

# Comprehensive Plan

## City of Virginia, Minnesota

Adopted: February 14, 2017



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# Comprehensive Plan

Prepared for City of Virginia, Minnesota – “Queen City of the North”

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is a written document that, after adoption by the City, is an enforceable city planning tool used to guide and shape the future appearance and functions of the community. Comprehensive plans are generally intended to look ahead and plan for the next 10 to 20 years, but they are most effective when they are able to be updated or refreshed approximately every 5 years. Comprehensive plans provide an inventory of existing conditions, which is like a snapshot in time showing what the community looks like in terms of population, employment, natural resources, land use, transportation, and other measures. Comprehensive plans also identify and document specific issues and opportunities a community faces at the time of its preparation and the plan identifies specific goals and policies aimed at addressing these issues and opportunities while fulfilling the community’s future vision.

This plan replaces the City of Virginia’s 1997 Comprehensive Plan. It is the policy framework the City will use to guide city leaders in future decision making concerning land use, housing, economic development (including downtown), transportation, parks, open space and trails, mining, timber, tourism and natural and cultural resources, public utilities and community facilities, and intergovernmental cooperation .

This plan recognizes and builds upon past and existing planning efforts and is based on community input. It will continue to carry out many of the goals and policies the City has been pursuing while providing new ones based on current issues, future trends and desires of the community.

### 1.2 Comprehensive Planning Authority & Purpose

Minnesota State Law grants each individual City the authority to plan for its future. According to Minnesota Statute 462, a municipality may carry on comprehensive municipal planning activities for guiding the future development and improvement of the municipality and may prepare, adopt and amend a comprehensive municipal plan and implement such plan by ordinance and other official actions in accordance with the provisions of sections 462.351 to 462.364.

#### 1.2.1 Use of the Plan

The Virginia Comprehensive Plan presents a vision for the City’s future, and an agenda for community action. The individual sections outline in more specific terms the goals and policies to ensure Virginia improves livability, evolves in a way that supports the values of the community, enhances market strength, and continues to be sustainable.

Once the Comprehensive Plan has been adopted by the City Council, work on Virginia’s vision, goals and policies does not stop. The Plan is a living document to be used for the day-to-day activities of city officials and staff, and should be referenced as needed to justify specific actions. Elected officials, appointed officials, and City staff should have easy access to the Plan, and should explicitly reference it in land use decisions.

As a living document, City officials should periodically review the Plan’s priorities, and check with community residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to ensure that the document remains current. Reviews should be conducted regularly and amendments made as necessary between updates, assessing the City’s progress toward the vision and the validity of the vision as community circumstances change and unforeseen events arise.

The plan provides specific recommendations to direct and manage Virginia’s evolution, redevelopment and growth. As with all land use decisions, implementation of these redevelopment and growth recommendations will have different levels of benefit and impact on community members.

A community comprehensive plan serves the following functions<sup>1</sup>:

- The plan provides continuous guidance over time to City staff and elected officials regardless of personnel changes
- The plan frames and balances competing interests and issues in order to strike a balance among the many competing demands on our lands. Orderly and rational development provides the greatest benefits to individuals and the community as a whole, and avoids nuisance conflicts between land uses.
- The plan helps protect public investments with well-planned, orderly and phased development patterns that provide efficient public services.
- The plan allows communities to plan for the protection of valued resources and environmental features and avoid destruction or degradation by inappropriate development.
- The plan provides guidance for shaping the appearance of the community within its unique context.
- The plan promotes economic development and contains information that guides the investment of prospective developers.
- The plan provides justification for decisions. Plans provide a factual and objective basis to support zoning decisions and can be used by communities to defend their decisions if challenged in court.
- The plan encourages community input and investment in the future vision. The comprehensive planning process provides citizens an opportunity to brainstorm, debate, and ultimately influence the future of their community.

### **1.3 Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance**

It is important to understand the relationship between the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance. While the comprehensive plan provides a long range vision, goals and policies for guiding land use and planning-related matters, the zoning ordinance is a regulatory tool that serves as one of the tools for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. It specifies the procedures and performance standards for public and private land

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<sup>1</sup> Modified from “The Purpose of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan” by Gary D. Taylor, Iowa State University.

development outlined in the various chapter elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The zoning map needs to reflect the distribution and categories of the Future Land Use Plan and the zoning ordinance needs to support the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies. As such the zoning ordinance may need to be amended to be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan and other aspects of new Comprehensive Plan.

## 1.4 Organization of the Plan

The Virginia Comprehensive Plan is presented in twelve sections described as follows:

### **Introduction:**

Describes the Plan's purpose, the city's authority to plan and its use. It summarizes methods used to engage the public in major involvement activities including the development of a Project Advisory Committee, Community Workshop, Community Survey, and Public Review and Hearing.

### **Virginia Today:**

Describes general population characteristics including age, households, age, race, ethnicity, income, education, employment characteristics and future population projections.

### **Land Use:**

Identifies current land use patterns, establishes a set of land use categories, a future land use plan and recommends a set of specific goals, and policies.

### **Housing:**

Provides a brief summary of existing housing conditions in Virginia and goals and policies for strengthening existing neighborhoods and guiding plan for future residential revitalization and development.

### **Transportation:**

Discusses key findings of the current transportation network, evaluates current and future transportation needs, and provides goals and policies for enhancing multimodal connectivity, accessibility and mobility.

### **Public Utilities and Community Facilities:**

Describes Virginia's existing infrastructure and community assets and recommends goals and policies for timely, fiscally responsible management of the city utilities and community facilities such as government buildings, schools, library, etc.

### **Mining, Timber, Tourism:**

Summarizes Virginia's mining, timber, natural resources and tourism assets and opportunities and establishes goals, and policies for their use, protection and restoration.

### **Recreation, Open Space and Cultural Arts:**

Describes existing recreation, park and trails, open space and cultural arts and provides goals, and policies for strengthening Virginia's role as a recreational, arts and culture hub for area residents and visitors.

### **Economic Development:**

Identifies needs for enhancing and growing commercial, mixed-use and industrial development, including the historic downtown and provides goals and policies that will guide a range of economic development activities in the City of Virginia.

**Intergovernmental Cooperation:**

Identifies programs and opportunities for joint planning and decision making with other jurisdictions, e.g., school district, IRRRB, adjacent local governments, etc., and provides goals and policies for strengthening and enhancing communications, and cooperation.

**Implementation:**

Provides guidance for maintaining accountability, monitoring activities, developing procedures and regulations and community involvement in implementation of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan.

## 1.5 Smart Growth Planning Principles

The Goals and Policies of this plan are based on a set of Smart Growth Planning Principles aimed at fostering cities, corridors, districts and neighborhoods that are compact, walkable, safe, affordable, and beautiful. Smart Growth promotes the building of sustainable communities with accessible, multimodal transportation facilities connecting housing, jobs, shopping and services, schools, and recreation facilities while protecting the natural environment. Established in the early 1990's, Smart Growth planning principles have been employed by numerous Minnesota communities from Hutchinson and Chaska to Grand Rapids and Duluth.

Smart growth principles provide Virginia with a way to promote efficient and sustainable land development and redevelopment patterns that optimize past infrastructure investments while consuming less land that is otherwise available for open space, and natural resource management, conservation and preservation.

The following overall principles describe how development should use land efficiently, be environmentally and economically sustainable, and reinforce the quality and character of Virginia. These principles differ from typical planning practices that are more reactive to political dynamics or shifting market forces which tend to minimize or disregard long-term impacts on social equity and public and environmental health.

“Smart Growth” principles, applied to overall city policy, should be a catalyst for Virginia to take advantage of opportunities from which the public will benefit because of environmental, economic and social sustainability and resiliency. The principles described below, as well as the goals and policies outlined in this chapter establish patterns that should guide the continued evolution of Virginia will grow smart if it:

**Makes Full and Efficient Use of Urban Services**

In order to maximize investments in civic infrastructure such as sewers and streets, growth should be adjacent to existing development, or take maximum advantage of underutilized “infill” areas in the form of redevelopment to produce a connected and, financially sustainable city.

**Encourages “Human-Scaled” Design**

Contemporary suburban style development, catering to automobile transportation, typically spreads out over the landscape, and lacks the walkable, human scale found in Virginia’s downtown and older, traditional neighborhoods. For example, Downtown Virginia and its adjacent neighborhoods have an intimate human scale, with continuous sidewalks and street trees while the downtown provides a pleasant walking environment with large picture windows and a mix of on and off street parking. While new development provides valuable services and tax revenue, the large building setbacks, dominant front yard parking lots, wide distance between buildings, and lack of safe

pedestrian access creates a far less inviting environment. More compact, accessible patterns of development use land and resources more efficiently while supporting a broader range of transportation options such as walking and cycling. Well-planned larger-scale development can make a positive contribution to Virginia's economy while also exhibiting the level of detail and human scale of the city's downtown and traditional neighborhoods. In this way, the city's character works in harmony with its residents and



its economy.

Example of walkable residential-scale business area.

### **Mixes Land Uses**

In the center of Virginia moving out from Chestnut Street, commercial, civic, service, residential and recreational uses are located relatively close together. Conversely, contemporary development in Virginia separates different land uses from one another. The concept of single-use zoning grew out of a need to separate living places from major industries to protect the health of residents, and this practice is still good policy in cases such around power plant or steel fabrication facilities. Mixing different yet compatible uses in a modern setting can create more sustainable communities by leveraging infrastructure investments and reducing environmental impacts, while increasing convenience by reducing the distances people must travel by car to conduct their daily lives.

Community plans and land development policies that allow for mixing a range of appropriate uses provide for a broader range of development opportunities. They also provide increased market flexibility allowing the development community to respond to changing trends and shifts in consumer preference.

### **Creates Housing Opportunities and Choices**

Virginia has a range of housing challenges from aging housing stock and a lack of modern, quality rental properties to rising construction costs and competition along its unincorporated rural-urban interface. More diverse housing types and improved existing housing stock in existing neighborhoods would satisfy a range of buyer and renter preferences.

Consequences of the mortgage crisis and subsequent economic downturn of 2008-2011, as well as demographic changes, have created greater demand for smaller lot, single-family development in innovative design settings and multi-family development including



attached housing for young professionals and empty-nesters. Integrating residential development at higher densities into existing commercial developments and activity centers such as downtown would allow Virginia to provide new opportunities for people at all stages of life to find their place in the city.

#### **Encourages Distinctive Neighborhoods with a Sense of Place**

Newer residential development often occurs as single use subdivisions or in isolated pods of apartment buildings or twin homes largely caused by outdated, single use zoning and subdivision regulations. Some of these areas lack discernable identities and sense of place or character. This Comprehensive Plan promotes the building of diverse and walkable neighborhoods, providing a mix of uses and housing types designed in an environmentally responsive manner that reflect Virginia's built heritage and character. This is especially important when undertaking redevelopment in and around the historic Downtown.

#### **Preserves Open Space and Vital Environmental Areas**

Virginia's environment including Bailey and Silver Lakes, its Park System, Mesabi Trail and surrounding north woods wilderness areas are its greatest natural assets. By leveraging reclaimed mining lands, preserving open spaces and environmentally sensitive areas, the city balances the built and natural environment and provides habitat for plants and animals, recreational opportunities, and places of natural beauty. Open spaces, whether for recreation, habitat or reclamation, have been shown to add measurable financial



value to adjacent development.

### **Creates Transportation Options**

Many communities have begun to realize the need to provide a wider range of transportation options. An auto-dependent city limits access of non-driving groups such as youth and older seniors. An increase in the city's physical size should not reduce access. Techniques that increase the ability of all residents to move safely and freely around the city include better coordination between land use and transportation, increasing connectivity within the street network, and developing multi-modal (or complete) streets that accommodate walking, cycling, transit and motor vehicles. This approach expands transportation options while also increasing opportunities for social interaction. Equally important, incorporating physical activity into the daily routine of



citizens creates a healthier and more physically fit community reducing demands on health care and increasing longevity.

### **Achieves Community and Stakeholder Collaboration in Development Decision**

Virginia is a great place to live, learn, work and play any time of the year. City government should stay close to its constituents through the use of tools and techniques that collect and monitor residents and business owners' needs. Issues and ideas voiced by the community cannot be considered and acted upon without the collaboration of citizens and their government. Partnerships between neighbors, businesses, foundations,



nonprofit organizations, schools, developers and the city will support and accelerate the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan.

*Interested citizens participated in Virginia's Comprehensive Plan community workshops held in June, 2016.*

## **1.6 Previous Comprehensive, Strategic, and Other Planning Efforts**

A review of all past planning efforts and documents relating to the study area (MN and parts of St. Louis County) has been conducted to assess what issues have changed, what

issues remain, what strategies have been successful, and what strategies ought to be reconsidered in future plans.

### **1.6.1 Comprehensive Plan (1997)**

Prior to this current comprehensive planning effort, the previous comprehensive plan for the City of Virginia was adopted in 1997. Despite being beyond its originally intended planning horizon, the 1997 comp plan still offers an important record of where the community was 20 years ago, and how that compares to today.

Many of the observations, history, and insight from the previous plan have been expanded upon in the upcoming sections of this report.

### **1.6.2 St. Louis County Comprehensive Water Management Plan (2010 – 2020)**

The St. Louis County Water Management Plan was a regional effort to identify and address the most critical water quality concerns within the County. The plan offers a strategic framework for citizens and elected officials to manage water resources across its seven major watersheds and over 1,000 lakes. The plan was approved by the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) and County Board of Commissioners in 2010.

### **1.6.3 City of Parks & Trails Master Plan (2013) Update**

The Parks & Trails Master Plan was developed in 2013 and recommended by the Parks Commission as solid guide to help aid in a coherent and strategic investment in Virginia's Parks and Trails. The plan includes the following 6 guiding principles:

1. Provide parks that satisfy the changing needs of the community.
2. Create identity for and foster unity within neighborhoods.
3. Connect the community through parks and trails.
4. Connect with nature.
5. Build Partnerships.
6. Be sustainable.

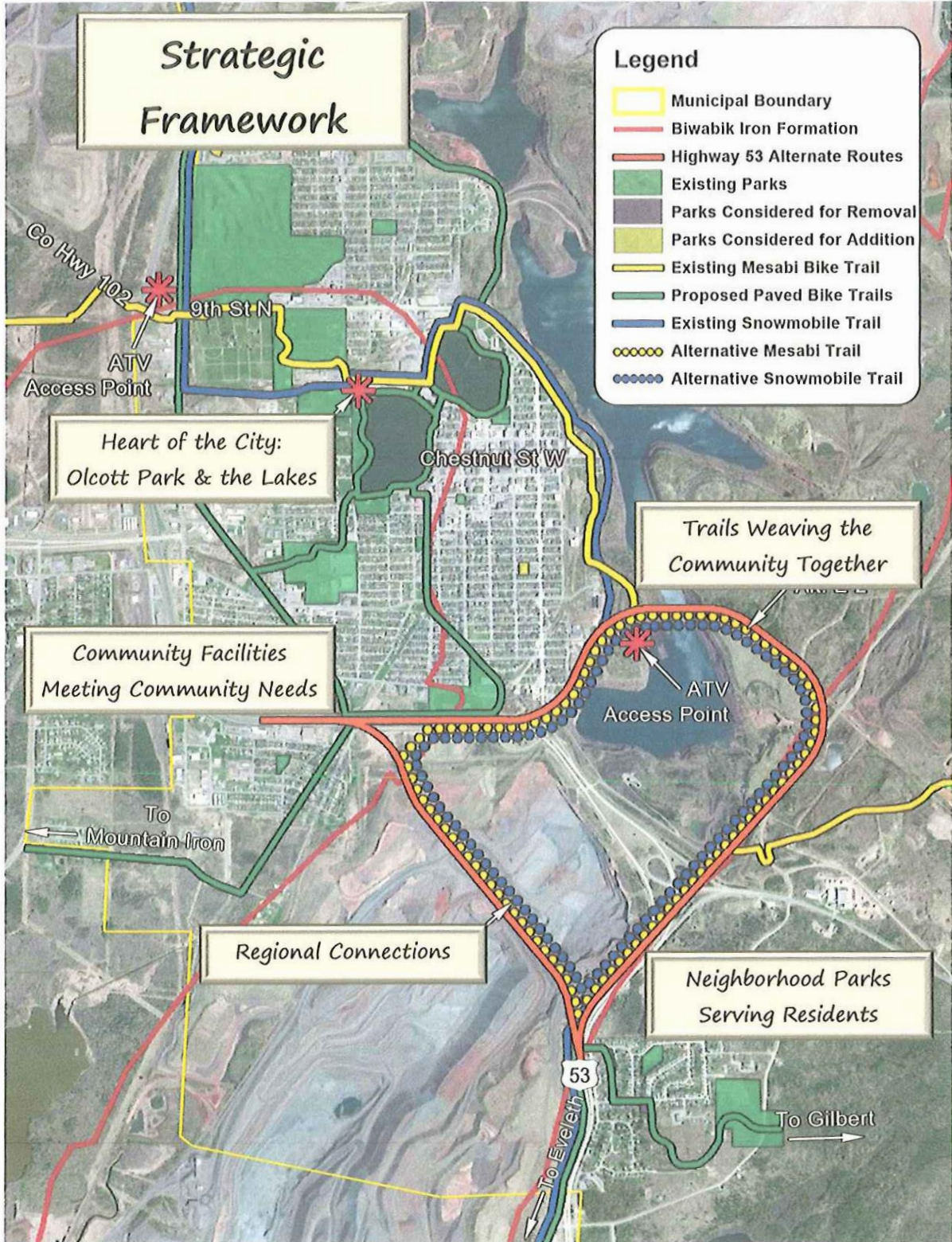


Figure 1 – Strategic Framework from the 2013 Parks & Trails Master Plan

#### **1.6.4 Community Foundation 2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan (2015)**

The 2015-2019 Strategic Plan was developed in establish a future direction that focuses on addressing set of priorities which are linked to community needs. As such the Foundation is focused on strengthening its impact by allocating resources to making a visible difference on a few key issues:

1. Community members and visitors experience a revitalized and beautiful city.
7. Virginia neighborhoods are safe, affordable, and share a strong sense of community.
8. The Foundation will establish a long-term asset development and disbursement policy.

The plan includes background data pertaining to Virginia’s socioeconomics, and housing, elements of a community vision, community needs and role of the foundation.

#### **1.6.5 Laurentian Vision Partnership Strategic Action Plan for 2011 and Beyond**

The Laurentian Vision Partnership (LVP) has prepared a multi-year strategic plan to guide its activities and achieve key outcomes consistent with the group’s vision and mission. The Strategic Action Plan identifies major areas of focus, expected outcomes, actions and tactics to support and achieve the LVP mission and vision:

- Address changing needs
- Add value for partners, and
- Enhance LVP’s regional presence and continued effectiveness.

LVP’s mission is defined as:

The Laurentian Vision Partnership is a regional coalition that promotes the development of productive post mining landscapes by cooperating in:

- Preserving lands to sustain current and future mining,
- Promoting landscape options for post mining uses,
- Identifying and discussing new development opportunities, and
- Providing the tools to achieve these goals.

LVP’s vision is defined as:

“Transforming pits and piles into living lakes and landscapes...our legacy for the future.”

## 2.0 Issues, Opportunities & Vision

### 2.1 Planning Process

Development of Virginia's Comprehensive plan was guided by a coordinated community involvement program consisting of active and passive opportunities including:

1. Seven meetings with a Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC) comprised of nine volunteers representing civic boards, commissions, City Council and downtown business and property owner, appointed by the Mayor
9. 234 responses to a 19 question community survey conducted online along with paper copies which were made available at the library and City hall
10. Two Issues and Opportunities community workshops attended by 20 citizens.
11. A CPAC community bus tour to visit and discuss issue and opportunity areas around.
12. A project webpage with background materials, meeting summaries and draft plan documents.
13. A community open house and Planning Commission public hearing to review and discuss the draft plan.



*Virginia citizens and CPAC members actively participated in every aspect of plan development.*

Several key themes were expressed by community members in the initial CPAC meetings, survey and workshops:

- Provide a coordinated and cooperative effort by the public, private and institutional sectors for revitalizing the physical, economic and social aspects of Downtown Virginia.
- Public safety and community well-being are essential attributes of a healthy and prosperous city.
- Increase efforts to providing a comprehensive and coordinated efforts to address blight and improve housing conditions.
- Continue efforts in supporting existing business enterprises and attracting new, non-mining related businesses to Virginia in order to diversify the economy and grow living wage jobs.
- Continue to provide parks, trails, lakes and open spaces that are safe, accessible, appropriately landscaped, kept up to date well maintained.
- Expand and enhance on-street cycling facilities as well as off-street trails for year-round use.

- Enhance the new community gateway / entry associated with the relocation of HWY 53 as well as revitalize the 2nd Avenue corridor.

In preparation for guiding development of the individual plan chapter goals and policies CPAC members participated in crafting a new vision statement for the Comprehensive Plan:

**Vision Statement**

Virginia, Minnesota is a historic and welcoming community providing a full range of employment and housing options within attractive, walkable districts and neighborhoods, well maintained parks, and natural areas, convenient shopping, a vibrant mixed use downtown offering multi- generational arts, cultural and entertainment activities, connected by a safe and accessible multimodal transportation network.

## 3.0 Virginia Today - Community Profile

The community profile section provides a summary of background information and relevant demographic and economic information based on available data including 2010 Census. The analysis of this data is important to understanding historical conditions and future development and growth potential for the City of Virginia.

### 3.1 Community History

Virginia's history began with mining explorations. The Village of Virginia was incorporated in 1892, with the origin of the name reportedly being from Alfred R. Humphreys, an early mining leader, naming the city after his wife, Virginia. It is also said that Virginia was a name fitting the abundance of virgin forest of great White and Norway Pine. In 1890, settlers first came to Virginia, lured by the uncovering of iron deposits. It officially became the first city on the Iron Range in 1895.

Fires destroyed what was Virginia several times including 1893 and 1900. After the fire of 1900, all commercial buildings erected in the downtown business district thereafter were required to be of brick, stone or concrete.

The City of Virginia is often referred to the "Queen City". In the 1920's, Virginia was ranked the 5th largest city in Minnesota, with mining activity reaching an all-time high. Virginia was the "hub" of the Range and was labeled "The Queen City of the Iron Range."

In 1964, the Taconite Amendment passed. The Taconite industry became a major provider of employment in the area until the early 1980's when the Mining industry experienced a downslide due to the economy. Their labor force was cut by nearly half.

The late 90s and early 2000 saw Virginia partnering with neighboring communities on several Industrial parks and recreational facilities.

*(source: City of website, <http://www.mn.us/history/index.php>)*

### 3.2 Regional Context

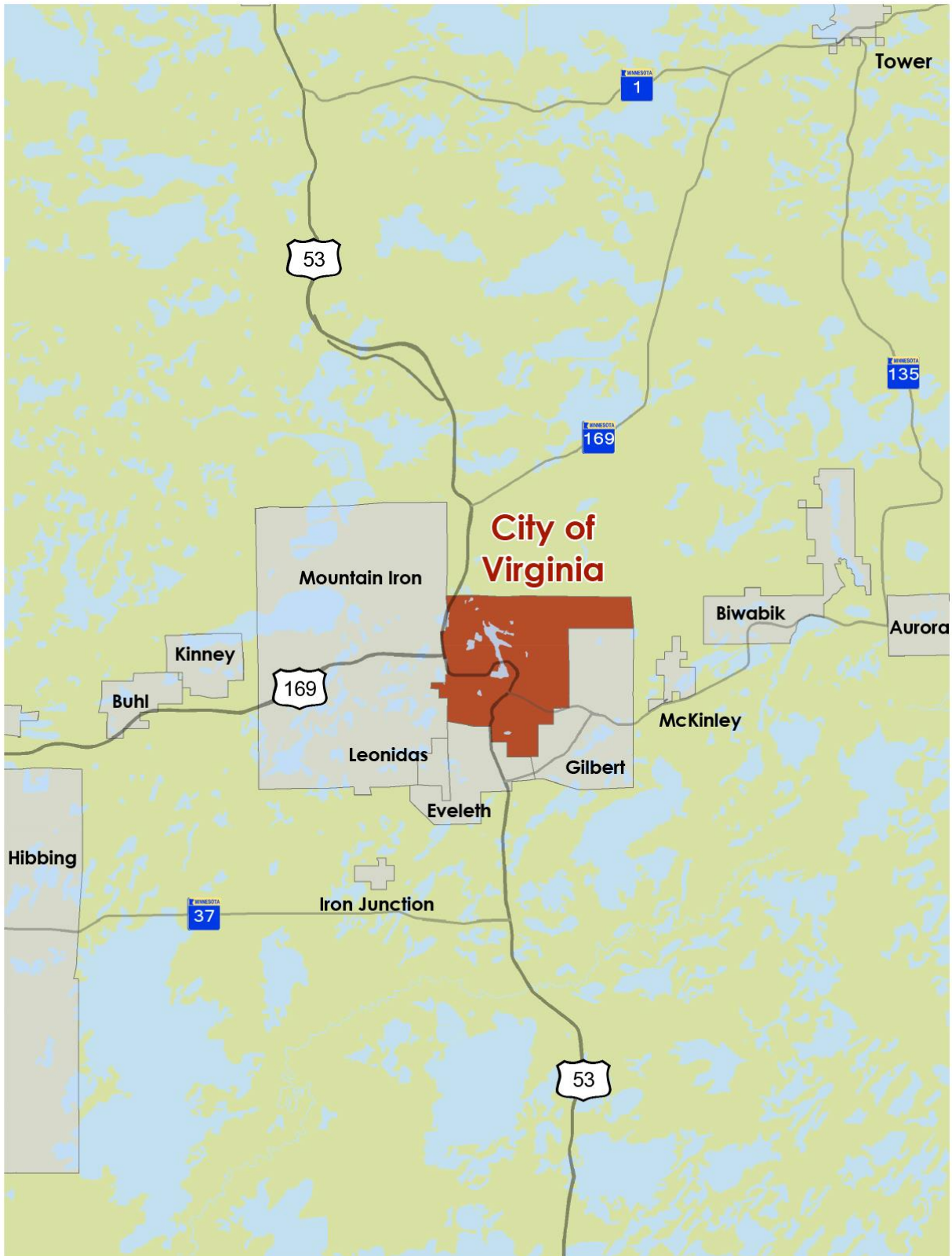
The City of Virginia lies in Northeastern Minnesota, in the center of St. Louis County and on the rich Mesabi Iron Range. Virginia is approximately 65 miles north of Duluth and is included in the Duluth Metropolitan Statistical Area. There are several nearby Arrowhead Region communities all within ten miles, including: Aurora, Biwabik, Buhl, Eveleth, Gilbert, and Mountain Iron. The Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan area is about 200 miles south, or three hours by car.

Virginia is also situated at the southern edge of the massive 3 million acre Superior National Forest, a third of which is the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and which also borders on Canada's Quetico Provincial Park. Highways 169 and 53 are major access routes to these popular canoe and recreation areas.

Figure 3-1 – State-wide Location Map



Figure 3-2 – Regional Location Map



The landscape of Virginia is dominated by the mining history of Minnesota’s Iron Range. Virginia falls within the Mesabi Range which is the largest of the four iron deposits that compose the Iron Range. The land was originally covered by Mixed Hardwoods and Pines, along with Aspens. The area is also dotted with conifer bogs and swamps. The landscape is rural in nature and most development is adjacent to Highways 169 and 53. The Sturgeon River and Cloquet Valley State Forests are each within 15 miles of Virginia. Both offer numerous activities including canoeing, hiking / biking and off road ATV trails. The Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle State Recreation Area is also located near Virginia. This is the state’s only OHV park and it offers over 36 miles of trails.

### 3.3 Demographic Projections and Trends

Population on the Iron Range has seen several boom and bust cycles over the past 100 years, and this pattern continues today. Mining and other primary industries continue to experience large swings in workforce needs, and this in turn drives either rapid growth or sudden and dramatic declines in population.

Virginia’s first population boom occurred from 1900 to 1910/20, when the population expand nearly fivefold, from about 3,000 residents to 14,000 residents. The population plateaued at around 12,000 to 14,000 residents from 1920 to 1960, after which time the population has experienced a downward trend at varying rates.

#### 3.3.1 Population

One of the most important components of a comprehensive plan is a profile of the population within the community and surrounding areas. Both historical data and long-range trends need to be considered. Census data is one of the most valuable tools in creating a community demographic profile. By collecting and analyzing this information, growth and development trends can be identified. Historical and future trends can help provide predictions of future conditions. The information provided in this section will provide a framework for updating the current comprehensive plan by attempting to meet future needs of Virginia over the next 20 years.

##### Population Growth

Table 3.1 compares population growth for the City of Virginia and St. Louis County between 1980 and 2010. In general, there has been a significant population decline in the City of Virginia since 1990. As of 2010, the City of Virginia population was 8,712 which is a decrease of almost 5% since 2000, showing not nearly the rapid decline rate as was experienced over the last 25 years between 1990 and 2015. The greatest population decrease in a 10-year period (7.4%) for Virginia occurred between 1990 and 2000. St. Louis County’s population basically remained stagnant and showed minimal growth between 2000 and 2010.

**Table 3-1- Population Growth (1980-2010)**

	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1980 - 2010	% Change 2000 - 2010
City of Virginia	11,056	9,410	9,157	8,712	-21.2%	-4.9%
St Louis County	222,229	198,213	200,528	200,563	-9.7%	0.0%

US Census 1990, 2000,2010

**Table 3-2 - Population Growth (1990 – 2014)**

	1990	2000	2010	2014	% Change 1990 - 2014	% Change 2010 - 2014
City of Virginia	9,410	9,157	8,712	8,671	-7.9%	-0.5%
St Louis County	198,213	200,528	200,226	200,563	1.0%	-0.2%

US Census 1990, 2000,2010  
US Census ACS 2014, DP03

**Population Projections**

Preparing the population projections is a critical step in developing accurate land use forecasts. Understanding future population growth patterns for a community, particularly when combined with land utilization estimates, can assist public and private sector planners and developers in determining infrastructure needs and identifying community investment opportunities.

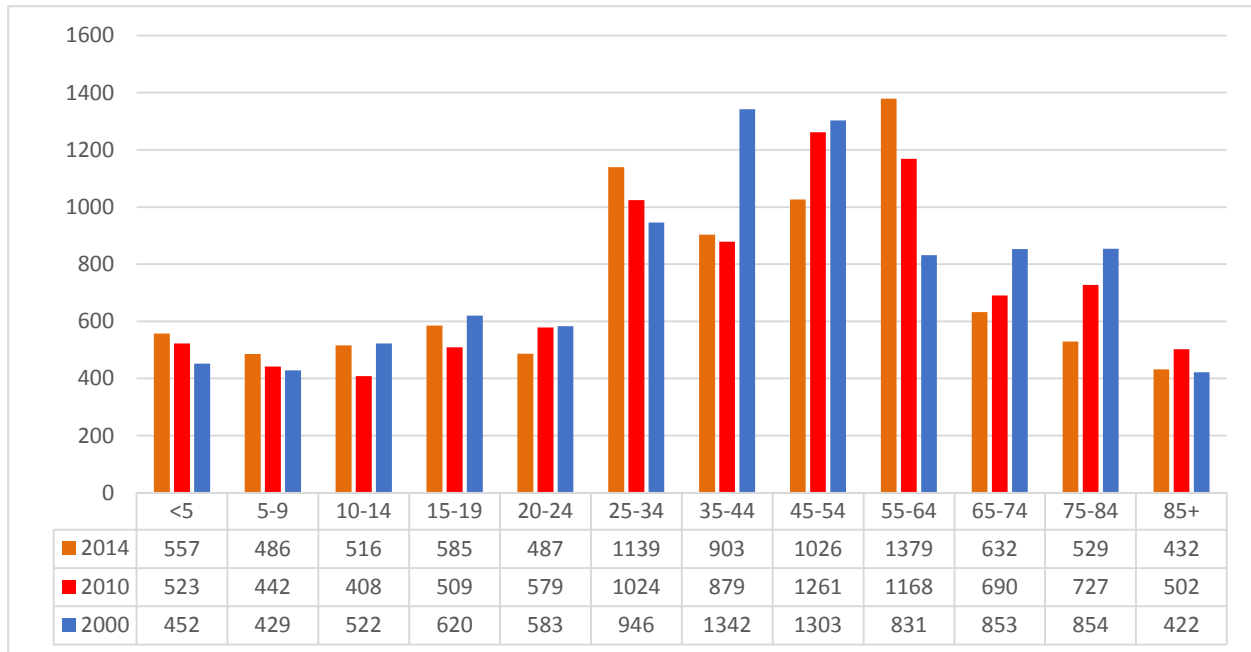
**Table 3-3- Population Projections (2015 – 2030)**

	2014(1)	2020 (2,3)	2030(2,3)	% Change 2014 - 2020	% Change 2020 - 2030
City of Virginia	8,671	8,400	8,000	-3.1%	-4.8%
St Louis County	200,563	200,794	200,299	0.1%	-0.2%

- (1) US Census ACS 2014, DP03
- (2) County Project is from Minnesota State Demographers office
- (3) City Projection is Linear Regression Analysis based on 1990-2014 Data

**3.3.2 Age**

**Figure 3-3 – Age Range of Population**



US Census 2000, 2010

### 3.3.3 Composition (Race, Education)

Figure 3-4 – 2014 Race Composition

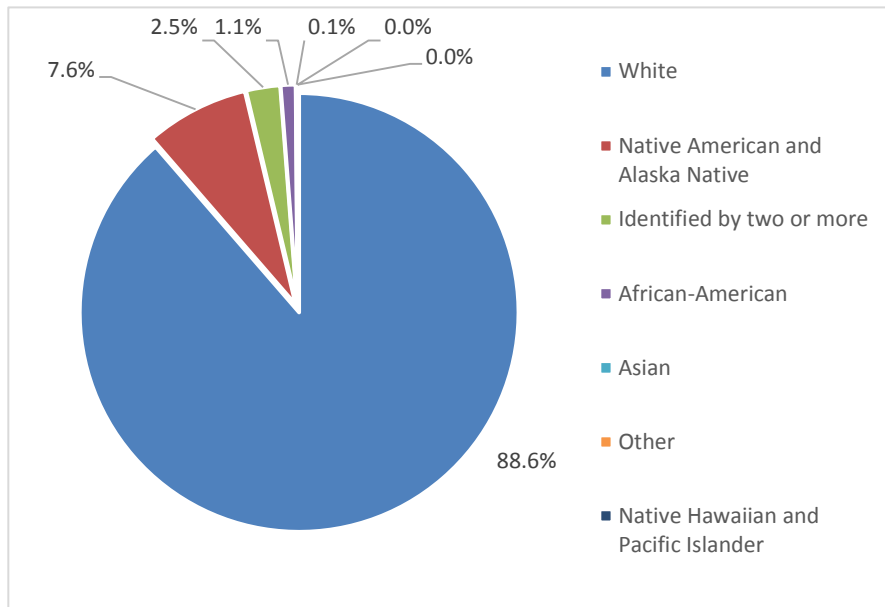


Table 3-4- Race

	2010		2014	
	Count	%	Count	%
White	7987	91.7%	7686	88.6%
Native American and Alaska Native	264	3.0%	662	7.6%
Identified by two or more	252	2.9%	217	2.5%
African-American	136	1.6%	95	1.1%
Asian	46	0.5%	11	0.1%
Other	25	0.3%	0	0.0%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	2	0.0%	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8712</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8671</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

US Census 2010  
US Census ACS 2014

### 3.3.4 Households/Housing Units

Table 3-5- Household Growth, 1990 – 2014

	1990	2000	2010	2014	% Change 1990 - 2014	% Change 2010 - 2014
City of Virginia	4,338	4,333	4,242	4,088	-5.8%	-3.6%
St Louis County	78,901	82,619	84,783	85,033	7.8%	0.3%

US Census 1990, 2000,2010  
US Census ACS 2014, S1101

**Table 3-6- Household Projections, 2015 - 2030**

	2014	2020	2030	% Change 2014 - 2020	% Change 2020 - 2030
City of Virginia	4,088	4,100	4,000	0.3%	-2.4%
St Louis County	85,033	87,100	89,700	2.4%	3.0%

