M. Lawhead as post master. The post office had originally been a Northern Pacific Railroad station.

On December 4, 1900, the Crow Wing County commissioners accepted a petition for organization as Sibley Township. Sibley was named from Lake Sibley, a name given by Nicollet on his map, published in 1843, in honor of Henry Hastings Sibley, for whom Sibley County was also named the town of Pequot, located within Sibley Township, had been platted nine months prior. Pequot had first been named for an early logger, but it was renamed by a postal official for a tribe of Algonquian Indians in eastern Connecticut.

The historic parts of Pequot Lakes were developed in the railroad era. The original town planners of Pequot Lakes designed the city on a traditional grid pattern centered on the railroad stop. This was in deference to the two major modes of transportation at the time: the railroad between towns and simply walking within.

The original housing was located between the railroad stop and Sibley Lake. The original development pattern was mixed-use, so residential and commercial ventures were interspersed throughout the grid. The typical buildings of this era were erected at the edge of the property line. This provided for a pleasant public space in front of the building with room for things like outhouses and garbage bins to the rear.

This approach changed following World War II. The 1950's started the highway era and automobile access became the predominant design feature for new development. Buildings started to be set back further to provide space for parking. They were also designed so as to appeal to passing motorists, with pedestrians frequently becoming an afterthought. New residential and commercial development started to appear on the periphery of town, often outside of the city limits. When the original highway was realigned and expanded, the pattern of new growth along the corridor was auto-oriented.

The area surrounding downtown Pequot Lakes, what was Sibley Township, has developed in a traditional rural/recreational pattern. Most of the development was either farmsteads on rural roads or lake cabins. Old winding trails to lake cabins have been adapted to one degree or another as local roadways. Most of these are substandard in that they lack dedicated public right of way – they exist in a collection of prescriptive easements.

As area development began to pick up in the 1990s, the significant housing investments were transitioning out of urban Pequot Lakes to where property owners could have larger acreage and/or direct lake access. Sibley Township began to transform into its current rural/suburban nature, with suburban-style subdivisions interspersed throughout lands formerly used for agriculture or logging. Many lake homes were converted from seasonal cabins to year-round dwellings, with significant increases in property values corresponding with increases in development intensity.

This is the development pattern that was evolving at the time of the merger between Pequot Lakes and Sibley Township in 2002, a decision that allowed both entities to plan for the character of the area's growth.

The fourth incarnation of the original Leech Lake Trail is manifested in the Trunk Highway 371 Expressway which was completed in 2017, just east of town. Those improvements were in response to increasing traffic counts as well as safety concerns.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

INTENT

Identify, preserve, and enhance the key social and physical resources that contribute to Pequot Lakes' unique character and add to the quality of life for its residents.

SENSE-OF-PLACE

The components that give parts of the historic downtown in Pequot Lakes a strong sense-of-place have been studied by the Planning Commission. They are simple to identify and understand. Where they are absent, it is quite easy to see how the public realm is diminished.

The two key components are:

1. **Lining up the buildings.** Where the buildings are lined up, they have the effect of creating a wall. This boundary condition makes the space feel comfortable to people within it. Where the wall effect is absent, the sense-of-place is lost and the experience of walking past will be unsettling to a pedestrian.
2. **Maintaining the correct width to height ratio.** Once the buildings are lined up to form walls, they need to be correctly spaced or the sense-of-place effect is lost. Maintaining a width to height ratio of between 3:1 and 6:1 is necessary, with 3:1 being optimal. If the buildings are too close, the space will feel cramped. If they are too far away, the public realm feels barren and the sense-of-place is lost.

This applies to areas that are commercial as well as residential. Wherever attention is paid to these two elements, the public realm is enhanced, a sense-of-place can be achieved and the properties become memorable in a way that translates directly into higher valuations.

Coding for these simple attributes does not require the heavy hand of government that is often apparent in zoning codes. To capture the sense-of-place and create a memorable human environment, the City is not called on to regulate such things as siding type or building color. Instead, some simple physical guidelines are all that is necessary, giving the property owner the freedom to develop their own property once the essential elements are satisfied.

SMALL TOWN FEEL

The downtown area— with its unique landmarks, quaint shops, and diverse services – is one of Pequot Lakes' most valued assets. Downtown landmarks such as “The Bobber”, public art, the Cole building and the trail center and park define the Pequot Lakes community. Many historic sites offer a reminder of Pequot's rich heritage. The City features traditional neighborhoods surrounding the downtown, as well as small farms and country homes dotting the area that was once Sibley Township. Public land and uninterrupted forests further accentuate the rural, small town feel indicative of Pequot Lakes which is The Heart of the Good Life.

A Downtown Plan adopted in 2014 outlines design strategies for enhancing the small town feel of the historic downtown. The plan also contains strategies designed to strengthen the economy of the

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downtown by providing increased opportunity for mixed-use development. Adding a built-in “customer” base by promoting new residences in the downtown while designing the public realm to have a strong pedestrian-orientation will allow a mix of businesses to be viable on a year-round basis. This approach will also make more-efficient use of existing infrastructure investments, which is essential if those systems are to be affordable over the long run.

NATURAL FEATURES

Pequot Lakes is a gateway to the Central Lakes Region. Long-time residents, newcomers, and visitors feel strongly connected to this north-woods landscape. Although population growth and improvements in transportation have the potential to boost Pequot Lakes’ local economy, the City must remain cognizant to create economic development and expansion to align with natural features.

Clean lakes, mixed forests, and diverse wetlands all contribute to the scenic beauty and character of Pequot Lakes. These natural features offer residents and visitors a tranquil respite as they provide habitat for plant and animal species. A deep respect for the natural environment is important to preserving it and future development that diminishes these resources can adversely affect what makes Pequot Lakes a special and desirable place.

COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACES AND EVENTS

Community gathering places such as churches and schools are an important part of the cultural fabric. In addition to providing residents with meeting places, they provide opportunities for citizen involvement in groups and activities that strengthen the community.

Encouraging public art by students and local civic groups gives young people an opportunity to engage in their community, enforcing the concept that Pequot Lakes values its youth and takes pride in their education. Yearly festivals like Bean Hole Days, the 4th of July Celebration, Chokecherry Festival, Antique Snowmobile Rendezvous, Cherry Car Show and Bands in the Park provide fun events that celebrate the City’s heritage, bring together people of all age groups, and attract visitors from around the state.

Pequot Lakes also has a tremendous asset with the Trailside Park area, the land between Government Drive and Front Street, adjacent to the Paul Bunyan Trail. To provide more benefit to the community, the park itself, which functions more as a central “square” than a traditional park, also needs some definition to make the space more usable.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

In Pequot Lakes, people have the opportunity to live where they also recreate. The Paul Bunyan Trail, numerous lakes, and areas of publicly and privately owned land provide residents and visitors with a variety of active and passive recreational opportunities. The integration of recreation with everyday life prevails in the City and it is worth preserving, particularly as the population in Pequot Lakes grows and existing recreational facilities face increased pressure. A growing awareness of health and fitness issues points to a greater demand for recreational opportunities in Pequot Lakes.

POLICIES

The following policies are proposed to guide all future growth and development and local government action in Pequot Lakes:

Protect and enhance landmarks, historic and archeological sites, community gathering places, and natural features in Pequot Lakes. The City of Pequot Lakes wants its community character – including the small town feel, natural features, social gathering places and events, and recreational opportunities - to serve as the foundation for economic vitality and quality of life. An increasingly large number of studies support this philosophy, with findings indicating that communities taking steps to actively protect their distinct community assets clearly enhance their economic potential, putting them at an advantage over other communities that don't identify and preserve the components contributing to their community character.

