

CHAPTER 2: THE COMMUNITY

The City of Isanti is a place with a strong sense of community that welcomes new residents while embracing existing residents.

Introduction

The City of Isanti has undergone significant growth and change in recent years, which have made the existing Comprehensive Plan obsolete. The growth in population and households as well as the changing dynamics of the community due to increased residential, commercial, and industrial development; has resulted in a re-evaluation of the future of the community. In order to plan and guide future growth within the community, an understanding of the existing conditions and trends is required.

The Community Chapter combines this discussion of existing conditions and trends with future projections to ensure that goals and aspirations for future growth and development are grounded in reality. The purpose of this chapter is to describe who is living in the City of Isanti, through the use of community demographics; to provide an introduction to the community facilities that serve City residents, and to discuss intergovernmental relationships that will help shape the community within the larger regional context.

Population and Trends

The current and historical population trends summarize to what extent growth has occurred over time. Based upon growth trends, the number of people estimated to move to the community within the next 10 years can be projected. The population projections consider both a high and a low estimate, in an effort to take into consideration changes in the housing market over time.

The City of Isanti attracts new residents to the community for two reasons; its proximity to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (TCMA) and its accessibility to State Trunk Highway 65. These two characteristics make Isanti a desirable place for young families looking for a single family home at a moderate price. The increased demand for this type of housing has driven development of residential property and resulted in the significant increase in population. The availability of City services combined with low land costs has made Isanti a desirable location for development.

Household Growth and Forecast

Household growth is closely tied to the housing market. After a decade of consistent, manageable growth through the 1990s, Isanti experienced a period of rapid growth beginning in 2000. Chart 1 illustrates that Isanti added a total of 369 households throughout the 1990s, resulting in an annual average of 37 households per year. Between 2000 and 2005, the annual average increased to nearly 160 additional households bringing the total number of estimated households in Isanti to just over 1,608 by 2005. Growth in households is based on the number of building permits issued each year for newly constructed homes.

Starting in 2005, the housing market in Isanti slowed significantly. This decline in the housing market will affect the amount of projected household growth in Isanti over the next 5 to

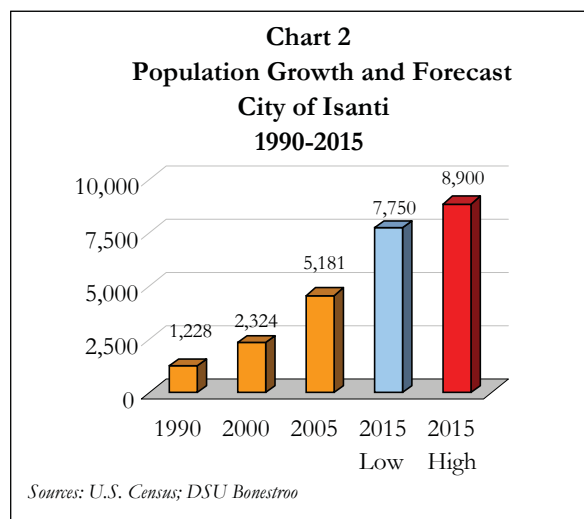
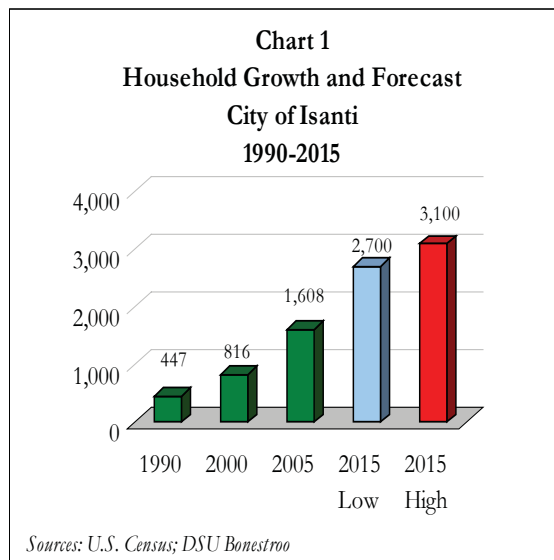
10 years. In order to project future household growth, an analysis of comparable exurban communities whom also experienced periods of rapid growth followed by stagnation brought on by a slowdown in the housing market were completed. The communities analyzed were Chaska (1970s and 1980s), Ramsey (1970s), Andover (1970s), and Prior Lake (1970s). During slow growth periods, the number of building permits issued was less than half of what were issued during the rapid growth periods and the slowdown period averaged about four years in duration before construction and household growth increased substantially.