US Census ACS 2014, S1101

(3) City Projection is Linear Regression Analysis based on 1990-2014 Data

**Table 3-7 - Occupied vs. Vacant Housing Units**

	2000	2010	2014
Total Units	4,692	4,610	4,665
Occupied	4,333	4,028	4,088
Vacant	359	582	577
Vacancy Rate	8%	13%	12%

US Census, 2000,2010 ACS 2014 DP04

**Table 3-8 – Owner-Occupied vs. Rental Housing Units**

	2000	2010	2014
Total Occupied Units	4,333	4,028	4,088
Owner-Occupied	2,673	2,357	2,464
Renter-Occupied	1,660	1,671	1,624

US Census, 2000,2010 ACS 2014 DP04

**Table 3-9 - Units in Structure**

Total Housing Units in Structure	Estimate	Percent
1-unit	3,040	65.2%
2-unit	402	8.6%
3 or 4 units	258	5.5%
5 to 9 units	113	2.4%
10 to 19 units	110	2.4%
20 or more units	686	14.7%
Mobile home	56	1.2%
Boat, RV, van etc	0	0.0%

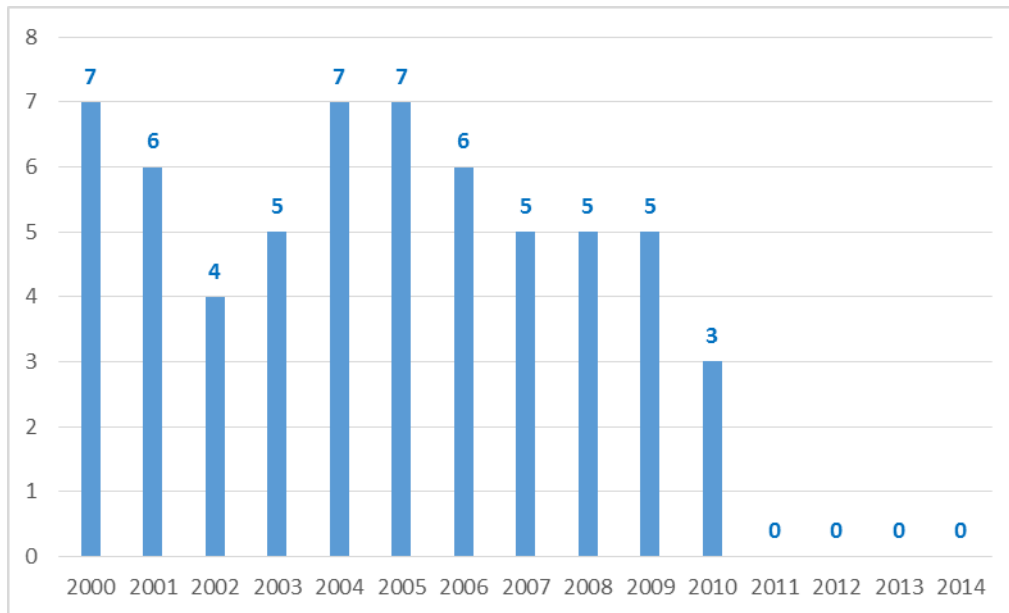
US Census, 2010 ACS 2014 DP04

**Table 3-10 - Construction Year of Housing Units**

Year Built	Estimate	Percent
Total Housing Units	4,665	100.0%
2010 or later	0	0.0%
2000 to 2009	273	5.9%
1990 to 1999	240	5.1%
1980 to 1989	253	5.4%
1970 to 1979	431	9.2%
1960 to 1969	446	9.6%
1950 to 1959	920	19.7%
1940 to 1949	596	12.8%
1939 or earlier	1,506	32.3%

US Census, 2010 ACS 2014 DP04

**Figure 3-5 – Building Permits**



US Census 2014

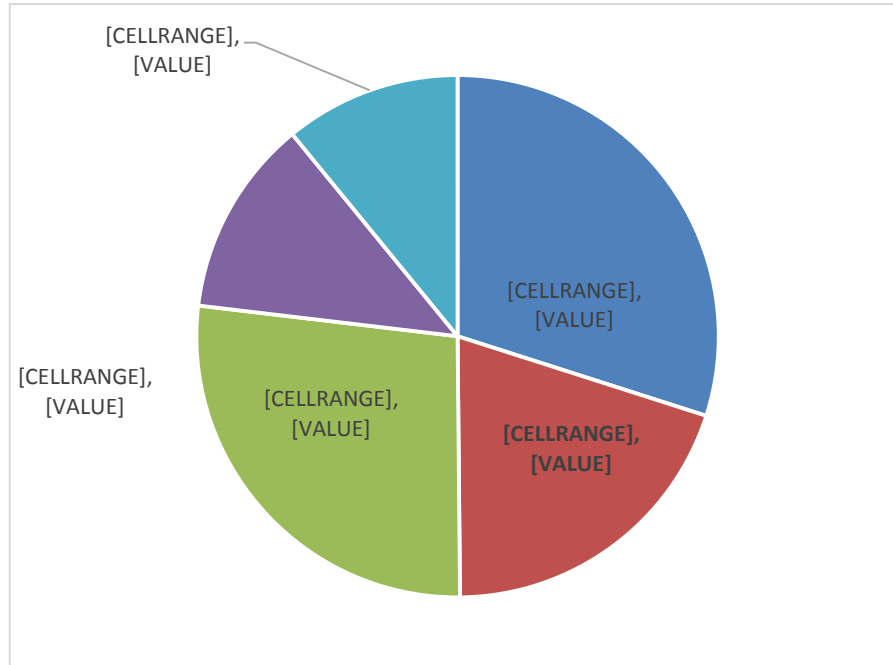
### 3.3.5 Employment

**Table 3-11- Update Title**

Occupation	
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	29.9%
Service occupations	19.9%
Sales and office occupations	27.0%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	12.2%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	10.9%
	100%

US Census ACS 2014, DP03

**Figure 3-6 – Employment by Occupation**



US Census ACS 2014, DP03

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## 4.0 Land Use



## 4.1 Introduction

Land Use establishes the foundation for the other elements of the comprehensive plan. How land within the city is used determines many aspects of the community. Roads and streets, city services, economic development, housing, parks and open spaces are developed, maintained and expanded according to the needs generated by the particular types and characteristics of Virginia’s land uses. In addition to establishing specific land use types the Land Use also establishes the community’s growth strategy and policy framework over the next 20 years.

The Land Use Plan helps the Planning Commission and City Council respond to individual development and redevelopment requests. It is comprised of text and maps that are intended to guide land use, zoning, and physical development within consistent with the City’s vision. Together the land use text and associated Future Land Use Map (FLUM) are the plan of what the city should look like and how it should function in 2035.

This Plan is implemented through detailed planning, zoning and subdivision ordinances, public improvements, public-private-partnerships as well as through private and public investment in land development.

## 4.2 Existing Conditions

Most of the developed land within the city is utilized for private and institutional purpose such as housing, shopping, health care and industry. The City of Virginia and related public agencies are also invested in a variety of land uses from power generation and water filtration to office / industrial parks, schools, trails and parks and recreation facilities. Ferrous mining comprises single most dominant land use in Virginia, occupying approximately 77% of land within the municipal boundary.

Land Use	Acres
HIGH DENSITY RES.	32.00
MID FAMILY RES.	21.00
MOBILE HOME	30.00
SINGLE FAMILY RES.	991.00
MINING	9,433.00
INDUSTRIAL	779.00
COMMERCIAL	303.50
INSTITUTIONAL	119.00
GOLF COURSE	120.00
OPEN SPACE	163.00
PARK	122.00
ROW	168.50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,281.50</b>

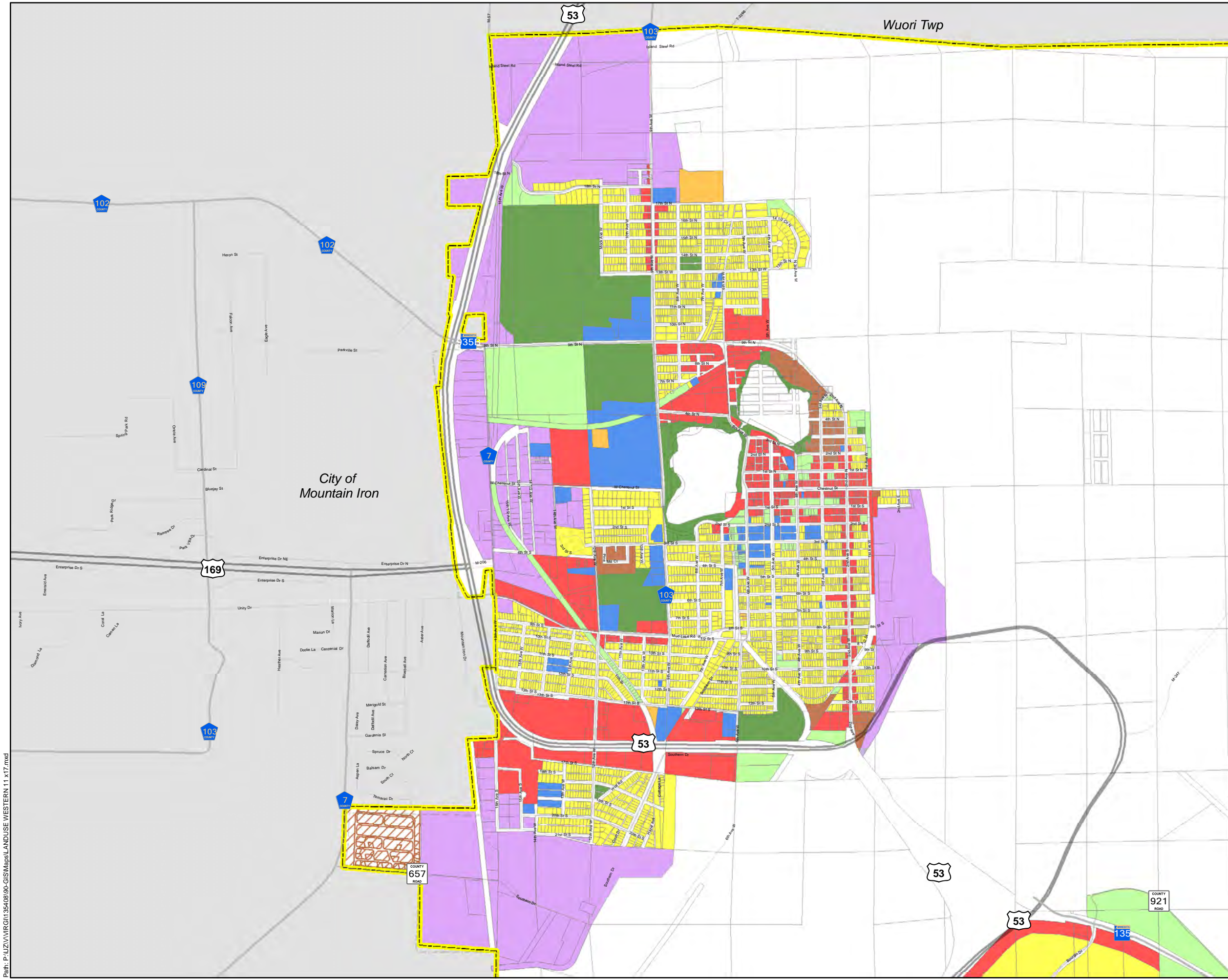
### 4.3 Future Needs

Virginia has experienced steady population decreases over the past several decades, and this relative trend is anticipated to continue. By 2030, Virginia is projected to decline to a population of 8,000, representing a 7.7% decrease from the 2014 population. Comparatively – this is a faster decline than that of St. Louis County. It is likely that residential land uses may decline somewhat as the population continues to age.

Providing for a more creative mix of uses in older commercial areas including multifamily residential and encouraging redevelopment with new varieties of infill housing in established neighborhoods currently experiencing blight and disinvestment will help attract new home owners while improving quality of life and tax base. Using these and other smart growth land use concepts, the City may be able to curb some of the projected population declines.

Performance of prominent economic sectors will heavily influence the land use as well. While the growth of mineral extraction activities is not likely within the City limits, the performance of this industry regionally will have a large impact on the success of the region's communities.

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**Legend**

- CITY LIMITS
- LAND USE**
- COMMERCIAL
- SINGLE FAMILY RES
- MID FAMILY RES
- HIGH DENSITY RES
- MOBILE HOME
- INDUSTRIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL (GOV'T / HOSPITAL / SCHOOL / CHURCH)
- OPEN SPACE
- PARK & GOLF COURSE
- MINING / OPEN SPACE



0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

Map by:mss  
 Projection: St\_Louis\_CS96\_Feet  
 Source: St Louis County, MnDNR, SEH

## LAND USE MAP

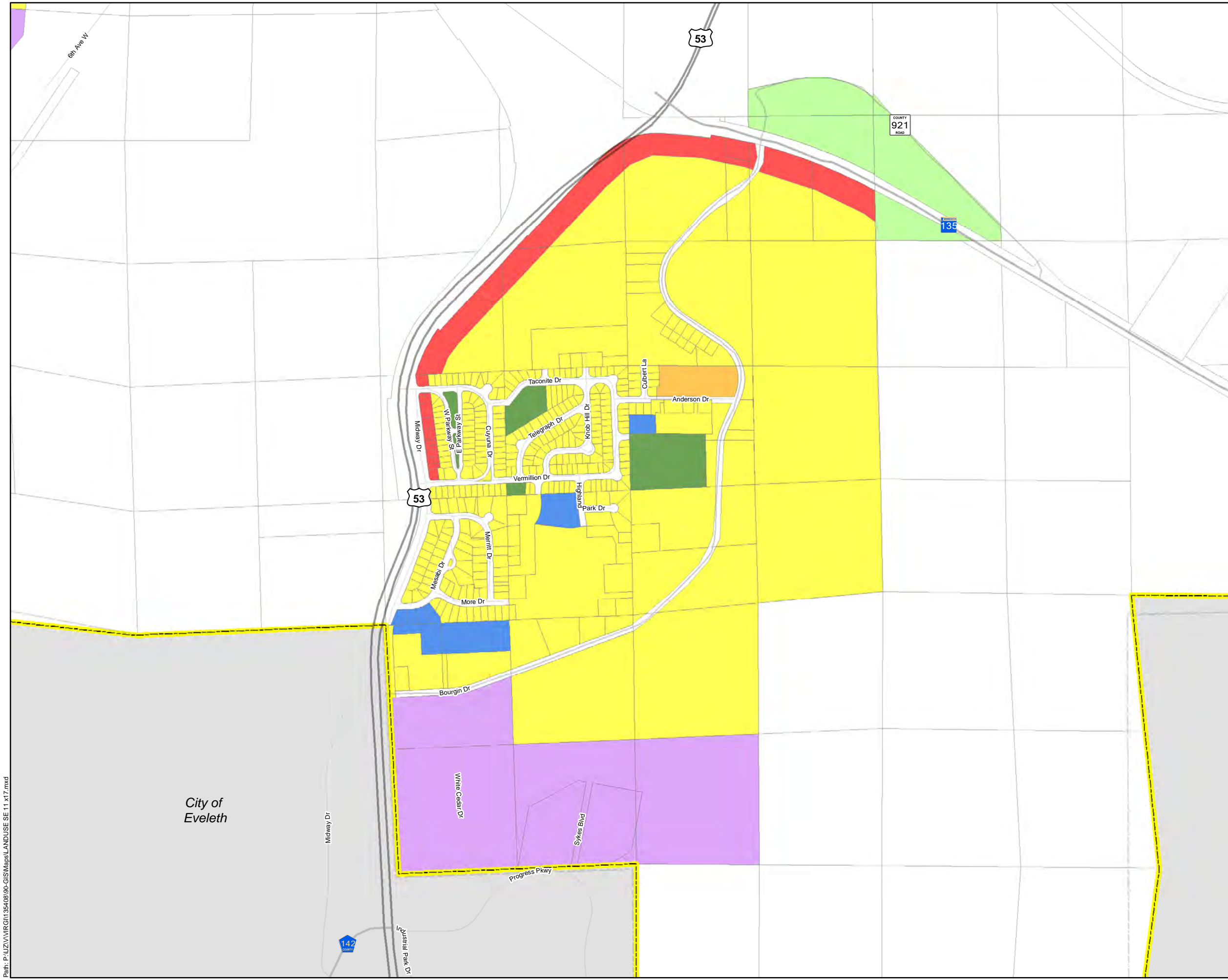
### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE VIRGINIA, MINNESOTA

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.

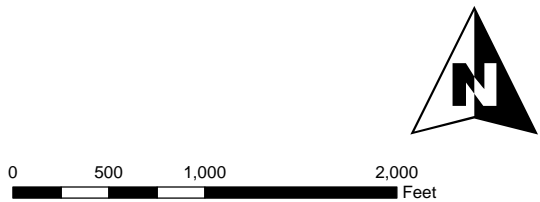


Project: VIRGI 135408  
 Print Date: 11/16/2016

Figure  
4.1



- Legend**
- CITY LIMITS
  - LAND USE**
  - COMMERCIAL
  - SINGLE FAMILY RES
  - MID FAMILY RES
  - HIGH DENSITY RES
  - MOBILE HOME
  - INDUSTRIAL
  - INSTITUTIONAL (GOV'T / HOSPITAL / SCHOOL / CHURCH)
  - OPEN SPACE
  - PARK & GOLF COURSE
  - MINING / OPEN SPACE



Map by:mss  
 Projection: St\_Louis\_CS96\_Feet  
 Source: St Louis County, MnDNR, SEH

## LAND USE MAP

### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE VIRGINIA, MINNESOTA

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Project: VIRGI 135408  
 Print Date: 11/16/2016

Figure  
 4.2

## 4.4 Goals and Policies

Comprehensive Plan goals establish long-range aims for the city and are intended to serve as guides for the Comprehensive Plan. They represent general statements that identify community aspirations or desired conditions. Policies describe actions aimed at achieving each of the Plan Element's goals. Policies will be developed following the review and refinement of Plan Element Goals.

Goal 1. Maintain an official Land Use Plan that embodies principles of smart growth in identifying the most appropriate locations for development and redevelopment.

**Policies:**

- a. Prepare and adopt a Land Use Plan that designates land use areas and guides development to appropriate areas in order to ensure desirable land use patterns and minimize conflicts.

Goal 2. Maintain controlled and orderly growth consistent with its Land Use Plan, Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

**Policies:**

- a. Work to retain attractive, historic buildings within the community.
- b. Adhere to specific site design restrictions for properties that are environmentally sensitive or have high visibility.
- c. Ensure community gateways are welcoming and attractive.

Goal 3. Preserve and strengthen Virginia's identity and sense of place through the use of traditional block patterns, urban design, site and building design and maintenance practices.

**Policies:**

- a. Work to retain attractive, historic buildings within the community, especially in the historic Downtown.
- b. Work to improve the attractiveness of primary gateways and highway and roadway corridors within, especially Highway 53, 2nd Ave corridor, and Chestnut Street.
- c. Strengthen land development regulations to establish specific site design requirements for properties that are environmentally sensitive or have high visibility.
- d. Work to assure roadway widths are adequate for the type of development served, but not wider than necessary to assure proper scale, reduction of hard surfacing and reduced costs to the city and developers.
- e. Review non-conforming uses for adherence to city policies. Enforce regulations that apply to non-conforming uses and review of effectiveness.
- f. Adhere to standards that assure proper screening and landscaping of unsightly site uses including surface parking lots.
- g. Promote redevelopment and infill when feasible to leverage existing infrastructure investments and strengthen neighborhood vitality and cohesion.

Goal 4. Coordinate community growth with mining companies to ensure land use compatibility.

**Policies:**

- a. Encourage compatible infill residential redevelopment throughout existing neighborhoods to address blight, increase housing choice and improve tax base.
- b. Encourage compatible mixed use and mixed-income infill redevelopment to enhance neighborhood completeness, promote economic development and strengthen sustainability and resiliency.

Goal 5. Support the economic and social viability of Virginia's historic Downtown.

**Policies:**

- a. Retain and attract an appropriate mix of retail/service business activity and housing opportunities in Downtown.
- b. Continue to respect and leverage the close proximity of Bailey and Silver Lake through use of innovative stormwater management techniques, access to open space and nature.
- c. Continue to enhance and maintain downtown-specific pedestrian, cycling and vehicular infrastructure appropriate to Downtown's unique and historic stature as Virginia's premier social and cultural district.
- d. Encourage and support innovative housing opportunities in the Downtown area.
- e. Promote adequate customer parking for the Downtown with additional concentration on maintenance and improvement of parking facilities.
- f. Continue to encourage the use of Federal, State, local, and other financial resources to fund and or incentivize Downtown reinvestment and maintenance of Downtown enhancements.

Goal 6. Practice smart growth planning principles and practices at all levels of government.

**Policies:**

- a. Provide smart growth education and training opportunities for elected officials, Planning Commissioners, and staff.
- b. Support smart growth education activities for community members by arranging training and seminars through organizations such as the MN American Planning Association, the League of MN Cities, Smart Growth America and the MN Chapter of the Urban Land Institute.

## 5.0 Housing



## 5.1 Introduction

Housing plays a critical role in defining a person's quality of life. From a new resident or visitor's perspective, it provides a visual indicator of the community's character, including prosperity and vitality. From a City's perspective, housing is typically the largest user of land and City services and provides a significant base for local taxes. Having a clear understanding of current housing conditions along with current and future population



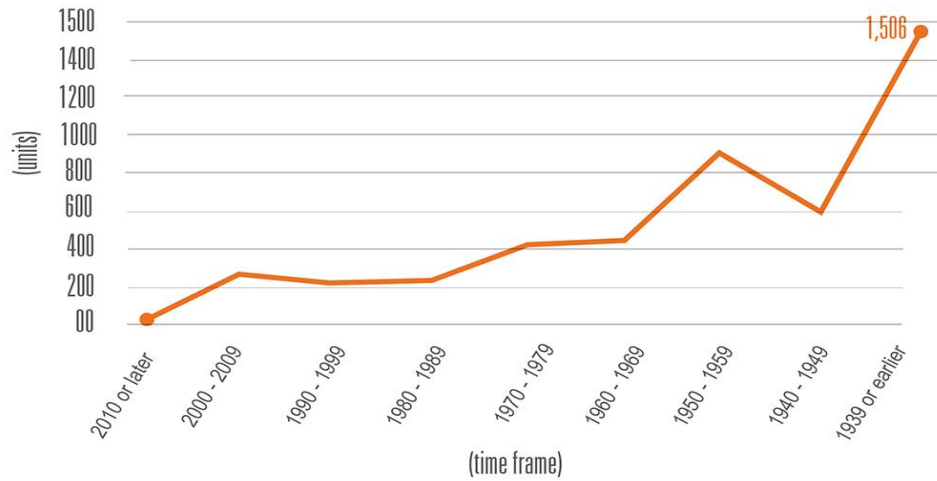
projections will assist as it strives to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Virginia provides a variety of housing types from traditional, single family homes to modern midrise, multifamily buildings.

## 5.2 Existing Conditions

Residential uses occupy approximately 1,440 acres of Virginia's developed land area. Nearly half of Virginia's housing units were built prior to 1940 and over two-thirds of homes were built before 1960. Also, according to CPAC and resident input, many older properties have not been adequately maintained. The age of the housing stock has an impact on overall housing condition since maintenance and efficiency demands increase with age. All housing units are served by public water and sewer. Despite several programs and extended efforts over multiple decades, Virginia continues to address the issues of aging and deteriorating housing stock. In addition, a continual shrinking overall population, tends to limit the pace of replacement housing and neighborhood expansion. Over the past sixteen years, residential building activity has occurred in the area of N.4th and N. 3rd Avenue West as well as to the south of HWY 53 along Bourgin Road.

## Construction Year of Housing Units



**4,665** total units

US Census 2010, ACS 2014

Of Virginia's 4,665 dwellings, approximately 60 % are owner occupied and 40% are renter occupied. By comparison Cloquet's 5,235 dwellings are 69% owner occupied and 31% renter occupied, while nearby Eveleth's 1,942 dwellings show a 56% to 44% mixture of owner to renter occupied.

The rental vacancy rate is the fraction of homes for rent that are not occupied. In 2014 the rental vacancy rate for Virginia was 5.79% according to Census ACS data. Over the past decade vacancy rates in Virginia have fluctuated from 8% to 6 %. A healthy rental market typically maintains a vacancy rate of about 5%, which is known to promote competitive rental rates, provide consumer choice, and allow for turnover. As of 2014, median rental rates in Virginia were approximately \$1,116 a month as compared with the national median rent rate of \$934.

Using median household income data for Virginia, one can calculate the fraction of income the median household would use to pay rent at the median monthly gross rent rate. For Virginia, median monthly gross rent as a fraction of median household income was 20.63% in 2014 according to the ACS.

**Table 5-1 – Number Dwelling Units per Residential Structure**

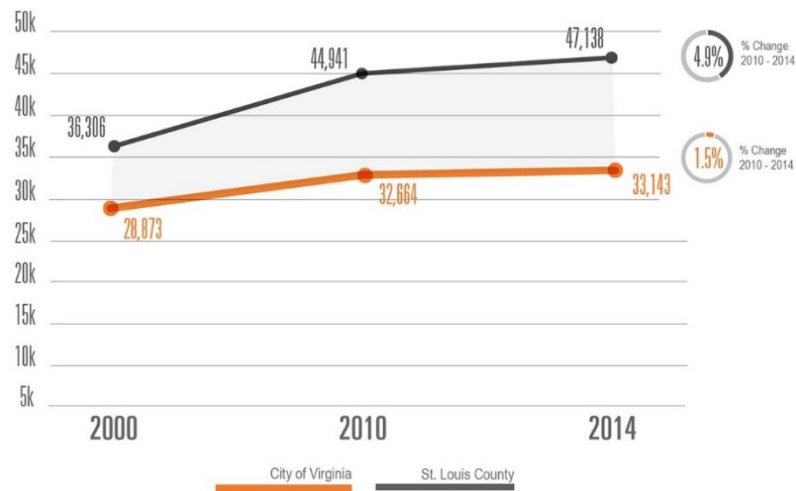
**Units in Structure**

Total Housing Units in Structure	Estimate	%
1-unit	3,040	65.2
2-unit	402	8.6
3 or 4 units	258	5.5
5-9 units	113	2.4
10-19 units	110	5.5
20 or more units	686	14.7
Mobile home	56	1.2

US Census 2010, ACS 2014,

While median household incomes for Virginia residents has risen over the past fourteen years, they continue to lag behind those of St. Louis County which has seen an increase of nearly 5% in the past four years. Household income levels directly impact the amount of money families can spend on housing. Increasing the City’s household median incomes can have multiple positive impacts on its housing market. As more families have more income to spend on housing, they are more apt to invest in upkeep and improvements, raising housing values. Housing developers are also drawn to communities with rising incomes and are more likely to invest in building new housing products which improves overall housing conditions and strengthens the local economy.

**Table 5-2 – Household Median Income**



US Census 2010, ACS 2014

**5.3 Future Needs**

With Virginia’s population set to decline, a slow-growing median household income, and an existing housing market with a slightly elevated vacancy rate, there is not likely going to be a strong push for significant housing growth. In fact, since 2010, the US Census has not recorded any new construction of housing units. Households are projected to decline

through 2030 by approximately 2.4 percent. With the pertinent demographic projections provided, it is likely the City will have the quantity of housing units necessary. However – the quality of housing that is available may not be suitable to attract new buyers or accommodate move-up housing.

Virginia’s rental housing properties appear to be relatively undocumented, as there is not licensing or formal registry of rental operators. This lack of accountability contributes to low levels of maintenance and some of the blighted conditions seen in Virginia’s housing stock. The City passed a new property maintenance code effective 2017 which will help in process of identifying condition expectations and citing noncompliant properties. Improving or rehabbing residential properties is a community-driven vision that many residents and business owners would like to achieve.

Continuing to encourage the construction of mixed-use facilities, revitalization of the historic downtown and strengthening existing neighborhoods should help to encourage younger and older residents alike to consider making housing investments in the City.

## 5.4 Goals and Policies

Goal 1. Achieve a diverse and balanced supply of market rate and affordable life cycle housing.

### Policies:

- a. Encourage the development of a variety of housing types, densities, and styles at price ranges for all income levels and ages to meet current and future community needs.
- b. Plan new residential areas as complete neighborhoods with a range of housing types, densities and price points.
- c. Support development of new and renovated affordable housing.
- d. Work collaboratively with industry and business to identify and provide safe, decent and affordable housing to meet the needs of their workforces.
- e. Engage the Development Community, including realtors, builders, lenders and landlords to provide code-compliant, attractive and affordable housing that meets the diverse needs of the community.

Goal 2. Strengthen and support Virginia’s existing neighborhoods.

### Policies:

- a. Update land development codes to include provisions for the development of compact, walkable, neighborhoods with a mix of residential building types, and sizes.
- b. Protect neighborhoods from incompatible land uses through effective land use and zoning and building codes.
- c. Improve transportation connections, particularly bicycle paths/routes and pedestrian facilities, between and within existing neighborhoods and other parts of the City and region.
- d. Preserve historic homes and culturally important community features - both built and natural - in existing neighborhoods.
- e. Encourage and support the maintenance and rehabilitation of older housing stock.

Goal 3. Achieve a consistent level of code compliant, quality housing stock throughout the city of Virginia.

**Policies:**

- a. Continue to evaluate the condition of existing housing stock to address code violations and eliminate blight.
- b. Continue to explore funding programs for blight reduction.
- c. Expand and accelerate programs to rehabilitate and/or demolish blighted residential properties.

Goal 4. Establish housing stock that is energy efficient and resilient.

**Policies:**

- a. Encourage resilient housing construction design, renovations, and management that maximizes lifecycle cost effective energy efficiency and minimizes exposure to climate risks.
- b. The plan shall identify existing housing conditions and plan for future housing rehab, redevelopment, and new housing.



*Examples of traditional multi-family homes incorporating modern construction methods and amenities.*

## 6.0 Transportation



## 6.1 Transportation Network

The City of Virginia recognizes the changing travel needs of its residents, commuters, visitors, commercial transporters, railroads, pedestrians, bicyclists, and air travelers making trips within and across the community. To provide for safe, multimodal transportation facilities that offer acceptable capacity under both existing and future conditions and a high level of quality transportation facilities, the transportation section of plan the overall comprehensive plan will provide transportation goals that to support a multimodal network into the future.

## 6.2 Existing Conditions

### 6.2.1 Auto Traffic – Volume and Capacity Assessment

Traffic Volume data for autos were obtained from the MnDOT database for the roadway network in the City of Virginia. The most current daily traffic volumes were obtained in 2013 with some data collected in 2011. Traffic volumes along some of the main routes in the City of Virginia are summarized and a comparison of this data with design capacities for similar roadways shows none of the roadways in Virginia listed below are at or near capacity (Table 6-1).

#### 6th Avenue West (two-lane section)

- North of US 53 – 1,800
- North of 8th Street – 3,000
- South of 1st Street N – 4,250
- North of 1st Street N – 5,100

#### 9th Avenue West/County State Aid Highway 103 (two-lane section)

- South of 9th Street N – 4,550
- South of 9th Street N – 6,400
- South of 1st Street N – 4,250
- North of 1st Street N – 5,100

#### 12th Avenue West

- South of US 53 (two-lane section) – 6,200
- North of US 53 (three-lane section) – 10,400
- South of 8-½ Street (three-lane section) – 6,800
- North of 8-½ Street (two-lane section) – 3,450 to 2,350

#### 8th Street South (two-lane section)

- West of 6th Avenue W – 6,500
- East of 6th Avenue W – 7,200
- East of 4th Avenue W – 5,200

#### Hoover Road (two-lane section)

- South of US 169 – 4,900
- North of US 169 – 4,050
- South of 9th Street N/County State Aid Highway 102 – 13,800

Chestnut Street (two-lane section)

- North of 18th Avenue NW – 5,400
- South of 18th Avenue NW – 13,800

2nd Avenue S/Trunk Highway 135/9th Street N (two-lane section)

- At Chestnut Street – 6,700
- North of 2nd Street N – 5,500
- West of N 6th Avenue W – 8,000
- East of US 53 – 6,600

Trunk Highway 135 (four-lane divided highway)

- Southeast of US 53 – 8,300

US 169 (four-lane divided highway)

- East of County State Aid Highway 109/Nichols Avenue – 9,700
- West of US 53, South Junction – 15,000

US 53 (four-lane divided highway)

- Southeast of Trunk Highway 135, East Junction – 15,000
- Northwest of Trunk Highway 135, East Junction – 23,400
- West of Trunk Highway 135 West Junction – 17,400
- West of 12th Avenue W – 14,900
- North of US 169 – 12,100
- North of 9th Street N/County Road 102 – 9,800

Based on typical design capacities shown in the table below, the streets identified above within the City of Virginia are not at or near capacity.

**Table 6-1 – Typical Daily Traffic Volume Design Capacity**

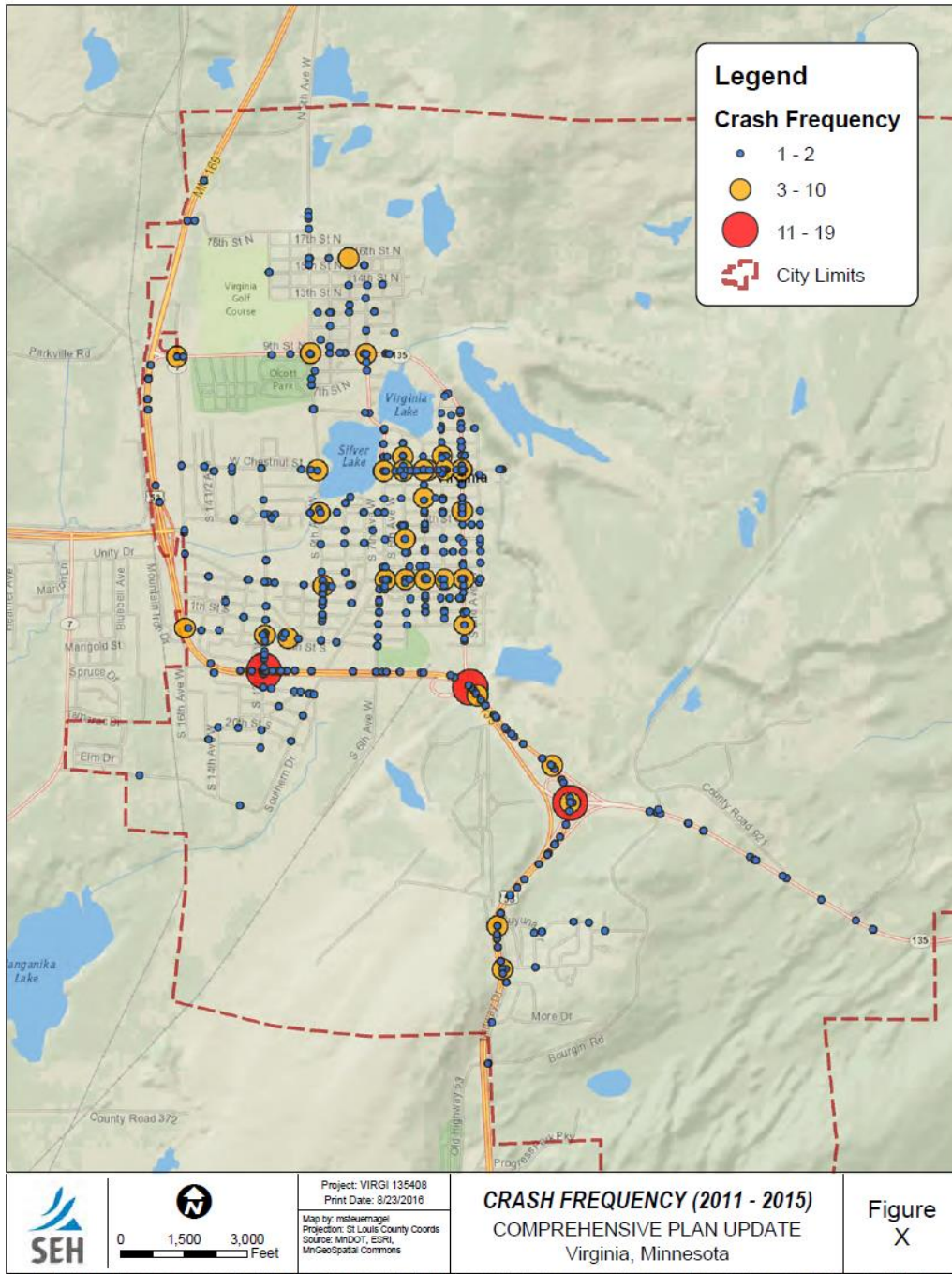
Facility Type	Design Daily Capacity
Two lane arterial/collector	12,000
Three lane arterial/collector	18,000
Four lane undivided arterial	27,000
Four lane divided arterial with turn lanes	40,000
Four lane freeway	74,000

### 6.3 Safety

The Minnesota Department of Transportation’s crash mapping software (MnCMAT) was used to identify crash locations and statistics for Virginia for a period of the past five years (2011 through 2015). These crashes and locations are illustrated on Figure B. The figure represents each of the total 790 crashes that occurred within the network during the five year period. The map shows the areas of the highest crash frequency with a red circle, having between 11 and 19 crashes over the most recent 5 years. The high and moderate frequency crash locations provide information about where potential areas of concern are located within the transportation network. Due to the high traffic volumes

experienced along the highway, it is expected that the higher crash frequency locations occur at the US 53 intersections as shown on Figure B.

