

Bayfield's success achieved with strong vision and policies

Bayfield has been on an historic success curve. Bayfield seeks not to simply extend the curve but to create a cycle that renews its uniqueness over time.

Like many rural American tourist destinations, Bayfield is caught in a positive feedback loop. **That is, the more desirable Bayfield becomes, the more pressure there is on community resources, including its residents.** As small town charm becomes an endangered feature of American life, places like Bayfield become powerful magnets to visitors and second homeowners. As its popularity has grown, property taxes have risen. Residents, unable to afford the growing costs and/or find employment, have departed; the resulting diminishment in the market for basic services has caused a simplification of the economy primarily tied to visitor services; **and, worst of all, a fear looms that “community” itself may be disappearing.** Another highly successful resort community, Whistler, British Columbia, is embarking on a sustainable community plan. Experiencing the burdens of its own success like Bayfield, Whistler asks: *“Are we in danger of that moment ...when the quality of place is eclipsed by the quantity of space? ...when the environment that was uniquely fresh becomes typically stale? ...where individuals make*



decisions for short-term gain rather than long-term benefit? ...when the icon no longer lives up to the visitor or resident expectations?”

Questions of this nature have driven Bayfield's planning and combined with the passion of this community to rescue itself, plans, goals, objectives and actions have unfolded.

A comprehensive plan is a community's vision for its future. It serves as a policy statement made by a local government to guide anticipated growth and meet community goals and goes beyond a traditional land use plan by looking broadly at the many elements that shape a community. Where a *land use plan* maps out the desired physical development of an area, a *comprehensive plan* takes social and economic goals in to account. This “big picture” approach guides government in realizing its citizens' desire. Bayfield's Comprehensive Plan was developed over fourteen months beginning in October 2000 and was adopted in December 2001.

“Smart Growth” legislation

Wisconsin, under progressive new legislation called Smart Growth, provides guidelines for comprehensive planning for local communities. This legislation does not take away local control; rather, it empowers small communities such as Bayfield by identifying elements that shape it and providing citizens with ample opportunity to design their future. The legislation requires that cities, towns, and counties in Wisconsin have comprehensive plans by 2010.