Thus, as a conservative forecast, Isanti is estimated to grow at an average rate of about 60 households per year from 2006 to 2010; rebounding to about 125 units per year from 2010 to 2015. This would result in a low forecast of 2,700 total households by 2015. The household forecasts are conservative even though Isanti has an infrastructure to accommodate much more growth. If development in neighboring communities was curtailed significantly, the forecast for household growth may average closer to 200 households per year from 2010 to 2015. This would result in a high forecast of 3,100 total households by 2015.

Chart 2 shows the corresponding population growth forecast through 2015, based upon the low and high household growth estimates.

Isanti grew from 1,228 persons to 2,324 during the 1990s, and has added over 2,200 persons since then for an estimated population of 5,181 in 2005. The low forecast shows the City containing 7,750 persons by 2015, whereas the aggressive forecast based on household growth of 1,500 results in a population reaching nearly 9,000 by 2015.

Although growth and population trends are important to the community, it is also important for the community to understand additional characteristics such as age of the population. In recent years, the City of Isanti has experienced a significant increase in the number of young families with school age children residing in the community. The increase has placed additional demands on schools, recreational facilities, and other community services. While these younger age cohorts are increasing at a faster rate, there is still a need to accommodate and provide services for those in the middle-age cohorts to senior cohorts; to ensure residents can age in place, are not priced out of their homes, or no longer feel a part of the community.



Persons by Age – 1990 to 2015

As the City of Isanti continues to grow, population increases will be spread across all age groups; however, some age groups may experience more significant growth than others.

Chart 3 illustrates Persons by Age living in Isanti 1990-2015, based upon the low and high growth estimates previously shown in Chart 2. As indicated in the chart, the proportion of growth by age group will be similar in either the low or high scenario.

Isanti has a much lower proportion of seniors (age 65 and over) than similar sized cities within the metropolitan area. This could be attributed to the type of housing provided in the City, which has been predominantly intended for entry-level single-family homebuyers. Within

the next 10 years, the City is estimated to add a substantial number of seniors. Even though, the proportion of seniors to the total population will remain lower; appropriate housing will need to be provided for those older age individuals looking for senior housing options.

The baby boomer generation, which was born between 1946 and 1964, turned 36 to 54 years old in 2000. By 2010, they will be age 46 to 64. According to regional and national trends, the highest population growth will occur within this age cohort. Again, the City of Isanti has a lower proportion of this age cohort, due to the type of housing offered within the community. Appropriate housing will need to be provided for those individuals within this age cohort who are looking to downsize.