## 6.4 Future Transportation



This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey map and is not intended to be used as one. This map is a compilation of records, information, and data gathered from various sources listed on this map and is to be used for reference purposes only. SEH does not warrant that the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data used to prepare this map are error free, and SEH does not represent that the GIS Data can be used for navigational, tracking, or any other purpose requiring exacting measurement of distance or direction or precision in the depiction of geographic features. The user of this map acknowledges that SEH shall not be liable for any damages which arise out of the user's access or use of data provided.

The Transportation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan will serve as a reference for residents, city officials, commissioners and staff to utilize as they review development proposals, plan capital improvement project budgets and consider future transportation system improvement needs. Transportation facilities link and, in some cases, separate land uses within the community. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan establishes

goals, policies and recommendations to address transportation needs providing a system that accommodates the growth of Virginia.

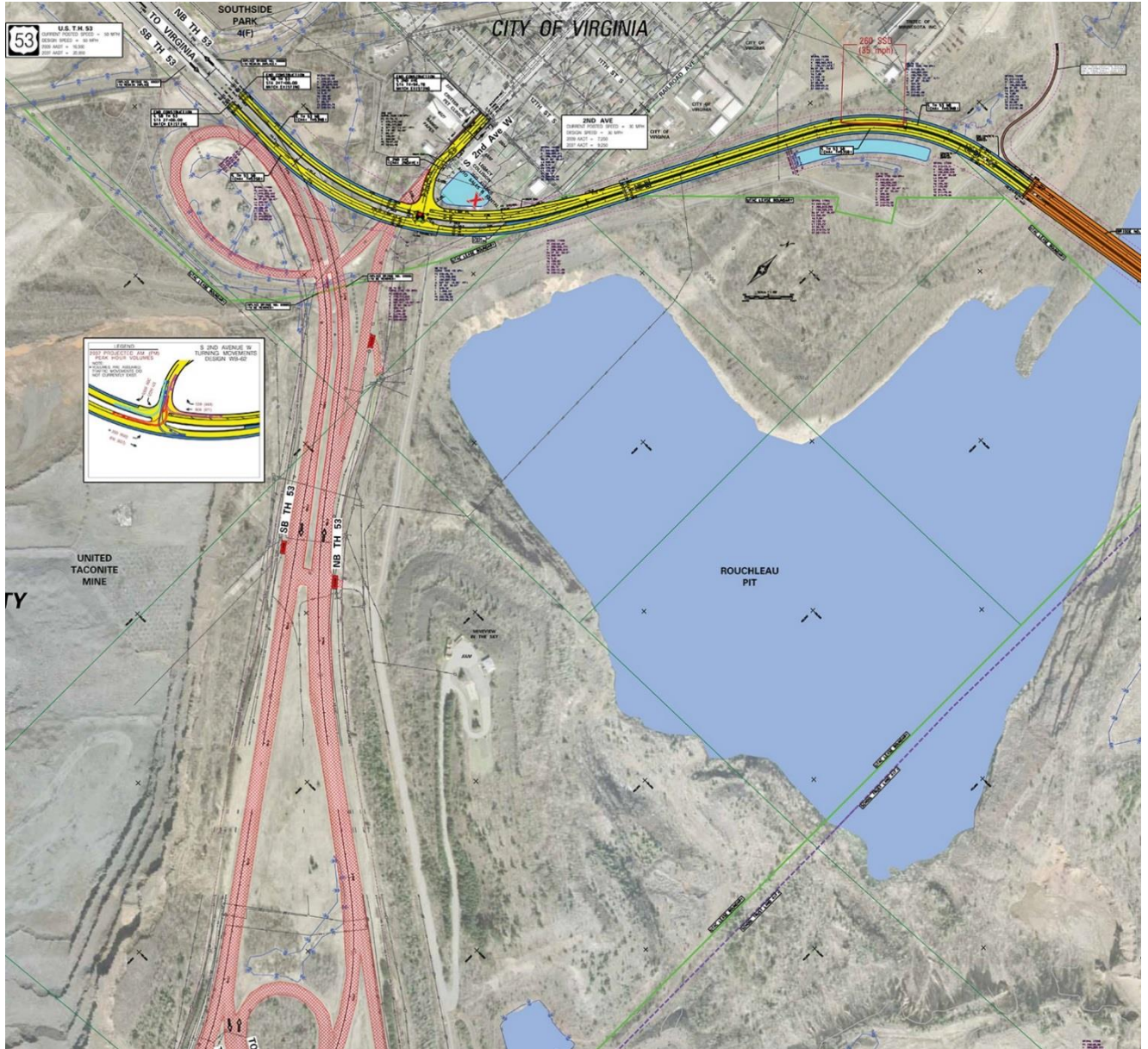
Transportation planning requires continuous monitoring and revision to react to unforeseen changes in the economy and market conditions that impact the community, in particular mining and other industry conditions in the East Range region.

## **6.5 Highway 53 Relocation**

Highway 53 was constructed by MnDOT in 1960 on land owned by iron mining interests. The easement included a requirement that MnDOT would relocate the road with three years notice if the mining interests wanted to get to the iron ore underneath the roadway. The mining interests notified MnDOT in 2010 that the road needed to be moved for mining purposes and it was agreed that this would occur in 2017. The relocation of US 53 includes a 3.2 mile segment between Bourgin Road and 2nd Avenue in Virginia as well as the following:

- Vacating a portion of Highway 53
- New interchange at Highway 135
- New bridge over Rouchleau Pit
- Relocation of Landfill Road
- Realignment of Mesabi Trail
- Reconstruction of 2nd Avenue interchange
- City of Virginia utility relocation

Figure 6-1 – Highway 53 Realignment



The project is presently under construction and will provide a transportation facility that will safely maintain adequate roadway capacity and mobility as well as local, regional, and inter-regional connectivity, maintaining efficiency of connections. The project will serve current and future capacity needs while maintaining system mobility and safety. The project development process also included mineral rights acquisition by the state under the new alignment to ensure that MnDOT will not have to move the road again.

## **6.6 Streets Framework**

Functional classification is a system by which roadways are grouped according to the function they are intended to serve. Basic to this process is the recognition that individual roadways do not function independently, but rather most travel involves movement along a network of different functional types of roads. Functional classification assists in determining what role each roadway should perform prior to determining its design features, such as street widths, design speed, and intersection control. However, it is critically important to recognize that there is flexibility in the design of a street relative to its functional classification.

MnDOT and several communities around the State of Minnesota and across the Country have adopted Complete Streets policies which guide the approach to design of streets that are safe and functional for all users including autos, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit. The specific modal needs across a network vary depending upon the adjacent land uses. For example, a market or school should be accessible by transit, foot, bicycle and auto and street designs should accommodate those users. An industrial area must often accommodate larger vehicles to transport goods, thus design controls must accommodate trucks as well as other modes.



**Figure 6-2 – Design Example – Intersections for freight and pedestrians**

*This design provides a mountable truck apron as well as tighter radii for autos to navigate intersections. The pedestrian crossing is set back from the apron area and the detectable warning surface is outside of the apron area.*

Complete Streets policies recognize the link between how a street functions and the adjacent land uses. The planning, design and construction or reconstruction of streets must consider land use context, prioritizing access for all user types to land uses such as schools, recreational, commercial and employment areas. Integrating such features as countdown pedestrian timers into traffic signals and signalized mid-block pedestrian crossings in areas with high pedestrian traffic can significantly improve walkability.

In addition to MnDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recognizes several street design resources that promote livability and context sensitive solutions that may be applied in conjunction with more traditional design influences such as jurisdiction and functional classification. (Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria and Procedures, 2013 Edition) As such, while considering the classification of the streets in Virginia it is important to understand the adjacent land use context and to review options for multimodal street design.

The Urban Street Design Guide from the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) provides guidance for communities rethinking their existing or future street network. Retrofit solutions and new street design options from the guide balance priorities and constraints to support multimodal transportation options. Two examples from NACTO are shown below illustrating the potential allocation of right-of-way. These are most applicable to the City of Virginia in a commercial context (Figure A) and a residential context.



*Street design elements for commercial area streets. NACTO Urban Street Design Guide*



*Street design elements for residential areas. NACTO Urban Street Design Guide*

Further, complete streets planning and design builds upon the notion that our streets serve as the outdoor rooms of our communities. As such, they constitute a primary component of our public space and it is essential that we approach their design from a holistic perspective. This perspective compels a broader view (beyond the right-of-way) encompassing adjacent land use, built form, hydrology and landscape character as well as multiple transportation modes.



*Shade trees line most of Virginia's local streets, providing shade and purified air while enhancing community character.*

## **6.7 Functional Classification**

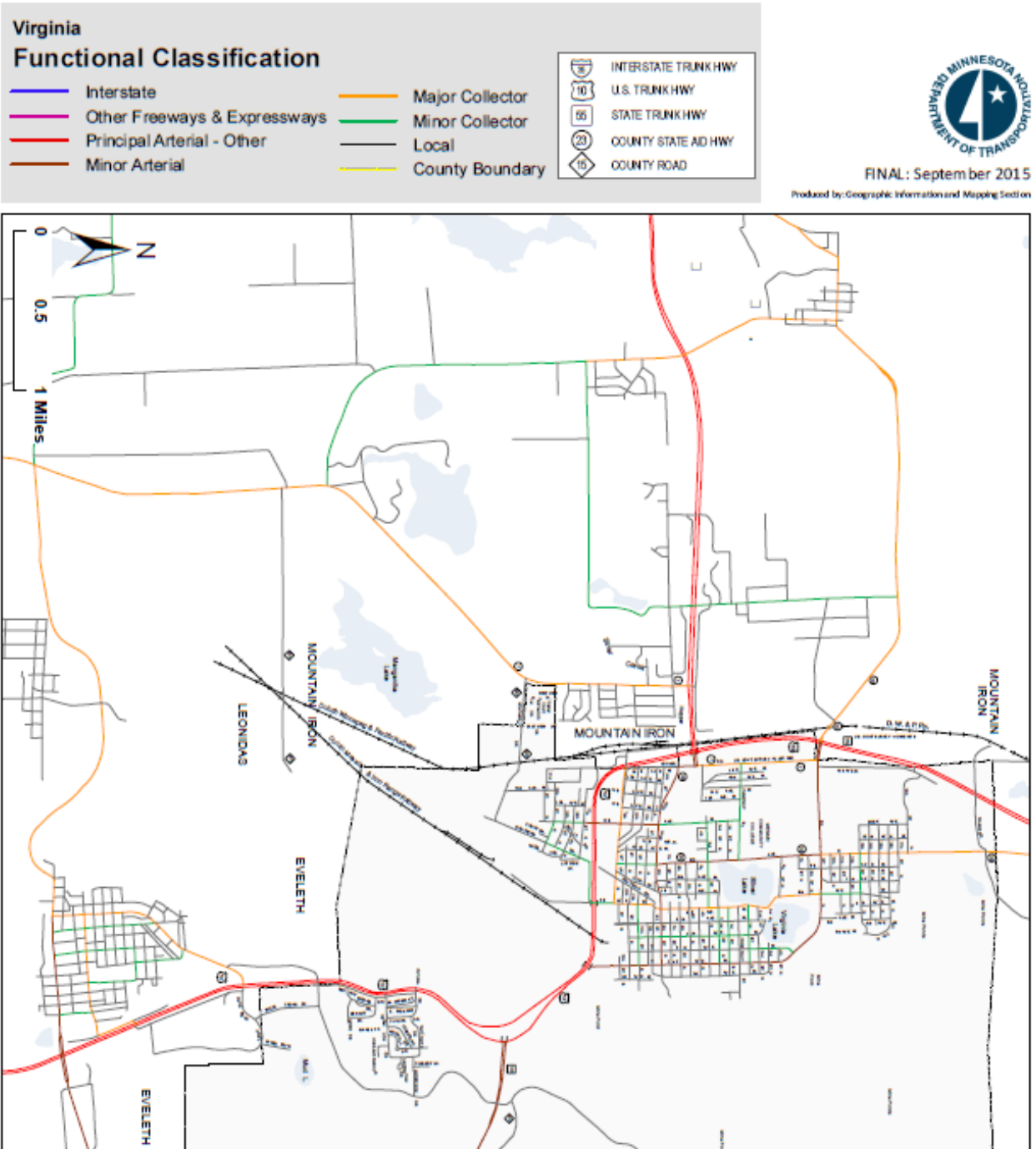
Functional classification is also an important consideration in the development of local regulations for land development. As appropriate, the mobility of higher classified roadways should be protected by careful management of site development and access spacing standards. Transportation problems can occur when a street's design and the management of access to the street are inconsistent with the functional and operating demands imposed by the surrounding land uses. Further, safety challenges often arise when the design of a street does not respond appropriately to the context of the adjacent land uses.

Functional classification is not a one-size fits all approach for roadway design, but rather provides a means for identifying roadways which are oriented toward providing mobility for through-trips (Principal and Minor Arterials) versus those that are oriented more toward providing accessibility or land access (Collectors and local streets). For example, outside of the US 53 commercial corridor and Chestnut Street, moderate to low density residential neighborhoods comprise much of Virginia's land use. These areas are well served by roadways classified as Local Streets and Collectors which are both present in residential neighborhoods with the same adjacent land use.

As one travels from residential area across town to areas of more intense commercial or industrial activity, a different, larger scale street, typically a Minor Arterial, is needed to safely accommodate larger traffic volumes and a mix of trucks, and cars. Transforming a street from one type to another type requires an integrated design approach that addresses both street infrastructure and the uses and design of buildings fronting on that street. The planning and design of streets must consider land use context, prioritizing access to uses such as schools, recreational, commercial and employment areas.

Figure 6-3 shows the Existing Functional Classification for the City of Virginia.

Figure 6-3 – Existing Functional Classification



### 6.8 Principal Arterials – Other

A primary distinction between other principal arterials and Interstates and Expressways is that direct land access is allowed on other principal arterials. The principal arterials serve longer trips between urbanized areas and across communities, support a high degree of mobility and provide mobility through rural areas.

US highways 169 and 53 are principal arterials traveling to and through Virginia.

## 6.9 Minor Arterials

Minor Arterials are streets that link rural principal arterials to larger towns and other major traffic generators capable of attracting trips over similarly long distances. This type of roadway is intended to provide service for trips of moderate length (greater than 2 miles) at a lower level of mobility than principal arterials. However, minor arterials typically have a greater focus on mobility than land access. Minor arterials are of regional importance because they relieve traffic on or substitute for principal arterials where necessary.

In Virginia the minor arterials provide the backbone of the transportation network through and around the core of the city. The following are minor arterials in Virginia:

- Trunk Highway 135
- 2nd Avenue W to 9th Street N
- CSAH 103/9th Avenue – Mud Lake Road to 9th Street N
- CSAH 103/Mud Lake Road/8th Street S
- 12th Avenue W – US 53 to CSAH 103/Mud Lake Road

## 6.10 Collectors

Collectors convey traffic from Local Roads to the Arterial network. There are Major Collectors and Minor Collectors. Major Collector routes are longer in length, tend to have fewer direct accesses and higher speed limits resulting in higher traffic volumes. Outside of the central business district area, Major Collectors serve primarily intra-county travel with Major Collectors offering more mobility and Minor Collectors offer more access.

Major Collectors such as Hoover Road, CSAH 103, 6th Avenue W and 13th Street S provide circulation through the core of town, gathering trips from minor collectors and local streets and dispersing them to the arterial system. Outside the City limits CSAHs 7, 102 and 120 link the rural areas and neighboring Mountain Iron to the arterials which connect to the core of Virginia.

In several instances the major and minor collectors are present in the same neighborhoods with the same cross section and adjacent land uses. A primary difference is that the minor collectors tend to travel shorter distances such as Chestnut Street, 4th Avenue W and 13th Street N.

## 6.11 Local Streets

Local streets provide the highest level of direct property access and typically carry lower traffic volumes at slower speeds (30 mph or less). Local streets facilitate the collection of short trips at low speeds and convey them to Collectors and Minor Arterials. In addition to providing direct property access, they interconnect residential neighborhoods, secondary commercial and industrial nodes. The local street network provides circulation and access for the residential and some commercial areas. The local streets range from 24-feet to 44 feet in width and generally serve as an interconnected grid.

## 6.12 Roadway Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction over the system of roadways in the City of Virginia is shared among three levels of government (state, county, and local/city). Roadway jurisdiction is an important factor because it affects a number of critical organizational functions and obligations including regulatory, maintenance, construction, and financial commitments. The system

includes the US and state trunk highway system, managed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) and County Road system, managed by St. Louis County, Municipal State Aid streets and local city streets, managed by Virginia.

## 6.13 Right-of-Way Preservation

There are many different techniques available to protect roadway corridors for future improvements. The basic approaches can be summarized as follows:

- Land acquisition (purchase of easements, title purchase, and eminent domain) – Land acquisition is an approach typically applied when specific improvements are eminent. The applicability of acquisition is linked to the availability of funding.
- Landowner agreements (development agreement, transferable development rights) – Land owner agreements are often limited in effectiveness when dealing with a large project area. By definition these agreements are applied on a parcel-by-parcel basis and are most effective when dealing with larger land holdings.
- Land use regulations (development exactions, ordinance setbacks, official mapping, and subdivision regulations) – Land use regulation techniques are facilitated through the comprehensive planning and zoning process. Certain regulations such as setbacks can be applied, while others such as official maps are typically developed for individual corridors and require a more substantial level of corridor definition.
- Access management (limiting property access) – Access management principals should be considered during all transportation planning activities. To be successful, it is important that the guidelines are applied consistently and uniformly at the time development and platting occurs.

In summary, the applicability of these right-of-way preservation options is dependent on many factors including available funding, the immediacy of development, and the timing of the need for a transportation improvement.

## 6.14 Transit

Public transportation service plays an important role for people who are unable to drive, especially those without access to personal vehicles, children, individuals with disabilities, and older adults. The U.S. transportation infrastructure focuses on motor vehicle travel (e.g., passenger cars, vans, SUVs, pickup trucks, and other light trucks) and provides limited support for other transportation options. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2013 approximately 86 percent of all workers traveled to work by private vehicle, and 76 percent drove alone. Also in 2013, 69 percent of urban households had access to public transit and 14 percent of rural households. Although using public transportation has historically been safer than travel in passenger vehicles, passenger vehicle travel has grown more quickly than other modes of travel. Motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of injury-related death for many age groups. In 2013, motor vehicle crashes were the second leading cause of death in individuals aged 13 to 25 years. Public transportation systems also provide opportunities for increased physical activity in the form of walking or biking on either end of the transit trip (e.g., from home to bus stop or from train stop to office) and reduced motor vehicle travel.

The City of Virginia is served by Arrowhead Transit which provides inter-city service throughout St. Louis County as well as 7 other nearby counties. Arrowhead Transit includes both fixed route scheduled service and demand responsive service. The

circulator type service stops every hour at Laurentian Manor, the Columbia housing area, the Bell Building, Super One North, Essentia, Pine Mill Court, the Thunderbird Mall, Super One South, and Target. Service at these stops is between 10AM and 4:35PM Monday through Friday.

Arrowhead Transit makes regular trips to Duluth from Virginia on the second Friday of each month. Arrowhead buses also make regular trips to nearby areas such as Eveleth, Buhl, Chisholm, Hibbing, Ely, Babbitt, Gilbert, Biwabik, Aurora, and Hoyt Lakes.

The demand responsive or Dial-a-Ride service is provided on an as-needed or on-call basis for \$1.50 per ride, or \$30 unlimited monthly pass. Children under 5 free and children ages 6-12 half price with an adult. Operation is during the following time frames:

- Monday through Friday: 7AM to 8PM
- Saturday: 9AM to 5PM
- Sunday 9AM to 2PM

Charter bus services are available through Jefferson Lines which take passengers to Duluth, Minneapolis, and other large cities across the Midwest.

## **6.15 Aviation**

The Eveleth-Virginia Municipal Airport (KEVM) is located three miles southeast of Eveleth. The airport is owned and managed by a joint commission from the Cities of Virginia and Eveleth. Daily operations average 48 aircraft per day and includes two runways.

## **6.16 Railways**

The City is surrounded by railroads, but there is limited rail activity within the City. The Canadian National (CN) Railroad purchased the DM&IR and DWP Railroads and operate a mainline track on the west border of the City which serves the three taconite plants in the area. The mainline track outside the western border of Virginia travels through Mountain Iron with about 20 trains per day carrying rail traffic from Canada to Duluth Superior and points east. The CN also has a medium size yard in Mountain Iron.

The former CN (DM&IR) track in the southern part of the City used to cross Highway 53 but has been abandoned and removed. With several industrial plants and mines being proposed on the eastern part of the Iron Range, there might be an increase in rail traffic into the Virginia/Mountain Iron area but it would likely not be substantially more than current traffic levels.

## **6.17 Pedestrians, Bicyclists and Recreational Vehicles**

The City of Virginia currently has a network on sidewalks to serve pedestrian traffic throughout the community. There are presently no on-street bicycle facilities in the city. The 115 mile, Mesabi Trail travels through the community on the north side generally along the 9th Street N Corridor and around the north side of Lake Virginia to the Rouchleau Mine Pit where the trail turns southward. A portion of the trail will be rerouted with the US 53

## **Transportation Goals and Policies**

Transportation goals and policies will help guide priorities for future investment, either as a publicly-maintained local system or in partnership with regional or state transportation agencies. These transportation goals, and policies provide the City with a means to measure the performance of the transportation system over time, and as necessary, an opportunity to reassess, revise and/or supplement the desires of the community.

The goals indicate a specific policy direction and assist in organizing individual objectives and more defined policies. The policies provide more detailed action plans that are necessary to prioritize and initiate a goal and may include initiation or continuation of a program or implementation of a specific project. The following goals and policies are not ranked or presented in order of importance or need.

Goal 1. Plan, develop and maintain an integrated, safe and accessible multimodal transportation system to meet existing and future needs.

### **Policies**

- a. Provide adequate roadway and intersection capacity to accommodate anticipated growth of the community and resulting forecasted vehicular traffic volumes.
- b. Establish a pedestrian network connecting residential, educational, commercial/retail, employment and recreational destinations throughout the city.
- c. Establish trails and on-street routes for the use of bicycles as a year-round mode of transportation.
- d. As the community grows, explore the expansion of public transit services and facilities in a fiscally responsible manner to ensure mobility for all residents and visitors.
- e. Limit the use of cul-de-sacs and dead end streets for accommodating future street connections.

Goal 2. Apply a flexible, innovative, and balanced approach to creating Complete Streets solutions that are appropriate to individual contexts; that best serve the transportation needs of all people using streets and the public right-of-way; and that support the City's land-use policies.

### **Policies**

- a. Develop and adopt a Complete Streets Policy
- b. Encourage interconnected streets and patterns of development to create more convenient multimodal travel options for residents that will also foster a sense of neighborhoods, while maintaining acceptable traffic volume levels.
- c. Maintain and, where possible, improve multimodal access to existing and planned land uses that support successful business and residential developments, while also managing safe traffic operations.
- d. Ensure access into downtown and the Silver and Virginia Lake areas for autos, pedestrians, and bicycles to support public activities and events, private business uses, and residences.

- e. Review opportunities for multimodal transportation improvements enhancing access, walkability and aesthetics to primary thoroughfares in the community including:
  - i. 2nd Avenue W/9th Street N
  - ii. 4th Avenue W
  - iii. 6th Avenue W
  - iv. 12th Avenue W
  - v. Mud Lake Road/8th Street S
  - vi. Chestnut Street

Goal 3. Foster a healthy, equitable, and economically vibrant community where all residents have greater mobility choices.

**Policies:**

- a. Develop a network of enhanced local connections to the Mesabi Trail.
- b. Continue to pursue Safe Routes to School initiatives and funding for healthy, non-motorized travel by the community's youth.
- c. Provide convenient access to the many natural features within the community and opportunities to support active living and healthy lifestyle activities.
- d. Target investments for interconnected sidewalks, trails and transit service in low-income neighborhoods connecting to employment centers.
- e. Promote walkability through enhanced connectivity including transit access, a diverse mix of land uses and placemaking and streetscaping features including green infrastructure treatments and climate resilient design.

Goal 4. Balance land use and related parking needs to maximize the City's resources to minimize impervious surfaces, storm water runoff, heat island effect and an unpleasant pedestrian experience.

**Policies:**

- a. Support land uses in existing and emerging town centers and primary thoroughfares with an adequate supply of on-street parking.
- b. As new development and redevelopment occur, require a review of shared parking resources to support a "park once" approach.
- c. Continue to accommodate alternative fuel vehicles in public parking infrastructure and encourage in private sector parking.

Goal 5. Implement the transportation vision through objective and definitive decision making as well as strategic funding, with the collaboration between jurisdictions (City of Virginia, MnDOT, St. Louis County, and surrounding East Range communities)

**Policies:**

- a. Plan for and preserve future opportunities for necessary transportation system improvements, including multimodal routes and facilities. Require adequate right-of-way dedication for new and/or expanded roadways including non-motorized facilities based on the planned function under future conditions.

- b. Realize necessary transportation system improvements in a cost effective and timely fashion.
- c. Encourage business owners, residents and community groups to be active participants in seeking funding by contacting local, state and federal decision makers in support of transportation funding.

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## 7.0 Utilities and Community Facilities



## 7.1 Introduction

Utilities and Community facilities serve as the framework on which the city is built and maintained. Utilities include steam, water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer systems. They also include electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, and solid waste disposal systems.

Community facilities provide public or semi-public uses such as government services (administration, police, fire and City Engineer). Other community facilities include public schools, libraries, community centers, museums, hospitals, or other uses that are open to public use either non-profit or for profit.

Planning for such facilities is important because these facilities provide essential support services for the community's employees, residents, visitors and businesses. As Virginia continues to evolve, it will be important to plan for preservation, future enhancements or expansion of these facilities to serve its population.

The need for and capacity of these essential services depends on the physical size of the community, population, and expected growth. In addition many retail and service businesses, industrial companies, as well as potential residents, look to the availability of these facilities when considering locating or expanding in a particular community.

## 7.2 Guiding Principles

- Provide high quality, cost effective utility services to the community.
- Support smart growth by prioritizing new development that takes advantage of available capacity of existing utilities and public services prior to initiating utility extensions and expansions.

## 7.3 Existing Conditions

### 7.3.1 Water

Virginia takes advantage of an abundance of ground water which accumulates in a reservoir east of town. The City's water treatment plant has a design capacity of approximately 5 million gallons per day (mgd).

- Average daily demand of 2 million gallons.
- Distribution system is comprised of 67 miles of city-owned main lines; 100 miles of customer-owned lines; 1,050 valves and 450 fire hydrants.

### 7.3.2 Wastewater Treatment / Sanitary Sewer

- Sanitary sewer mains and interceptors range in size from 8 inches to 24 inches with 10 lift stations.
- Virginia has primary, secondary, and tertiary waste treatment systems using an activated sludge process.
- Waste treatment plant has a design capacity of 2.7 million gallons per day (mgd).
- All plant's effluent meets and exceeds Minnesota Pollution Control Standards.
- Sludge is disposed of at the land application facility on the outskirts of Virginia.

### 7.3.3 Storm Sewer

- City has separate storm and sanitary sewer systems.

- The City is required to develop and maintain a stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) for the power plant.

## 7.4 Virginia Public Utilities

The Virginia Department of Public Utilities (VPU), located in Virginia, Minnesota, is a city-owned entity which has been serving the City of Virginia since 1913. The Department of Public Utilities Commission governs the VPU.

The Utility produces electricity and steam with its co-generating facility, it has a state-of-the-art water treatment plant that produces high quality water, and it sells natural gas.

### 7.4.1 Electric Power

- Serves approximately 5,800 customers in the City of Virginia and certain area of Mt. Iron.
- Consists of 80 Miles of overhead distribution cable and 17 miles of underground cable.
- Electrical distribution plant consists of a combination of 2,400 Volt distribution and 13.8 Kilovolt (KV) distribution system.
- Virginia operates a 30-megawatt co-generation power plant and has a 20-Megawatt interconnect with Minnesota power.
  - Statistical Data
    - Primary Voltage: 2.4KV and 13.8 KV
    - Generation Capacity: 30 Megawatts
    - Minnesota Power Interconnect: 20 Megawatts
    - Peak Demand: 22 Megawatts
    - Average Demand: 19 Megawatts
- Co-generation power plant
  - The power plant has four operating boilers, including a natural gas boiler, which was commissioned in 1993.
  - Two steam turbines generate power and provide exhaust and extraction steam to the distribution system. Electricity is generated as required to match the steam heating load.
- In addition to the Virginia Department of Public Utilities, Lake Country Power and Minnesota Power offer electric power to the areas surrounding Virginia

### 7.4.2 Natural Gas

- Virginia has supplied its own natural gas since 1965
- Provides approximately 2,300 residential and commercial customers.
- Approximately 58 miles of gas main lines and 44 miles of gas service lines.
- Natural gas has been rerouted for the Highway 53 reconstruction.
- 2 miles of natural gas main and a new Town Border Station for Midway have been completed.

### **7.4.3 Steam Heat**

- Serves approximately 2,000 customers.
- 22 miles of steam main lines and 18 miles of steam service lines.

### **7.4.4 Waste Collection**

- Virginia provides solid waste collection services. The system uses dumpsters and a volume-based system of special plastic bags “blue bag” for trash pick-up.

### **7.4.5 Recycling**

- Curbside recycling is provided twice per month.

### **7.4.6 Public Safety and Fire Protection**

Virginia provides police and fire protection services to its citizens, businesses and institutions. The police department includes 21 full time officers and a chief of police.

The Virginia Fire Department has positions for 27 sworn full time Firefighter/Paramedics, and Administrative/IT Assistant, and EMS Coordinator, Fire Marshal and a Fire Chief. The department has five state licensed Advanced Life Support ambulances equipped with state of the art medical equipment.

### **7.4.7 Telecommunications/Broadband**

Three telecommunications and broadband service providers operate within the City:

- CenturyLink
- Mediacom
- Access Broadband

### **7.4.8 Library**

The Virginia Public Library is located at 215 S 5th Ave. within the downtown and operates Monday through Friday. The Library is advised by a seven member commission. Library materials may be searched and ordered using the library’s web site <http://www.virginia.lib.mn.us> as well as through the Arrowhead Library System.

### **7.4.9 Virginia Public Schools**

- Parkview Elementary School and Learning Center: 506 9th Avenue North
- Roosevelt Elementary School: 411 S 5th Ave
- Virginia Senior High School: 411 S 5th Ave
- Virginia is also served by private and religious schools

### **7.4.10 Mesabi Range Community and Technical College**

The Mesabi Range College is a two-year college offering AAAS degrees and certificate programs. The College also provides online opportunities to earn a Master’s in Engineering with specializations in Civil Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Electrical & Computer Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Mining & Minerals Processing, or Mechanical Engineering through University of Minnesota Graduate School. Courses are typically taught by UM Duluth instructors. The college has two campuses, one Virginia, and one in Eveleth, Minnesota. Average enrollment is 1,700 students. The Virginia Campus is located at 1001 West Chestnut Street.

#### **7.4.11 Virginia Regional Medical Center**

The Virginia Regional Medical Center serves as the medical hub for the Iron Range region. The approximately 83 bed acute care facility also includes a heliport is located at 901 9th Street. Hospital, emergency medical and convalescent services are provided by Essentia Health-Virginia. Additional elder care is provided by Edgewood Vista with independent and assisted living, memory care, adult day care and short stays.

#### **7.4.12 Virginia Heritage Museum**

Virginia's Heritage Museum complex is located in Olcott Park on 9th Avenue and consists of the former park superintendent's residence, a Finnish log house and a 1930s tourist cabin. The facility includes permanent exhibits depicting logging and lumbering industries, Virginia's fires of 1893 and 1900, area shirt factories and Olcott Park's Master Gardener Gunnar Peterson.

#### **7.4.13 Additional Cultural and Arts Facilities and Activities**

The Lyric Center for the Arts is a prominent Virginia arts group that promotes local arts efforts. The mission of the Lyric Center for the Arts is to provide arts and educational opportunities for children and adults across the Iron Range while renovating the Historic Lyric Building.

#### **7.4.14 Additional arts and cultural organizations and activities include:**

- The First Stage Gallery
- B'nai Abraham Cultural Center
- Kaleva Hall
- Virginia Public Library
- Goodman Auditorium, Virginia Secondary School
- Mesabi Range College Theater
- Mesabi Symphony Orchestra
- Virginia Community Band
- Range of Voices Chorale
- Mesabi Musical Theater Company
- Small Parts Players Children's Theater Company
- Virginia Concert Series Association
- Choralaires Men's Chorus
- Downtown Dance Academy
- Iron Range Original Music Association

### **7.5 Goals and Policies**

The following Goals and corresponding policies are intended to guide the preservation, enhancement and or development of Virginia's utility infrastructure and community facilities in the coming years:

Goal 1. Provide residents with clean water supply, sewer collection and wastewater treatment system which meets applicable laws and regulations in a cost effective manner.

**Policies:**

- a. Maintain an infrastructure replacement program for the city.
- b. Use the city’s Capital Improvements Plan for planning and budgeting of public service improvements.
- c. Evaluate the costs and benefits of new industries that place high demands on the city’s water system and Waste Water Treatment Plant.
- d. Develop a plan to upgrade utility connections and controls to existing buildings in the downtown area.
- e. Continue to monitor and meet effluent standards.

Goal 2. Improve Virginia power system to provide an economically stable and environmentally responsible power source.

**Policies:**

- a. Evaluate the ongoing viability of public power generation and steam.

Goal 3. Promote community growth and redevelopment through integrated planning of clean energy, energy conservation, environmental stewardship and timely emergency response infrastructure.

**Policies:**

- a. Promote development in areas that are contiguous to existing public infrastructure such as sewer, water, power and streets.
- b. Encourage the use of energy and water conservation practices in development and redevelopment projects such as “EnVision Rating System”
- c. Utilize best management practices (BMPs) to reduce the impacts of stormwater runoff, control sediments, prevent erosion and protect ground water.
- d. Integrate waste reduction and recycling programs into all City-owned facilities and buildings. Continue to improve energy efficiency in all city-owned facilities.



*Example of solar powered electric vehicle charging station in Austin, MN.*

# Green Stormwater Infrastructure Tools

## Overview

Green City, Clean Waters promotes the use of green stormwater infrastructure throughout the city. These green tools use plants, trees and stone to filter store and manage stormwater in a smart and cost-effective way.



### How do These Green Tools Work?

When it rains, stormwater runs off streets and sidewalks into a green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) tool. Water soaks into a stone bed below ground where it is absorbed by plant roots and released through transpiration. Some of the water evaporates from the surface and excess water is slowly released back into the sewer system. Storing water in these GSI systems significantly reduce pollutants entering our creeks and rivers.

### What are the Benefits?

- Improves water quality by reducing combined sewer overflows\*
- Improves the health of our stream banks and aquatic life
- Enhances the beauty of our streets and neighborhoods
- Promotes a safer and healthier community
- Reduce the urban heat island effect (city's temperature)
- Improves air quality

\*Combined sewer overflows occur during heavy rainstorms when treatment plants can't clean all the water running through the system so polluted stormwater and sanitary waste overflow into local rivers.

