

A Vision of Bayfield in the Year 2021

In 1997, Bayfield was dubbed “the best little town in the Midwest.” The publicity drew attention and the popularity of Bayfield as a tourist destination soared. Now, in the year 2020, folks look back and congratulate themselves on attending to the problems and opportunities that accompanied this popularity and on expanding planning efforts to create a vision of its future and public support for fulfilling it.

Visitors continue to flock to Bayfield to experience its abundant natural beauty, recreational opportunities, small town friendliness, quiet charm and human scale development. Bayfield remains remarkable for work in historic, cultural and natural resource preservation and has recovered some qualities that appeared to be disappearing as tourism skyrocketed in the 1990s. Bayfield is known as environmentally aware, with distinctive open spaces and natural features, clean air and water, protected habitats, parks and outdoor recreation. Bayfield is now a place where residents can earn a living and have basic consumer needs met and is acclaimed for initiatives in affordable housing and low impact economic development – features which draw visitors interested in reclaiming their own communities and retaining or improving their quality of life.



An Erickson Orchard Apple Festival booth

Population grew to 1000 over the past twenty years and it is now more diverse than ever with a mix of age, ethnic and economic groups, giving the community greater stability. Bayfield has emerged as a place for families, where jobs, housing, schools, public services and social and recreational opportunities continue to improve. **A key feature of Bayfield’s progressive view of healthy community has been housing programs.** The Sustainable Homes Project allows residents

Top: The Methodist Church behind the Knight House was a victim of arson in early 40s. Below: The Theodore Ernst house was built in 1885.

and young families to afford homes. While property values continue to be higher than those nearby, there are now programs to assist people with average incomes to purchase homes. Special needs have also been factored into housing, especially those of the elderly. Assisted living allows resident elders to remain here as they age and also draws retirees and their families to the area. Most homes (75%) in Bayfield are owner-occupied and new development is directed toward both permanent and seasonal residents.

With Bayfield’s burgeoning popularity in the late 1990s came traffic issues, especially pedestrian safety and parking during the summer. Today, congestion is managed by providing adequate parking (some remote with shuttle service), wider sidewalks, highly visible crosswalks, and improved signage throughout downtown.