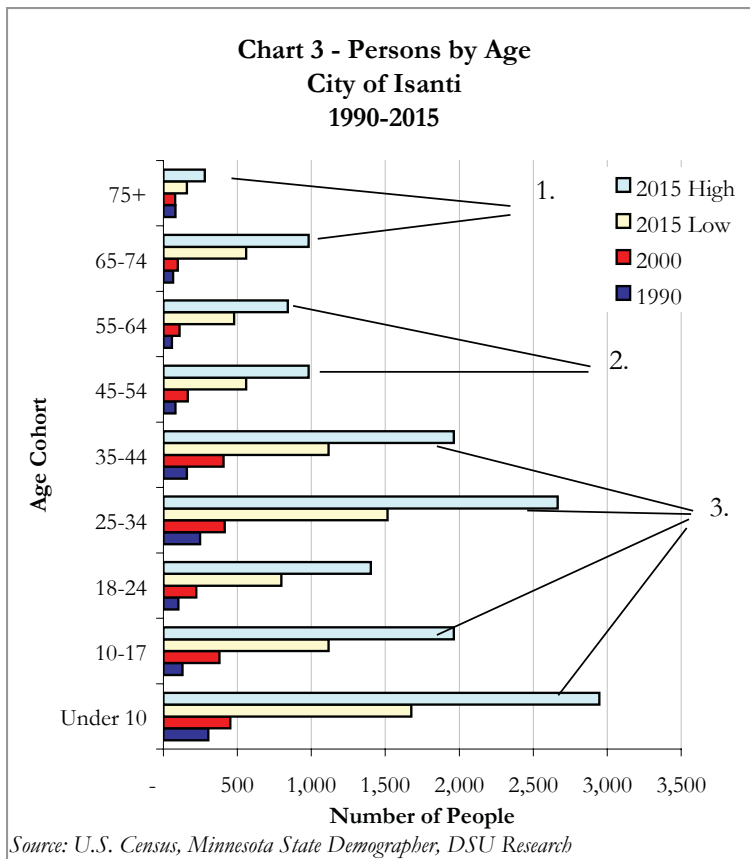
The generation born between 1965 and 1976, known as the baby bust or Generation X, is smaller in proportion to the baby boomers generation. Nationwide, there will be a population decline for persons age 35 to 44 during the current decade. However, this age cohort is expected to increase significantly in Isanti due to attractive housing options.

The echo boom, children of the baby boom born between 1977 and 1995, is growing rapidly. As a result, dramatic growth in the age 25 to 34 cohorts

is expected for the City of Isanti in the coming years. Households in this age cohort are beginning to form their own households. Entry-level housing is an attractive option. The formation of households for this particular age cohort will result in increases of the under-18 population.

Objectives:

Several general community goals are stated within Chapter 1 that speak directly to the changing population and demographics. Acknowledgment and acceptance of changing demographics and diversity among City residents will foster a unique and desirable community for existing and future residents. The following objectives relate specifically to future demographic changes within the community.



- Encourage community organizations and residents to participate in informational sessions and community gatherings, which provide the opportunity for residents of the community to meet and discuss concerns and/or issues facing the community.
- Work with the local school district and other community organizations to gain insight and understanding of new residents' beliefs, cultures, and heritage.
- Utilize community organizations to gain an understanding of the diverse groups located within the community as well as gain insight into issues and concerns facing these various groups.

Community Facilities

"Places that serve the population"

The Community Facilities portion of this chapter describes the public schools, public buildings and services as well as other private facilities that are necessary in order to provide services to residents, businesses, industries, and employers located within the City of Isanti. As the community continues to grow, there will be increasing demands for schools, recreational facilities such as ball fields and active spaces, as well as community gathering spaces for families. Understanding population and growth trends will help inform the City of the types of services and facilities that are needed in the community. Subsequently, an understanding of the effect of population growth on existing public services will enable the City to define a capital improvements program. .

Community facilities have a wide range of purposes and functions. Facilities can be directly correlated with services provided to residents (i.e. fire hall or police station), or they can be a community gathering place such as a community center and churches. The following list identifies facilities located in the City, their function, plans for future expansion, and capacity issues.

City/Government

City and Government facilities focus on providing services to the residents within the community. These facilities oftentimes focus on the safety and well-being of the population. Efficiency and availability of these services increase the quality of life in the community and help make it a desirable place to live.

City Hall

110 1st Avenue North

The Isanti City Hall was completed in the fall of 2005 and boasts a large council chambers and meeting room, along with City staff offices. The newly constructed City Hall is located in Downtown Isanti. Basic administrative City services are handled at the location. The space will serve as a new icon and gathering space in downtown.