*Example of Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP's) used by the City of Philadelphia, PA.*

Goal 4. Respect environmentally sensitive areas when extending and constructing public utilities and community facilities.

**Policies:**

- a. Consider employing sustainability ratings systems such the EnVision Program when building or reconstructing civic infrastructure in order to improve Virginia's triple bottom line of social, environmental and financial performance and resiliency.
- b. Place overhead utilities underground when feasible.
- c. Establish proper buffer zones between overhead utilities, substation, and treatment facilities and residential and commercial uses.
- d. Encourage the use of comprehensive environmental impact analyses for public and private infrastructure extensions and expansions.
- e. Adhere to and enforce environmental regulations for all infrastructure and community facility extensions or expansions.

Goal 5. Develop civic infrastructure (community facilities and utilities) with concern for aesthetic appearance and integration with surrounding environments.

**Policies:**

- a. Respect and emulate the visual character, scale, massing, and materials of buildings within Virginia's historic downtown when renovating existing or designing new facilities.

Goal 6. Coordinate infrastructure improvements such as street reconstructions with storm and sanitary sewer, water, power, and attractive and functional streetscaping that includes provisions for ecological services.

**Policies:**

- a. Where practical, employ sustainable, green infrastructure practices such as LED street lighting, street trees, permeable paving, rain gardens, etc. as an integral component of civic infrastructure.

Goal 6. Recognize and support Virginia's investment in the Library system.

**Policies:**

- a. Support and perpetuate the use and quality of your Most frequently visited municipal building, the Virginia library
- b. Continue to support the Public Library system as a primary resource of civic information and lifelong learning.
- c. Work to expand the role of Virginia's Public Library as a valuable civic asset and destination within the historic downtown environment.

Goal 7. Collaborate with community service and arts organizations, institutions and the private sector to develop and promote arts, culture and popular entertainment programs and venues that create active and engaging events to attract and retain Virginia residents and visitors of all ages.

**Policies:**

- a. Explore opportunities for public private partnerships in the development, operations and maintenance of arts, cultural and entertainment programs and facilities.
- b. Promote opportunities for arts and culture, and entertainment in the city.
- c. Actively pursue the development of programs and facilities that provide healthy activities of interest to youth, teens and young adults.
- d. Continue to support programs and facilities serving senior citizens.
- e. Continue to support existing arts, culture and popular entertainment organizations, programs and facilities.

Goal 8. Maintain essential emergency services to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

**Policies:**

- a. Ensure there are adequate emergency services of police, fire, rescue, hazardous event responses and emergency medical services.
- b. Invest in partnerships with regional emergency service providers and municipalities (free trainings, etc.)

Goal 9. Maintain and enhance community facilities and services, which contribute to the quality of life for area residents.

**Policies:**

- a. Evaluate the Comprehensive Plan on an annual basis and develop needed utilities and community facilities as deemed necessary.
- b. Continue to support having good health care and community education facilities that serve the city.
- c. Identify future needs and locations for new or expanded community facilities.
- d. Work with public schools to ensure long-term educational needs are being met and they stay an important part of the Virginia community.

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## 8.0 Mining, Timber, and Natural Resources



Virginia's roots lie within the timber and mining industries. The area was first settled in 1890 with the lure of iron deposits. To get to that ore, however, timber had to be harvested. Two large lumber mills operated in the early 1900's, including the Virginia Rainy Lake Company, which boasted to be the world's largest White Pine mill.

Today, there is very little timber production in Virginia, but mining continues to be an economic base for the region.

## **8.1 Mining**

Virginia lies within what is known as the Mesabi Iron Range, which was formed by a large and very shallow fresh water sea in prehistoric times. The sea left behind iron sediment. This range extends from Babbitt, Minnesota to east of Grand Rapids, Minnesota – over four miles wide and 100 miles long. Most of the mining within this range has been done from open pits – and this area has historically produced about 90% of the iron ore produced within the US, and about one third of the ore produced globally.

The City of Virginia is basically surrounded by operating iron ore mines. Three large operations – United States Steel Corporation – Minnesota Ore Operations, ArcelorMittal's Minorca mine, and Cliffs Natural Resources – United Taconite– make up the primary iron ore production in and around Virginia. Conversations were held during the planning process with representatives from this companies, including:

- Sandra Karnowski, District Manager – Public Affairs-Minnesota, Cliffs Natural Resources
- Jonathan Holmes, General Manager, ArcelorMittal – Minorca
- Travis Kolari, Acting General Manager – U.S. Steel Corporation

### **8.1.1 Current and future mining areas**

The three largest mine operations in the Virginia area have all expressed that within the planning period, they do not plan on expanding operations outside of their existing permitted territory. However – ore reserves are available adjacent to existing operations so they may pursue those when they are closer to exhausting their current reserves. All three firms have expressed that they anticipate having sufficient ore reserves for the next 20 years, at current production levels.

The largest change in mining area will come when Cliffs Natural Resources begins mining where Highway 53 was situated (under relocation at the time of this plan's preparation). This not only will have an impact to traffic coming into the City of Virginia, but it will also require water usage from a new water source. This new water source use will be carefully explored, as other area mines have water appropriation, and the City of Virginia gets their drinking water from this water source.



Employment in the mining industry is running right at the average numbers according to the mining companies. In terms of attracting and retaining good employees, for the most part local mine operations tend to hire locally. When recruitment is necessary, the largest reported hurdles to get new employees to the Virginia area are the lack of child care specifically for shift work, along with the northern Minnesota climate.

Future use of the mining lands is critical to the long-term success of communities that are or have been dependent on the mining industry for economic stability. The Laurentian Vision Partnership is a regional coalition that has been working over the past decade to bring together mining, government, business and community interests on the Mesabi Range. This organization and its participating stakeholders facilitates discussion and decision-making that promotes the development of productive post-mining landscapes on the Mesabi Iron Range by cooperating in:

- Preserving lands necessary to sustain current and future mining
- Promoting landscape options for post mining uses
- Identify and discuss new development opportunities
- Providing the tools to achieve these goals.

## 8.2 Timber

Timber harvesting has had a profound impact on the development of the Virginia area. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, Virginia was heavily invested in timber harvesting. The W.T. Bailey Lumber Mill started in 1895, followed by the Virginia Rainy Lake Company in 1909, which boasted to be the largest White Pine sawmill in the world. Today – large White Pines are known to be sunken along the bottom of Bailey and Silver Lake. Today – however, timber harvesting is no longer a large industry in the immediate Virginia area.

During the early 1900's, street trees were planted throughout the City. However – the City's urban forest has become more sparse over the years with the exception of Olcott Park. Recent detection of the emerald ash borer will likely kill many of the City's ash trees in the coming years. Combatting this emerging pest will require a comprehensive effort from treatment of large, significant or special trees to removal and replanting with a more diverse and hardier group of street trees. Within Olcott Park, there is a 4,500 square foot Botanical Garden Greenhouse. This is free of charge facility is operated cooperatively by the City and the non-profit Friends of the Greenhouse and offers has a range of floral displays.

The City of Virginia is a part of the Arrowhead Region, which generally consists of Carlton, Cook, Lake and Saint Louis Counties and is about 10,600 square miles. The Superior National Forest lies within this area and is three million acres. This area begins just north of the City of Virginia. This is the eighth most visited national forest in the US. Possibly the most notable area within this forest is the Boundary Water Canoe Area near the Canadian border, about an hour north of Virginia.

Within the Arrowhead Region there are other natural parks and tourist destinations. However – these are generally not in the immediate vicinity of Virginia. These include the Sawtooth Mountains and Voyageurs National Park.

Louisiana Pacific is looking to acquire and re-purpose a former wood manufacturing plant in Cook, MN, about 30 miles north of Virginia. They are proposing to manufacturing wood siding – which would entail about 250 new jobs. Part of the location decision is access to wood product – so regionally, timber production is still active.

## 8.3 Natural Resources

Natural resources are significant in the City of Virginia as they contribute to the health and safety of the residents. Many natural resources in Virginia also act as recreational amenities for residents and landowners, which contributes to the quality of life in and around Virginia.

### 8.3.1 Groundwater / Water Supply

The City of Virginia gets its water supply from groundwater which seeps into abandoned open pit mines. Quantity and quality are good for City of Virginia residents. With the encroachment of mining operations into the Highway 53 corridor, water will begin to be drawn down from the City's source. It will be critical to monitor the quantity and quality of water once the drawn down begins from the mining operations. If quantity or quality decline, additional actions will need to be taken to ensure area residents have affordable, safe and reliable water.

### **8.3.2 Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

It is generally more desirable, both environmentally and economically, to avoid steep slopes and disrupting natural drainage ways with construction and land development. Problems with erosion and runoff pollution can occur with development on steep slopes, and flooding and wet basements can occur with drainage way disruptions.

### **8.3.3 Threatened and Endangered Species**

St. Louis County is home to many animal and plant species, as well as natural communities, including Canada Lynx and its habitat, the Gray Wolf and its habitat, Northern Long-Eared Bat, Piping Plover, and its habitat, and the Rufa Red Knot.

These species and their habitats are protected, and as such, are preserved to the extent possible.

### **8.3.4 Surface Water**

Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, intermittent waterways, and natural drainage ways make up the surface waters of Virginia. These resources are all water bodies, standing still or flowing, navigable and intermittent, including natural drainage ways that collect and channel overland rainwater or snowmelt runoff. Natural drainage ways are characterized by intermittent streams, threads, rills, gullies, and dry washes that periodically contribute water to first-order streams. There are also many artificial drainage ways where the natural drainage ways have been altered by human activity. All of these features have the ability to transport sediment and pollutants and are affected by their watersheds, the land that surrounds them.

There are several mine pit lakes within or bordering the city limits, including:

- Bailey Lake (also called Virginia Lake on some sources)
- Silver Lake
- Mud Lake
- Mesabi Mountain Pit

Stream corridors are not particularly prevalent in Virginia, although the East Two Rivers stream flows through and connects Bailey and Silver Lakes.

### **8.3.5 Floodplains & Wetlands**

There are a number of wetland areas within the watersheds that can affect water levels of rivers and creeks flowing through St. Louis County. Wetlands are defined as an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation and which has soils indicative of wet conditions. Wetlands may be seasonal or permanent and are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes, or bogs. Wetland plants and soils have the capacity to store and filter pollutants, replenish groundwater supplies, store floodwaters and maintain stream flows.

Most of the wetlands within or near the City lie east of the current Highway 53 corridor. Some wetlands are being filled to accommodate the relocation of Highway 53. There are pockets of wetlands elsewhere – predominantly towards the southern edge of the developed portion of the City and north along 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue toward Highway 53.

One sensitive land feature that most residents are aware of is the floodplain, the flood-prone lands adjacent to water bodies. Floodplains can be desirable development areas due to the proximity to lakes, rivers and streams, but pose additional problems by possibly putting residents and property at risk. Development in floodplains can also affect the environmental quality of the waterway.

The City of Virginia has not been mapped by FEMA for floodplains. Within St. Louis County's All Hazard Mitigation Plan it is identified that most flooding in Virginia and Mountain Iron is not within mapped floodplains, and is due to runoff and storm water management infrastructure as opposed to high water in surface water systems.

### **8.3.6 Wildlife Habitat**

Scattered throughout St. Louis County are various federal, state, and local wildlife, fishery, natural and scientific areas. These often encompass one or more of the sensitive land areas discussed previously (e.g., wetlands, forests, shorelands, prairies). These areas are managed as open space to provide important feeding, breeding, nesting, cover, and other habitat values to a wide variety of plant and animal species.

The Laurentian Divide Picnic Area and Recreation Area is approximately four miles north of the City along Highway 53/169, and serves as an excellent wildlife habitat and viewing area.

## **8.4 Local Food Sourcing**

Having access to local food is an increasing public desire, and helps anchor communities in sustainable and healthy communities, as well as creates educational opportunities on gardening. Growing Together – Virginia Community Gardens is a joint project between the Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability (IRPS) and the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA). Essentia Health was a key partner in providing start-up funds for what started as the Rutabaga Project. There are four community garden sites in Virginia:

- 216 Chestnut Street
- Pine Mill Court
- Northside Park
- North Bailey's Lake (ready in 2017)

The Virginia Farmers Market, also through a partnership with the IRPS held a grand opening in 2016, and arose out of the popularity of local vendors that had been setting up throughout the City. It is open seasonally in Downtown's City Center Park. Additional nonprofit organizations also support the growing and sale of locally grown food through CSA's and retail facilities such as the Natural Harvest Co-op.

## **8.5 Goals and Policies**

Outlined below are goals and policies to protect and enhance Virginia's natural resources.

Goal 1: Continue to support the role of mining, timber, and natural resources as an integral part of the local economy.

**Policies**

- a. Work to ensure the needs of mining and timber producers are met, while balancing the need to retain the integrity of the natural resource base in and around the Virginia area.

Goal 2: Coordinate and collaborate with mining industry in matters of infrastructure, development, and maintenance.

**Policies**

- a. Continue to coordinate with and work with local mining companies on issues that are vital to public and private interests.
- b. Work cooperatively with the DNR and mining representatives to determine potential impacts to water resources with the expansion of mining operations into the Highway 53 corridor.
- c. Ensure all Virginia residents and businesses have access to safe, reliable and affordable water.

Goal 3: Promote ecologically responsible forest management and timber practices.

**Policies**

- a. Support programs that aim to prevent and eliminate non-native invasive species such as emerald ash borer.
- b. Utilize the available database information regarding natural plant communities and rare biological species when identifying land for preservation and set-asides within developing areas.
- c. Develop and implement a city-wide urban forestry program.

Goal 4: Collaborate with mining companies to achieve the goals of the Laurentian Vision.

**Policies**

- a. Continue to support and promote land alteration practices geared toward creating more useable and sustainable end uses such as outdoor recreation and wildlife habitat.
- b. Continue to promote sustainable re-use and proper end use planning for current and former mine lands.

Goal 5: Promote collaboration between mining, education, and job training.

**Policies**

- a. Ensure open dialogue between:
  - Virginia School District,
  - Mesabi Range College,
  - Iron Range Engineering and Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training,
  - Advanced Minnesota,
  - City officials,
  - Mining industry representatives

Goal 6: Expand opportunities for affordable, locally grown food sourcing.

**Policies**

- a. Work with Natural Harvest Food Co-Op and other local food resources to support a network of businesses for improved access to locally grown food resources.
- b. Continue to coordinate with the Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability (IRSP) in support of the Virginia Farmers Market and Growing Together – Virginia Community Gardens.

## 9.0 Recreation & Open Space, Cultural Arts & Resources



## 9.1 Introduction

Parks, Open Space, Trails and Cultural Arts can often be driving forces of tourism, helping to strengthen a community's quality of life and identity. Supporting growth and upkeep of Virginia's active and passive recreation facilities and programs as well as fostering growth of its arts and cultural economy are key components for attracting and retaining residents and businesses.

## 9.2 Parks, Open Space and Trails

As the City of Virginia's population evolves, the park and recreation facilities will need to accommodate those changes and respond to a range of active and passive recreational needs.

Virginia's parks, trails and open space provide the community a wide range of recreational opportunities, maintain property values, and preserve valuable wildlife habitat and scenic landscapes. Open space provides scenic opportunities and a way to preserve the "small town" character of Virginia. Open space is either undeveloped or reclaimed areas within the fabric of city development. It includes sensitive areas, natural plant communities, shore lands, wetlands, water bodies, wildlife management and water fowl production areas, etc.

The park, open space and trail system also fosters a positive image of the city's commitment to providing a recreational system that helps define the community's quality of life. A well-developed parks, trails and open space plan promotes a sense of community where residents are engaged with neighbors. It also provides a network that promotes creating a healthy community based on making active living a routine part of



daily life.

## 9.3 Recreation Programs

Research has shown the importance of staying active, socially engaged and physically fit. There has been a growing tendency towards singular entertainment and non-direct communication with easier access to the internet. This is especially significant as Americans are becoming an aging population and who, both young and old, are experiencing health-related issues associated with lack of exercise, such as obesity. Physical activity is an important contributor to health, and engaging in regular physical activity can improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone health, cardiovascular and metabolic health markers and body composition in children and adolescents, and reduce the risk for numerous adverse health outcomes, including hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and some cancers in adulthood.

Recreation programs provide a community tool to address these issues by:

- Providing opportunities to socialize with other members of the community
- Providing health related benefits
- Stimulating local economy
- Providing healthy rather than destructive past-time opportunities for youth
- Help establish life-long patterns of personal fitness and social interaction

## 9.4 Parks

### 9.4.1 Existing Conditions

1. Olcott Park, 9th Street North, 33.06 acres
14. Silver Lake Park, located around north, south and west sides of Silver Lake, 20.2 acres
15. Bailey's Lake Park, located around north, south and west sides of Bailey's Lake, 8.1 acres
16. Jefferson Park, located on 14th Street N, 2.2 acres
17. Pine Mill Park, located South 12th Avenue West adjacent to Miner's Memorial Complex, 1.9 acres
18. Roosevelt School Play Area, located on South 5th Avenue
19. Ridgewood Park, located on Wolf Road, 0.97 acres
20. East West Parkway, located between East and West Parkway Streets, 1.2 acres
21. Midway Play Area, located on Vermillion Drive, 0.6 acres
22. Midway Rink, located on Taconite Drive, 3.5 acres
23. Midway Tennis, located on Laurentian Drive, 10.9 acres
24. Miners Memorial Complex, located on Highway 53, 21.3 acres
25. Southside Park with Quad Cities Tennis, located on South 5th Avenue, 17.5 acres
26. Finn Town Park, located on 3rd Street North, 0.5 acres
27. Angel of Hope Children's Memorial Park, located on the south shore of Silver Lake.
28. Veteran's Memorial Park, located on 2nd Street north of Baileys' Lake.
29. City Center Park, located south of Bailey's Lake

30. Beth Metsa Memorial Garden, located south of Bailey’s Lake

31. Rotary Park, 601 - 899 4th Street North Across from Super One North

Located at 1308 13th Street on the north side of the city, Virginia’s municipal golf course offers an 18-hole layout with sand and water hazards, mature conifer and shade trees. The facility includes a north-woods style log clubhouse with full service dining and operates between mid-April into September. In addition to open play, the course is host to numerous tournaments and events throughout the season.

#### 9.4.2 Trails and Sidewalks

In addition to parks, Virginia has miles of trails and sidewalks. The sidewalk and trail system primarily follows the current residential development pattern. However, development of additional sidewalks is strongly encouraged in newer residential areas outside of the older urban core. Community members expressed strong support in the community survey for expanding and enhancing on-street cycling facilities as well as off-street trails.



The 115 mile Mesabi Trail which generally runs north-south through the city, is a regionally significant, year-round active recreation and tourism resource. The scenic trail connects 28 Iron Range communities through forests, wetlands, along rolling hills and former mining pits. The Virginia trailhead, currently located along 9th Street / HWY 135, could better serve the local businesses and tourist economy by being located in the downtown area.



#### 9.4.3 Recreation, Development and Sports Programs

The Virginia park system benefits through collaboration with other local and regional entities to provide recreational facilities and recreational programs. Such entities and organizations include St. Louis County, the Virginia Area School District, Mesabi Range Community Technical College, athletic associations and community service organizations. All of the area lakes also offer superior recreation opportunities, including fishing, boating and swimming, including Bailey’s and Silver Lakes within the city’s urban core and Lake Vermillion to the north of the community.

#### 9.4.4 Open Space

Virginia’s location within Minnesota’s rich iron ore deposits continues to influence the prominence of the mining industry within the community as well as within the surrounding region. The City of Virginia is surrounded on all sides by iron mines, and while this acts as an economic driver for the area mining lands primarily remain as open space, during and after they have been mined. Once material extraction is completed

these mining lands are typically reclaimed as passive open space, either in the form of green space, or deep water lakes. These areas will continue to become regional open space and recreation resources that residents and tourists will want to be connected to using local and regional trail systems. As former mine acres are transformed into passive land uses, the City should look for opportunities to work with the mining companies, St. Louis County and other stakeholders to ensure they are reclaimed in a manner that is useable for habitat and or recreation and that they are accessible.

The existing parks are well distributed throughout the city and provide access for passive and active recreation to the community's residents and visitors.

## **9.5 Trail Plan**

### **9.5.1 Trail Service Level**

Service level of a trail refers to capacity of the trail or trail system to meet the needs and expectations of a given population or user group within a defined geographical area. The following describes the hierarchy of six service levels. The service level within a trail system increases as user groups become broader, more specialized and/or more resource dependent. Also included in this section is a description of private trails.

### **9.5.2 State Trails**

State trails are typically destination trails and serve a statewide population. Travel time to a trailhead is often one to four hours. State trails are a minimum of 20 miles long and traverse high quality natural resource and scenic landscapes. Abandoned railroad corridors are often developed to accommodate state trails with connections to state parks or regional, county or local attractions.

### **9.5.3 Regional Trails**

Regional trails serve multiple cities and/or counties in greater Minnesota. It takes about 30 minutes or more to travel to a trail head. Typically, the trail must be long enough for at least an hour of non-motorized recreational travel which is about 5 miles of walking or 20 miles of bicycling. Given the highest priority are those trails showing scenic qualities and a diversity of natural resource attributes. High priority is given to connections between State Trails and urban centers, parks, and other trail systems. Regional trails should provide a multi-modal surface.

### **9.5.4 County Trails**

County trails differ from local trails in that they are typically located within county parks. Lengths can vary considerably. They are frequently designed for specific uses, i.e., mountain biking, skiing, interpretive trails, etc.

### **9.5.5 Local Trails**

Local trails provide "close-to-home" opportunities (typically within a five-minute drive or 10 minute walk), and often have direct access from neighborhoods. Popular local trails are found along Virginia's urban lakefronts where users can easily get daily exercise, connect with nature as well as travel through the city. Trail linkages to county, regional, and state trails are desirable. Local trails have the following characteristics:

- Mostly non-motorized.
- Lengths vary from ¼ mile to numerous miles of interconnected trails within a site or between communities.

- Most often cities and townships have jurisdiction and funding responsibilities for local trails.

### **9.5.6 Private Trails**

Private trails are those that traverse private land as part of larger trail system. The most common are grant-in-aid snowmobile trails, which traverse private land through agreements secured by local snowmobile clubs and are important to maintaining the network for snowmobiles in the state.

### **9.5.7 Winter-Use Trails**

Trails maintained for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, winter hiking, dog sledding, skijoring trail, and snowmobiling offer residents and visitors the ability to get outdoors for exercise and relaxation during the winter months. Nearly all of the trails described above can be programmed and groomed to support winter activities.

### **9.5.8 Blue Trails**

Blue trails are dedicated stretches of rivers or waterways that enjoy special clean water protection and are destinations for boating, canoeing, fishing, and other outdoor recreation. They provide opportunities for people to discover rivers and waterways and help connect urban and rural communities to the outdoors. Blue trails also provide:

- Healthy recreation and educational opportunities for people of all ages.
- Connections for people to access special protected areas such as wildlife refuges, parks, and forests.
- Opportunities to build partnerships and support for natural resource conservation.

Refer to the State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2007, Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines, Trails and Waterways Division, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN for additional details regarding trail design standards.

## **9.6 Cultural Arts**

A community's culture is characterized by its museums, entertainment facilities, community art organizations performance venues and historic structures. Throughout the community input discussions, the importance of Virginia preserving its historic downtown buildings, highlighting its mining history and expanding its regional arts scene were identified.

Virginia Area Historical Society, which operates the Heritage Museum out of the former Virginia Park Superintendent's residence in Olcott Park offers exhibits depicting the region's rich logging and lumbering history, as well as the Virginia fires of 1893 and 1900.

The Lyric Center for the Arts First Stage Gallery is a prominent Virginia arts group that promotes local arts efforts. The mission of the Lyric Center for the Arts is to provide arts and educational opportunities for children and adults across the Iron Range while renovating the Historic Lyric Building.

Additional arts and cultural organizations and activities include:

- The First Stage Gallery
- B'nai Abraham Cultural Center

- Kaleva Hall
- Virginia Public Library
- Goodman Auditorium, Virginia Secondary School
- Mesabi Range College Theater
- Mesabi Symphony Orchestra
- Virginia Community Band
- Range of Voices Chorale
- Mesabi Musical Theater Company
- Small Parts Players Children's Theater Company
- Virginia Concert Series Association
- Choralaires Men's Chorus
- Downtown Dance Academy
- Iron Range Original Music Association

## 9.7 Community Issues, Perceptions, and Ideas

In general, the park and recreation system serves the community well. The majority of ideas and issues generated by community input involved improvements to routine maintenance, expansions of hiking and cycling facilities and programming of events and activities that would strengthen tourism. Targeted areas of improvements included better non-motorized connectivity between parks and green spaces, better bicycle accommodations ( bike lanes, bike racks, etc.), better integration of the regional trails into and through the City's downtown and development of new multi-generational and multi-seasonal facilities (public or privately run) such as mini-golf, water park, dog park, Nordic skiing and snow shoeing.

## 9.8 Future Park Needs

Using a National Park Standard of 10 acres of parkland and open space per 1,000 people, the current park system, significantly exceeds the national standard.. While this is a general "rule of thumb" it seems based on survey results that residents are generally satisfied with the accessibility of area park and recreation facilities. The current size of the facilities should be sufficient to meet future demand as well.

It is important to serve all residents and neighborhoods with park and recreation facilities. As additional subdivisions are divided further away from the existing park facilities, it will be critical to identify if the new areas are well-served by park and recreation facilities.

## 9.9 Goals, and Policies

Outlined below are goals and policies for the park, recreation and trail system. Goals provide general aspirational statements intended to be attained through implementation of policies. Policies, describe more specific actions necessary to initiate or actualize a proposed goal.

Goal 1. Provide high-quality, age-appropriate park and recreation facilities and programs that meet the community's needs.

**Policies:**

- a. Continue to establish, administer and maintain a community-wide park and recreational system that provides a variety of high-quality facilities to fulfill the expanding needs and expressed desires of the community.
- b. Engage with specialized recreational users and sports groups to refine and improve the design of park facilities and recreation programs.
- c. Explore additional multigenerational and multi-seasonal recreational opportunities, including indoor spaces.
- d. Strengthen Virginia's role as a regional hub and tourist destination for the Arrowhead Region, Superior National Forest, and mining.

Goal 2. Establish land use patterns and park planning practices that are environmentally sensitive and complement the natural hydrologic system, including the balance between ground and surface waters.

**Policies:**

- a. Acquire land that fulfills the needs based on future community growth, provide trail connections, or secures a uniquely suited site or facility.
- e. Enhance public access, use and enjoyment of Virginia's natural and recreational resources.
- f. Continue working with regional mining companies to achieve the goals of the Laurentian Vision Partnership Strategic Action Plan 2011 and Beyond.

Goal 3. Provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment within the city's park facilities and open spaces.

**Policies:**

- a. Periodically undertake a safety assessment of park facilities and equipment and make necessary improvements in a timely fashion.
- b. Coordinate user safety assessments and improvements with Virginia Police and Fire Departments to ensure consideration of appropriate response and access by public safety personnel.

Goal 4. Enhance public multi-seasonal access, connectivity, inclusiveness and enjoyment of Virginia's natural and recreational resources.

**Policies:**

- a. Continue to implement an off street trail system.
- b. Collaborate with City Engineer to promote active transportation as an alternative to automobile use within Virginia.
- c. Support Safe Routes to School initiatives that introduce and promote youth to becoming more active through walking and cycling.
- d. Establish safe, interconnected multi-modal corridors linking downtown, neighborhoods, parks and community amenities.

Goal 5. Enhance Virginia's community identity and vitality through the cultural arts.

**Policies:**

- a. Provide social gathering places that are stabilizing and strengthening elements in creating a strong sense of community identity.

- b. Support the effort to educate residents about different ethnic arts and cultural traditions, and for building multi-cultural understanding.
- c. Increase public awareness of cultural programs and services through media, use of new technology, City publications, community partnerships, and through increased accessibility to public artwork.
- d. Promote cultural arts that distinguish the City of Virginia from other regional cities.
- e. Support and promote arts and cultural groups, resources and opportunities as a component of economic development.

Goal 6. Facilitate partnerships and collaborations with other public agencies, community based groups, and the private sector to expand opportunities for cultural arts.

**Policies:**

- a. Collaborate with Virginia Area School District, Mesabi Technical College and other jurisdictions to present quality arts programs and performances to the community.
- b. Pursue, where appropriate, county, state and federal funding opportunities for cultural arts.

Goal 7. Preserve and promote the arts, and support the development of programs for public art and cultural opportunities that create and enrich a strong sense of community identity and promote a high quality of life.

**Policies:**

- a. Advocate for visual and performing arts programs to serve the needs of the community.
- b. Incorporate cultural arts as part of Virginia's overall economic development program, especially those that are attractive to out-of-town visitors.
- c. Continue to build a strong sense of place in the downtown through use of arts and culture.
- d. Incorporate the arts into Downtown revitalization efforts to enhance pedestrian connections and highlight cultural assets including public art and community history.
- e. Incorporate public art into city parks and open spaces.
- f. Encourage participation from the private and business sectors to help fund and support art and or art making in vacant store fronts, semi-private and public places.

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10.0 Economic Development



## 10.1 Introduction

Economic development is a critical use of a community's fiscal, social, and physical resources in a long-term process aimed at preserving and improving the quality of life and livelihood of each member of the Virginia community.

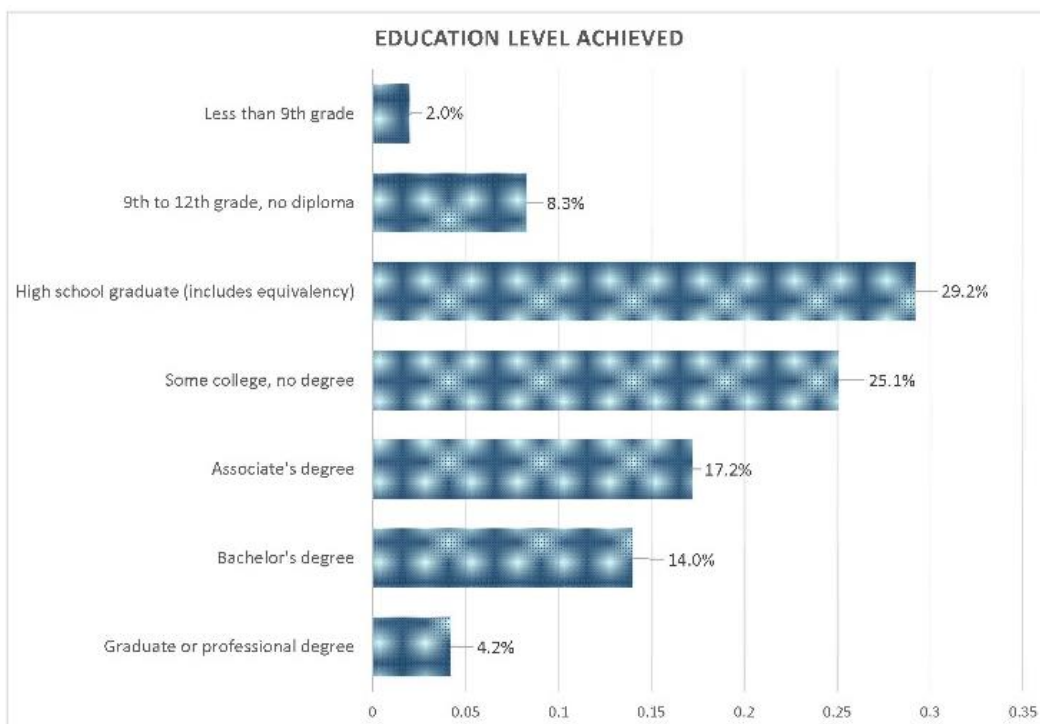
Those elements necessary to support economic development include:

- Sufficient and suitable land;
- Appropriate and adequate infrastructure;
- Available and trained workforce;
- Supportive policies and regulations;
- Accessible and affordable financial capital.

The economy plays a central role in maintaining the vitality and quality of life within a community. A healthy economy creates living wage jobs, providing economic opportunities to all citizens. The economy also supports the tax base, providing for schools, police, fire protection, parks and other community facilities and services.

The dynamic nature of financial markets and business cycles must be acknowledged and where possible, anticipated. However, it is likely that new social, economic, or development opportunities or influences may arise that were unforeseen when policies were first formulated. Because of this, the Comprehensive Plan requires periodic review in order to respond to emerging local, regional or national economic trends or changes.

The purpose of the Economic Development section is to present goals and policies that support and encourage a strong, vibrant economy. While this Chapter focuses on these specific topics, it is important to recognize that the entire Comprehensive Plan can be



utilized as an economic development tool.

## **10.2 Existing Conditions**

In terms of economic development, Virginia remains dependent on the mining industry. The City lies within the reach of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission. This organization coordinates the overall economic development planning and programming for several counties, including Koochiching, Itasca, Aitkin, Carlton, St. Louis, Lake and Cook Counties.

### **10.2.1 Labor Force**

In Virginia, the percent of residents with Bachelor Degrees (14.0%) significantly lags St. Louis County (26.4%) and Minnesota (33.2%).

The Virginia population has a median age of 40.8, the same as St. Louis County, but significantly higher than Minnesota's median age of 37.6.

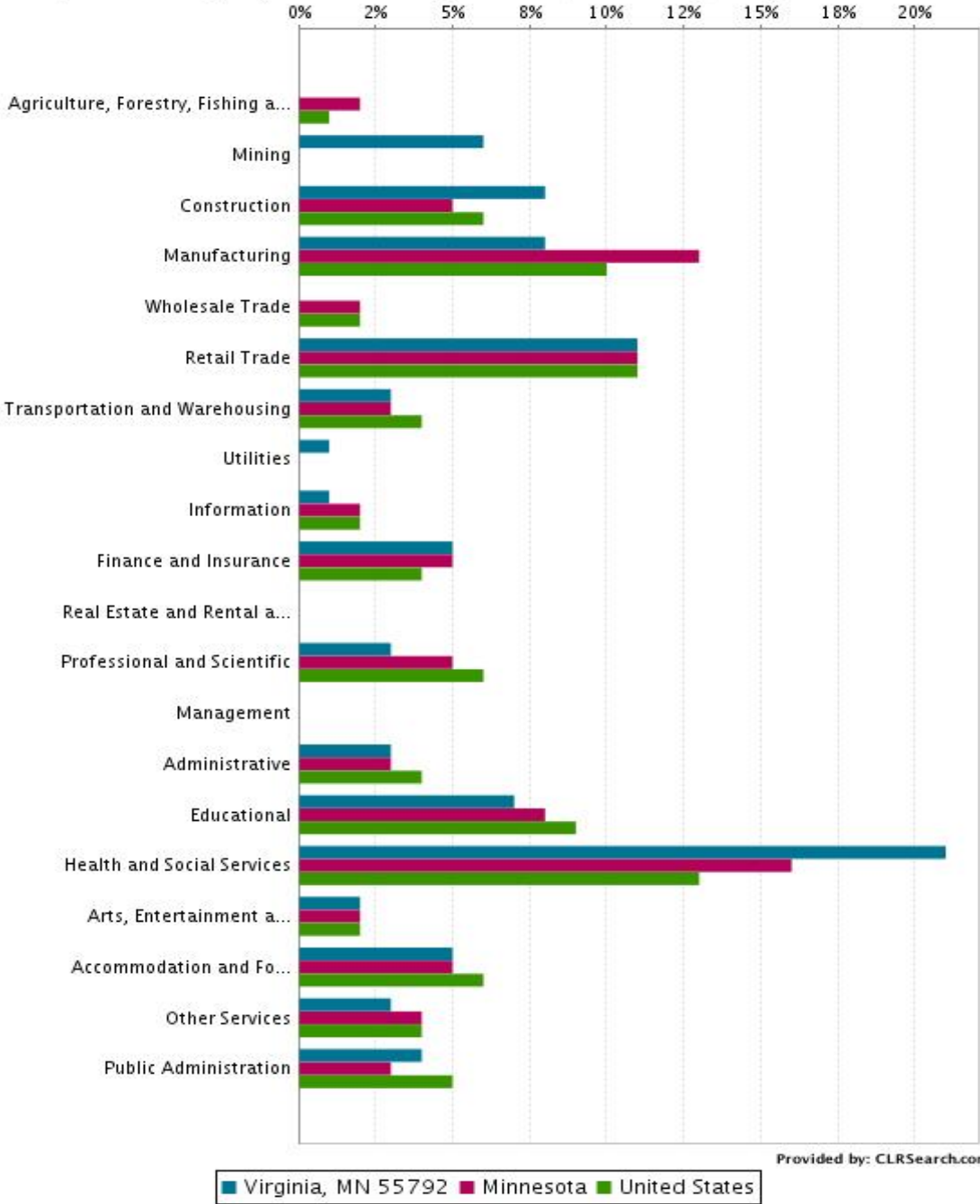
The Median Household Income in Virginia is approximately \$33,143, compared to St. Louis County's MHI at \$47,138, and Minnesota's (\$60,828).