Support traditions, festivals and events that bring the community together and celebrate Pequot Lakes' heritage. The City should continue to sponsor and assist with organizing festivals and events that unite Pequot Lakes and build on its unique history and local culture.

Preserve and maintain forested gateways leading into Pequot Lakes. Planning participants expressed concern that forested gateways into the City could be lost. Residents need to work hard to preserve their community's natural and scenic areas.

Ensure that new development adds to the character of the community and enhances the sense-of-place. Many new developments follow suburban land use patterns and design guidelines, resulting in look-alike cities. All new developments – including commercial, industrial, residential, mixed use, recreational, or civic – should incorporate Pequot Lakes' small town feel and cultural heritage in their layout and design.

Encourage public participation in local government system. The foresight and lack of complacency among residents is distinct in Pequot Lakes. By continuing to encourage and support its tradition of civic engagement, the City will strengthen its community pride and strong traditions. The city should continue to solicit public engagement through the traditional mechanisms (bulletin postings at city hall, newspaper publications, etc.) and also by alternative approaches including social media, email and the city's website.

Ensure that elected and appointed officials, local citizens, business owners, and landowners are informed of and understand the goals and strategies contained in the Comprehensive Plan. This Comprehensive Plan will not be effective unless all property owners, residents, staff, and officials are aware of its policies and actions. Over the years, hundreds of area residents and concerned individuals have volunteered a great deal of time working on planning in the community, including development of the Pequot Lakes Comprehensive Plan, the Highway 371 planning efforts and/or any one of the lake management plans that have been assembled. These participants want to make sure that their work is not discarded, but rather is repeatedly referenced. The City needs to educate everyone impacted by the Comprehensive Plan so that it is the driving vision behind all local decisions.

ACTION ITEMS TO SUPPORT POLICIES

- Create and adopt a strategy to provide continuous engagement with residents through online platforms, also known as Gov 2.0.

- Provide entertainment in the Trailside Park on summer weekends.
- Ensure that improvements to Government Drive provide a platform for growth.
- Ensure that all future lighting installed is scaled to neighborhood standards.
- Establish and maintain a continuous string of festivals and community events throughout the year, particularly during shoulder seasons.
- Create a Park Plan for the Grow Zone and surrounding neighborhoods that leverages park investments to promote livability and encourage private-sector investment.
- Establish an outdoor skating rink in the Grow Zone or the surrounding neighborhoods for use during winter months.
- Establish a splash pad or other water-based recreational amenity in the Grow Zone or the surrounding neighborhoods for use during the summer months.
- Create a distinguishing gateway to highlight the transition to the Grow Zone (downtown) portion of Pequot Lakes.
- Commission local artists to create public art throughout the town. Budget money and fundraise for one or two projects each year.
- Establish a simple, branded website and social media presence that lists and promotes the festivals and events happening in Pequot Lakes.

INTENT

Create a housing approach that accommodates people in all stages of the life cycle, provides quality housing for people and families at all income levels, builds neighborhoods that attract investment and connects those neighborhoods to key destinations within the community.

TRANSITIONING NEIGHBORHOODS

To respond to the current development pattern and the spatial mismatch that has been created between the areas of greatest infrastructure investment and housing values, the City needs to adopt a different approach within the urban, rural and transition neighborhoods.

In urban neighborhoods, an approach that attracts more investment, and a higher-value investment, is critical to the long-term financial and social health of the City. Street standards need to be adjusted to ensure that a complex, neighborhood setting is created with good pedestrian connectivity in a safe, comfortable environment. A new set of development codes are needed to ensure that housing investments address the public realm in a way that adds value to adjacent properties. When each new structure adds value to the overall neighborhood, the task of attracting new investment will become much easier.

In rural areas, where public investments are less but still exceed the tax revenues generated from adjacent properties (except for shoreline properties, which generally produce more revenue than they require in adjacent infrastructure maintenance), the City needs to work to limit long-term liabilities. This will require adjusting road standards back to a more “rustic” design. The City should not assume the maintenance liability on new roads and, for places with huge disparities in public cost/benefit, should look at ways to privatize those segments. The Pequot Lakes Subdivision Ordinance requires a cost/benefit analysis be prepared to analyze ongoing costs to the City to provide services and maintenance to the development.

Transition areas must be managed using either the urban or the rural approach, but never a middle zone between the two. A mid-point will ensure that traditional neighborhoods cannot expand while the resulting development will be constructed at densities that do not provide for recovery of the long-term maintenance costs. To facilitate expansion of urban neighborhoods into the transition area, the City may consider developing a plan for extension of a neighborhood pattern.

POLICIES

The following policies are proposed to guide future housing decisions in Pequot Lakes:

Build neighborhoods that are interconnected to the rest of the community and serve to enhance the public realm. Traditional approaches to zoning are inflexible, separating different styles of housing from each other and disconnecting neighborhoods in a way that is destructive to the character of the neighborhood. Placing large apartment buildings next to smaller-sized housing units detracts from each structure. The City’s approach must be to provide many housing options – single-family, duplex, multi-family, studio apartment and more – but in a form that complements the existing character of the neighborhood.

Ensure that new housing is properly scaled to the neighborhood and designed in a way that enhances the public realm. If Pequot Lakes is to be able to afford to maintain the infrastructure in its historic neighborhoods, the value of the investments in these neighborhoods needs to increase. This will not happen if the scale and design of new investments is of a different model than the neighborhood is designed for. New housing must complement the historic development pattern in order to attract additional investment.

Expand housing options and provide regulatory flexibility in the city's urban areas. Pequot Lakes is saturated with rental housing in large, multi-family buildings. The majority of this housing is located in the downtown. It is appropriate for the density but not for the scale of the buildings, which are not compatible with the neighborhoods they are part of. Flexibility is needed so that affordable options for meeting the housing demand can happen within these existing neighborhoods.

Land surrounding the downtown in the rural/urban transition zone is appropriate for expanding the downtown development pattern. Such expansion should accommodate families as well as seniors. Providing for population growth within the urban areas of Pequot Lakes will benefit commercial businesses located downtown, will make efficient use of existing infrastructure investments and will provide viable alternatives to the suburban pattern migrating into rural, more natural areas.

Ensure that public improvements in the right-of-way are properly scaled to the neighborhood it serves. The form and intensity of private sector investments in housing will respond to the improvements that are made in the public realm. Where streets are high-speed and reserved only for auto traffic, the adjacent development pattern will tend to be low density and auto-oriented. Where streets are neighborhood speed and accommodate a wide range of travel options, the adjacent development pattern can become more intense in a traditional, neighborhood pattern. It is important that the public improvements scale properly to the development pattern that is served.

Encourage new medium- and high-density housing units to include amenities designed to accommodate seniors. A portion of the rental housing stock in Pequot Lakes is geared toward today's seniors. Tomorrow's seniors will have higher demands and expectations. If Pequot Lakes is to remain competitive, housing stock in the city should be modernized to service the upcoming elderly demographic.

Seek to eliminate substandard housing to provide for safe living environments. Substandard housing poses a health and safety threat to those who occupy it, which are often poor families who are renting. Substandard housing also undermines overall property values throughout the city and can cause pockets of blight where the market will not reinvest. Through public and private reinvestment, the City should encourage new homes of quality construction and ensure that existing substandard homes are brought up to code or removed.