Community Center

121 West Noreulis

The City of Isanti Community Center plays host to a number of special events for City residents. The Isanti Happy Seniors organization utilizes the facility as the gathering place for many social events for local senior citizens. The Community Center is the focal point for many other area organizations as well. The Lions host local fund raisers as well as Bingo at the facility. Community Dances, National Night Out, and the Blood Mobile; all use the facility as the gathering place for community residents. In addition, City residents are able to rent the facility for events such as receptions, birthday parties, anniversary celebrations, etc



Public Safety Building

101 CSAH #5 West

The City of Isanti has a class five fire ranking. The department serves a 156 square mile area, including the City of Isanti and six townships, and has thirty-five volunteer fire fighters. The department's equipment includes the following: four tankers, three pick-up trucks, one crew cab, and three pump trucks.

The fire station was built in 1982 out of concrete block. The building is in good condition and has adequate space for the department's needs. Recent repairs include a new roof and furnace, interior doors, and interior painting of the building in 2006. Current remodeling projects include the repairing of the front part of the driveway in 2007. In 2004, a substation was built at 4705 County Road 5 NW. The ambulance service comes from Cambridge Medical Center.



Police Department

101 CASH 5 West

The City of Isanti Police Department consists of the following personnel: Chief, 6-full time officers, 5 part-time officers, a full time Administrative Assistant, 2 part-time Clerical and 12 Police Reserve Volunteers. The department has three squad cars, a four-wheel drive Reserve vehicle and an unmarked car.

In 2006, the Police Department was moved into the remodeled portion of the building connected to the Fire Department placing the City's emergency and protective services into one central location.

The Police Department's service area is the corporate City limits and tier one district. Mutual aid agreements are in place with the Isanti County Sheriff, Braham Police and Cambridge Police. Dispatching and jail service is through the Isanti County Sheriff's Office. Finally, a written agreement is in place with the I.S.D. #911 to provide services to the three schools located in Isanti.

The Police Department is overseen by the Mayor and City Council. The City Administrator and two selected Council people serve on the police liaison committee. It is the mission of the Isanti Police Department "to protect and serve the community of Isanti to its' fullest potential. To protect the rights of all persons and to help the people in need. To challenge ourselves in keeping our community a safe place by making our presence known, deterring crime, and being fair and impartial. The department wants to let the community know they can be counted on to make Isanti a safe place not only to live, but to visit and do business".

Post Office

25 West Main Street

There is one post office that serves the City of Isanti. The post office offers full mail delivery service, window service, P.O. Boxes, and rural delivery. The post office leases space in a 6,400 square foot building constructed of cement block. The lease for the post office location will be ending soon. Decisions will need to be made as to whether to maintain the current location or seek a new location within the community. The building was built in the early 1970s and remodeled in 1982. Currently, no repairs to the building are needed at this time, though as the City grows, space may become increasingly cramped. In 2006, another mail route was added, requiring approximately 36 square feet more office space for equipment.



Public Works Maintenance Building

100 Isanti Parkway West

The Public Works Department is responsible for a multitude of functions, including snow removal, lawn care, street maintenance, water system treatment, sewer system treatment, infrastructure repair and maintenance, and park maintenance. Major equipment used by the Department includes three snow plow trucks, one motor grader, one sewer cleaning truck, one wheel loader, four pick-up trucks, one large riding lawnmower, one wide area pull type mower, one bobcat, one portable generator, one street sweeper, and one Ford tractor for pulling equipment.

The primary building for the Department and its employees is an 80' x 150' concrete building that was constructed in 1998. The building serves as storage for many City vehicles and equipment, including some of the major equipment used by the Department. As the town grows and more equipment is needed, the building may need to be expanded to store the additional equipment.



Sewage Treatment Plant

110 Isanti Parkway West

The City's sewage treatment plant was completed in 1997. The facility includes concrete block and poured concrete buildings as well as six 3.4 acre aerated ponds. The plant has an average wet weather flow capacity of 0.657 million gallons per day and the average flow capacity per day is 0.260 million gallons. The system has I/I problems from old clay tile lines that are currently being replaced with PVC pipe as a part of street reconstruction projects. The aerated ponds have generated no waste-sludge to date.