In September 2016, the Unemployment Rate in Virginia was 6.4%. This was higher than St. Louis County (4.9%), Minnesota (4.0%) and the US (5.0%).

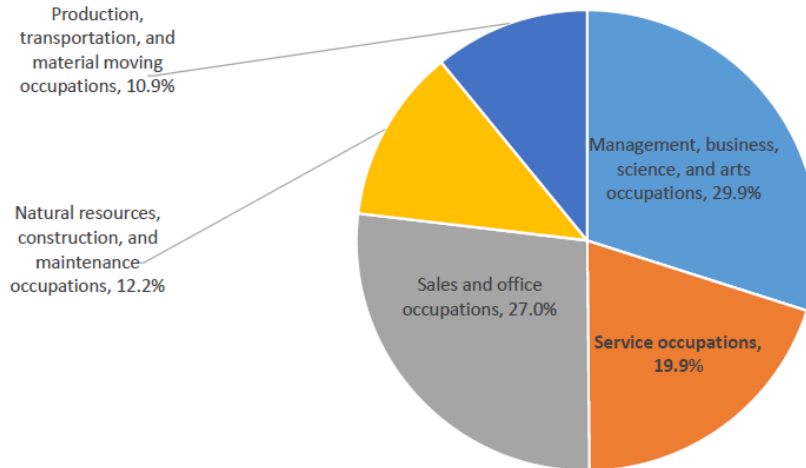
### **10.2.2 Economic Base**

The health care and social services industry employ nearly 25 % of the people which is the largest percentage of workers followed by the retail trade at approximately 10.5 percent followed by construction and manufacturing at approximately 8.5 percent. Based on 2012 employment data, approximately 6.5 percent of Virginia’s population is employed in mining-related industry. Due to a range of foreign and domestic trade and currency factors as well as shifts in the business cycle, mining and construction related employment typically experience the most fluctuation in employment levels.

**2012 Employment by Industry for Total Civilian Population (Population Age 16+) for Virginia, MN 55792**



About 30% percent of those employed are in management, business, science and arts occupations and 27% are in sales and office occupations.



US Census ACS 2014

The entire region is known for the mining industry. However – this is no longer the major employment industry of the region. The mining industry is likely to continue to be volatile, and as such, the City needs to continue to broaden its economic base to ensure it remains resilient and adaptable.

### 10.3 Economic Strengths and Weaknesses

The following are strengths and weaknesses in attracting and retaining businesses and industries to the City of Virginia. It is important that the community continue to work on strengthening its position to meet future business and industry needs that may arise.

#### 10.3.1 Strengths

- Centrally located, accessible Downtown
- Relatively low wage scale, low land costs, and lower business and property taxes
- Good regional accessibility and connectivity
- Historic Downtown main street buildings and streetscape
- Ample downtown commercial district parking
- High quality regional medical facilities
- Good education system
- Accessible and attractive urban lakes, parks and greenways

#### 10.3.2 Weaknesses

- Lack of raw land for new development
- Perceived increase in crime
- Perceived high cost of public utilities
- Investment stagnation
- Lack of parking resource management

- Aging, poor quality housing stock
- Aging downtown buildings in need of repair and upkeep
- Numerous downtown vacancies
- Limited downtown parking resources
- Seasonal tourism cycle

## 10.4 Downtown



Virginia's Downtown serves as the central core of civic life and plays a primary role in shaping the character of the community. Given the unique situation of the city being surrounded by mining lands, the traditional downtown area represents a significant opportunity for community evolution and growth. It is the best place for continuing the tradition of mixing retail, service, and entertainment, residential and civic uses, on multiple stories and side by side.

Downtown Virginia – particularly the Chestnut Street corridor from 1st to 6th Avenues was designated a Historical District in 1997, known as the Virginia Commercial Historic District. Virginia's historic, main street buildings are one of its greatest assets: their ground floors are adaptable to multiple uses and their brick and stone exteriors establish downtown's character and unique sense of place. The uses within these buildings may change as business come and go but the exterior of the buildings themselves should be restored and maintained in a state of good repair.

Virginia has made efforts to make downtown pedestrian friendly by constructing curb extensions, which shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians, installed benches, litter receptacles and decorative lighting. Its street system is interconnected with sidewalks and limited curb cuts. While the one-way alleyway system poses confusion for visitors and is difficult to enforce, it does provide access for off street parking and secondary, back of building business access. In general, Downtown's "bones" are in good shape, however, more attention needs to be paid to building rehabilitation, and encouraging / supporting private investment.

Recently efforts to expand the historic district have included development of service and retail buildings such as Super One Foods and Natural Harvest Co-op along 6th Avenue West and 4th Street North to the north-west of the existing Downtown main street area.



Service and retail establishments generally are the primary business types within the Downtown. Eating and drinking establishments are also well-established. Public comment received during the development of this plan has identified considerable concern regarding the prevalence of bars and associated antisocial behavior as patrons exit the premises such as jeering and shouting at passersby, loitering, littering and fighting.

Significant efforts to diversify the uses within Downtown are needed in order improve overall social civility and economic vibrancy. Ideas and opportunities identified through public input include:

- Replace buildings in the worst physical condition with new residential apartments or condos
- Rehab upper floors of commercial buildings for downtown residential apartments
- New downtown hotel
- Preserve and reuse/rehabilitate the historic Northland Building
- More sit-down restaurants
- Promote / support more entertainment and events, music, theater, art fair, markets
- Strengthen / enhance connection to Bailey's Lake
- Provide a program of financial incentives to stimulate reinvestment
- Increase Police patrolling on foot and bicycle in the evenings and weekends
- Utilize vacant lots for temporary gardens, public seating, dining and or art space
- Include public restrooms as a part of a new downtown visitor / welcome center

## 10.5 Redevelopment and Revitalization

Economic development sites and projects should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Of foremost importance is to determine if the proposed project is consistent with the community's vision and Comprehensive Plan. If and when there are sites that the City would like to develop for commercial or industrial uses, they should seek assistance in marketing them.

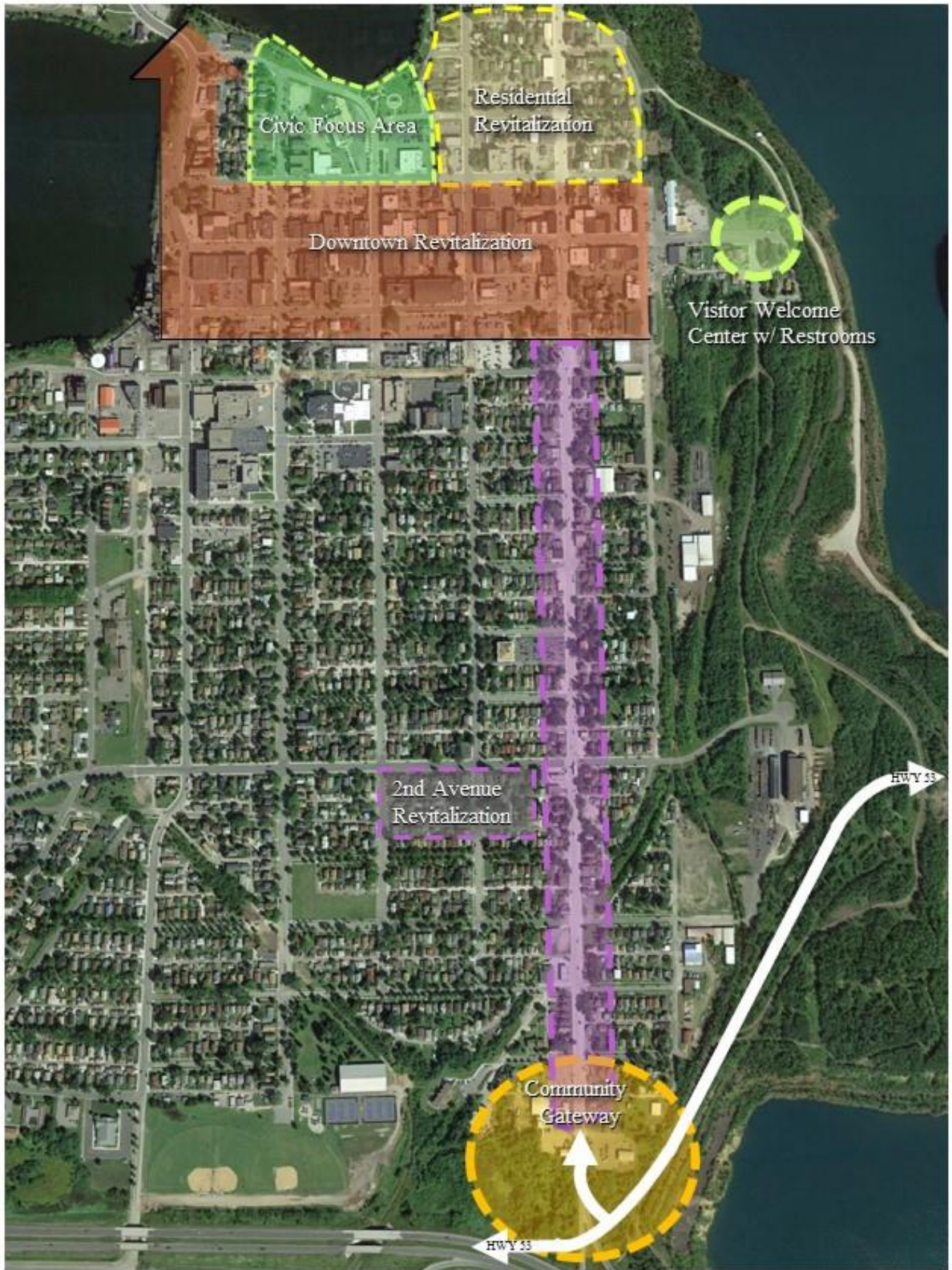
Significant efforts are warranted in the downtown. Where possible, commercial and retail development should be directed towards the Downtown Business District. When feasible, infill and redevelopment of existing properties is encouraged, provided historic features of buildings are preserved and/or enhanced. Mixed-use redevelopment opportunities in the downtown area will help to create a market demand for goods and services in the downtown.

Proactive efforts by the City of Virginia will be needed to ensure the downtown is a safe and attractive area for existing and potential businesses. The local businesses are formulating a Main Street organization to unify and develop other specific strategies to aid in this process.

The Revitalization Framework Plan illustrates a set of integrated concepts for public and private investment. Public attention should be paid to strengthening the public realm with investments in streetscape renovation, expanded wayfinding, activate vacant mid-block sites with pocket parks, plazas and public art and increased cycling facilities should be integrated into the existing street network and pedestrian connections and greening should be enhanced between Chestnut Street and City Center Park. Public – private partnerships should be initiated to revitalize residential areas adjacent to Downtown including redeveloping blighted sites as new multifamily housing. Rehabilitating upper level residential units and ground level commercial facades of Downtown buildings needs to be a priority. Private investment should be recruited and incentivized to fill available buildings and infill vacant sites with new complimentary uses.

Second Avenue represents a significant revitalization opportunity given the realignment of Highway 53 exit ramp and the prominence of this corridor as a community gateway. The corridor's revitalization should look to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue which used to be the primary entry into the community. Here the homes face the corridor and ample space is given to allow for street and downtown's decorative lighting is extended to enhance visual character and strengthen wayfinding and identity. Serious consideration should be given towards realigning and redeveloping properties along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue as well as enhancing the streetscape. Again, engaging the private and nonprofit sectors to partner with the City in a coordinated, comprehensive effort will be key to attracting investment for revitalizing this corridor by reorganizing the placement of new buildings and enhancing the public realm.

Highway 53's new alignment crossing the existing mine pit and touching ground on the east side of the City also presents an opportunity for enhancing the visual quality of the adjacent landscape with new buffer plantings, signage and lighting. Addressing and mitigating views from the highway is especially important given the industrial land use and aging facilities located on the western side of the mine pit between 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and the Mesabi Trail. The proposed stormwater detention pond located adjacent to the new exit ramp presents an additional community gateway and landscape enhancement opportunity.



**Revitalization Framework**  
Virginia, MN

## **Business and Industrial Parks**

The City has a range of Industrial Parks. These areas are well served and well-occupied with stable businesses that add to the economic base of the region.

- Pearsall Industrial Park
- Hoover Industrial Park
- Northern Heights Industrial Park
- Progress Park – a high-tech business park that is a joint venture between the City of Virginia and the City of Eveleth.

## **10.6 Tourism**

The City of Virginia depends on tourism to support many of the local service-oriented businesses. Key to local tourism is the Mesabi Trail – a premier bicycle trail that winds for over 120 miles throughout northeastern Minnesota. Planned expansions will result in this being over 145 miles through 28 communities – which will make it one of the longest paved trails in the US.

The trail segment between Virginia and Gilbert will be closed until 2018 when the re-routing of Highway 53 and bridge construction is complete. When it reopens, this segment of trail will cross the highest bridge in Minnesota as it enters Virginia.

Mineview in the Sky was a large tourism draw that celebrated the area's rich mining history, and allowed picturesque aerial views of the deepest mines in the area. With the re-routing of Highway 53 – this too closed, but a new site for the attraction is being sought.

## **10.7 Assessment of Future Conditions**

Virginia's downtown is where the majority of economic growth and change will occur. The City is landlocked by mining operations, and there are available properties in and around the downtown. The appearance and perception of downtown as an economically vibrant place and atmosphere needs to be bolstered by filled storefronts and programmed space.

Having multi-use facilities in the downtown also helps to encourage and create a more vibrant atmosphere. When buildings become mixed use with a residential component, there becomes a market-driven need – people living in an area can constitute a critical mass to serve. As the City contemplates economic development investments, part of the conversation needs to be how to draw more people into downtown – and it can start by having them live there.

As discussed in the Transportation Chapter, Highway 53 will be relocated due to it being constructed on land owned by mining interest. Significant investments are being made by MnDOT to relocate an approximately 3.2 mile segment of Highway 53 between Bourgin Road and 2nd Avenue in Virginia. This relocation may open opportunities for additional economic development activity, as a new segment of Highway Corridor will become highly visible for many motorists, visitors and residents.

## **10.8 Economic Development Tools, Programs and Agencies**

There are a variety of tools and resources available to Virginia in terms of economic development resources – including tax increment financing (TIF), establishing a port

authority, establishing an urban renewal district(s), use of eminent domain and obtaining technical, and funding assistance.

Specific programs include:

- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)
  - Minnesota Investment Fund
  - Greater Minnesota Business Development Public Infrastructure Program
  - Transportation Economic Development Program
  - Contamination Clean-Up Program
  - Redevelopment Grant Program
  - Workforce Housing Program
- Federal Community Development Program
- Federal Environmental Brownfield Program
- Minnesota Bonding Bill Program

Local and regional programs and agencies include:

- Iron Range Resources (IRRRB)
  - Commercial Redevelopment Program
  - Comprehensive Plan Program
  - Development Infrastructure Program
  - Cultural and Tourism Program
  - Application Fund Program
  - Workforce Development Program
  - Business Loan Program
  - Business Energy Retrofit Program
- Virginia Economic Development Authority
- Virginia-Eveleth Economic Development Authority
- Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency
- Laurentian Chamber of Commerce
- Revive Virginia
- Center for Small Towns
- National Main Street program

## **10.9 Principles, Goals and Policies**

The following are City-wide economic development principles:

1. Encourage and support economic diversification to improve resiliency to economic shocks and transformations that are outside the City's control.
32. Foster an atmosphere of entrepreneurship.
33. Streamline the redevelopment and development approvals process.

34. Encourage the development of local renewable and efficient energy resources.
35. Encourage development of a local food system. (Farm to Table)
36. Prioritize recruitment of living-wage job businesses.
37. Ensure high-speed internet is accessible throughout the City.
38. Continue to work with agencies to identify and clean-up environmentally compromised properties for future redevelopment.

### **10.9.1 Downtown**

Goal 1: Downtown will be a place where businesses prosper.

#### **Policies**

- a. Establish a Downtown Business Organization or Main Street organization to spearhead revitalization efforts.
- b. Manage and maintain off-street parking facilities as a shared resource. (Managed as a whole, not as individual facilities—Park anywhere for any business)
- c. Establish permitted parking to support Downtown residential (Allow overnight parking).
- d. Consider establishing and maintaining district-wide business hours.
- e. Work with area business and property owners to develop and implement a Downtown identity and promotions program (logo and slogan/tag line).

Goal 2: Building designs and renovations respect and contribute to Downtown’s historic, main street character.

#### **Policies**

- a. Provide a variety of financial and technical assistance programs to business owners for renovating / rehabilitating downtown buildings and signs.

Goal 3: Provide for a mix of multi-generational uses including commercial, entertainment, personal service, professional office, lodging and multi-family housing.

#### **Policies**

- a. Review and update zoning and subdivision ordinances to eliminate barriers or inconsistencies in providing for a traditional, main street form and pattern of development within the Downtown district.
- b. Actively recruit entrepreneurs to locate their businesses in the Downtown.
- c. Actively recruit developers (including through public-private partnerships) to create appropriately scaled projects in the Downtown.

Goal 4: Maintain and strengthen an attractive, walkable and interconnected public realm.

#### **Policies**

- a. Assess the condition and extents of the Downtown, (Chestnut and 4th Streets) streetscape and undertake a systematic program of renovation.
- b. Prepare and implement a street tree planting and maintenance program.
- c. Implement public restrooms within the new visitor /welcome center planned for the eastern end Chestnut Street.

Goal 5: Create bicycle-safe / bicycle-friendly Downtown streets.

**Policies**

- a. Coordinate the design and implementation of on-street bike infrastructure such as protected bike lanes and intersection treatments to better connect Downtown with adjacent neighborhoods.
- b. Add bike parking / bike racks within Downtown, in parking areas, and in front of business.
- c. Require bike parking as a part of new development and construction Downtown.

**10.9.2 Commercial and Mixed-Use**

Goal 1: Provide conveniently located and contextually designed neighborhood retail facilities that are accessible on foot and bicycle.

**Policies**

- a. Ensure zoning regulations allow for a modest amount of small-scale, neighborhood-oriented retail uses such as corner stores in convenient locations.
- b. Expand an integrated, accessible and safe active transportation network.
- c. Encourage reinvestment, redevelopment and infill development on vacant or underutilized properties along major thoroughfares and key corridors such as 2nd Avenue.
- d. Encourage the expansion of Child Care capacity within existing and new facilities.

Goal 2: Encourage compact, commercial and mixed-use infill redevelopment in appropriate areas to strengthen the vitality of existing corridors and neighborhoods, leverage existing infrastructure investments and expanding active transportation options.

**Policies**

- a. Develop incentives for infill development in target areas.
  - o Provide grants & loans, when appropriate, to assist downtown businesses and property owners, aiding in the preservation and maintenance of existing building stock.
    - Storefront Revitalization Matching Grant Program
    - Commercial Rehabilitation Loan Program
    - Redevelopment Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District
    - Fund downtown revitalization planning & updates to such plans.
- b. Promote compact, walkable neighborhoods that provides an environment that can accommodate live-work lifestyles.

Goal 3: Support development of tourist-related commercial enterprises that strengthens Virginia's position as a northern Minnesota tourist destination.

**Policies**

- a. Continue to explore feasible alternatives to redevelop and enhance Mineview in the Sky.

- b. Work with regional tourism organizations on a coordinated effort to improve tourism throughout the Iron Range.
- c. Coordinate with Downtown businesses, non-profit arts and culture groups and service clubs to support and expand on activities and special events.
- d. Expand and leverage the Mesabi Trail in marketing, promotions and event planning.

### 10.9.3 Office and Industrial

Goal 1: Foster and support continued development of locally owned and operated business and industry that build upon or leverage Virginia's core industries such as mining, metallurgy and steel fabrication, outdoor recreation, and medical services.

**Policies:**

- a. Work collaboratively with existing core industrial and business sector leaders to identify niche business opportunities.
- b. Continue marketing and developing existing and new business / industrial park development.
- c. Continue to recruit and support new office and industrial businesses that provide living wage jobs.



**11.0 Intergovernmental Cooperation & Partnerships**



Intergovernmental cooperation is an important tool needed to operate in an efficient and cost effective manner, as well as to control and promote change and growth in an orderly fashion for the City of Virginia and adjacent units of government. This plan element establishes goals and related policies for guiding future intergovernmental activities.

## **11.1 Existing Conditions**

The City of Virginia is a home rule charter City led by a Mayor-council form of government and is managed by a professional City Administrator. In addition to the Mayor, the City Council includes six elected members.

Virginia lies within the northern reaches of St. Louis County. Cities adjacent to Virginia include Eveleth and Leonidas, Mountain Iron, McKinley and Gilbert.

Virginia is located in Minnesota's 8th congressional district.

In addition to Federal, State, regional agencies and local units of government, the Iron Range Resources Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB), Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA) and Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) also cooperate with the City of Virginia on a range of economic, transportation, recreation and social service initiatives and programs.

## **11.2 Intergovernmental Agreements and Relationships**

Virginia maintains several intergovernmental agreements and relationships including:

1. St. Louis County
  - d. Mutual Aid for Police
  - e. Boundary Waters Drug Taskforce
  - f. Quad City Biosolids Authority
  - g. Recycling/Solid Waste Disposal
2. Eveleth
  - f. Mutual Aid for Police & Fire
  - g. Virginia/Eveleth Econ. Dev. Authority – Progress Park
  - h. Water Interconnect
  - i. Quad City Biosolids Authority
3. Gilbert
  - j. Mutual Aid for Police/Fire
  - k. Water Interconnect
  - l. Quad City Biosolids Authority
4. Mountain Iron
  - m. Mutual Aid for Police/Fire
  - n. Water Interconnect
  - o. Quad City Biosolids Authority
5. Fayal Township - Mutual Aid for Fire

## 11.3 Goals and Policies

**Goal 1: Continue to work cooperatively and maintain excellent relations with all governmental units in and around the region.**

### **Policies**

- a. Frequently communicate with other government officials (staff, elected and appointed officials) both formally (on committees, etc.) and informally (telephone calls, emails, etc.).
- b. Coordinate with adjacent and, or relevant units of government on planning efforts (e.g., comprehensive, land use, transportation, and natural resource protection), regulations, and specific land use decisions.
- c. Where practical, share information, equipment, resources, facilities, technology, services and possibly revenue that have cross-jurisdictional use.
- d. Evaluate existing intergovernmental cooperation efforts on an annual basis and determine the need to maintain, improve, expand or dissolve existing agreements.

**Goal 2: Continue to cooperate and coordinate multimodal transportation system improvements with MnDot, St. Louis County and Arrowhead Transit.**

### **Policies**

- a. Continue working to ensure that Virginia's long-term, multimodal transportation policies and plans are reflected in MnDot's Capital Improvement Plans.
- b. Continue to collaborate with Arrowhead Transit to expand service to better serve night and week end workers and downtown patrons and visitors.
- c. Integrate transit facility infrastructure into transportation improvement projects where appropriate.
- d. Continue to expand access and connectivity to regional multi use trails for year-round use.

**Goal 3: Foster a legacy of conservation and protection of natural resources on lands outside Virginia's City limits.**

### **Policies**

- a. Collaborate with St. Louis County, MN DNR and National Forest Service and mining companies to strengthen, and implement policies, plans and regulations pertaining to natural resource conservation, protection and or mitigation.

**Goal 4: Expand Mesabi Technical College's community impact and integration.**

### **Policies**

- a. Engage college administration on a routine basis to coordinate and collaborate on aspects of campus expansion, student housing, parking and other matters of joint interest or consequence.
- b. Promote and support Mesabi Technical College as an integral economic development asset and partner.

**Goal 5: Involve the Virginia school district in long range planning efforts and in reviewing current development proposals.**

### **Policies**

- a. Establish a formal, routine communications process with school district to facilitate timely information exchange.

- b. Review effectiveness of communications and collaboration efforts on an annual basis.
  
- e. **Goal 6: Collaborate and cooperate with Iron Range area government agencies to improve Virginia's quality of life.**

**Policies**

- a. Continue supporting and collaborating on programs provided by the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency such as Arrowhead Transit, Head Start and Housing.

# 12.0 Implementation



This element serves as an action plan for prioritizing and realizing the goals and policies described in the Comprehensive Plan. The plan is not an end in itself; rather it is the beginning of a new planning cycle. As such it is important that current tools, regulations and programs such as the zoning and subdivision ordinance be reviewed and where necessary made consistent with the goals and policies of the new Comprehensive Plan.

While the Comprehensive Plan is intended to help guide land use and related infrastructure development decisions it is not an attempt to predict the future. Rather it is an expression of the community's interests and desires for improving upon current conditions and achieving a more prosperous, equitable, healthy and sustainable future.

As change is inevitable, the Comprehensive Plan may need to be amended to appropriately reflect and support changes in land use or other primary community systems. This plan element also outlines the process for amending the Plan. As plan amendments occur, it will be important to review the Plan for consistency. Additionally, the overall Plan should be reviewed for relevance and consistency by staff and Planning Commission on an annual basis.

Elected officials, appointed commissioners and staff should refer to the Comprehensive Plan when reviewing future proposals for private, public and institutional development and redevelopment and develop specific findings of fact to support or deny a given application. As part of any significant proposal, a thorough review of the Plan is necessary with particular attention given to goals and policies. Where the impact on civic infrastructure and adjacent land uses of a proposed redevelopment or development is minimal, the evaluation may simply be a determination whether the requested action is in conformance with the Plan. Proposals with significant potential impacts will require more in depth analysis and debate in order to determine consistency, community value.

## **12.1 Zoning Ordinance**

Zoning is the primary regulatory tool used by local governments to implement planning policies. It consists of the Official Zoning Map and the supporting ordinance text.

The purpose of the Zoning Ordinance is to promote the public health, safety, comfort and general welfare of the people of Virginia, MN. The Ordinance regulates a variety of interrelated components including the location of buildings proposed for specific uses, the height, bulk and land coverage of buildings, provides for minimum sanitation standards, off-street loading and parking, and regulates and determines the areas of yards and housing density, to a considerable degree depending on the provision of water and/or sewage treatment facilities.

Within a land use plan designation (per the Comprehensive Plan), there may be several zoning districts that will accomplish the intent of that land use designation. For example, an area designated in the Plan for residential may be zoned any one of several zones that permits residential development. The particular zone will be based upon the type of conditions in that area and how they apply to the land use goals and policies of the Plan.

Any zoning proposal, whether on a large area basis or an individual property, must be determined to be consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Where a conflict exists between the Plan and existing zoning, the Plan directives must prevail. In cases where the Comprehensive Plan is not followed, the findings of fact for the zoning proposal should explain the reasons for deviating from the Plan and should

the zoning proposal be approved, the Comprehensive Plan should be amended to reflect the change.

The Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map are amended from time to time to reflect new goals and policies adopted by the City. The City should review its existing Zoning Ordinance and Map for inconsistencies with the adopted new Comprehensive Plan, and create a schedule for amending the zoning documents to reconcile divergences. An important first step is to compare the current zoning map with the adopted Land Use Map and reconcile discrepancies. There may be valid reasons why the two documents are not identical, but these reasons should be clear.

When amending the Comprehensive Plan is needed to accommodate a desired rezoning, the process is as follows:

1. Applicant meets with planning and zoning administrator to review reasonableness of rezoning in relation to the surrounding uses as well as compliance with state law and compatibility with the comprehensive plan.
2. If the rezoning is acceptable and in the best interest of the City, but is not in compliance with the comprehensive plan, the petitioner will apply for both a rezoning and a comprehensive plan amendment.
3. A written application is made with a fee.
4. Notice is published and sent to surrounding property owners within 300 feet of the subject property or properties at least 10 days prior to the planning meeting in accordance with state law.
5. The zoning administrator prepares findings of fact and a recommendation for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council.
6. The matter is presented to the planning commission. The commission makes a recommendation to the council.
7. If the commission recommends the rezoning and amendment, notice is published and sent to surrounding property owners within 300 feet of the subject property or properties at least 10 days prior to the council meeting in accordance with state law.
8. The matter is presented to council as a proposed ordinance and is subject to ordinance rules, i.e. passes the first time with unanimous vote.

## **12.2 Subdivision Ordinance**

The other most widely used land use control mechanism is the subdivision or land division control ordinance. The purpose of the ordinance is to safeguard the best interest of City, the homeowner, the developer and future owners; encourage well planned subdivisions by the establishment of design and construction criteria; to improve land records by establishing standards for surveys and plats; and protect the environmentally sensitive areas of the City.

## **12.3 Plan Maintenance**

To ensure the Plan remains a dynamic and living document, The City should implement an on-going planning process that uses the plan to develop annual improvement programs. Simultaneously, the plan should be reviewed and evaluated to ensure that its goals, policies and programs continue to reflect changing community needs and attitudes.

The most important method of implementing Virginia's new Comprehensive Plan is to use the plan as part of the day-to-day planning routine by committed elected and appointed officials, City staff members, and citizens. The Plan should be referenced in planning studies and planning staff reports and used when considering each new development, redevelopment and incentive with the intent of achieving the vision and goals set forth in the plan.

Circumstances will continue to change in the future as the City grows and evolves. To that end, Virginia's Comprehensive Plan will need to be modified and refined to remain current. Updates and changes should be identified, carefully noted and thoroughly considered as part of an annual review process.

## **12.4 Annual Plan Updates and Amendment Process**

While rewrites or major updates are typically made every ten years, and updates are made every five years, annual amendments can provide an opportunity to revisit progress on implementing the plan's action items as well as maintaining consistency with changed conditions and circumstances. A plan amendment should be prepared and distributed as an addendum to the adopted comprehensive plan. Identification of the potential plan amendments should be an on-going process by the Planning Commission and City staff throughout the year.

## **12.5 Implementation Responsibility**

The responsibilities for the actual initiation and monitoring of the goals and implementation action items of the comprehensive plan lie with the following groups:

### **12.5.1 Citizens**

The City's citizens should continue to be involved in the implementation and maintenance of the comprehensive plan. They are responsible for bringing their concerns and issues to City staff.

### **12.5.2 City Council**

The City Council should receive and act upon recommendations in accordance with the vision, goals, and policies of the plan. It is imperative that the City Council provide overall policy guidance and consider issues and changes when they are consistent with the stated purpose of the comprehensive plan.

### **12.5.3 Planning Commission**

The Planning Commission should use the comprehensive plan as a tool for decision making for growth, development and redevelopment to assure the projects, proposals and policies area in accordance with the plan. On an annual basis, the Commission should submit an annual report of the activities and achievements as well as recommendations for future planning initiatives.

### **12.5.4 City Staff**

City Staff should review all development issues associated with zoning and subdivision of land for compliance with stated goals and policies and land use map. Staff should also monitor planning activities to aid in the need for revisions and updates

## 12.6 Action Items

A community's final step in the comprehensive planning process is to set priorities for strategies associated with the specific plan elements to achieve its vision and goals. Just as many distinct policies can speak to a given goal, a community can select a range of strategies or action items – consistent with its policies – to achieve any of its goals. Reaching an understanding of which should be given the highest priority is a key step a community should take to implement the Plan.

Table 12-1 provides a summarized list of implementation action items to implement policy recommendations in various plan elements over a 1-5 year time frame. As items are well underway or completed, new ones should be identified and brought forward for implementation. Some of the recommended action items may require substantial cooperation with others, including other units of governments and or the private sector. In addition, other City department or City Council priorities may affect the completion of these key actions.

Plan Element	Action Item	Primary Responsible Party or Parties
<b>Land Use</b>		
	Update zoning and subdivision regulations to more directly reflect and serve to implement the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan. (will include ghost platting exercise)	Administration, City Engineer, Commission and City Council
	Annual Review of Comprehensive Plan	Administration, City Engineer
<b>Housing</b>		
	Create zoning and subdivision regulations that provide for neighborhoods with a mix of life-cycle housing, sidewalks and interconnected street systems.	Administration, City Engineer, Commission and City Council
	Develop and implement a program for housing infill.	Administration, HRA
	Actively engage in public-private partnerships to develop new housing options that meet the socioeconomic needs of Virginia's current and future residents.	Administration, HRA
	Adopt a rental housing license and inspections program.	Administration, HRA
	Explore methods and funding options to promote the improvement of the existing housing stock, including retrofitting existing homes to better serve today's families.	Administration, HRA
<b>Economic Development / Downtown</b>		
	Prepare a Downtown Revitalization Plan	Administration, City Engineer, EDA, Revive Virginia
	Continue recruiting businesses to city owned business / industrial parks.	Administration, EDA
	Continue actively promoting, evaluating and supporting the rehabilitation and reuse existing vacated commercial buildings.	Administration, EDA
	Partner with the private sector (developers, financiers, and property managers) to accelerate redevelopment of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Chestnut Street corridors.	Administration, EDA, Council

<b>Plan Element</b>	<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Primary Responsible Party or Parties</b>
	Develop additional industrial park facilities.	Administration, EDA, City Engineer
<b>Transportation</b>		
	Develop and implement a Safe Routes to School program to promote healthy, active youth and reduce obesity.	City Engineer, Parks and Recreation, School District
	Expand on-street routes for the use of bicycles as a year-round mode of transportation.	City Engineer
	Expand bike parking and support facilities at public buildings and Downtown.	City Engineer
	Incorporate aesthetic and multimodal treatments as a part of HWY-53 relocation / reconstruction project.	City Engineer
<b>Utilities and Community Facilities</b>		
	Continue renewal of aging city infrastructure / street system.	City Engineer
	Develop civic infrastructure with aesthetics and surrounding environment integration in mind.	City Engineer, Administration, Common Council
<b>Parks, Trails and Open Spaces</b>		
	Develop and implement an Urban Forestry Plan and Program	Parks and Recreation, City Engineer
	Continue assessing and replacing outdated park and recreation equipment with age appropriate, universally accessible apparatus.	Parks and Recreation
	Continue to expand on the inclusiveness of Virginia's parks	Parks and Recreation
	Study relocation of the Mesabi Trailhead closer to Downtown Virginia to strengthen visitor use of downtown businesses.	EDA, Administration, Parks and Recreation
<b>Mining, Forestry and Natural Resources</b>		
	Continue coordinating and collaborating with mining companies on community growth, redevelopment and infrastructure expansions, maintenance and enhancements.	Administration, City Engineer, Parks and Recreation
	Look for ways to improve access to locally grown food.	Administration, AEOA, IRPS
<b>Intergovernmental Cooperation</b>		
	Continue to participate in regional long-range planning discussions and activities.	Administration, EDA
	Collaborate and cooperate with Iron Range area government agencies to improve Virginia's quality of life.	Administration

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Appendix A  
Community Survey

# VIRGINIA, MN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## - Online Community Survey Results -

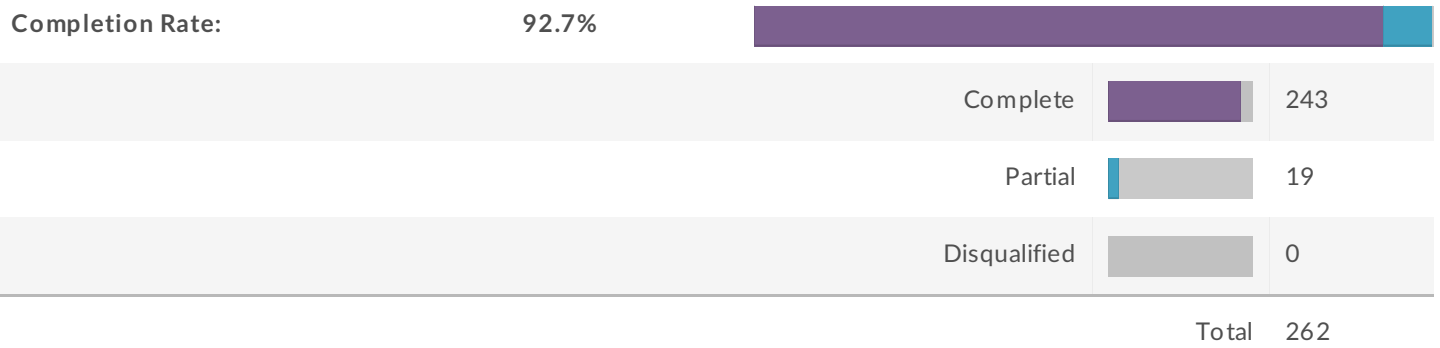
An online community survey was available from May 10th, 2016 to June 30th, 2016. 243 people completed the full survey, and the detailed summary of responses are on the following pages.