ACTION ITEMS TO SUPPORT POLICIES

- Adjust the City's land use regulations to provide for more flexibility for rural property owners engaging in historic agriculture and related activities.
- Adjust the City's road standards to provide for low-volume, rustic roads, to be used in the rural areas.
- Extend the Grow Zone approach to the surrounding traditional neighborhoods through adoption of a form-based code for these places.

- Utilize the City’s recently adopted street standards which promotes safe pedestrian and biking travel in addition to compatible automobile travel throughout the entire urban area of the City.
- Conduct a study to identify specific streets where targeted investments in enhanced infrastructure (sidewalks, dedicated bike lanes, dedicated trails, neighborhood placemaking, etc.) can have the greatest impact on improving connectivity.
- Work with the HRA to develop a target list of redevelopment properties, on public or private infrastructure.
- Perform an assessment of walkability in the Grow Zone and throughout the surrounding neighborhoods to determine areas of high and low pedestrian mobility and identify priority corridors for mobility improvements.
- Promote construction of quality, affordable life cycle housing.
- Seek and encourage home based businesses.
- Promote farm to table cooperative.
- Promote a vibrant and complete senior living complex.
- Encourage owner occupied dwellings.
- Engage local contractors and developers to partner with development and redevelopment of our housing inventory.
- Provide regular and ongoing enforcement of maintenance standards throughout the City.
- Consider adoption of the State Building Code.
- Develop a Transition Area Plan to fast track private sector investments in the transition area. The plan would provide a framework for connecting future development to the existing urban areas of the City.
- Work with the HRA to develop a plan for rehabilitation of existing homes.
- Create a Park Plan for the Grow Zone and surrounding neighborhoods that leverages park investments to promote livability and encourage private-sector investment.
- Review the land use code for any regulations that may get in the way of the establishment of local agriculture operations.
- Develop an incentive policy to encourage the establishment of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTENT

Have a well-balanced local economy that builds on Pequot Lakes' existing business community, attracts outside investment, encourages entrepreneurs, promotes the creation of diverse jobs and serves the consumer and service needs of Pequot Lakes' residents and the surrounding neighborhoods. Pequot Lakes is a well-established community. Growth is needed to avoid stagnation and the city needs to get a higher utilization on public investments by encouraging development within the existing infrastructure.

BUSINESS PARK

The City of Pequot Lakes embarked on a business/industrial park due to the economic diversification, job opportunities, and tax base it would offer. The park was completed to aid in attracting and retaining manufacturing and other businesses. Pequot Lakes Business Park was established in 1996 and expanded in 2003. The park includes 33 lots and more than 60 acres. In 2017, a survey was completed of the existing companies in the business park. There are currently 17 operating companies that employ 229 people, and generates approximately \$145,000 annually in property taxes for local governmental units.

The growing capacity within the community provided an opportunity for Pequot Lakes to establish a business park using a grant and loan package from the Federal government, in addition to other funding sources. The industries in the park provide the area with a degree of economic stability that comes with having year-round jobs and products that are exported from the area. In 2008, the City modified its land use regulations to provide more development flexibility within the park (smaller lots and increased coverage limits) to get higher utilization out of the existing infrastructure investments and entice development of the remaining undeveloped properties.

DOWNTOWN

The downtown area was the original commercial center of the community. Based around the location of the old railroad stop, it has the traditional grid pattern of development. While the entire area has been developed with full municipal utilities, the development has evolved to be based primarily along the major transportation corridors. Since the close proximity of businesses in the downtown provides a direct interaction amongst patrons, the existing development provides a solid base to build on and an opportunity for additional growth.

In 2009, the city established a "Grow Zone" throughout the downtown commercial areas. In searching for a way to reduce regulations and streamline the permitting process for businesses, an alternative set of standards were developed for this area. Instead of the standard zoning approach, which prohibits any use not specifically allowed, the Grow Zone standards instead allow nearly all uses and focus instead on the form new construction takes. Where this form is compatible with the existing development pattern, not only does it add to the "destination effect" of the downtown, but approvals can be made very quickly. Property owners seeking to make improvements to a property within the Grow Zone may choose to either utilize the Grow Zone standards or stick with the traditional approach.

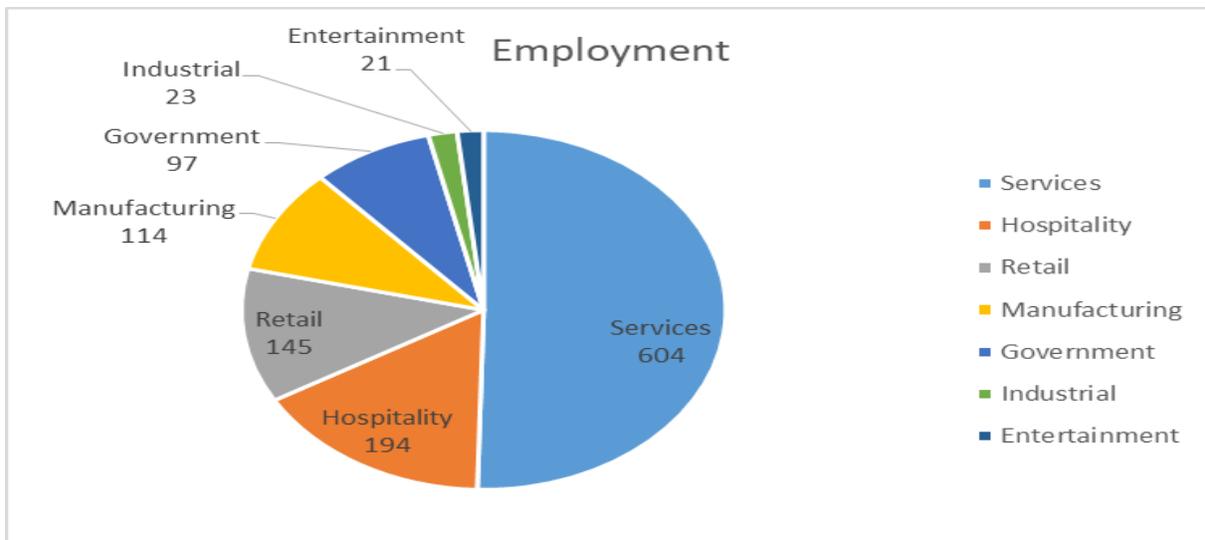
With the infrastructure in the downtown area in need of maintenance, there is a need to increase the amount of development, grow the tax base and get a higher return on the reinvestment in this infrastructure.

PATRIOT AVENUE CORRIDOR

Outside of the downtown, the former Highway 371 corridor, now Patriot Avenue, has developed in an auto-oriented pattern. For the most part, this development is not tied to municipal utilities and has developed in a somewhat random distribution. There are areas where development is clustered together and other areas where there are large gaps between enterprises.

EMPLOYMENT

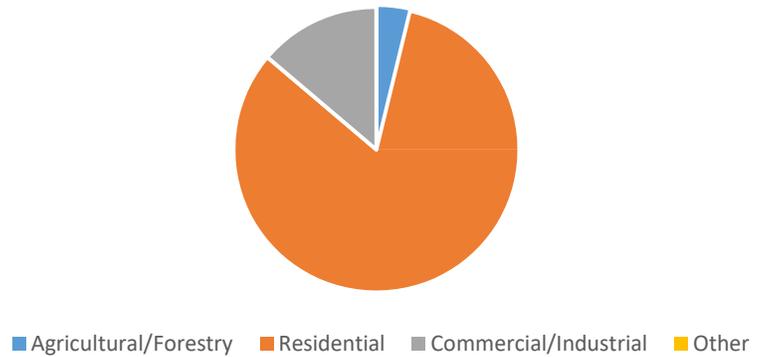
These three geographic areas of development have created a local economy that is highly service-oriented. Information provided by Minnesota Employment and Economic Development indicates 51% of the jobs in Pequot Lakes are service-related. The estimated population for Pequot Lakes is 2,226. The United States Census Bureau in 2015 found roughly 15% of the workforce live and are employed in the City. Approximately 85% of the workers employed in the City live elsewhere.