The mass load limit of the wastewater plant is 272,000 gallons. As Isanti's flow increases above the mass load limit, the allowable concentration of pollutants will decrease proportionately. Though no improvements are currently necessary, as Isanti grows an upgrade to the facility will be necessary.

Utilities

Water

1st Avenue North, Well No. 1 and Well No. 2

Currently, the City draws its water from two wells: Well No. 1, which was built in 1976 and Well No. 2, which was built in 1991. A new well was drilled in 2006 and a pump house will be constructed as part of the 2007 Well #3 Pump House Project. All well pump houses are constructed out of concrete block. The existing pump houses are in good condition, but will require some replacement of aging controls and equipment in the near future.

There is one 750,000 gallon water tower that is located on a service road west of East Dual Boulevard.

The City's water supply does not currently meet the MDH/EPA standards for combined radium. The City is investigating options to address this issue. The City also has water quality issues related to high iron and manganese levels as well as hard-water problems. The City is currently working to address the situation. Please see the report on Trunk Sanitary Sewer, Water Main and Storm Sewer for more detail.

Electricity

Approximately one half mile east of highway 65 is the north-south boundary between Connexus Energy to the west of the line and East Central Energy to the east of the line.

Natural Gas

City of Isanti is served by CenterPoint Energy.

Technology

As technology expands and grows with the community it is important for these resources to be available to residents in the form of cable, high speed internet and wireless capabilities to each home and business.

Schools

Schools are an integral part of the community. Creating neighborhoods and spaces that encourage accessibility to and from schools is an essential component for schools and their development. The City of Isanti is served by Cambridge-Isanti Independent School District

911. The schools identified below serve Isanti residents, and are located in the City. Additional schools serving the community include the High School and other elementary schools located in Cambridge. This makes coordination and collaboration between Isanti and adjacent municipalities also served in the district essential. Ultimately the City and the school district should work together to ensure that these facilities have adequate capacity for additional students as well as to ensure that expansion of existing facilities and development of new facilities is carefully reviewed.

Isanti Primary School

301 W County Road 5

Isanti Primary School has grown by leaps and bounds over the years. The original part of what is now Isanti Primary School was built in 1960. An office area and boiler area were added in 1956. Lunchroom, stage and kitchen areas were added in 1960. Six classrooms below the steps followed this addition in 1966. In 1969 a huge section was added which included; additional boiler room space, 18 classrooms, a gym and a media center. Between 1969 and 1989 four portable classrooms were added to house four fourth grade classes. These portables were taken away after another addition in 1989 added eight classrooms to the north side of the building. In 1999, again an additional portable building with two classrooms was added in order to help house the year round program, School For All Seasons. In 2003, two more double portable buildings were added to house four classes of fourth grade. With the passage of a bond issue during the 2004-05 school year, a new school was built in Isanti which reorganized the grade level structure and allowed the school to remove the portables. For the 2006-07 school year the student numbers fit the building.

Isanti Primary School is currently a Pre-School through grade two building, with approximately 500 students. The former third and fourth graders and the K – 5 School For All Seasons have moved to the new Isanti Intermediate School which houses grade 3-5 and the School For All Seasons, K – 5.

Large areas in the primary school include a lunchroom and a gymnasium. Combined, these rooms hold approximately 600-700 people.



Isanti Middle School

201 Centennial Drive West

Isanti Middle School was built in 1976 and is a brick building. The School was remodeled in 1994 to accommodate more students. The building has a cafeteria that holds around 200 and a small lecture hall that seats 75. The school has an “open” school look and has had some portable walls added. In addition, an auditorium has been added that seats approximately 425 people and a new parking lot design.

The building currently houses grades 6-8 and has 525 students. The student teacher ratio is approximately 26-1. The Minnesota Center (grades 6-8 year-round program) is located on the upper level of the school.