Every comment received online is included in the summary in its entirety without alteration, except for references to individual's names which have been redacted.

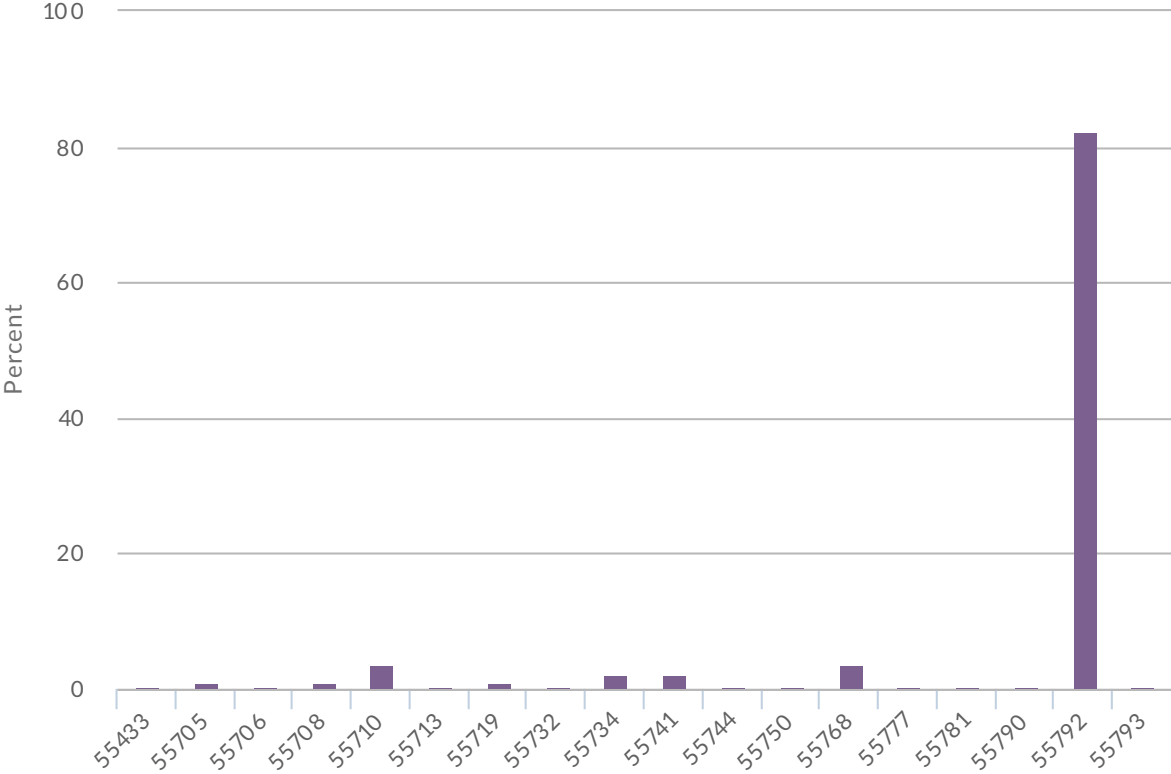
Some comments may include mature language or content that is not suitable for all audiences.

# Report for Virginia Comprehensive Plan Survey

## 1. Response Counts



## 2. What is your zipcode?



3. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
My neighborhood reflects pride of ownership and investment.	111 45.3%	70 28.6%	64 26.1%
My neighborhood is walkable	145 59.2%	55 22.4%	45 18.4%
My neighborhood is attractive	103 42.2%	71 29.1%	70 28.7%
I know many of my neighbors	124 50.8%	75 30.7%	45 18.4%

#### 4. If you could change one thing in Virginia what would it be?

Count	Response
1	2nd ave makes this town look like a dump
1	Acceptance of community diversity
1	All the empty businesses and blight rental property.
1	An improved image so the world can see our positive aspects.
1	Bad activity,crimes
1	Be tougher on drugs. Quit giving people on probation so many chances to mess up before jailing them. Our city is turning into drugville.
1	Better policing of the real crime. Not all the racial profiling
1	Better street repair
1	Bike lanes or sharrows around the city including downtown.
1	Bring the peace & serenity back to our downtown area.
1	Chestnut St. It needs life brought back to the area. Definitely more local restaurants, Virginia lacks any diversity in good cuisine.Appealing to the tourism market would be good for the town. Especially since you will be having more influx of people just to check the bridge out. Tourism and hospitality industry is the fastest growing sector in the nation, would be good for Virginia's economy.
1	City government is stuck in the past. Get those crabby old men off the council and install some fresh, forward-thinking blood.
1	City taking pride in their own city , and police who would actually help neighborhoods clean up vagrants

Count	Response
1	Clean up 2nd Ave and Chestnut.
1	Clean up 2nd ave crime area
1	Clean up 2nd avenue and tear down the dilapidated buildings.
1	Clean up Second Avenue area. It looks like a run down ghetto.
1	Clean up Silver Lake
1	Clean up Southside rental homes. 2nd avenue is frightening at night. Railroad avenue is just as bad
1	Clean up downtown and make more things for kids to do
1	Clean up the Main Street of pedifiles and drugs
1	Clean up the drug traffic and the riff- raff who break the law to pay for their habit. Make the streets safe to walk again!
1	Clean up the worn down areas and crack down on rentals, drugs, etc so our city feels safe to walk anywhere
1	Clesnupcrime
1	Combined the quad cities high schools! It makes financial sense and will provide more opportunities for our youth! Create a comprehensive fish stalking plan for our area mine pits so that you can fish a diversity of species within a short driving distance (great tourism opportunity).
1	Communication
1	Condemn the Mirage Bar and nearby tenement slum housing units and put the owners, the addicts, prostitutes, drug dealers and other undiserables on a bus to Havanna
1	Cost of utilities
1	Cost to live here - share library costs with cities using/ambulance/hospital etc.
1	Crime
1	Crime rate
1	Crime rate and public utility policies paricularly relating to steam. The cost to remove steam service to a residence can be outrageous. If it's not removed, the homeowner is billed a service fee even if it's not used. Citizens of Virginia pay LOTS of money in utility fees yet if something happens relating to utilites it is the home owners responsibility to pay the PUC to repair it.
1	Crime rate.
1	Crime. Which is direct result of addiction adnd how not handled correctly in judicial system.
1	Decrease drug use
1	Decrease the crime rate

**Count    Response**

- 1        Definitely reform the rental code.
- 1        Don't ignore it's people
- 1        Downtown area
- 1        Downtown area needs to be more friendly and welcoming.
- 1        Downtown, Main Street, make it family friendly. Encourage small business and new business to be active in a revitalization. By keeping crime in check and having a police presence more people will be encouraged to visit downtwn. It has been wonderful to see the few businesses that are there continue, local is always better for a city.
- 1        Drugs
- 1        Eliminate HUD housing. Stop importing criminals. For the size of the population, the crime rate is ridiculous.
- 1        Eliminate drugs and drug users.
- 1        Eliminate the illegal drug problems, which would likely reduce the crime. Deport all of the lazy, unproductive, welfare transplants that have moved into this community over the past few years. Discontinue the Mesabi Community College football program.
- 1        Establish rent control. The rate of rental properties vs owned residences is embarrassing.
- 1        Every time a friend or relative comes for a visit, they comment on how trashy Virginia has become. From dilapidated buildings (residential & commercial), to blight, to lack of commercial (service & retail) development.
- 1        First and foremost - get rid of steam heat and work on a third party to provide heat and utilities. Mt. Iron has Minnesota Energy and utility bills are half the cost. This would help immensely! Clean it up - we have a beautiful area and our downtown looks deserted and like people don't care. Driving down side streets or 2nd ave we have houses that are falling apart and roads that are crumbling.
- 1        Fix mainstreet in virginia with community owned shops. Sub shops, food variety, mini golf
- 1        Fix the problem areas in Virginia as well as put updated parks in areas especially Midway. Encourage more businesses to come to the mall before it turns into a ghost town.
- 1        Fix the roads by Macdonalds.
- 1        Fix the walking path that is by the school and goes around by the baseball fields. Make the Roosevelt playground more kid friendly. Area events more known.
- 1        Fix up many of the rentals in our town. Clean up the alleys too.
- 1        Focus on Virginia's image with an eye to preserving some of our historical buildings and saving trees. It seems the city is so quick to tear down houses (I realize some are not salvageable, but 60 structures demolished [REDACTED] at a recent council mtg.!) and, unthinkably, beautiful old sturdy brick structures. Why cut the trees on our walking paths? Preserve the beauty and the shade!

**Count    Response**

1	Freshen the street paint and sidewalks. Plant some flowers! Make Virginia look alive! If the city looks good it might motivate businesses to add some curb appeal, then home owners which could lead to happy people. Happy people make the world go round!
1	Get rid of criminals.
1	Get rid of deadbeats, welfare cases and sexual offenders.
1	Get rid of high cost steam heat system.
1	Get rid of so many dead beat renters
1	Get rid of the "slumlords". Their cheap, government subsidized housing attracts a bad element. And too many city resources are being spent on rental properties. Almost all fires are in rentals and my guess is that most police calls are to rentals as well. They need to be held accountable, but won't since half the city counsel has rental properties.
1	Get rid of the career welfare folks that have taken over the city. Local Welfare should be used to tied over local citizens going through tough times. Not for free loaders that are attracted to the area.
1	Get rid of the drugs and low income housing, rentals, etc.
1	Get rid of the good ol' boys club that runs the City Hall
1	Get rid of the rental properties that bring in some undesirables into our town! 2nd ave is the worst place on the range and rentals are a big part of it! High property taxes and crime are two of the reasons we are thinking of moving!!!
1	Get rid of the rentals or make more rules for the owners and the tenants
1	Get rid of the run down houses, crack down on all the increasing crime and remove the huge growing drug problem!!!! Virginia deserves to be the great place to live that it used to be again!!!
1	Get the criminal landlords to fix their houses. We have over 50% rental property in town and the slumlords should be held to a higher standard. It's time to crack down on them to make sure the homeowners are investing in the community, unlike the slumlords who siphon from it.
1	Get the rif raf off the streets. Reduce crime.
1	Have more things do to, such as like a kids center or something that teenagers would like. There's nothing for us
1	Hold landlords to a much higher standard. This would impact both the renter and the community. Would heighten feeling of safety and community pride for all. I think the law makers have been too entrenched in this issue (sone as landlords themselves) to make the best decisions for all. Our poor do not want to live in slum housing.
1	Hold landlords to higher standards when it comes to the living conditions of the homes they allow people to live in. I see houses that look uninhabitable and families with young kids are living there. Black mold, peeling lead paint, crumbling asbestos - none of that should be acceptable. Perhaps we need to condemn some homes and provide more low-income housing developments with resources on site?

Count	Response
1	Holding all business owners, homeowners and rental owners accountable for the upkeep of their property
1	Housing code and enforcement.
1	I live in Mountain Iron, don't really like to visit Virginia as there are numerous sketchy people walking the streets at any time of day. I do not feel safe in Virginia any longer. 10 years ago it was a nice city, today not so much. Many roads are in disrepair, houses are the same in many parts, there is a lot of drug problems, and many slum areas. To fix the city would be a miracle!
1	I live in ridge wood and it's great.... However I know of some neighborhoods that are getting to be really bad and unsafe. Wish we could go back to the days where it was ok to leave our doors unlocked
1	I live in the Ridgewood area, which is nice. But downtown is terrible. The crime, sketchy people, rundown buildings and empty lots are an eyesore.
1	I moved out of Virginia because of all the drugs and number of times my truck and house was broken in to and serious lack of police willingness to do anything. People are scared to walk the streets. The town has gone down hill
1	I work on Virginia.. It's scary downtown after 5 in the evening.. We need to get rid of the bars where the cops are called every other hour!!
1	I would change the increasing amount of sex offenders who are allowed to live in our town of Virginia.
1	I would change the inefficient utility infrastructure and operation. I enjoy living in Virginia, but the idea of our city supporting the wasteful heat system is the one motivator for our family to put our money into another neighboring community.
1	I would find an alternative to steam heating.
1	I would fix the many horrible streets that need to be redone.
1	I would like some of these empty lots to be turned into community gardens ran by the community for the community. I have an empty lot across the street from me that is currently used as a shortcut for drug addicts. It would be nice to get the community involved to transform these empty lots into food producing gardens. Many wonderful things could come from this.....
1	I would like to see the time when the parking switches over to the other side be different. It is inconvenient to have it during dinner and it is not posted clearly in town, my guests seem to get tickets and don't want to return. Also the communication on setting up recycling is lacking! We called to request a container and they weren't any and asked for a day and were told to ask our neighbors!
1	I would make it more affordable to get off the steam heat system if that is what a family wants to do.
1	I would stop importing homeless people here from Illinois and start taking care of our own people.
1	If I could change one thing in Virginia it would be the safety on the streets.
1	Improve access to healthcare services.
1	Improve downtown area.

Count	Response
1	Improved maintenance of parks, lakeshore, and other public areas. Maintenance is barely adequate at present. Other towns seem to know how to accomplish this.
1	Increase more well-paying jobs, more affordable housing options, and improve the crime and drug use.
1	Increase patrol cars and lock up the criminals. Do drug busts. Get rid of all the nasty housing that allows for that kind of living and lifestyle. Virginia used to be a great town now I hate to even drive through it. We as citizens can take care of the things we have control over. The law enforcement and government are in charge of criminals. Do something about it.
1	It would be nice to be able to walk around Olcott park in the evenings/night without getting followed or yelled at by young men who are smoking in the park.
1	It would be to have more stores and model what the twin cities suburbs have to offer.
1	Lack of a Taco Bell and other fast food chains. But mostly Taco Bell.
1	Lack of diversity
1	Landlords who do not keep up their rental homes!!! The house near me needs painting, however upkeep is nil to none!
1	Less crime
1	Less drug traffic.
1	Less low income rental properties and sex offenders. Need new businesses.
1	Less meth.
1	Less minorities=less crime.
1	Less rental housing. My neighborhood is mostly owned but I see when rental housing is doing to the rest of the town
1	Less rental units or more regulations for the landlords on upkeep responsibilities. They detract new buyers and make whole blocks appalling. The neighborhoods/streets in Virginia with homeowners and responsible landlord units are beautiful and desirable. The slum type units are unacceptable and a disgrace to the city and their neighbors.
1	Less rentals. More families.
1	Less state and county assistance, we seem to attract every low life in the state. Less section 8 housing, more police presence, increased drug enforcement
1	Let's try and get a bar/restaurant maybe similar to an Applebee's rather than have 7 places specializing in breakfast and pancakes. Our park used to be one of s kind, now it's a plastic playpen like every other. Is there a way to utilize all these pit areas around us with beautiful clean water??
1	Limit liquor licenses and bring business back to main street, some good factory jobs would help too

Count	Response
1	Low income housing in one area, it looks like bad and more often then not is unkempt and falling apart. As well as redone residential roads
1	Lower crime rates
1	Lower the crime rate. (Get rid of the riff raff, bring the community back together.) Honestly, the 2nd avenue area is scary. I would not walk that area alone or at night.
1	Make it more friendly, people are afraid to be out past Dark in virginia, you need to clean it up, get the junkies out town
1	Make small new business easier to begin. Good starts already, but room to grow.
1	Make the Main Street more attractive. Get rid of the drug traffic.
1	Mandate rental licenses and use this to lower overall rentals in virginia. The rental/owner occupation ratio is too high. There must be pain before you'll see real change
1	Mental Health and Wellbeing
1	Meth and heroine have become rampant on the range. I feel something needs to be done to prevent people from using these drugs. Education, offering a safe house for people to detox and get help without going through withdraws and without being judged or punished. In exchange for detox, sober living and real treatment the attendees will help work on special projects to help clean the city up!
1	More activities for school age youth.
1	More activities for youth including outdoor recreation opportunities and playgrounds
1	More activities to do.
1	More affordable housing and tear down the houses no one should be living in
1	More bike lanes. Outside places to sit. Clean up many streets. Paint houses and buildings. Clean up blight
1	More businesses Less crime
1	More family friendly activities and areas. Splash pad, better use of parks, family events, safer neighborhoods, more cultural activities rather than just dive bars. Offer something for families that would keep people in town on the weekends so that we could recruit and keep doctors and other professionals to the area.
1	More local businesses in the downtown area
1	More opportunities for my kids i.e. Batting cages, inside play park, water slides park,
1	More places for walking/hiking
1	More police involvement. I.E. Walking in neighborhoods, visiting schools, showing positive reinforcement. If you become friends and neighbors the citizens will become your greatest allies.
1	More police officers for a safer atmosphere.

Count	Response
1	More private housing (not public), increasing the tax rate then increasing the revenue for the city therefor being able to improve the parks, roads, buildings, hospitals, etc...
1	More trails and parks.
1	Move the school to Mt. Iron.
1	Municipal water quality.
1	NOt so many bars. Make easier for people to walk downtown without a drunk coming up g, to you.
1	Needs to be more for school age kids to do. Winter is long especially around here. Many other MN cities and suburbs have city ran indoor parks. This would make a huge difference here.
1	New leadership. Has been the same people for a long time. Time for some new people with fresh ideas.
1	Offer affordable senior housing.
1	Overall safety. Having young children is concerning around here.
1	Pass the building code to help curb blight & crime & crackdown on rental owners!
1	Police being more available...active..visible...you don't need 7 squads for an arrest...or 5 squads for a domestic...less drugs...everyone knows Riders patrons and Mirage patrons go outside and smoke pot...you can smell it when you walk by...maybe we need officers in street clothes walking through downtown looking for drug activity instead of uniforms...tip line for drug activity
1	Prices for Virginia Public Utilities And crime rate has definitely risen over the years
1	Projects/meetings/education to rebuild our sense of pride and community in our beautiful town. There seems to be an abundance of crime and apathy in Virginia now. I know we 'can't go back', but I grew up here in the 70's. It was just SO different back then. Friendly. Safe. Fun. We need to take our city back!
1	Public Safety, Reduce the amount of "free" money funnelled to Virginia through st Louis county
1	Public bike racks, and that the end of the bike path at 9th Ave wouldn't drop off a freaking curb.
1	Quit pandering to the welfare cases and instead pander to job creators. Crack down on crime and drugs
1	Reduce crime/drugs in the city. We have the highest crime rate per capita in the state.
1	Reduce drugs and crime
1	Rental properties ALL need to be cleaned up!!
1	Rental units and the amount of people attracted to the MASSIVE amount of them are killing the town. Blight.....need I say more? While every surrounding city has a fall/ spring clean-up, Virginia has none! Having this service would more than likely help the blight issue too! Virginia is my home town that I love, but the rentals, riff raff it attracts and blight need to be addressed.
1	Restore Olcott Park to it's original beauty

Count	Response
1	Restore the downtowns old buildings. Have more arts and culture to attract younger generations. Less crime and sex offenders in our city. Less rental properties and more home ownership where people have pride in there homes.
1	Restored Downtown
1	Revitalization of the downtown
1	Revitalize Chestnut street and the Virginia Commercial Historic District
1	Revitalize downtown!!!
1	Revitalize downtown. Crack down on slumlords. Mesabi to Cease bringing in thugs from the inner cities and ghettos of America Bring in more business to mall area Cops need to quit harassing people downtown
1	Revitalize downtown. Also fix the streets
1	Revitalize the downtown
1	Revitalize the downtown to attract business ,socialization etc
1	STOP THE THEFTS AND DRUGS!!!!
1	Safer cleaner better rental options.
1	Safer, less druggies, more to do, more jobs
1	Somehow find a way to rid the city of the "undesirables" that have moved into the city the past few years. As a result, I believe the crime rate would be reduced significantly. Virginia was recently listed as the 2nd most dangerous city in the entire State.
1	Stop taking every child molester that comes out of prison.
1	Stop the giveaway programs that encourage people to not have to work for there survival. If you haven't looked around lately(50 years), it isn't working. People walking around with no direction in life & of course then getting into trouble. Crime, crime & more crime....P.S. take the stop lights off the main street.
1	Take away welfare and out of town people from the area. Also stop government programs and buildings from this town!
1	That we were stricter on how well kept are yards and houses are supposed to be. Some places are just dives and get away with it. Why don't we fine them for messy yards or there houses falling apart? I think it would help it look so much nicer if the standard was higher!
1	The "when in doubt hand it out" money
1	The █████ / █████ / █████ /etc. boys club mafia leans FAR too much to the right to accurately reflect the outlook of the average citizen, and cronyism is still rampant...in 2016.

**Count    Response**

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1        The absentee landlords, the rental properties that give the tenants nothing to be proud of, the unenforcement of city ordinances like leash laws, the police not around the public, the crime, the stores down town not maintaining sidewalks, the street harassment by the bars, the parking situation from 1st St back for blocks around

1        The amount of rundown rental properties is terrible. Attracts jobless drug attics. Get more druggies off the streets. Can't take a walk around silver lake without seeing someone hing suspicious or a used needle Latin on the ground.

1        The cheap rentals that look like trash and bring in low-lifes

1        The crime rate

1        The crime rate is horrible and the drug usage is horrendous

1        The crime, the streets are horrible, downtown area with the missing stores, 2nd avenue,

1        The crime....would like to be in my back yard with the front door open and not worry someone is going to come in and steal

1        The crimes happening on a daily basis make this community unsafe. Crackdown on crime and a lot of the problems will go away. I believe the entitlements encourage a lot of people to this community for all the wrong reasons.

1        The downtown area needs some major tlc. I may not live in Virginia but I work there and the downtown area is scary even in the day time.

1        The drug and crime issue is out of control. What goes hand and hand with this issue is the lack of working young/middle aged adults in the area. Way to many people are on some form of government assistance in our fare city, people flock here because of the ease of getting on these programs. I grew up in Virginia, it brakes my heart to see this happening....it's not a safe place to live anymore.

1        The drugs and crime

1        The drugs need to be taken care of. It's not safe to even walk outside my home at night. Heck even during the day I feel unsafe at times.

1        The entrance onto 2nd Avenue into town! This is a run down area of town and does not look inviting at all.

1        The fixing of the most used roads in town. Example 6th avenue from the bridge all the way to the waste treatment plant.

1        The lack of a rental code. The substandard housing is driving many of the issues in our community, and until the Council holds the landlords accountable, nothing will change.

1        The lack of businesses on Main Street and our mall. I also think that citizens should have some input as to what kind of businesses would enhance our community. Too many abandoned buildings and lack of places for youth to gather.

1        The lack of new, contemporary businesses/restaurants.

**Count    Response**

1	The leadership, need you get young people working for the city and helping with decisions. Needs good ol' guys out, balanced mix of voices.
1	The leadership; mayor, city council, etc. I would make the mayor position a FT position where they have the time to spend the city and revitalization and economic development of it.
1	The less than par rentals that are allowed and not taken care of
1	The look of second avenue is disgusting and need too clean up badly and rid the scum of the area and drugs
1	The one thing I would change is the downtown area.
1	The overwhelming number of non-productive, non-working, welfare dependent individuals/families that appear to be drawn to Virginia.
1	The people are not welcoming of outsiders and minority groups. Ely is the only sustainable town on the Iron Range because it embraces tourism. Main Street is filled with bars, and drunks and drives away any other potential small businesses from starting up. In addition. The city also suffers from inadequate access to mental health care and facilities. Alcoholism, domestic abuse, meth, etc.
1	The public utilities are ridiculously high with an outdated heating system. Please find a way to curtail cost for the thousands of people effected, specifically during the winter months where utilities are known to be double and sometimes triple the cost.
1	The run-down or dangerous feel that is beginning to come across.
1	The way it looks...it is unattractive, dirty
1	There are many abandoned homes and rundown buildings in the downtown area that need to be dealt with. It makes the city feel dangerous, and as a woman working downtown, I don't really feel safe walking on my own in the area.
1	There is excess supply of terrible buildings. Some are severely blighted, some are abandoned, some have worse problems still. Many of these excess buildings are rentals, often low-income rentals. Although a certain amount of low income rentals may be important to a community, Virginia has a deep imbalance that is creating problems.
1	Things for children an teenagers to do, an get a rid of some of the bars
1	Though I love my south side neighborhood, there are too many blighted areas in town. It's just sad and unattractive. It doesn't encourage investment by individuals or businesses and attracts the wrong people.
1	To be able to get things done in the town without having to beg at city hall or have to know someone who knows someone
1	To feel safe
1	To feel safe again. I would never allow my daughters to walk alone. Especially after dark.
1	To have it look classier there are so many junky buildings and garbage every where.

**Count    Response**

1	To make it more safe. In the last few years I feel that the city of Virginia has gone down hill, and there is more crime. Myself and many of my peers have mentioned how they don't even want to go on a walk because they don't feel safe. Having better walking areas and family areas would be awesome!
1	Turn competitive Sports Teams into intramural Sports Teams at Mesabi College - this would include fo otball, basketball and baseball. If you move to the Range to attend college - then come here to keep up your grades - prepare/study and get college acclimated for your junior and senior years at a 4 year college.
1	Utility costs--people pay double for steam--coming in and going out (condensate); We pay double for water--coming in and as sewage; We pay for garbage plus the cost of the "blue bags," Enforcing blight. Enforcing the leash law for CATS. (OK--3 things)
1	Viable and attractive Mainstreet
1	Violence is too rampant in Virginia
1	Virginia is not inviting towards new business the town needs to look to the future, not to the past.
1	Virginia is not the same town as the town I grew up in. Virginia's crime is the one thing I would change and the slum lord housing.
1	Virginia needs a comprehensive renewal plan in the housing sector. There are way too many unkempt and rundown houses, lots, and apartments in town
1	Virginia needs better biking lanes within the city and not just the trails. Recreational biking in the area is phenomenal but when it comes to using biking as a form of commuting, we are lacking the safety and space needed within the city.
1	Virginia needs to do something about its downtown. Northfield is a great example of a city that has maintained a vibrant downtown balanced with freeway development, including large chain stores. There needs to be incentive for property owners to fix up storefronts and for entrepreneurs to start a business in or move to Virginia.
1	Virginia should become a GreenStep city, joining other Iron Range communities such as Mt. Iron and Gilbert, in working toward becoming a more green, more sustainable community.
1	Virginia should have a cleanup day so people can dispose of large garbage items they have cluttering up their property.
1	Way to many bars get rid of the drunks clean up main street keep sex offender the hell out of my town
1	We had to move from Virginia's southside park neighborhood because of vandalism, drug dealing and crime. We bought a new house in Midway and can't sell the old one due to criminal activity in the area.
1	We need a structured plan put into place that will engage our citizens to become more involved in our neighborhoods. The high concentration of rental properties within are neighborhoods are typically the source of the problems. If you suspect there is an issue, report it!!
1	Work on "taking it back" and making it a safer city.
1	Work on having less drug activity.

Count	Response
1	Would love to see more positivity celebrated... People love to talk about and share all of the negative. I realize there are many negatives that need to be addressed, but Virginia is still a great place to live, work, and raise a family. If only negatives are being highlighted, it's pretty difficult to keep and attract new businesses and families
1	Zoning and residential renewal.
1	a more vibrant colorful downtown area
1	crime
1	curbs and walks are poor repair or replace
1	develop a strict rental code. The rental property is deplorable. And the landlords are not held to standards or policy. The Main Street should also have building standards that are adhered to
1	downtown attractiveness/safety and economics
1	improve downtown Virginia and make it a place to visit. Truthfully now I do not feel safe there.
1	keep out all of the sex offenders
1	reduce crime zones and resident lawbreakers/drug users
1	restore/repurpose downtown area
1	the view people get coming into town from second ave ... upkeep, rundown, dingy ... not welcoming at all.
1	vuv

## 5. What's the one thing about Virginia that shouldn't change?

Count	Response
4	Olcott Park
2	N/a
2	Olcott park.
2	Park
2	Parks
2	The parks
1	"Small town feel". We need more diversity in our businesses. Less fast food
1	5th ave
1	A desire for improvements.
1	Access to the 2 lakes
1	Access to the park
1	Alcott Park
1	As of right now I can't think of anything because for me I feel there isn't much positive things going on right now. A lot going on in the city next door but no there.
1	Beautification
1	Beautification projects for our town..

**Count    Response**

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1	Beautiful historic buildings
1	Bike trails
1	Bus service
1	Camaraderie and the local community feel.
1	Care and pride
1	Chestnut Street
1	Civic Pride
1	Comitment to quality education.
1	Community
1	Community Parks
1	Continued support of parks and rec area.
1	Core values
1	Downtown needs to keep the character it has. We could clean it up a bit, but we have a gem if we make the needed investments.
1	Educational opportunities available to young people
1	Everything should be open to change. Nothing in this city is doing well
1	Family orientation. We should be safe.
1	Fire/EMS service. As long as we can afford this top quality service, keep it as is. Try to find a way to get the local communities and rural Virginia to pay their fair share for this service, based on their usage.
1	For the most part, residents have pride in their city
1	Fundraising support for schools, charities, organizations, i.e. We do have community pride and we support our school district.
1	Generally the community spirit is high. Blue pride is a quality I think is very inviting.
1	Good library and parks.
1	Great parks
1	Green space around silver lake - just like all of the studies and comprehensive plans recommended - oh wait - Virginia did not listen and most of the green space is now gone

Count	Response
1	Green space.
1	Having a central school, library and business district. A small, walkable community is why we chose Virginia.
1	Highway 53
1	Historic buildings and ground should not be destroyed. Common sense and a regard for historical features that can keep Virginia special are often disregarded. Seems like city council member prefer tearing down and building new.
1	Historical value. Clean fun park for kids, water fountain area, flowers downtown, land of loon
1	I appreciate that we have nice parks in town.
1	I cannot think of anything at this time.
1	I don't know.
1	I enjoy that the highway systems do not run directly through town. As of now, 53 and 169 do not go into the city but effectively skim the edges and bringing the needed consumerism.
1	I feel like there is ample community pride, especially regarding sports and schools. That needs to be harnessed to bring further change!
1	I feel we should keep and restore the old historic buildings in our town. They add character to the area.
1	I honestly can't think of anything
1	I like living in Virginia, it has a small town feeling with all the amenities that are needed.
1	I love our parks and lakes and hope to see them maintained and celebrated.
1	I think change is needed all over.
1	I wish Main Street was more populated or got more business because it is such a beautiful part of the city are the old buildings.
1	I'm open to all change
1	It is beautiful! We love 5th ave, Chestnut, the park...lovely job with keep-up!
1	It is very difficult to find one element that doesn't require any changes within the city of Virginia. The city is broken and there needs to be an almost complete overhaul.
1	It's background of how much fun it used to be in the 60s and 70s, now it's bars and depressing
1	It's nice that there are shopping opportunities above and beyond what smaller area town have.
1	Its people.
1	Job opportunities

Count	Response
1	Keep investing in the area around the lakes.
1	Keep the library - it's superb
1	Keep the park updated
1	Keep the sense of pride of our history! We need to educate our youth about who we are and where we came from.
1	Keep the small town atmosphere .
1	Keep the trees
1	Keep these beautiful old buildings
1	Keep upgrading the down town area.
1	Keeping our traditions and local pride alive.
1	Keeping the school in the city
1	Land of the loon festival
1	Love Midway neighborhood.
1	Maintain, restore, and reinvent Main Street through careful investment focused on long term outcomes!
1	Mining is #1 in our area and treat it that way.
1	Money spent on parks and recs should not be cut. We need to keep our town beautiful and enjoyable for everyone. I love the new trail around Silver Lake and the new disc golf course set up in Olcott. These kinds of things make me want to stay here with my family.
1	Most people have community pride.
1	Natural beauty
1	Natural beauty. Lakes. Care for elderly.
1	Nice old/large trees lining the streets in some of the older neighborhoods.
1	No comment
1	Not sure
1	Not sure, we've already lost so much!
1	Nothing
1	Nothing.

Count	Response
1	Olcott park
1	Olcott park
1	Olcott park.
1	One thing that should not change in Virginia is how friendly everyone is.
1	Our great schools and educational system
1	Our great small businesses.
1	Our parks. (Virginia is my hometown and I have worked there for 20+ years) Keeping them in there natural beauty plus updating there infrastructure is a wonderful.
1	Our school district is very good
1	Parks and rec does a great job of maintaining community parks.
1	Pay more attention to the Park and green space!
1	People's pride
1	Pride in our town.
1	Protect the parks and lakes. (And clean up the lakes too -- somehow.)
1	Public library and Land of Loon
1	Quality of schools
1	Queen City Pride!
1	School
1	School system.
1	Schools
1	Schools are good
1	Size of the high school
1	Small local community neighborhoods. Most neighborhoods are still fairly safe during the day.
1	Small town feel
1	Small town feel.
1	Small town pride in our community...pitching together to take care of friends and neighbors, frequent our businesses, and support our youth...they are the future.

Count	Response
1	Spending money on the parks.
1	Steam heat
1	Stores just leave the,
1	Street lamps
1	Strengthen relationships; build on strong foundation.
1	Strong sense of community pride
1	Summer Street music downtown
1	Supporting local small town businesses
1	The Loon
1	The Main Street and fifth avenue. It could use a little touching up. But that makes Virginia!
1	The Olcott park is a positive attribute for our community. It should be enhanced so that it would be welcoming and therefore used.
1	The amount of property tax per home per year. Continue to improve downtown businesses, make the city great again, driving out crime from the streets.
1	The bike trails should continue to be maintained
1	The co-op and war memorial area. Need more bike trails.
1	The community events are great
1	The community pride despite the fears.
1	The connection to mknjng should not change. The viewstand should stay.
1	The coziness
1	The fact that people are trying to make Virginia the great city it used to be!
1	The flowers that are hung during the summer
1	The focus on revitalizing the downtown.
1	The golf course!!
1	The green space. Continue to rebuilt our beautiful Olcott park and enhance the lakes. Make them accessible to all and keep them safe. Why are cars back in the play area of the park? There is history there if people looked. Numerous accidents lead to the no driving which was awesome. Then it was one way and now the Recent times I was there people are driving any which way - better signage needed.
1	The helpfulness of all emergency services, whether it be police or fire department/ems

**Count    Response**

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1        The highway 53

1        The historical character and integrity. The charm. The community connections and involvement and volunteerism. The inclusion.

1        The lakes.

1        The little grass remaining around lakes and at parks.

1        The location of the schools as a physical centerpiece in our community and neighborhoods.

1        The marching band

1        The name....that's about it.

1        The ongoing effort to bring art into our community through theater, murals, music, and such.

1        The outlying neighborhoods are nice: Fairview addition, Ridgewood, etc. The WWTP is new so I guess that's nice.

1        The park is beautiful

1        The parks and golf course are well maintained.

1        The parks and recreation department does a wonderful job. Please don't ever let Mr. Bachmann retire!

1        The parks and trails around the lake are awesome.

1        The parks are nice

1        The parks. We are thrilled with the news of the addition of a Northside and Ridgewood park. These are great places for communities to get together and encourage young families to move into the city.