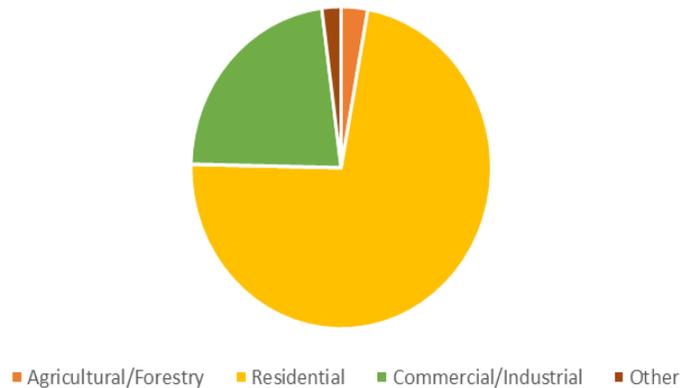
TAX BASE DISTRIBUTION

It is also important context to have an understanding of the relative tax distribution within the City of Pequot Lakes. Where other area communities, such as Brainerd and Baxter, draw large percentage of their tax base from commercial development, Pequot Lakes relies most heavily on residential areas. Roughly 3/4ths of the local tax base comes from residential development.

Property Value Distribution
2018 Crow Wing County Assessor's Data



Property Tax Capacity Distribution
2018 Crow Wing County Assessor's Data



POLICIES

The following policies are proposed to guide future economic growth and development in Pequot Lakes:

Strive to maintain long-term stability in the City's rate of taxation. Business growth and creation in Pequot is going to depend on the City's long-term competitiveness. It is enticing to spend money today to induce near-term growth. However, when that growth does not create long-term revenues to handle ongoing maintenance expenses, the subsequent rising tax rate hurts business. Pequot Lakes must take a long-term look at its tax and expense structure and ensure businesses a solid and stable investment environment.

Maintain the downtown area as the center for economic activity in Pequot Lakes. As many cities struggle to keep their downtown areas strong and vital, Pequot Lakes has an advantage in that its downtown already has a healthy mix of retail and professional businesses clustered together. The City must keep the agglomeration of its businesses and seek to infill and redevelop commercial properties as they become available. The City also needs to work to systematically reconnect and rehabilitate the neighborhoods surrounding the core downtown so as to further strengthen the businesses there.

Make the area's natural, scenic, and recreational amenities the Pequot Lakes brand. The primary reason that people choose to live, work and visit the Pequot Lakes area is the natural, scenic beauty and the many recreational opportunities. Pequot is in a unique position to retain that powerful brand and use it to not only enhance the quality of life for residents but provide long-term business opportunities for compatible enterprises.

Streamline the regulatory process to provide business owners with flexibility while ensure new enterprises build on the community's assets and enhance its brand. The City's regulatory framework needs to protect existing investments while at the same time encouraging the expansion and redevelopment of key commercial areas. The City's ordinances need to be continually re-evaluated to ensure that they clearly and aggressively promote the vision of this plan while eliminating needless and counterproductive regulation. Regulations must be clear to understand and approval processes should be as streamlined and user-friendly as possible.

Strive to have the business park fully utilized. The long-term maintenance costs of the industrial park need to be met by increased development – and more intensive development – within the business park. Storm sewer systems are designed to handle an overall impervious coverage amount of 95% and the sanitary sewer and water systems also have excess capacity. It is critical, for the long-term economic health of the community that the City continues to seek ways to obtain a higher return on the existing business park properties.

Ensure that expansion of the City's commercial zoning districts are tied to the cost-effective expansion of utilities. Development along the Patriot Avenue corridor misdirects investments that are critically needed in the downtown and business park areas. In addition, development along this corridor impedes safe vehicle travel, degrades traffic capacity and is expensive to provide service to. Businesses in these areas may find comparatively cheap land prices, but that reflects the difficulty in sustaining a business in an isolated location. New commercial zones must be reserved for areas in the community that will

immediately utilize the community's existing investments in major infrastructure.

Promote an excellent school district and housing policies that cater to a diverse workforce. The success of businesses in the community will depend on people choosing to move to, live in and invest in Pequot Lakes. A healthy school and desirable workforce housing are two of the most critical components necessary to attract workers and investment. To the extent possible, the City of Pequot Lakes needs to support the local school district and work to implement a robust housing strategy for the urban neighborhoods of Pequot Lakes.

Assist local businesses with leveraging capital. To maintain a sustainable local economy, the City of Pequot Lakes should create an environment for businesses to establish, grow and prosper. The City needs to help new businesses and businesses in transition leverage capital. The availability of capital is the most important factor in creating and expanding a business. Financial incentives are an important economic development tool for the City to use. The City has the ability to utilize a number of incentives: Tax Increment Financing (TIF), tax abatement, revolving loan programs and more. The City needs to be deliberative in which types of projects it provides financial incentives to.

Partner with local economic development agencies to support and enhance businesses. The City should assist in energizing the local business spirit. An entrepreneurial spirit in a city is a contagious thing. If the City continues to show a dedication to business, our partners in the Chamber of Commerce and the Brainerd Lakes Area Economic Development Corporation will help promote it. City officials need to be active in business networks reinforcing the idea that local economic advances will come largely through local cooperation.

ACTIONS ITEMS TO SUPPORT POLICIES

- Change the City's budgeting process to include a five-year budget projection as part of the annual budgeting process.
- Perform an assessment of walkability in the Grow Zone and throughout the surrounding neighborhoods to determine areas of high and low pedestrian mobility and identify priority corridors for mobility improvements.
- Adopt a small business subsidy plan targeted to 1) regional destination and 2) neighborhood service businesses that desire to locate or expand within the Grow Zone.
- Adjust the zoning code to clearly reserve all space within the industrial park for uses that are not public, and will pay property tax.
- Ensure that improvements to Government Drive and Patriot Avenue provide a platform for growth.
- Establish an outreach program to have city representatives personally meet with local business owners, realtors, bankers and others that may influence private-sector investing decisions to inform them of the City's unique, pro-growth vision.
- Provide regular and ongoing enforcement of maintenance standards for properties located within the Business Park as well as the Grow Zone and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Create a Park Plan for the Grow Zone surrounding neighborhoods that leverages park investments to promote livability and encourage private-sector investment.
- Implement a local Economic Gardening strategy which focuses on growing a wide array of small locally owned businesses as opposed to attracting one large employer or industry from outside the area.
- Take steps to encourage the development of living units above businesses in the downtown area.
- Work with the local business community to ensure their needs are being adequately addressed by a chamber presence within the City.
- Further develop the town center park as a unifying feature.

- Provide programs to revitalize and fill store fronts.
- Build on the arts community and promote history/culture.
- Further attract and diversify businesses by new strategic commercial development.
- Focus on being tech ready by partnering with local communication providers to improve broadband service in the core area of our City as well as surrounding areas.
- Plan for phased expansion of the business park to be ready for businesses which may wish to locate in our City.
- Develop a market plan centered on live, work, and play utilizing the new trademark “The Heart of the Good Life”.