Isanti Intermediate School

101 Sun Prairie Drive

The Isanti Intermediate School opened in the fall of 2006 and services grades 3-5. The school is 97,000 square feet and is constructed of concrete block and precast. Meeting halls include a gymnasium and assembly area.

Churches

A variety of church denominations are located within the City limits including:



Elim Baptist

Elim Baptist

114 N. Dahlin Avenue

Faith Lutheran

109 2nd Avenue



Faith Church

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic

207 N County Road 23

Harvest Christian Evangelical

Hwy 65 and County Road 5



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church



Harvest Christian Evangelical

Community Objectives

Community facilities are an integral part of the community; fostering a sense of place and belonging for all Isanti residents. A comprehensive list of general goals and strategies are provided in Chapter 1 with respect to community facilities. The following list of objectives provides specific, action-oriented statements that relate to community facilities.

- Maintain and enhance open discussions with the school district to ensure proper location of new school facilities, to include the location of a new high school within the City of Isanti.
- Work with the school district to ensure the availability, capacity, and quality of school facilities throughout the district meets the needs of City residents.
- Work with developers and residents to promote growth in a contiguous manner to ensure efficiency of community services and utilities.
- Establish consistent fees and charges to assist in paying for the costs for the extension of City services and utilities for new developments.

Collaboration and Intergovernmental Relationships

Creating opportunities for cooperation and collaboration in the community will improve the quality of life for all residents. The development of a Comprehensive Plan has far reaching

effects on the City and the greater region. Collaboration and intergovernmental relationships are the foundation for building a prosperous, quality place for Isanti residents to live.

Community facilities may blur jurisdictional boundaries through the provision of services to a much larger population. This is especially true with respect to the school district which does not necessarily follow jurisdictional boundaries, but rather follows neighborhood patterns and concentrations of resident populations to ensure adequate capacity in each of its schools. In addition, residents travel outside of Isanti, use infrastructure in adjacent cities, shop in nearby towns, and work throughout the region. All of these factors require the City of Isanti to look past its municipal boundaries, taking into account the City within a greater regional context.

Isanti participates on a regional scale with Isanti County and through the School District to ensure adequate services are available to the community. The City also participates in the Active Living by Design program which is a countywide initiative through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. These relationships provide additional services to City residents. In order to understand those relationships, an understanding of the programs, the goals associated with these programs, and the services provided to the City of Isanti are necessary.

Intergovernmental Organizations and Relationships

As the City of Isanti continues to grow, City boundaries and services will continue to grow and change as well. These changes will have an affect upon adjacent jurisdictions and municipalities. Future expansion and annexation will need to be facilitated in a manner that is respectful and cognizant of all the key stakeholders. Discussions between various stakeholders are more than likely to occur as growth pressure and demand for additional land increases.

Many of these discussions will take place jointly with the Townships, and may also require direct involvement from the County. It is essential for the City to facilitate discussions and relationships at all governmental levels, ensuring that the future growth of the City is sensitive to those jurisdictions surrounding the community.

The County has long advocated for contiguous growth, which can be served by existing City services. The City of Isanti has adopted this pattern of development and will continue to implement this type of development into the future. The City recognizes that the County is also updating their Comprehensive Plan, and as such the City will be actively participating in the plan development to ensure that the goals and aspirations of the City are reflected in the update of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Objectives

The following objectives are specific objectives that build on the information provided in this chapter.

- Representatives of the City should actively participate in all Isanti County Comprehensive Planning Initiatives; including the Overall County Comprehensive Plan, Transportation and Park & Recreation Plans.
- Promote the Active Living Initiative to ensure that recreational opportunities are available for community residents.
- Establish a committee that encourages collaboration between the City and neighboring townships on various issues and establishes a working relationship with understanding and mutual respect.
- Collaborate with Isanti County and surrounding communities and townships on planning and community enhancement projects, to include technology and transportation opportunities.