1        The private businesses that make it a cute, homey town

1        The rustic look of downtown

1        The school

1        The school pride, nice neighborhoods, and good schools

1        The school should always stay here

1        The school.

1        The schools. We have wonderful schools!

1        The sense of community we share

Count	Response
1	The small town feel
1	The small town feel that it would have minus the crime.
1	The small-town pride
1	The strong sense of community
1	The support for the arts and culture movement
1	The support of the community of those in need.
1	Tough question
1	Ummm I suppose there are a few buildings they could leave standing, everything else people included gotta go
1	Walking paths around the lakes
1	We are a 'hub' for this area. Hopefully, we can maintain that and grow the other areas - arts, tourism, shopping and not just the services - social, criminal and mental health.
1	We can always improve.
1	We don't need more dollar stores
1	We have a beautiful park.
1	We have nice parks and good public services (EMS, fire, police, public works, etc)
1	We love all the small town traditions.... And the pride we have for Virginia High School....
1	We should continue to have a school in Virginia (not outside of our city), hospital, police, fire, etc.
1	both marquette and public school systems are strong and getting stronger!
1	curbs and walks are poor repair or replace
1	green space
1	home town friendliness
1	its 'Queen City" designation
1	land of the loon summer festival
1	love the northside park, now just need the fountain done
1	nv
1	our parks

**Count    Response**

1        school district is strong

1        small town atmosphere local shops/merhants

1        the parks

6. Please indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements?

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
There is an effective level of cooperation between Virginia and its neighboring communities	34 14.0%	99 40.7%	110 45.3%
There is an adequate supply of living wage jobs	22 9.0%	48 19.7%	174 71.3%
Streets in Virginia are generally well maintained	47 19.2%	48 19.6%	150 61.2%
There is a good support system in place for entrepreneurs and new businesses	20 8.2%	106 43.4%	118 48.4%
More bike facilities (bike parking, bike lanes, etc.) are needed within the City	128 52.5%	62 25.4%	54 22.1%
Virginia is a welcoming and attractive place for visitors	21 8.6%	71 29.0%	153 62.4%
The city is well managed	23 9.5%	109 44.9%	111 45.7%
Sidewalks should be included in new developments	193 79.1%	36 14.8%	15 6.1%
City services are effectively provided	63 25.9%	110 45.3%	70 28.8%

7. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the City of Virginia

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
There is an adequate supply of well-built and well maintained quality housing choices	16 6.5%	42 17.1%	187 76.3%
More single family homes are needed	155 63.5%	57 23.4%	32 13.1%
More multi-family homes are needed	74 30.3%	60 24.6%	110 45.1%
New housing should be built in downtown	87 36.0%	75 31.0%	80 33.1%
New housing should be built within existing neighborhoods to replace blighted buildings or on vacant lots	219 89.8%	18 7.4%	7 2.9%

8. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements about Virginia’s parks and trails:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
City parks meet my and or my family’s routine recreational needs	128 52.2%	64 26.1%	53 21.6%
City parks are well maintained	136 55.5%	75 30.6%	34 13.9%
The community is easily accessible using the existing trail system	110 45.1%	88 36.1%	46 18.9%
The number and types of parks and open spaces within the city is adequate	137 55.9%	39 15.9%	69 28.2%
The off-street trail system should be improved / extended	121 49.4%	85 34.7%	39 15.9%

## 9. What specific park amenities or trails (if any) do you feel are needed (and where) within the City?

Count	Response
4	None
1	A better sports complex for baseball and youth sports
1	A community center similar to Mountain Iron's near our parks
1	A dog park would be great, either a new park or a designated area within existing parks. More walking trails throughout the city that are maintained. A community garden. A skate park. Bring the flowers back into Olcott Park, they were beautiful!
1	A dog park. More bike lanes , plainly marked in traffic areas....more places to park bikes...more street lights to make walking at night a safe activity.
1	A new pool
1	A splash pad for young children and more options for little kids
1	A variety of places for kids and families
1	Additional generic outdoor Rec would be excellent-- pure pits, seating areas. Trails connecting Virginia to other communities could be improved.
1	Attractive, well maintained, well light, safe bike/walk/run trails. I am a runner and am afraid to go east of 6th avenue. Many other streets are industrial, run down areas
1	Atv access would 100 percent appreciated.
1	Atv trails. We have enough bike paths.
1	Baileys lake trail needs to be upgrades and redone. Needs to be wider and plow able for winter walkers.

Count	Response
1	Bathroom upgrades at Olcott Park.
1	Batting cages and scoreboards at Olcott park
1	Better ATV access and signage to nearby trails
1	Better lighting in existing parks to deter crime.
1	Better park at the trail heads. ATV trails going and coming into town.
1	Better public transportation
1	Better running accessibility for training, and also a complete new trail near the golf course area. I believe the parks should have more welcoming feel for families with young children- Olcott in specific
1	Better signage for in town walking. Make the place easier to understand.
1	Bike and walking trails
1	Bike paths to get from one side of the city to the other, there is no room on the roads and legally we are not allowed to ride on the sidewalk
1	Bring Olcott Park back to it's glory days. When we were young, we would go there for a picnic lunch and to play for hours. It was a community gathering place. -- Things to add: Climbing Rocks w/ hand grips, small zip line, Splash Pad, Sprinklers, a Skate Park area.
1	Bringing the Meabi Trail back into Virginia will be an important part of the trail system as well as bringing people to town. An adequate bike and walking trail information center will be needed to make the trail into town a destination instead of a detour.
1	City needs less housing not more. Renters make up 33.63% of population. This is too much. Average 1 bedroom rents for \$565/month. This is too low. Median home cost is \$92,000. This is too low. 14% of homes are vacant. Too much. At least 10% of the structures in Virginia need to go and do not need to be replaced immediately.
1	Clean up silver and baily's lakes and create a better park areas near them. Thanks avatar of the cities lakes, we are wasting that opportunity.
1	Complete the blacktop trail around Bailey's Lake. Make a safe way for walkers to cross from Rotary Park to Bailey's Lake (terrible curve in the road to try to cross----maybe a footbridge??). Demand that public utilities clean the sidewalks of snow on their south and east sides so that walking is possible in winter around Silver Lake. Stop selling the greens pace on the north edge of Silver Lake
1	Dog park anywhere
1	Dog park is needed; a place that you can get some time with your family where your not getting harassed by someone from the city
1	Dog park or walking trails where dogs are allowed.
1	Dog park would be a nice addition. Trails and parks have an element of danger associated with them.

Count	Response
1	Dog park, bike paths that allow easy access to local businesses, mountain bike paths closer to town,
1	Dog park. Anywhere in the city.
1	Dog parks. Better facilities with better maintenance. I've noticed stuff that took weeks to be fixed. A small park has nothing suitable for kids under 3 or 4. And better access to bathrooms is needed. Been very difficult to get our toddler to the closest bathroom during potty training.
1	Dogs should be welcome in city parks. A skateboard park is needed for the youth. It should be professionally designed and constructed. (I have heard that Eveleth's skate park has the wrong kind of concrete and is bumpy, cracked, dangerous.)
1	Don't know
1	Enough already
1	Extension of bike/walking trail to encircle silver lake. Trail signage on snowmobile trails to restaurants/hotels.
1	Fix water fountain in park, get greenhouse up and running again, utilize park with music fests, more playground equipment for kids, skateboard park, cost effective events to learn painting, arts, crafts, sewing, karate, swimming, gardening, skiing, horseback riding, caring for animals, volunteer programs for caring for animals (treated like a job).
1	Grooming of cross country ski trails on the golf course and/or Olcott for opportunities for winter activity. The Virginia hospital could be a partner.
1	Hiking trails, places to run, more nature.
1	I am hoping for a nice trailhead to the mesabi trail where the new bridge enters town. We need access to that trail from the south side neighborhood. Also, I would like to see a nice dog park similar to the facility in Hibbing (separate fenced field areas for small dogs and large dogs). This town is very dog-unfriendly.
1	I don't feel comfortable walking the trails cause of the shady drug addicted people who walk them and southside park always has broken bottles and needles on the ground. I think the city put all their resources into olcott park and nothing into the others.
1	I feel somewhere up on north side
1	I feel the trails are good for what we do. I would love to see the Miner's building turned into a community center that could include an indoor walking track... I do know there are some plans in place, but the state is not helping with funding
1	I only suggest having the police monitor the parks more at night.
1	I think a skate park would be a great asset for our youth that get kicked off of every other property (and I understand why). I would love to see the Southside park maintained better. There is always broken play equipment. As new equipment is added to current parks- model after Bayfront Park in Duluth or something similar.
1	I think advertising of the trails and parks is needed to encourage more use.
1	I think for the size of the town parks and trails are adequate.

**Count    Response**

1	I think good now. The current system we have doesn't get used much.
1	I think it would be nice if there were bike lanes on the street separate from the parking lanes.
1	I think the current city park system should implement a dog friendly atmosphere.
1	I think we need an indoor park and/or activity center for younger children; especially needed in the winter when there's nothing else to do!
1	I think we should worry less about parks and more about the safety of people using the parks!
1	I would love to see more plants & trees in the existing parks
1	I'm happy with the park situation:)
1	Improve upon what we currently have.
1	It would be nice if there was a place for our teens to hangout. I would have to give this more thought.
1	It would be nice to have a trail that my kids can walk on within the city from the schools to downtown to the park and around. The side walks are hit and miss, some places there aren't sidewalks around. In the winter, even in front of the public utilities the sidewalks are full of snow!
1	It would be nice to see some trails in midway.
1	Just fix up south side park I know a lot of kids go there
1	Just green space in general. There are too many unused and run down buildings that should be turned into green space to make the town feel more welcoming and less crowded.
1	Just more on Southside, Olcott is lovely.
1	Less focus on sports, more on rec
1	Less needles in the sand at all parks
1	Many kids are looking for stuff to do in the summer and I think adding more walking paths to the parks and libraries would help
1	Many more important issues to worry about first
1	Maps for trail locations. Maintained bathrooms at parks
1	Mini golf course, batting cages, snack cafes, exercise components Near the lakes
1	More access to trails with walking paths close to Midway. I feel Midway is a closed off area
1	More activities open for the public.... For example..... The tennis courts are nice, but when in use for school tennis they are unavailable. Have more things like that open for use.... Shuffle board, tennis, beach volleyball, etc. tennis courses at Mesabi could be fixed. A shuffle board could also be built alongside there. It would be a fun nice touch.

Count	Response
1	More bike trails
1	More bike trails /walking trails / dog park
1	More bike trails within town. Bike trail on streets within town
1	More bikes trails that connect to the existing parks
1	More indoor recreation!! A community center for all seasons is the one thing this community needs! We need healthy, active residents all year round. Indoor track, swimming, basketball, fitness etc, creates a healthy, happy community.
1	More park options for special needs
1	More paths, lanes, wider shoulders.
1	More picnic tables within the parks so people can go have lunch at the park etc
1	More shades tables for get togethers
1	More updated parks, for example, the skating shack in Ridgewood is great, but the rest of the park is in need of an update.
1	More walking trails/paths; biking is good, but, maybe an access on the South side to get to the Mesabi Trail. Parking lot specifically for the Mesabi Trail where you can park and then hop on the trail and go. Right now, as far as I know there isn't an specific parking for the bike trail in Virginia.
1	Mountain bike trails! Support IROC to build trails at lookout mountain
1	Mountain bike, dirt bike etc..
1	N/a
1	Na
1	Need a dog park and we need a skate board park so kids have a place to skate board without being yelled at
1	Need a playground or swingset on Northside by the skating rink.
1	No additional parks or trails needed in Virginia.
1	No comment
1	No more parks/trails. They dont support job growth
1	None in particular, just better maintenance of existing ones
1	None, unless if not already available--bags for people to pickup and dispose of their dog crap.
1	Not more amenities but better patrolled by police. Lots of drug users and bums hanging out in the parks.
1	Olcott Fountain Restored

**Count    Response**

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- 1      Olcott fountain and greenhouse projects are good projects. City-community partnerships in action.
- 1      Park at entrance to Midway neighborhood behind Dairy Queen should be improved to be less toddler and more big kid. There are tons of kids in this neighborhood and all would benefit.
- 1      Parks and trails are adequate. Do not waste more money on trails. We live in a small town which is perfectly safe to bicycle on the streets in town.
- 1      Parks in the city limits are fairly good. Just need to fix up with newer equipment, which has been done and maintain fencing, buildings could use a makeover etc
- 1      Pool, zip line, etc.
- 1      Restored Fountain
- 1      Ridgewood needs a playground area to replace the outdated one. Walking and biking trails throughout the city would allow those without vehicles to more easily get around by other means
- 1      Routes off the trails into downtown or other business along the highway.
- 1      Safe to be in. Not scared of who might come along and ruin ones day
- 1      Safe ways to get across highways from ridgewood
- 1      Shade and park benches between north/south sides and city center
- 1      Silver & Bailey's Lakes could be better utilized with park & recreation space as opposed to business's & the beach area has no appeal & could only be improved.
- 1      Silver lake should be improved. Get rid of the ducks. Filthy
- 1      Silver lake trail needs to be cleaned up
- 1      Skating rink shacks that are actually open.
- 1      Some more outdoor gathering spaces for activities would be awesome. Something like bandshell for outdoor concerts or outdoor movies in the summer. Designated bike lanes on roads would also be an improvement. The sidewalks suck to bike on, but driving on the road is dangerous. Specific lanes for bikes would be a welcome addition.
- 1      South side park improvements, trails and sitting areas.
- 1      Splash pad Family friendly geared activities
- 1      Stuff for people to do in them. Maybe like a bocce ball court, and bean bag boards, disc golf, things like that.
- 1      The bike trail does nothing but pass through the outside of town. Do more movies in the park. A mini golf course is great for all ages

**Count    Response**

1	The city does not need more "green space," but it could enhance what it does have. Parks like Jefferson on Northside or Ridgewood could be made to look like specifically-designated parks, rather than lots with playground equipment and skating rinks. Creating decorative signs and adding landscaping (and community gardens, perhaps) would be good additions. Virginia should also have a dog park!
1	The city should create places our kids can go without parents having worries about the amount of crime/drugs in town.
1	The city's lakefront should be developed with business that are taking advantage of the lakefront view. Restaurants nightclubs etc. Not sold cheaply or given away to doctors offices, union halls, car dealerships etc what a waste of prime property.
1	The highway around the city has no over or under pass for walkers and bikers. Very dangerous intersections with no well marked crossing nor sidewalks. People hang out in the median grass/dirt trying to cross by Walgreens or super one. Keeps me from riding my bike into town - crossing the highways. Please keep the cars out of the playground area AND make it a smoke free environment!
1	The lakes are a mess that should have been dealt with many years ago. Many towns and cities would NEVER let something like a beautiful lake go to waste by letting it become filled with garbage and uncontrolled weed growth. Such wasted potential.
1	The need to revive the park by the hospital. All the great things were removed and only some have been replaced with things my kids don't care to play on. The rocket slide and big twister slides need to make a comeback as well
1	The parks need to be maintained better
1	The present trail systems are adequate.
1	The public parks are a gathering place for drug dealers and druggies. I refuse to bring my children to the Southside Park specifically. Only occasionally to Olcott. We prefer the school playgrounds - they're safer.
1	The ridgewood park-would like to see more than just swings.
1	The spaces around Silver and Baileys lakes could be used as parks more by installing a playground for kids, picnic areas, gardens, grilling areas, and improved beaches.
1	The trail around Bailey's Lake is a serious safety hazard to the elderly who walk around!
1	The trails are adequate
1	There is a large lack of atv trails in the city. Bike and walking look to be sufficient but are not in a safe area.
1	There should be designated ATV trails much like the mesabi bike trail, that connect different cities
1	They need to be safer
1	This is one area I feel the city does a wonderful job. Thank you!
1	To many drugs and scetchy people can't go there after dark
1	Unsure at this time

**Count    Response**

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- 1        Vacant downtown lots should be made into parklettes. Old railroad passages should be made into neighborhood greenways instead of strings of garages. Capitalize on the biking craze with mountain bike trails and areas for fat biking.
- 1        Volleyball court, better running/bike trails especially around the lakes, maybe some trails that run from north side to behind super 1 south
- 1        We do not have water parks!!!
- 1        We don't need any more trails until we clean up this city
- 1        We have great parks. I do not feel safe using trail system.
- 1        We have nice walking trail round the lakes, but maintenance is lacking. Grass trimming gets done at Land of the Loon time and then it is ignored. Everything seems to be done a a minimum level.
- 1        We have plenty of "green space" in Virginia, we need better homes, more businesses and all-in-all more people paying taxes to support what we already have before we can really improve upon anything. With more tax base we can go about urban renewal and we will attract more desirable people and businesses to Virginia.
- 1        We have plenty of parks.
- 1        We lost most of our trails to this new bridge and highway. Im waiting to see what we get back when the construction is done. It would be nice to see drinking fountains at the parks again.
- 1        We need a place to be able to walk your dog that isn't hidden away or used for snow removal in the winter. I would be happy just to be able to walk in Olcott Park or all the way around Silver Lake with my dog.
- 1        We would love to see the trails around the lakes cleaned up a bi. It's great to have businesses utilizing the lakefront properties, maybe they could have more responsibility of upkeep of their area, such as picking up litter. Also allowing drivers in Olcott park is unsafe. Especially the top circle. Often we see vehicles going the wrong way and it is confusing for kids cuz it looks like a trail
- 1        We've 'woosed out' and taken away any playground equipment that may pose a potential injury (or lawsuit). I take my Grandchildren to Olcott Park to play. No adrenaline rush from getting all the way up the 'big' slide, the Tornado slide, or the Rocket slide. Kids need to be able to take some risks.
- 1        Well identified and safe trails to our park for children; otherwise future park development I believe is well underway and will be well done
- 1        Why in the HE#L doesn't the City acknowledge and FULLY embrace the ~amazing~ and unique public resource that is the Olcott Park Greenhouse?!? STOP treating it like a liability! That is the old-school, short sighted tinkering that must be purged from City Government.
- 1        Workable water fountains is just one suggestion.
- 1        You can't feel comfortable using the trails due to the crime that occurs.
- 1        You need a dog park
- 1        designate a specific caged area (sanctuary zone) within the park for the meth and heroine addicts - like an exclusion zone where the users can practice their habits - it's also close to the hospital for overdose response

**Count    Response**

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1        feel the park and trails are adequate

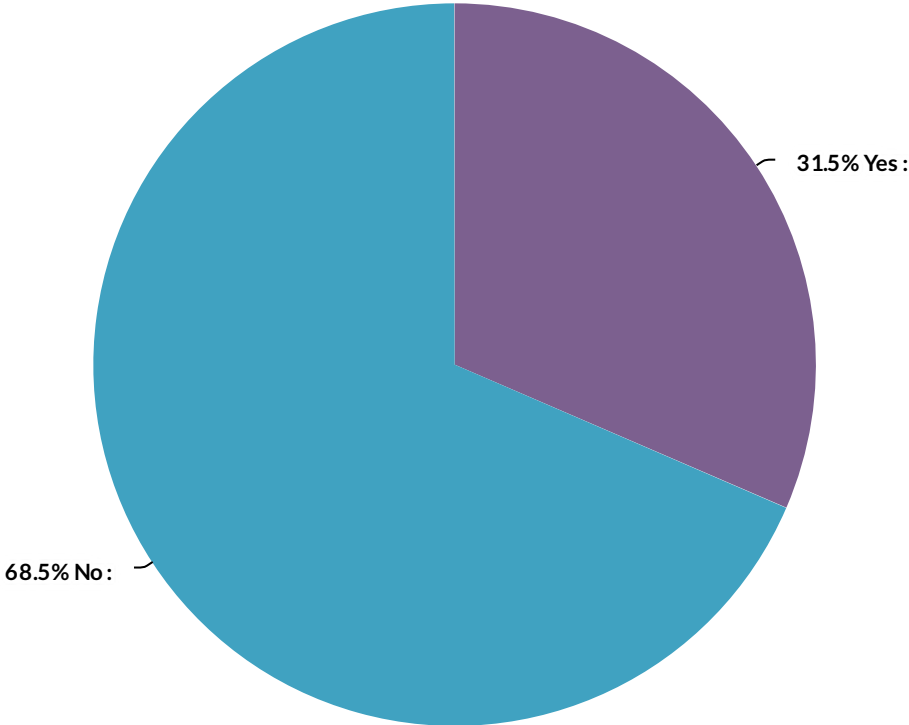
1        more garbage, or better yet recycling bins

1        none

1        none-adequate

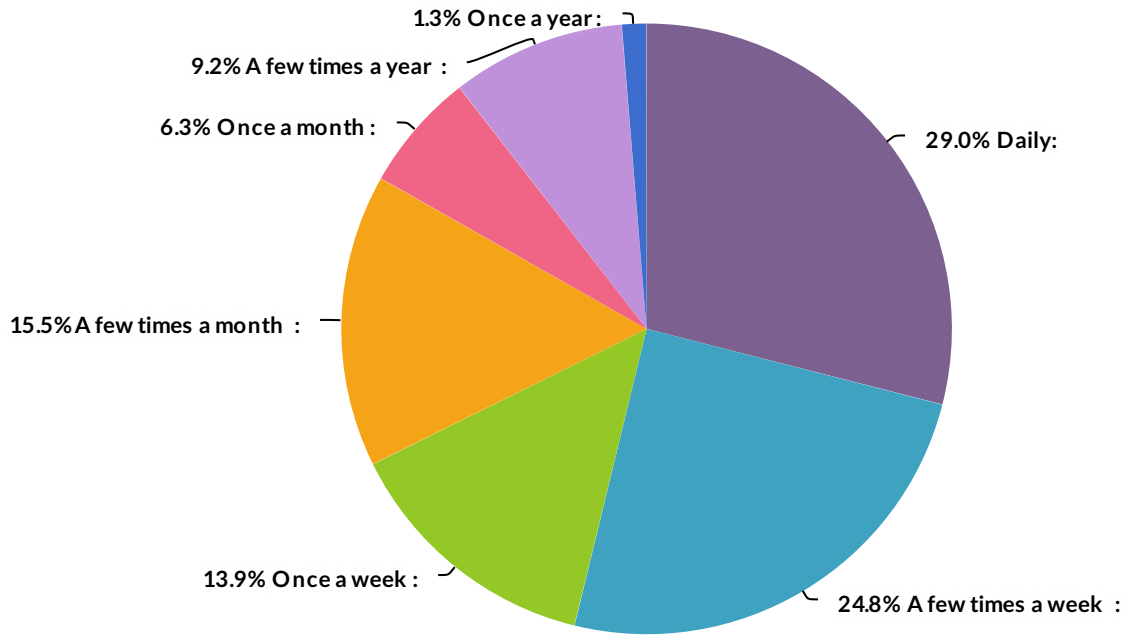
1        not sure

10. Do you work or live in the downtown area (within 3 blocks of Chestnut Street)



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	31.5%	75
No	68.5%	163
Total		238

# 11. How often do you visit downtown Virginia?



Value	Percent	Count
Daily	29.0%	69
A few times a week	24.8%	59
Once a week	13.9%	33
A few times a month	15.5%	37
Once a month	6.3%	15
A few times a year	9.2%	22
Once a year	1.3%	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>238</b>

## 12. How frequently do you visit the following destinations downtown?

	Once or more per week	Once or twice per month	One to four times per year	Never
Workrelated meeting	49 20.7%	28 11.8%	39 16.5%	121 51.1%
Library	25 10.5%	49 20.6%	77 32.4%	87 36.6%
Retail shop	69 29.0%	82 34.5%	58 24.4%	29 12.2%
Service business	39 16.4%	70 29.4%	83 34.9%	46 19.3%
Restaurant	72 30.4%	84 35.4%	70 29.5%	11 4.6%
Bar/restaurant	51 21.8%	68 29.1%	76 32.5%	39 16.7%
City Hall	4 1.7%	21 8.9%	98 41.7%	112 47.7%
Art Center	7 3.0%	11 4.7%	51 21.7%	166 70.6%
Special events	8 3.4%	40 16.9%	123 52.1%	65 27.5%

13. What three words would you use to describe downtown Virginia?

1:

Count	Response
14	Dirty
12	Run down
8	Empty
8	Rundown
7	Scary
6	Bars
6	Vacant
5	Historic
5	Unsafe
4	Dangerous
4	Dying
3	Blight
3	Desolate
3	Potential

Count	Response
3	Run down
3	Run-down
3	dirty
2	Aged
2	Beautiful
2	Creepy
2	Crime
2	Dated
2	Dead
2	Delapitated
2	Depressing
2	Dilapidated
2	Dingy
2	Dirty
2	Ghetto
2	Neglected
2	Old
2	Potential
2	Sad
2	Sketchy
2	drugs
2	historic
2	old
1	Abandoned
1	Abandoned

Count	Response
1	Average
1	Beautiful
1	Blighted
1	Boozy
1	Busy
1	Character
1	Charming
1	Clean
1	Crime ridden
1	Daytime Hometowny
1	Decaying
1	Decline
1	Declining
1	Delapidated
1	Dilapidated
1	Dilapitated
1	Disgusting
1	Drunk
1	Drunks
1	Empty buildings
1	Friendly
1	Getting scarey at night
1	Help
1	Help!
1	Historical
1	Horrible Parking

Count	Response
1	Imporant
1	Inadequate parking.
1	Inconsistent
1	It
1	Lacks in character
1	Limbo
1	Meth
1	Needs help. Too many empty storefronts
1	Neefu
1	No activity
1	Old
1	Old school charm
1	Old town style
1	Out-dated
1	Outdated
1	Outdated
1	Overpriced (rental)
1	Pretty
1	Pretty
1	Quaint
1	Run Down
1	Run Down
1	Rundown
1	Scary at times
1	Scary people roaming around
1	Scray lately, definitely at night

Count	Response
1	Scummy
1	Sex offenders
1	Shady
1	Shithole
1	So very sad
1	Struggling
1	Tired
1	Too many bars
1	Trashy
1	Trying
1	Underutilized
1	Uninviting
1	Unique
1	Unkempt
1	Unparkable.
1	Vacant
1	Valuable
1	archaic
1	bars
1	congested
1	cramped
1	dead
1	deteriorating
1	downtrodden
1	empty
1	full

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Count	Response
1	incomplete
1	lackluster
1	plenty
1	rundown
1	sad
1	scarey
1	scary
1	uninhabitable
1	vacant

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2:

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Count	Response
11	Old
9	Unsafe
8	Scary
6	Bars
6	Dirty

Count	Response
6	Rundown
5	Vacant
4	Drugs
4	Neglected
4	Unwelcoming
3	Crime
3	Dangerous
3	Dead
3	Empty
2	Boring
2	Depressing
2	Dying
2	Historic
2	Outdated
2	Run down
2	Rundown
2	Sad
2	Vacant
2	old
1	Accessible
1	After
1	Artsy
1	At
1	Bar filled
1	Barren
1	Beautiful

Count	Response
1	Blacks
1	Blighted
1	Churches
1	Clean
1	Closed shops
1	Crime-filled
1	Crumbling
1	Dated.
1	Deteriorating
1	Dirty
1	Disappearing
1	Disgraceful
1	Diverse in businesses and services
1	Drug infested
1	Drugs infested
1	Eclectic
1	Empty
1	Expensive
1	Expensive utilities
1	Eyesore
1	Falling apart
1	Fantastic Potential
1	Filthy
1	Forgotten
1	Ghetto
1	Harassment.

Count	Response
1	Has
1	Help
1	Historical
1	Home
1	Hopeful
1	Junky looking
1	Lacking business
1	Lots of bars
1	Make more inviting. Scary people frequent area during day.
1	Messy
1	My favorite place to eat!
1	Nasty
1	Need more business
1	Need of more businesses
1	Needs new business
1	Needs tlc
1	Nice
1	Nighttime scary
1	Non vital
1	Not safe
1	Not safe after 4pm
1	Old
1	Old-school
1	Open store fronts
1	Opportunity
1	Overpoliced

Count	Response
1	Overrun
1	Partly beautiful
1	Pedestrian friendly
1	Poor
1	Poor parking
1	Quiet
1	Renovation needed!
1	Sad empty buildings
1	Scarey
1	Scarey - sometimes.
1	Shabby
1	Shootings
1	Shuttered
1	Sketchy
1	Slum
1	Slummy
1	Sometimes scary
1	Soulful
1	Sparse
1	Terrible roads
1	To many bars
1	To many bars
1	Tragic
1	Ugly
1	Unappealing
1	Unattractive

Count	Response
1	Underutilized
1	Underutilized
1	Unemployed
1	Unfriendly
1	Uninspired
1	Unkept
1	Unsupported
1	Unwantables
1	Violent
1	Violent
1	abandoned
1	bars
1	bars bars bars
1	blight
1	blighted
1	business-poor
1	charming
1	crimes
1	dangerous
1	depressing
1	empty
1	empty (retail spaces)
1	homeless
1	inconsistant
1	lackluster
1	limited

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Count	Response
1	of
1	of
1	potential
1	riff-raff
1	rundown
1	sad
1	shabie
1	tedious
1	underutilized
1	vacant buildings

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3:

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Count	Response
7	Sad
5	Scary
5	Unsafe
4	Dirty

Count	Response
4	Empty
4	Uninviting
4	Vacant
3	Bars
3	Boring
3	Old
3	Potential
3	Ugly
2	Crime
2	Drugs
2	Dying
2	Historic
2	Lacking
2	Nice
2	Rundown
2	Sketchy
2	Struggling
2	Too many bars
2	old
1	Active
1	Anti-business
1	Bad parking
1	Bar loiterers
1	Baren
1	Beautiful
1	Blight

<b>Count</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	Broken
1	Closes too early
1	Community
1	Crime
1	Crime infested
1	Crime-filled
1	Crime-ridden
1	Crowded
1	Dangerous
1	Dark
1	Dark
1	Dear to my heart
1	Declining
1	Deserted
1	Deteriorating
1	Dilapidated
1	Dirty/Crime Ridden
1	Disfunctionals
1	Don't go there after dark
1	Drug ridden
1	Drugland
1	Drunks
1	Drunks
1	Dumpy
1	Dwindling
1	Embarrassing

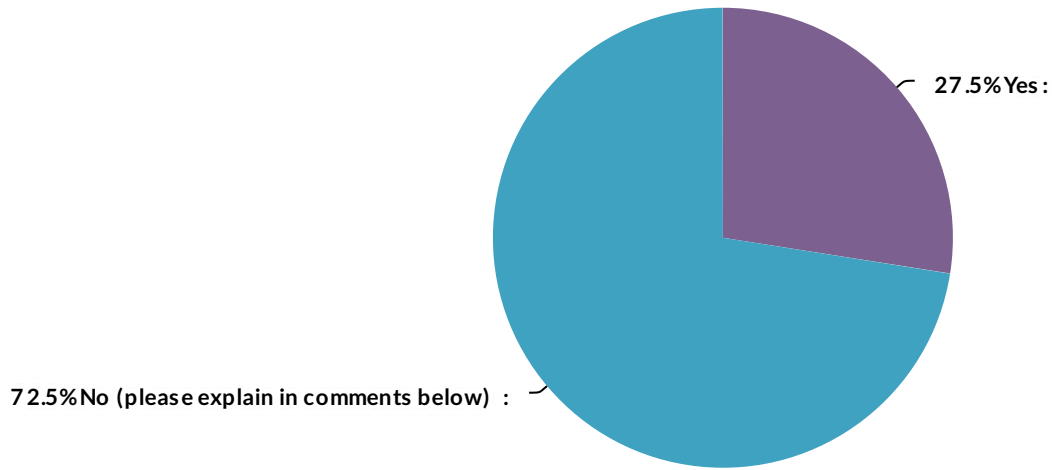
<b>Count</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	Empty buildings
1	Empty spaces
1	Excellent restaurants
1	Filled with drunks
1	Filthy
1	Friendly
1	Full of potential
1	Ghost town
1	Good businesses
1	Growing
1	Grungy
1	Has potential
1	Help
1	Home
1	Homey
1	Important to the survival of Virginia
1	Ininviting
1	Irrelevant
1	Key to the Northwoods
1	Lack of businesses
1	Lacking police
1	Lots of creeps
1	Memories
1	Mirage bar needs to go
1	Mismanaged
1	Nasty

Count	Response
1	Needs new stores and restaurants.
1	Needs our help
1	Needs renewal
1	Never at night
1	Night
1	No coherent design
1	Nonfunctional
1	Not friendly
1	Not maintained.
1	Odd
1	Old and rundown/vacant
1	Out of date
1	Poor
1	Potential
1	Potential filled
1	Poverty stricken with lazy people
1	Quiet
1	Regressive
1	Rough
1	Run Down
1	Run down
1	Run down
1	Run-down
1	Rundown
1	Scary
1	Sex offender central

<b>Count</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	Sketchy People
1	Slum apartments
1	Slums
1	Sometimes trashy
1	Stabbings
1	Still-viable
1	Struggling
1	Stuck in a rut
1	Tired
1	To much vagrancy
1	Too many drunks
1	Trash
1	Un inviting
1	Unappealing
1	Unkept
1	Unattractive
1	Unnecessary
1	Unprideful
1	Unsafe feelings
1	Unshoveled
1	Unwelcoming
1	Utility bills
1	Weak
1	Welfare
1	Well maintained
1	Zombies

<b>Count</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	abandoned
1	alcohol establishments
1	bar's
1	charmless
1	classic
1	cleaner
1	criminal
1	dumpy
1	ghetto
1	invest
1	mediocre
1	meth
1	needs new business
1	needs updating
1	parjking
1	quiet
1	sad
1	scary
1	sleepy
1	stubborn
1	superfluous
1	tear-it-down
1	thugs
1	unsafe
1	vacant

## 14. Do you feel safe downtown?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	27.5%	65
No (please explain in comments below)	72.5%	171
<b>Total</b>		<b>236</b>

## 15. Do you feel safe downtown? - comments

Count	Response
3	Not at night
1	400 block of chestnut.
1	A few bars and their customers are very scary. There are stabbings or police called out constantly. The apartments on 3rd Ave N have police there at the very least once a day.
1	A lot of random people, drugs and crime
1	Actually being downtown feels safe-- in the restaurants, bars, or on Chestnut Street-- but every woman in this town knows you don't walk home alone from downtown after dark. That is both depressing and infuriating.
1	After the [REDACTED] bought the Mirage bar, i don't feel safe downtown anymore. The shootings and fights almost always stem from there. Not to mention the illegal activities that go on there including drug sales. We (My family and I) use to take a nightly walk around Baileys lake, We haven't in over a year because of the violence on main street. ( we have to cross main to get to Baileys) Just last week we heard that the owners of mirage got robbed yet they didnt go to the police, instead they hired local thugs to find the suspects and assault them. We dont need this kind of activity in our town! We need a closer look into how the Mirage is run! [REDACTED] can be very deceiving and cunning. Dont forget about there illegal sales of spice at there tobacco shop on 2nd ave a couple years ago. They tore this town apart with those sales now there at it again with the Mirage bar. Please look into this, our town would be a much better/safer place.
1	At night there is to many creeps around.
1	Certain bars, the newsette, and other parts of downtown have a scary clientelke
1	Check the stats!
1	Creepy at night.
1	Crime and junkies.

Count	Response
1	Crime is quite high. Has gotten quite a bite worse in the last 10 yrs.
1	Daytime is better than night. Try not to be there when it gets dark if I am alone.
1	Daytime, yes...mostly. Nighttime, it's more dangerous than ever. Put some of those lazy cops on foot for better community relations and more immediate responses to trouble....and the expensive camera system has done NOTHING to improve the "feel" of downtown at night.
1	Depends on the time of day.
1	Depends who is out and about.
1	Downtown has gotten incredibly scary. With all the people that seem to wander aimlessly and the drug problem in this city has got out of control, you never know when a knife or gun is going to be pulled out on someone
1	Downtown is not what it use to be. I stopped going downtown 6 years ago after constant run ins with combative people either drunk or high
1	Downtown is scary with all the dark empty buildings that house transients and such.
1	Drug users and dangerous criminals outside of bars, not enough police surveillance for people trying to safely leave a bar or restaurant at night.
1	Druggies and sex offenders are everywhere
1	Drugs and crime seem to be everywhere you turn! Way to much section 8, low income housing available. Lazy scary people wandering the streets rather than seeking jobs
1	Drunks, drugs, and crime
1	During business hours, yes, most of the time. Unfortunately there are a lot of transient people roaming around at all times of day that worry me.
1	During day, yes. Not in evening because of the types of people on streets, drugs, crime etc
1	During day is ok, night, not so much
1	During daytime only
1	During evening hours no - daytime yes
1	During the day I do, evenings not as much, and I avoid it after 9 pm.
1	During the day I feel safe. After dark I do not feel safe.
1	During the day yes, at night absolutely not, don't feel safe anywhere in Virginia at night
1	During the day, yes I do. I do not feel safe at night.
1	During the day, yes, in the evening not so much
1	During the day- yes. At night- no.