NATURAL RESOURCES

INTENT

Preserve and enhance the health, beauty and ecological function of the area's natural resources, including plant and animal species, wildlife, forests, lakes, streams, wetlands, groundwater, soils and slopes, air and other environmental amenities.

WILDLIFE AND RARE SPECIES

Pequot Lakes is home to a diverse array of wildlife species. Future development may threaten these populations. Buffers around prime habitat and corridors linking habitat patches can safeguard wildlife from future development.

FORESTS AND NATIVE PLANT COMMUNITIES

At one point, Pequot Lakes was covered primarily by Red and White Pine. The expansion of railroads to the area resulted in heavy logging from 1870- 1920. Today, approximately half of the land within Pequot Lakes is forested with deciduous and coniferous trees. As growth and the number of people increase, air, light and noise pollution could become greater problems.

WATER RESOURCES

Part of Minnesota's "Northern Lakes and Forests Eco-region," Pequot Lakes is home to a number of lakes including Sibley, Mayo, West Twin, East Twin, a small portions of Lower Cullen, Middle Cullen, and Upper Cullen, as well as Natural Environment Lakes Cloverleaf, Rice, and Lund. These lakes provide residents with breathtaking scenery, good fishing, and a host of other recreational opportunities

Phosphorous, once a common component of fertilizers, poses a threat to the future health of lakes. The major cause of elevated phosphorous levels in Sibley and Mayo Lakes is some shoreline runoff, but primarily runoff from the Mayo Creek watershed. Continuous efforts are underway to determine areas of erosion on the creek with restoration efforts ensuing. A large portion of the phosphorous is from sediment download from areas that are bare of vegetation. Efforts are also focused on reducing runoff from cattle operations through the use of buffer zones and best practices for ranching

All land use activities occurring within local watersheds impact area lakes. Specific activities that threaten area lakes include lakeshore development, rip-rap and other harmful landscaping practices, faulty septic systems, fertilizers, increased impervious surface, soil compaction, and the removal of aquatic and terrestrial vegetation. Minnesota's natural resources are threatened by a number of invasive species. Aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels and Eurasian watermilfoil inhabit a small percent of waters throughout the state. Boaters, anglers, lake associations, and local governments must continue to work to stop aquatic hitchhikers and protect our water resources.

Wetlands and streams perform invaluable functions in watershed health, providing habitat for a diversity of rare wildlife and fish species, controlling erosion and slowing surface run-off, filtering pollutants and

sediments, allowing for groundwater recharge and discharge, minimizing flood damage, and providing opportunities for recreation, economic development, and education. Today, Pequot Lakes contains over 500 acres of wetlands, most of which are located around lakes. The wetlands vary from inland swamps and herbaceous wetlands to open ponds. Because of their contribution to environmental health, economic development, and quality of life for local citizens, the City of Pequot Lakes seeks to protect existing wetlands and works to ensure their natural function.

SOILS AND GEOLOGY

The last glaciers to cover Central Minnesota deposited large quantities of sand and gravel over the area now occupied by Pequot Lakes. Today, nearly 75 percent of land area features sandy outwash plains over sandstone bedrock. While the plains provide good building sites, the sand over sand feature is highly susceptible to groundwater contamination, which must be considered for new development that is not supported by the municipal sewer system, particularly in the Wellhead Protection Area.

SLOPE AND TOPOGRAPHY

Slope and topography serve as important determinants of potential development areas. Development and altered gradients along slopes can result in restricted scenic views and vistas, and can contribute to erosion and slope instability. Although Pequot Lakes is rather flat, it contains several hilly areas located in the northern portion of the City. These hilly moraines featuring sandy soils on moderately steep slopes are particularly vulnerable to disturbances caused by development.

AIR QUALITY AND NATURAL SCENERY

Residents and visitors in Pequot Lakes value and enjoy clean air and quiet tranquility, largely due to the area's many forests and overall lack of traffic congestion. As development continues and the number of people using automobiles and recreational vehicles increases, air and noise pollution could become potential problems. By encouraging alternative forms of transportation that connect residents and visitors to destinations in the area—including shuttles and multiple use trails—the City of Pequot Lakes can prevent air pollution from becoming a problem. To maintain the current levels of air and noise quality, the City should also protect trees for air purification and noise reduction, enact regulations and designated-use areas for off-road recreational vehicles, and promote alternative energy such as fuel cells and wind and solar power.

POLICIES

The following policies are proposed to guide future preservation and management of natural resources in Pequot Lakes:

Protect and enhance natural resources and open space contributing to the character and vitality of Pequot Lakes. While it may seem that Pequot Lakes has an abundance of natural resources and open spaces, unmanaged growth and development could degrade the City's natural resources. The City must actively protect existing natural resources and enhance those that contribute to Pequot Lakes' rural character.

Direct future development away from significant and/or sensitive natural resources and toward

suitable areas with existing infrastructure and proper soil and slope characteristics. The city should limit development around wetlands and bluffs and encourage development in more suitable upland areas that are served by the city's streets, and sewer/water systems.

Promote development and construction practices that retain and improve existing natural features and systems on and around building sites. Not all development is equal with respect to its impact on natural resources. Development practices that identify and preserve significant natural resources - such as clustering, open space dedications, restrictive covenants, or conservation easements – should be promoted by the City whenever possible. Furthermore, construction practices in all new developments should avoid causing erosion, tree damage, or the disruption of significant ecological features.

Support more environmentally sound alternatives to transportation, power, storm water management, landscaping, and sewage treatment. One of the City's strengths is its progressive thinking. The City should take the lead in promoting the use of new, sustainable technologies for its infrastructure.

Foster environmental stewardship. Pequot Lakes must educate residents and visitors about the value and importance of preserving natural resources for sustaining the environment, local economy and quality of life.

ACTIONS ITEMS TO SUPPORT POLICIES

- Work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), local lake associations and others to prevent the spread of invasive species to or from arealakes.
- Implement the Subsurface Sewage Treatment System (SSTS) monitoring program to ensure ongoing maintenance and compliant operation of systems throughout the City.
- Control runoff from farms and city streets to lakes.
- Enroll in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's GreenStep Cities program.
- Explore the possibility of becoming designated as a "Bird City" through Audubon Minnesota.

RECREATION

INTENT

Provide an inter-connected and highly accessible City-wide recreational system with adequate public and private amenities that offer diverse and high-quality outdoor recreation for all socioeconomic levels.

BACKGROUND

The City of Pequot Lakes has a mixture of recreation amenities. Outdoor recreation is a primary reason many residents have chosen to reside in this part of the Central Lakes Region. Preserving and enhancing recreational opportunities is a high priority in continuing the current standard of living for residents. Features of Pequot Lakes' outdoor recreational system include lakes and wetlands, trails, public natural areas, playgrounds, and private facilities such as golf courses. Indoor recreation is also available at the school gym, coffee shops, and retail stores.

LAKES AND WETLANDS

Lakes and wetlands are community assets and provide scenic vistas for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. These bodies of water also benefit Pequot Lakes by providing opportunities for more active recreation. Since development is prohibited in wetland areas, these pieces of land are ideal areas for outdoor recreation such as hunting, winter trails, and bird watching.

Within city boundaries, Pequot Lakes has five primarily recreational lakes: Sibley, Mayo, East Twin, West Twin, and most of Middle Cullen. Lakes are true public open space, and public lake access exists on Sibley, East, and West Twin Lakes.

TRAILS AND SCENIC BYWAYS

Trails are a significant recreation opportunity in Pequot Lakes. The most widely-known existing trail is the Paul Bunyan State Trail, a paved path that runs from Crow Wing State Park south of Baxter to Bemidji. This trail is a significant tourist attraction that brings visitors through the central commercial district of downtown.

The Mayo Lake Nature Preserve, located off Hurtig Road, consists of 64 acres of land graciously donated to the City. Situated toward the end of Wilderness Road, the State Wildlife Management Area contains over 200 acres. Both of these areas are available for passive recreation, such as bird watching, walking, hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and wildlife viewing.

The Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway, which runs along County Highways 11 and 16 in Pequot Lakes, is another important recreational asset. In addition to providing a "forested gateway" to the City, the byway preserves the scenic value of the area for drivers to enjoy, draws tourists to the City, and provides additional walking and biking surfaces. The 54-mile Byway connects with the Paul Bunyan State Trail in Pequot Lakes and Jenkins. This area may be designated as a Bird City area. Birds are an indicator of the health of the environment.

PUBLIC NATURAL AREAS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Many large pieces of forested land, wetlands and open space in Pequot Lakes are publicly owned. City, state, and county public land owners create challenges in managing the use of land for recreation purposes. Nevertheless, coordination is necessary in order to provide the most benefits to the community. Public land is an important resource for hunting activities. The Pequot Lakes School District provides athletic fields to be used by students and residents. The City operates several city parks providing recreational opportunities and locations for community events. The City should support the County in their pursuit to lease and improve the DNR-owned fire tower property.

Trailside Park is located in the center of the downtown area. Community festivals, such as Bean Hole Days and Bands in the Park, utilize both sections of the park. A large playground is available. Planned improvements to this park include expansion to include Bobber Park, addition of a splash pad, skating rink, a community building, and a flag display. Bobber Park is home to Paul Bunyan's Ox and Paul Bunyan's Chair, as well as the historic Bobber Water Tower.

Neighborhood parks are important and provide opportunities for close-to-home recreation. Sibley Lake Park overlooks Sibley Lake. The Sibley Lake Association recently provided the labor to remove the deteriorating steps and revegetate the hillside, along with moving the fishing pier and providing new access steps. A playground was recently donated to be utilized by neighborhood children as well as visitors.

Gildner Park and Trailside North Park are neighborhood parks that include playground equipment, picnic tables, and barbeque grills.

Pequot Lakes is also home to a Dog Park. The Dog Park is located under the new City Water Tower and is used by residents and visitors.

Equally important are indoor recreational facilities. The school gym complex and Trailside Center are indoor facilities that can be utilized.

POLICIES

The following policies are proposed to guide future recreational growth and development in Pequot Lakes:

Preserve the integrity of city lakes by limiting development in sensitive shoreland areas. Levels of recreational use for many activities are high in relation to surrounding areas; two examples are hunting and fishing. Much of the present and future development in Pequot Lakes is concentrating on lesser value lakeshore where fish and wildlife habitat values are high; programs are needed to preserve some lakeshore from development.

Make lakes, wetlands, and public forests more accessible to the public. The lakes and wetlands are scenic spots for recreating residents and tourists. Since development is prohibited on wetlands, they are prime locations for recreational opportunities such as hunting, birding, or winter trails.

Partner with other public entities owning undeveloped property in Pequot Lakes to create a coordinated plan for future recreational use. The integration of public land could greatly enhance

recreation opportunities in Pequot Lakes. City parks, State forests, and County and State trails can add connections for all kinds of recreation. It is essential for the City to coordinate preservation of public space for future use. Now is the time to possess the foresight before Pequot Lakes finds all open space completely divided out and privately owned.

Seek to increase the existing recreational resource base and to connect all new and existing recreational features and facilities. While recreational activities and use of facilities by both residents and non-residents has increased significantly in recent years, the resource base available has actually decreased. Most of this recreation takes place on limited public lands and waters. Thus, preservation of key recreational features must be a component of all new developments. The City must take advantage of opportunities to expand and connect existing and future outdoor recreational facilities.

ACTION ITEMS TO SUPPORT POLICIES

- Identify and establish well-marked routes that more directly connect snowmobile and bicycle traffic from the regional trail system into the City.
- Maintain an open dialogue with the City of Breezy Point and Crow Wing County regarding a recreational trail system between the Paul Bunyan Trail and the City of Breezy Point along the County State Aid Highway 11 corridor.
- Improve mobility options by connecting community assets (parks, schools, library, etc.) whenever feasible with multi-modal transportation facilities.
- Utilize community facilities and activities and communicate, collaborate and expand on them.
- Explore alternatives for low-cost hiking trails through the woods that could be accessed by walking from downtown.

TRANSPORTATION

INTENT

Maintain a transportation system that provides for a variety of safe and flexible mobility options for people and businesses operating within the City, as well as provides for safe, high-speed access to the surrounding economic region all at a cost that is financially responsible to taxpayers.

HIGHWAY 371

The Highway 371 Expressway was completed in 2017 and is located along the easterly border of Downtown Pequot Lakes. Safety concerns for motorists created the need for this increased roadway corridor. The new four lane expressway from Nisswa to Jenkins provides enhanced connectivity to more populous areas, while providing safe and efficient travel to the City of Pequot Lakes for those that visit and work in our community. Future developments of the City's road system should capitalize on this new alignment that allows for ease of access and intra-city travel.

The roads turnback process, between the City, Crow Wing County, and MnDOT for CSAH (Main Street), TH 371 (Patriot Avenue), and County Road 112 (Rasmussen Road), have allowed the City opportunities to create a more walkable and bike-able community due to the safer traffic pattern that has emerged in the downtown area. This, along with the future improvements to Trailside Park, will create a more cohesive community to live, work, and play.

LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS

The City has had an informal policy of working to bring every road up to meet the City's official standard. As the economy has evolved and the explosive growth of the 1990's and through 2008 has vanished, there is reason to reconsider this approach. Even in the best of economic times, the City had difficulty keeping up with road and street maintenance. With a less vigorous economy projected for some time to come, it does not seem to be possible that the City could keep every implied road and street maintenance commitment.

The reality is, however, that the City does not know exactly how much that implied commitment is. While some projects that have been in the works for years are continuously delayed for lack of funds (Government Drive being the prime example), other urgent projects are added to the near-term list. Many of the roads that were built by developers or through a direct assessment of petitioning property owners are still in their first life cycle, so major maintenance expense has not been an issue.. In order to greater understand these pending expenses the City has developed a Street Criteria Policy which provides for the evaluation and rehabilitation schedule of all of the City streets.

It is also becoming more apparent that the assumptions behind the current road and street sections may be faulty, or at least not in line with the public's financial expectations. For roads, it is always assumed that two cars must be able to meet going in opposite direction at high speed without the need to slow down or yield. While being able to drive 40 mph instead of 20 mph can save minutes on a trip, this design may be a luxury we are no longer willing to pay for.

Similarly with City streets, the design in the traditional neighborhoods has also encouraged high-speed auto traffic at the expense of any other mode of travel. Not only is the approach very expensive, it erodes private-sector investment in areas where the City has significant additional investment in expensive public utilities (sewer, water, storm sewer). The City's approach to streets needs to be reevaluated to ensure it creates value and attracts additional private-sector investment to the City's neighborhoods.

POLICIES

The following policies are proposed to guide all future transportation-related decisions in Pequot Lakes:

Promote a safe transportation system. The most important design factor for a transportation system is safety. Proven methods for increasing safety on rural roads are to slow speed and limit intersections. New roads and reconstructed roads should use traffic calming designs to slow traffic. The number of intersections in new developments should be limited, especially along collector roads. Within urban areas, crosswalks, clearly defined intersections, and narrowing of the roadway with vertical elements such as trees or store-fronts are needed to slow speeds and increase driver awareness. Urban areas must have an approach that does not emphasize automobile trips to the detriment of other forms of mobility.

Ensure that local roads and streets enhance the public realm. Rural roads need to be physically and aesthetically designed to be rural. Excessively wide road widths and clear zones increase traffic speed and create a road that lacks character. Narrower road sections slow traffic speeds and maintain a rural character, especially where the roads are tree lined. Urban streets need to provide for mobility choices beyond automobiles. These streets need to be designed so that they add value to adjacent properties and induce higher levels of private-sector development throughout the City's traditional neighborhoods.

Ensure a highly-connected road network. Most developers prefer to develop on a cul-de-sac for a number of reasons that benefit their development in the short-term. Limiting the number of cul-de-sacs and promoting inter-connecting roads creates redundancy that improves safety, provides alternative routes, and ensures a more efficient transportation network. It also reduces maintenance costs and facilitates future growth and development.

Plan for the long-term financial viability of the current transportation system. The City has developed a Street Criteria Policy which provides for the evaluation and rehabilitation schedule of all of the City streets. This evaluation is reviewed annually. Maintenance of city streets and roads should be a primary objective allowing for safe and connected travel within the city. Maximization of use of turn-back funds should be analyzed to make sure sufficient funding is available for repairs and growth in our road system. Wise investment of the funds to insure that they are available at the time of need should be considered. In addition to capital fund projections, a cash flow analysis should be done and updated periodically on the cost to maintain our streets and roads.

Direct new residential growth toward existing roads and limit the amount of roads in new developments. Residential growth is rapidly occurring in Pequot Lakes and will continue to occur in the rural areas whether the City promotes it or not. Development in the remote areas of the City is more costly to maintain service than development closer to the downtown or along existing roadways. There is no need to subsidize development, either directly or indirectly, outside of the downtown area, especially when doing so increases City expenses more than a development of equal size that is more efficiently located.

ACTIONS ITEMS TO SUPPORT POLICIES

- Ensure that improvements to Government Drive and Patriot Avenue provide a platform for growth.
- Create inviting Highway 371 accesses/gateways into the community.
- Frequently review signage plans.
- Provide for a traffic flow analysis as part of any decision process that involves changing existing roads and corridors within our community. Decisions should be based on data.
- Designate a truck route from the Business Park to County Road 11 and State Highway 371 avoiding residential areas.
- Support bikers, rollerbladers, trail users and pedestrians by continuing to improve and add bike racks and rollerblade lockers.
- Work with Crow Wing County to properly-scale the TH 371 and CSAH 11 corridors through the Grow Zone area following the construction of the TH 371 Alternate Alignment. Ensure that these corridors maintain a character that encourages pedestrian activity throughout the Grow Zone.

INFRASTRUCTURE

INTENT

Maintain systems of infrastructure, including municipal sanitary sewer, individual sewage treatment systems, municipal water supply, individual wells, storm sewer, electricity, natural gas and advanced telecommunications that provide, over multiple life-cycles, for a prosperous local economy, a healthy environment and a high standard of living.

BACKGROUND

The City is serviced by municipal, corporate and individually owned utility systems, all filling a needed role in supporting life and economic activity in the City of Pequot Lakes.

The City operates a municipal water system. The system serves the downtown area, the business park and some residential areas within the core of the City. Dependent on the features constructed, capacity may become an issue with potential Trailside Park amenities.

There are some minor issues with the water system that need to be addressed. Old, leaking curb stops create losses in the system that are difficult to track. All water users are auto read. A monthly meter maintenance fee is charged to utility customers to help defray costs in upgrading the metering system.

Residents outside of the reach of the water utility obtain their water from individual wells. It is not known exactly how many of these are shallow wells, although it is widely believed to be a significant percentage. The aquifer is unconfined and therefore there exists a high potential for contamination.

The City operates a municipal sanitary sewer system basically covering the same service area as the water system. The system contains six lift stations, all of which have been recently upgraded. Sewage is treated in an aerated pond system with the effluent being ground applied through row irrigation on adjacent farm fields. The ponds are currently operating at roughly 60%, with flows being relatively stable month to month. The clay liner in the ponds were replaced with a plastic liner. Along with a modified approach to the row irrigation system, these improvements appear to have successfully addressed potential groundwater contamination concerns.

Individuals not serviced by the municipal sanitary sewer system treat their sewage through individual systems. New state regulations have addressed some concerns over poorly maintained systems, although problems still loom large, especially on lakeshores where the characteristics of seasonal usage are not compatible with standard on-site treatment. The City has developed a policy requiring compliance inspections on existing systems.

The City has limited storm sewer facilities. These were almost all ad-hoc repairs installed in reaction to acute problems that had developed. As the City continues to grow and development patterns become even more intense, there will be a need for aggressive stormwater management. Some of this management may be able to happen on individual sites, although most of it will need to be done by the City. Stormwater management continues to be improved when road reconstructions occur.

Broadband and fiber are the main conduit for commerce, both today and in the future. Any road or utility work should be an opportunity for internet service providers to install fiber or other updated communication lines. Heavy emphasis should be placed on making Pequot Lakes a tech ready city for business, education, health, and personal utilization. Partnering with local providers to provide high speed internet access at an affordable price should be a primary objective.

POLICIES

The following policies are proposed to guide all future infrastructure–related decisions in Pequot Lakes:

Municipal utility systems must be fiscally managed like a private utility, minus the profit margin. Public utilities need to operate in the same manner as private utilities. They need to maintain the current system and level of service while financially planning ahead for repairs or replacement of system components. The City has increased water and sewer rates incrementally for the past several years. Periodic rate adjustments that reflect the real cost of running and maintaining these systems are necessary. Expanding the business park or other area within reach of city services, partner with private investment should be considered wherever possible to reduce strain on the limited tax capacity of our city.

The long-term expense of infrastructure expansion and the corresponding assumptions for induced growth and enhanced tax base need to be evaluated prior to every project that adds new infrastructure for taxpayers to maintain. Infrastructure projects in Pequot Lakes have historically been done on a “cash flow” basis, where the City evaluates the impact to the levy from paying its portion of a given project. When projects are funded with outside dollars (grants, low interest loans or direct private-sector investment in a project), the City has generally not calculated the long-term obligations of infrastructure maintenance, instead focusing on the potential near-term gains from increased property tax base. As our current infrastructure completes its initial life cycle, projected maintenance costs – which are typically a City obligation – are growing to unaffordable levels. Before additional obligation is added, it is critical that the City understand the entire cost it is committing to.

Public sector investments need to be aligned with private sector investments in areas with substantial infrastructure investments. The City of Pequot Lakes has made its most significant infrastructure commitments in the traditional neighborhoods, downtown and the business park. The city should continue to encourage private sector investments in these areas to maximize the local return on investment. The city should also continue to fiscally analyze new developments and only accept proposed public improvements if they make financial sense for the city.

When infrastructure systems are being maintained, the City must consider whether or not the infrastructure should be enhanced or scaled back based on the anticipated level of development that it serves. There are areas in the City, particularly in the downtown, where modest amounts of additional enhancement as part of a rehabilitation project would create a platform for additional private sector investment (e.g. Taking savings from narrower travel lanes and using it for wider sidewalks). Conversely, there are areas where the level of service provided is not supported by – or often even desired by – the properties that are served (e.g. Wider, faster roads through the rural countryside). When the City undertakes a major maintenance project, the land use potential for the area served needs to be the determinant factor in the form and scale of the improvement. (The proposed Road Specification Matrix may align with land use.)

Ensure a high level of maintenance of individual sewage treatment systems. Individual sewage treatment systems - when properly installed, used, and maintained - provide an adequate level of sewage treatment. All properties that lie outside of the sewer service area have their sewage treated by individual treatment systems. In a seasonal area, these systems often do not work as designed when they experience peak usage and/or are not properly maintained year-round. Especially along the shoreline, this has a dramatic effect on the quality of the area's resources. A more aggressive approach towards inspection and maintenance of individual systems should be implemented, especially in shoreline and wellhead areas. The City must remain open to new and innovative ways to treat sewage.

Facilities that have a risk of fire damage (industrial uses, commercial uses where flammable liquids are present, etc.) or house large populations of people (schools, group home facilities, etc.) must be located on the municipal water system for fire protection. The City's municipal water system provides enough pressure and volume for excellent fire protection throughout the industrial park and most of the downtown. With the office/campus concept growing in appeal, there is a trend to locate facilities with a high number of people to more remote areas. This is especially true where there is an availability of raw land outside of the downtown core. Public safety dictates that these facilities, especially where they serve the vulnerable, must be located so as to be served by municipal water service.

The City's wellhead must be protected from potential sources of contamination. Nearly the entire City's water supply is moderately vulnerable to contamination due to the soil types, mainly coarse sands and gravels, above the aquifer. These soil types provide minimal protection against contamination from the surface. The City has completed a wellhead protection plan. This plan needs to be fully implemented, including overlay zoning districts where needed, to minimize the potential for contamination of the City's drinking water supply.

Maximize use of existing utilities. Growth zones, Tax Increment Financing, and other economic planning tools should be considered to encourage in-fill within the downtown and business park. It is more cost effective to provide sewer and water along with transportation and communication services in a smaller geographical area. It will provide a better long term return on investment to the city for providing the capital outlay for those services.

ACTION ITEMS TO SUPPORT POLICIES

- Provide better technology infrastructure for remote workers and students.
- Establish a Wellhead Protection Overlay District to regulate the installation of wells and the establishment of uses that could threaten the aquifer within the wellhead area.
- Implement the Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Policy requiring Compliance Inspections.
- Continuously review the road standards policy and road classification list to ensure successful long-range planning and construction of multi-modal transportation facilities in areas utilized by bicyclists, pedestrians, etc.

INTEGRATED GROWTH PLAN

The physical pattern of development dictates how we relate to the world around us. Pequot Lakes has grown at a fast rate. A Future Land Use map cares not about whether growth will happen, but rather where it will occur and roughly in what form.

This Integrated Growth Plan combines the critical features of all the sections of the Comprehensive Plan into one physical and regulatory model that expresses the future vision of Pequot Lakes. It provides the bridge between this Comprehensive Plan and the ordinances and zoning map, and serves as a guideline for future land use decisions.

At the core of the City's vision is the philosophy that there exists an urban Pequot Lakes and a rural Pequot Lakes; two distinct areas that contribute to the character, diversity, and vitality of the City. The City desires a growth pattern that does not blur the differences but maintains these discrete areas. A well-defined transition zone between urban and rural Pequot Lakes is a central component to the future growth strategy.

The following analysis, which stems directly from statements contained in this plan was used in creating the Integrated Growth Plan:

- Forested areas, open space and agricultural uses are an important part of life in Pequot Lakes.
- They need to be protected from encroaching development.
- Lakes, wetlands, and steep slopes are non-developable properties. They serve as unique environmental and recreational features of the land that must be preserved.
- Demand for lakeshore property is high. New residential development along lakeshores must not significantly alter the natural appearance or function of the lake.
- Off-lake residential development should occur in areas that do not excessively add to the service burden of the City.
- The downtown area has a combination of high-density commercial and residential uses along a traditional grid-like street pattern. Growing affordably will mean expanding similar mixed-use and walk-able development options in the central areas of town.
- The urban portion of Pequot Lakes can best be described as those areas served by municipal utilities (sewer and water). The City will continue to maintain higher densities and seek to infill this area with new commercial and residential development.
- The rural area that was once Sibley Township features low-density residential development and ample natural areas and open space. The City will retain this area's rural feel.
- The area surrounding the urban core – which constitutes the urban/rural transition zone - will see the greatest pressure for horizontal growth.
- Industrial expansion is a key component to sustained economic growth, but industrial uses have negative externalities that often conflict with residential and some commercial development. Expansion of industrial areas should occur in a well-defined and appropriate location that is adequately buffered to prevent conflicts.
- Access to a variety of recreational facilities throughout the City is important for enhancing the quality of life for residents and for attracting tourists and visitors to the area.

Using this analysis, twelve future land use categories were developed. These categories describe the desired future pattern of development within the City.

1. **Agriculture** – The pattern of development provided for in this area would be very large lot residential/agricultural. Agricultural uses would be family-farms and similar low-scale operations.
2. **Forest Preservation** – The pattern of development provided for in this area would be very large lot residential within forested land. Forests would be managed to allow for eventual timber harvesting.
3. **Open Space** – This is designated non-developable property, mostly wetland areas and steep slopes.
4. **Water Resource** – There is no development on the area’s lake surfaces, so these areas are set aside for public recreational enjoyment.
5. **Shoreline Residential** – The pattern of development in these areas is residential consistent with state shoreline development standards.
6. **Downtown Mixed-Use** – The pattern of development in this area would provide for high-density apartments, townhouses, live-work units, professional offices, shops, restaurants and other commercial uses. Sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, landscaping, and storefronts abutting sidewalks are encouraged.
7. **Urban Residential** – Development patterns in this area are a medium to high-density residential that enhance and expand the traditional grid style of development. Walk-able neighborhoods that connect to other urban areas and recreational areas are facilitated. These areas are served, or will potentially be served, by municipal utilities.
8. **Rural Residential** – Development patterns in this area are low-density residential. These areas will not be served by municipal utilities and the amount of new roads and development will be limited.
9. **Urban/Rural Transition** – These areas are not currently served by municipal utilities, but are within the potential expansion area. Development density in these areas must facilitate future utility extension and must be designed to tie to the urban areas.
10. **Commercial** – Development patterns in this area will feature medium to high-density commercial uses scaled to automobiles and pedestrians. This area will be serviced with municipal utilities.
11. **Light Industrial** – This area will support light industrial uses that will sustain Pequot Lakes’ economy in the long-term. It will be serviced with municipal utilities. Future industrial uses will not adversely affect the health, safety, and welfare of local residents.
12. **Recreational** – These areas consist of existing and potential parks, trails, public access points, and natural areas of varying size and function. They are distributed equitably throughout the urban, rural, and transition areas.

These categories are not current zoning classifications, although the integrated growth plan should be referenced when making future land use and zoning decisions. In addition to these categories, the City of Pequot Lakes must consider design guidelines for future development and redevelopment opportunities. These guidelines would ensure that future signage, building exteriors, landscaping, and development designs fit in with the small-town, north woods feel of Pequot Lakes.