**Count    Response**

1	During the day--yes, but not after certain hours and in certain areas
1	Each time I'm down town I see people hopped up on some sort of a substance. It's ridiculous, embarrassing, and feels unsafe. Two examples from recent trips: someone was high on something, agitated, and was yelling and flicking off people parked in their cars, another example is the cracked out person who was trying to snort ketchup off the table at a restaurant with families present. He then proceeded to stick his bloody bandaid to the table. It was disgusting.
1	Even as a man, I feel there is risk to walking downtown at night. I'm especially concerned for women, children, and the elderly who might be walking alone.
1	Even during the day, you find lots of unstable/intoxicated people wandering the streets. The Goodwill/liquor store combo attracts a certain clientele...
1	Growing up here we used to ride our bikes downtown all the time. Even 8 years ago I would walk around at night without concerns downtown. I would never go out alone downtown at night now. And I would never let My kids ride bikes there alone. Too many crimes. Too many scary people
1	Have you seen the people who longer on Main Street? No thanks.
1	History of crime and drug related events have made me feel unsafe.
1	I could go into long detail but almost every time I walk downtown I get catcalls from creepy guys and my friend at 16 years old was attacked outside of subway at 7 pm. As a woman I do NOT feel safe walking downtown
1	I definitely wouldn't want my girlfriend walking the streets at night. All that needs to be said
1	I do avoid certain doorways, will cross the street
1	I do during the day but as a female would never go downtown at night by myself
1	I do not feel safe after dark especially. I use to walk on my lunch break and now I am even Leary to do that. Too many people standing around outside bars or loitering in front of businesses
1	I do not feel safe walking far distances with my kids. Very poor parking, I loop the block until something opens up
1	I don't exactly feel "unsafe". I would say it is more of an "unpleasant experience". About 1 in 5 people you see are people that are clearly clinging to the fringes. I believe many vulnerable people (elderly, women, children) would be frightened to walk along Chestnut St even during the daylight.
1	I don't feel safe at night when I walk With my child. Reduce low cost rental units and some of the non-working, drug abusing people will go away
1	I feel like you definitely need to use the buddy system. I certainly would not be walking downtown Virginia by myself.
1	I feel like you have to always watch your back. If I am downtown for something I always move as quickly as I can from one place to another. Night is the worst. Growing up my parents would tell me to avoid downtown Virginia as much as I could at night
1	I feel safe

## Count Response

1	I feel safe, but I also know where not to go to keep that feeling
1	I feel safe, but I worry about my children. I have concern with allowing my children to walk to and from events or school because of the violent crimes that occur. Also, there are many "strange" people downtown due to the many service providers (Merritt House, RMHC, etc.) that are located in Virginia.
1	I get creeped out by drunks smoking outside
1	I have been harassed on numerous occasions by the patrons of various bars hanging out outside. It gets worse as it gets later and they start traveling between bars. There has been some significant violent crime around the bars as well.
1	I have experience many people, clearly under the influence of "something" at any given time of the day. A little scary to say the least!
1	I hear about too many assaults
1	I see too many sex offenders registering their addresses on chestnut street. I keep my kids close to me when we go downtown.
1	I used to feel safe but I would not feel safe anymore
1	I used to own a small business downtown. At least once a week I saw drug deals. It is why I closed up shop. I don't feel safe and I absolutely do not let my children go there (16 & 13 yrs old).
1	I visit downtown regularly and the last trip I visited a local photo shop and the hallmark store and felt very unsafe. A lot of sketchy people hanging out around the store front during the middle of the day. Yelling and fighting going on!!! The trip to downtown the week before this I actually saw a drug deal go down right in front of Subway. I also saw what appeared to be a heroin needle laying on the curb by Poor Gary's.
1	I work downtown and it doesn't matter if it is 11 am or 9 pm - belligerent/drunk/mentally ill/scary people are out and about. I have had sketchy looking adult males heckling me at 2 in the afternoon as I walked to my car
1	I work out downtown (at Supreme Court) and shop, eat at a few places. I would not feel safe after dark. I would not want my kids walking around downtown... I can't help but notice some of the troubled looking crowd (sorry - hard to find right words)...
1	I would feel better if there wasn't so much racism in the community and public had a better understanding of the structural macroeconomic contributors to poverty.
1	I wouldn't feel safe at night. I do feel safe during the day. I don't feel safe having my children walking downtown near the pedophile building. Gross!!!!
1	I've had too many people tell me about being assaulted or robbed. Afraid.
1	In some areas yes others too dark and known drug activity...shootings..etc
1	In the day yes....at night-no. I believe the past events that have occurred at night on Chestnut are self explanatory. 2nd avenue another story.
1	In the daylight yes

Count	Response
1	In the daytime I would feel safe for the most part but not as much during the evening.
1	In the daytime for sure feel safe...at night, would avoid certain areas on foot; but would feel okay driving to a store/establishment
1	Is this a real question? There's gun fire, someone was in the back seat of my car passed out when I got in it after work, people are insane
1	It is set in the most impoverished part of the community. Alcoholism is rampant.
1	It's not well maintained, and there a lot of sketchy people that hangout downtown because of the numerous bars.
1	It's ok. No excitement to it!
1	Just last week I witnessed 3 forcible arrests in one day all before 6:30pm
1	Just seems very unsafe with different individuals meandering through the streets especially by the bars.
1	Keep your vehicle doors locked when driving down Chestnut Street!! Too many strange people roaming the streets.
1	Living within this area I lock my door when I come home, I pay attention to who is walking on the street when I come home! There is too much crime in our area, low income housing, sex offenders and VPD spends a large amount of time in these dumpy apartments!!
1	Look at the people walking around.. That alone explains it
1	Mentally challenged people walking everywhere
1	Meth, shootings, stabbings. The town is a joke, look at the crime rate!
1	Mirage Bar has some scary people hanging around it.
1	Most times worry about 2nd ave crime, alleys, area around magic bar, see lots and hear about lots of drugs in those areas. Run down buildings, empty lots with broken glass and garbage, seen people having sex alongside buildings at night
1	Mostly
1	Mostly bar goers can make it unsafe.
1	Mostly fine during the day. Too many Odd people that have no reason to be in Virginia---the only reason they are here is for county hand outs.
1	Need more cameras, cops, monitoring of dark alleys and bars
1	Night life does not seem safe with the comments, rumors, and stories I hear.
1	No I would love to walk downtown in the afternoon but that were all the meth heads and pedofiles live

Count	Response
1	No police presence - are the police in hiding - why no beat cops - does Virginia even have a police department anymore
1	No very people friendly
1	No welcoming people.
1	No, due to the people who choose to hang out down there. When you're sitting in a car and some young kids are pounding on the trunk of your car to get a reaction out of you and you have to leave before picking up your food order - that's not good. Shile we have excellent police officers; I don't feel that they are adequately trained to handle what is taking place downtown and therefore they don't.
1	Not after 530 no no all the druggie drunks homeless and down right garbage come out.. scream down alleys running down the street screaming ..
1	Not after 5pm
1	Not after dark
1	Not after dark!
1	Not after dark. Drugs have taken over the range. With that comes increased crime.
1	Not after night fall. There are "rough" groups, and recent shootings.
1	Not always...seedy characters walk the street.
1	Not at night. Too much criminal activity. Creeps me out that there are so many sex offenders housed in various places around downtown. Need more businesses like The Shop/218 Taphouse. They engage the public with their mini outdoor concerts. Just seems like fun.
1	Not at night...especially around the bars .
1	Not at night/evening because of the many people hanging outside of the bars.
1	Not during peak bar times
1	Not so much at night. Yes overall
1	Ok during morning and early afternoon but people who look dangerous/violent appear later in the day into the night. The whole are feels dark and unsafe.
1	On several occasions I have had my teen girls walk from my place of work on Chestnut street to music lessons, coffee shop, etc. and every time they have had undesirable people follow them, heckle them, etc. This has happened all over Virginia. They are no longer allowed to walk anywhere. We have had people drunk in our work alley mid-day, they've entered fleet vehicles, stolen stuff, puked in alley, sit on our stairs, etc. Downtown is not safe. The other day I was walking a block to Jue's to pick up food and some man was making obnoxious comments to me.
1	Only during the day
1	People are always loitering, not well lit, no background music, run down bars bring in unsavory clients.

Count	Response
1	People get stabbed and shot downtown often.
1	Personally, I feel safe. But, I can see where people aren't. The people standing out in front of bars smoking and in some instances recently with guns going off. Drugs. Etc.
1	Questionable clientele hanging outside of Mirage, Newsette, Ryder's
1	Random attacks are very frequent. Also, many sex offenders live downtown.
1	Rough looking buildings and people. Not much of a police presence unless special events going on
1	Several sex offenders have relocated downtown. I would never let my kid walk downtown alone. I used to be able to run up and down the downtown area and shop all by myself without worry - I wouldn't even let a teenager go alone downtown.
1	Somewhat.
1	Sports Palace, Mirage, Riders. No need to say anything more.
1	That's where all the crime is, get rid of some bars
1	The crime rate in that area seems very high.
1	The drug epidemic is out of control and it's effects are along Chestnut St 24/7
1	The old, run down businesses bars, homes, etc., that are in the vicinity of downtown attract the same kind of people - it makes you look twice when you walk out the backdoor at work
1	The people that hang out around downtown creep me out and the people I am with. We will drive down the block instead of walk to the next place we were to go to.
1	The police presence has been noticed and is appreciated.
1	There are a number of problem bars that attract a bad crowd and I don't think the police do enough to wrangle in the drunks walking around.
1	There are a lot of shady people roaming the downtown area even in the daytime. Most buildings are run down and do not look inviting, or they are vacant. I will drive down there but I don't ever want to walk down there.
1	There are lots of scary looking people and druggies hanging out downtown. I would never walk alone at night or even past 5:00.
1	There are sketchy people and a lot of crime and drugs. I would not go out after dark alone.
1	There are so many people waved out on drugs around that area I no longer feel safe. By the way cameras are not the answer. Less low income housing is.
1	There are too many bums walking around with no place to go or tweaked out on drugs after business hours
1	There are too many crimes on Main Street. Too many run down buildings and closed businesses.
1	There are too many empty stores and there is always smokers hanging out in front of bars. It is gross.

Count	Response
1	There are too many unknown people walking around at night and traffic is very busy
1	There have been an increasing number of break ins, dangerous weapon incidents and open drug dealing going on- even in the daytime.
1	There have been several shootings downtown and I have personally witnessed many bar fights on Main Street.
1	There is a huge crime and drug problem that endangers every resident's safety, not nearly enough police presence
1	There is a perception of high crime and unruly behavior downtown. I would hate to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.
1	There is too many strange people around, either on meth or some sort of drugs
1	There is way too much crime in that area of town.
1	There isn't a safe place on the earth anymore
1	There's way to many bars and not enough restaurants and creepy people
1	This is not the same town I grew up in. Very gross
1	To many derelicts walking around, including 2nd Ave.
1	To many drugs, to many out of town people, cops looking for the working man not the unlawful loser, and ridiculous utility's.
1	To many scary figures walking about
1	To many seedy characters in this part of town.....day and night!
1	To many weird people
1	Too many dirtbags. Shut down sports palace, riders, smoke shop, etc.
1	Too many druggies above the Newsette.
1	Too many nefarious activities going on around. Drug deals, etc
1	Too many of the bars cater to an unsafe crowd, making the entire neighborhood unsafe.
1	Too many people hanging out around bars - smoking I guess now that it is banned inside - maybe all bars should have to have fenced smoking area to keep people off the sidewalks. Hate walking by!
1	Too many rough looking individuals lurking around.
1	Too many times random crimes have taken place
1	Too much crime
1	Too much crime and too many sleazy people. Not enough good legitimate businesses.

**Count    Response**

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- 1        Unaddressed Mental health issues abound. Lack of concern over the wellbeing of citizens. Abundant drug use to "self medicate", severe depression...survival instincts on overdrive... No where to turn...
- 1        Unsafe at night. Congested during the day. Parking hard to find, and with angle parking, hard to back out safely.
- 1        Vagrants everywhere, intimidating to walk by them
- 1        Very rough crowd in parts. High sex offender population.
- 1        Virginia is ranked as the 2nd most dangerous city in the State for a good reason. You don't need to be a genius to see the issues downtown. Just take a ride downtown, anytime of the day. But keep your doors locked!
- 1        Virginia's crime has gotten to the point where I avoid Second Avenue and a lot of the neighborhood surrounding it.
- 1        Way to many addicts on main street
- 1        Way too many "weirdo's" wandering around downtown. There are only two bars downtown Virginia that I'd feel safe in. Huge drug issues downtown.
- 1        Way too much crime in this small town and not enough law enforcement. Law enforcement spends more time on petty crimes for revenue. Because we all know if they catch a violent criminal or a drug criminal, nothing will be done other than maybe a waste of tax dollars and a few nights in the county jail and they'll sent back to the streets. The real criminals need to be dealt with in this town.
- 1        Well, I feel fine most of the time, but once it gets closer to dusk there are more "sketchy" characters around so I don't feel as safe to be out on my own.
- 1        Would be nice if the smokers used the alley rather than the sidewalk; it makes the entire downtown unattractive.
- 1        Yes and no. I have never had a problem but my mother and others I know are scared of areas downtown due to the quality of people renting housing like 424 1/2 chestnut. Plus the things that happen at the Mirage and the building that houses former sex offenders at 4th and Main. This news spreads among the community and people don't want to go downtown. It's not very welcoming when someone is drunk on a bench seat outside of subway or Frandsen and talking to themselves and yelling at random people.
- 1        Yes but I am more careful than I would be other places.
- 1        Yes during the day but not at night
- 1        Yes, I personally feel safe because I stay out of the bar scene with exceptions to live music on occasion. I personally have never had a problem but every day you hear of a fight, some escalating into more (standings, shootings). This a much different than when even a decade ago and I worry that the trend may effect my children in the future.
- 1        after bar hours you are very likely to be a victim of crime.
- 1        during daylight
- 1        in broad daylight or in certain parts, yes.

**Count    Response**

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1        late at night I would not dare walk the streets alone

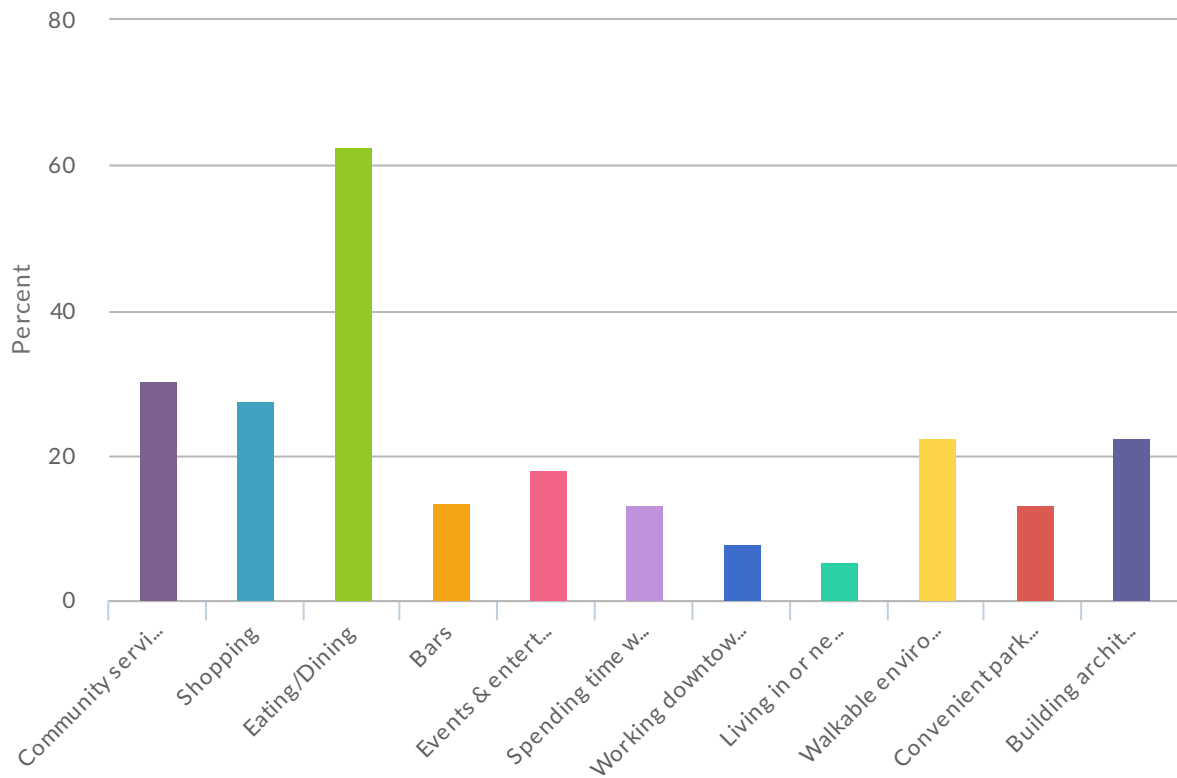
1        only during the day

1        probably not safe at night

1        there are too many bars, and with the multiple bars come crime, stupidity, and unease. no one feels that they can walk downtown after dark.

1        too many troublemakers out during evening

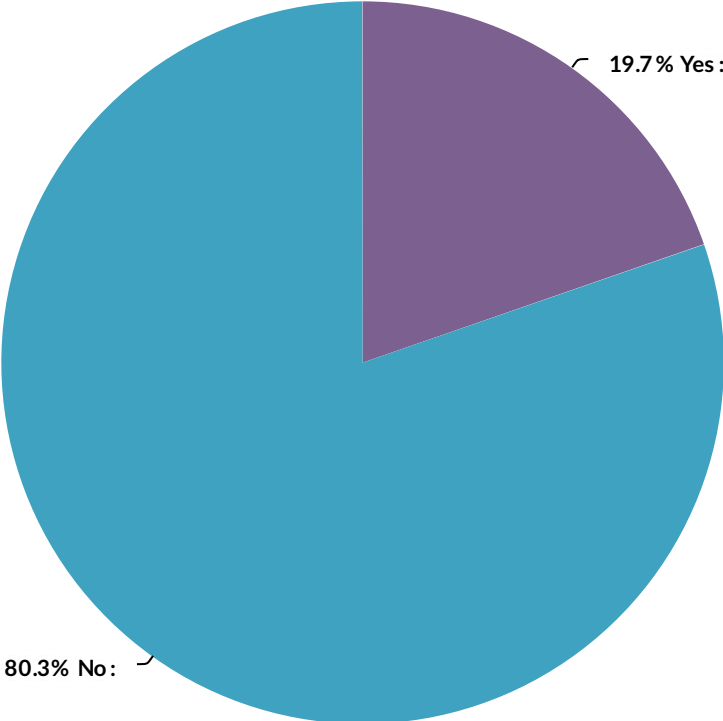
## 16. What do you value most about downtown? (check up to three)



Value	Percent	Count
Community services (library, City Hall)	30.3%	69
Shopping	27.6%	63
Eating/Dining	62.7%	143
Bars	13.6%	31
Events & entertainment	18.0%	41
Spending time with friends and family	13.2%	30
Working downtown	7.9%	18
Living in or near downtown	5.3%	12
Walkable environment	22.4%	51
Convenient parking	13.2%	30
Building architecture	22.4%	51

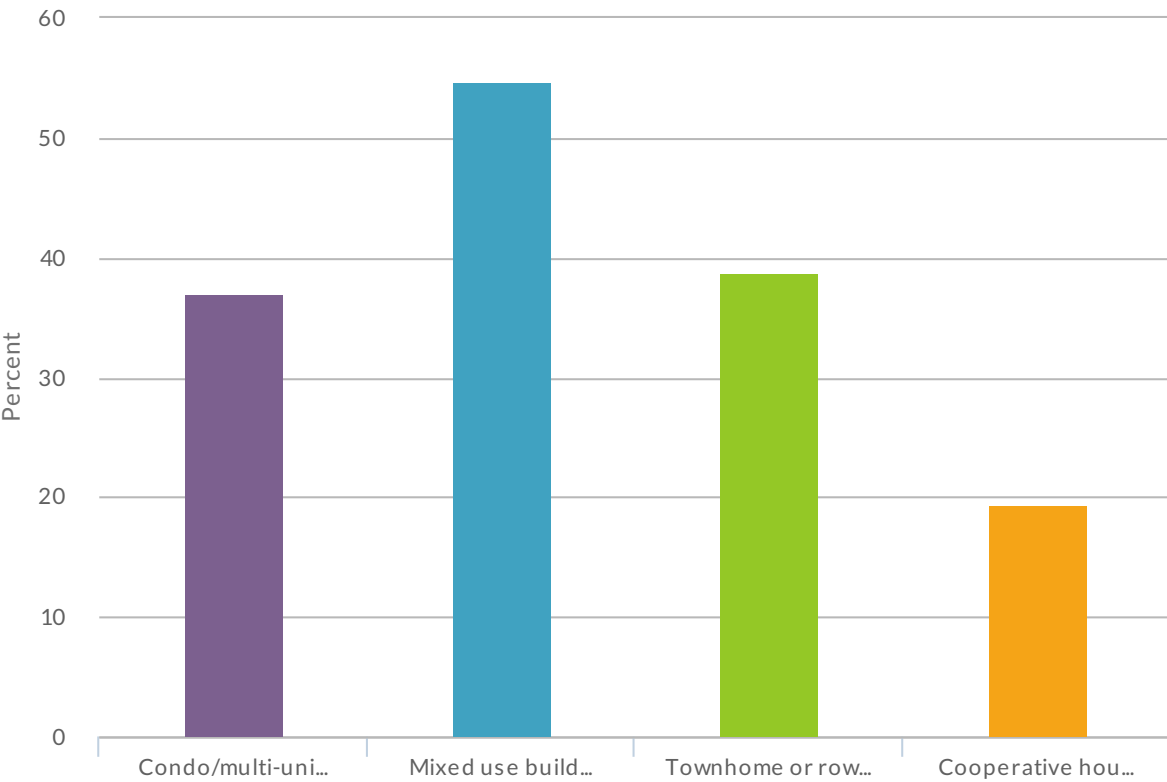






17. Would you consider living in the downtown area (within 3 blocks of Chestnut)?



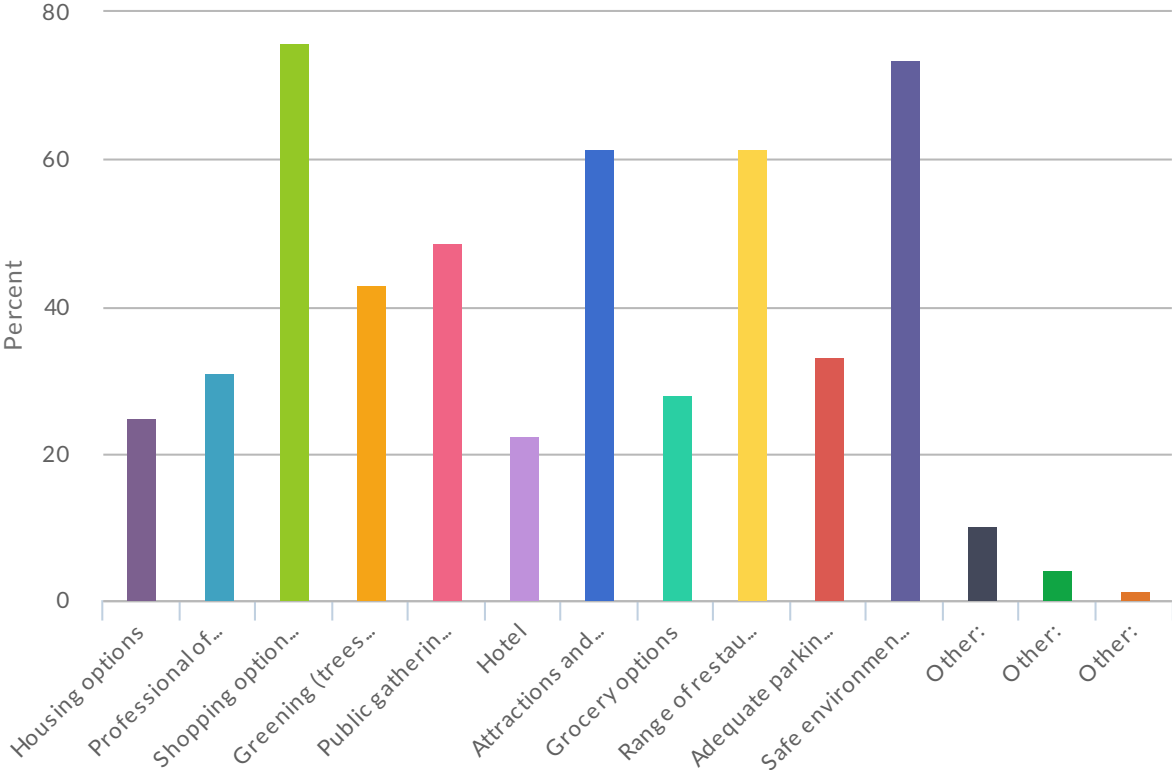
Value	Percent	Count
Yes	19.7%	47
No	80.3%	191
Total		238

18. If you answered Yes to the previous question, which type of housing would you prefer? (check all that apply)



Value	Percent		Count
Condo/multi-unit apartment building	37.1%		23
Mixed use building (such as above a shop, office or restaurant)	54.8%		34
Townhome or rowhouse	38.7%		24
Cooperative housing	19.4%		12

### 19. What do you feel is missing downtown? (check all that apply)



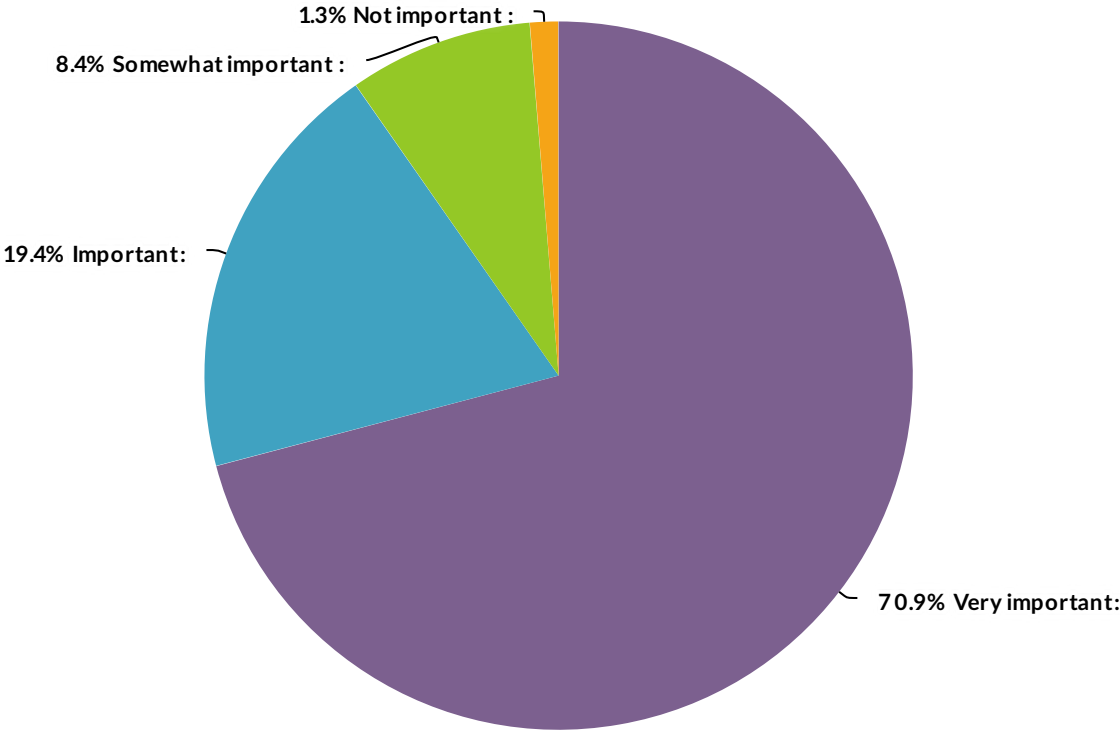
Value	Percent		Count
Housing options	25.0%		59
Professional offices	30.9%		73
Shopping options	75.8%		179
Greening (trees, flowers, etc.)	42.8%		101
Public gathering space (plaza, pocket park, etc.)	48.7%		115
Hotel	22.5%		53
Attractions and activities	61.4%		145
Grocery options	28.0%		66
Range of restaurants	61.4%		145
Adequate parking	33.1%		78
Safe environment	73.7%		174
Other:	10.2%		24
Other:	4.2%		10
Other:	1.3%		3

Other:	Count
Affordable utilities	1
Arts	1
Better policing.	1
Biking	1
Brewpub	1
Efficient/Cost Effective Utilities	1
Foot Patrol of PD	1
Historic integrity of signage and storefronts	1
It is more about addition via subtraction.	1
Municipal wifi	1
Police foot patrols	1
Police presence	1
Renovate current hotel	1
Support by the City.	1
Support for local businesses and new businessses	1
Things for kids	1
a downtown is missing	1
civic pride	1
creative development	1
energy conservation improvements for buildings	1
more art, music, etc.	1
police presence	1
police presence	1
recycling encouragement	1
Total	24

<b>Other:</b>	<b>Count</b>
15 bars. Most of them are cesspools. Why.	1
Better community services.	1
Bike shop	1
Cameras	1
Help from city to keep existing business open	1
Music	1
bulldoze main street	1
convient bike parking/lockup and bike lanes	1
feeling of no value to the City	1
sustainable development	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>

<b>Other:</b>	<b>Count</b>
Sex offenders downtown is a problem	1
Too much police presence	1
microbreweries	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>

20. How important is the revitalization of downtown to Virginia’s overall economic health and community well-being?



Value	Percent	Count
Very important	70.9%	168
Important	19.4%	46
Somewhat important	8.4%	20
Not important	1.3%	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>237</b>

21. Is there something specific you think the comprehensive plan should address? If yes, please specify.

Count	Response
3	Crime
2	Safety
1	Absentee landlords renting sub standard apartments
1	Affordable utilities
1	Attracting other businesses that aren't mining dependent. If young families are to stick around, there needs to be more focus on other endeavors and not just restaurants.
1	Bike lanes!! Bike racks to lock up bikes on(modern bike racks, not the old one's that are already randomly scattered throughout city)!
1	Blight
1	Blight mainly and then newer housing that drives up costs so non desirable people don't congregate to the area
1	Cameras, excessive law enforcement at night driving out and scaring off customers from entering the town. This town has a Very bad rap! No one is willing to chance having 2 drinks and being followed out of town. Chase the druggies in the alleys not drive the squads up and down the main street all night long.
1	Change and growth
1	City departments working together and stop competition for dollars

Count	Response
1	City should adopt something like Envision <a href="http://sustainableinfrastructure.org/envision/">http://sustainableinfrastructure.org/envision/</a> incorporated into future infrastructure projects. Tthe City utilities needs to foster Solar Garden protects <a href="http://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/solargardens">http://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/solargardens</a>
1	Clean the sidewalks of dog and/or human poop daily - why do we have to continue to walk around the piles and also this is a biological hazard
1	Clean up 2ond Ave. What a shame for the first impression for people coming in from the South.
1	Cleaning up and rehabbing the buildings. Especially, the upper levels - they need to be functional again (as apartments, offices, businesses). We have a historic downtown, but little reason to go there. The irony, the mall killed downtown, and now the 'stand alone' stores (Walmart, AT & T) are killing the mall. Give incentives to locate businesses downtown.
1	Community gardening opportunities
1	Controlling the rising crime rates.
1	Creating a downtown that people from out of town would visit, and people that live here would take pride in and frequent
1	Crime and drugs need to be addressed
1	Crime, homelessness, vagrancy.
1	Crime/Drugs More safe options for kids or youth- mini golf or fix the bowling alleys, arcade something to keep the good people here
1	Crime/drugs I think the welfare this state hands out has made Virginia a breeding ground for criminals to take advantage of the system and terrorize our community.
1	Criminal activity and unlicensed rental units that do not background study their tenants. Downtown is mostly pawn shops, thrift stores, and bars. The blocks around chestnut street are full of rundown rental properties that are inhabited by sex offenders and drug dealers.
1	DOWNTOWN revitalization and promotion of economic opportunities downtown- also- taking advantage of the bridge that is coming as grand entrance to our city- ( a pit stop/overlook area with city info boards/attractions & advertising)
1	Deplorable housing stock. Enforce sidewalk snow removal.
1	Diversification of industries
1	Divide and conquer...there are many incredible motivated affiliations at play. Come together...outline the priorities...each spoke tackle an outcome.
1	Downtown revitalization is a must!! We need to turn this into a place where people come to shop, eat, and gather. It should be beautiful and alive! We need to get rid of the unwanted riff raff that are hanging around and scaring people away. Making something beautiful and desirable is a sure way to do that and at the same time provide amenities and opportunities for the citizens of Virginia.
1	Drug Usage

Count	Response
1	Drug problem
1	Drugs and crime. Drugs and mental health issues, less section 8 housing, requirements for those that are unemployed to get jobs!
1	Drugs and the negative effects on our city. Too many old and abandoned homes and bad rentals (2nd ave for example)... We could use some town homes or some kind of living for those not ready for assisted living, but may be ready for a nice option without maintenance and own entrance
1	Drugs, sex offenders, cleanliness, obtainable jobs.
1	Entering downtown from 2nd avenue would discourage anyone considering visiting Chestnut from visiting. Make the entrance more inviting & business & visitors will follow.
1	Find a way to clean up this community. Way too many druggies, drunks, & welfare bums.
1	For the sake of overall economic benefits, working in closer partnerships with other developing and developed Range towns, particularly Mountain Iron and Hibbing.
1	Get RID of the expensive steam system and related business KILLING utility bills downtown!
1	Get rid of some bars
1	Get rid of the 20 bars on main .. just a few are safe .. cantina rainy lake ... safe the rest noooo
1	Get rid of the riff raff downtown, the police need to clean it up and make it safe again
1	Green space, renovating rundown buildings to make the city feel "new"
1	Hire more police officers - more of a presence. Address 2nd avenue area. More cameras around town. Address slumlords.
1	Honestly, the "ease" of government assistance, and the abundance of low income housing has brought in a lot of "non-natives" that seem to be a big part of the Virginias "demise".
1	How can people feel safe with the heroine problem
1	I think how we present ourselves off of highway 53 is important. A little bit of brush mowing would go a long ways to dressing up our community. Let's work with businesses to help clean up the highway 53 corridor
1	I think it is very important to address the city ran utilities - specifically steam heat. I live in West Virginia and my utility bill from Mt. Iron for a larger 3 bedroom house is around \$120 per month in the winter. Friends/co-workers/Family in Virginia is upwards of \$400-\$500 or even more! That is absolutely ridiculous and should be one of the key points the city should be working on to address.
1	I think it should address ideas for making it easier for small businesses to open in the downtown area rather than expanding through big cooperations moving into town.
1	I think the addition of new businesses run by younger people are amazing. it would be great if some of the older businesses updated their look (both exterior and interior) to reflect a warm, welcoming clean environment.

**Count    Response**

1	I think, as I have stated in the other comment boxes, urban renewal has to happen sooner than later. That does not mean more low income housing in Virginia, we have enough. Middle/working class housing is needed along with more business opportunities for small businesses.
1	I would love to see a place for professionals to socialize and network. Virginia should work to attract families to the area seeking out companies that can pay a living wage and provide benefits.
1	I would want a Panera restaurant downtown
1	Identify ways to attract multiple small business. Reward entrepreneurs and try to create an attractive physical and business environment. Easier said than done.
1	Improve parks and green areas. Stop adding buildings that block lakeshore view. Maintain historic structures like schools and Northland building. Stop creating additional parking. We have adequate parking space now- the additional parking is just for those that don't feel they should have to walk more than 10 steps to get to work.
1	Increase police presence. Push out the criminals and bring the cruise nights and safe feeling of the past.
1	It appears you are heavily focused on downtown which is good. Economic development and bringing more stores to our mall and building that up as well.
1	It would be a great addition to have a uptown type of atmosphere
1	Keeping the small local businesses, they are already trying to keep downtown vital, is important. Revitalization of historic buildings. Making these buildings usable if at all possible is a challenge. If potential business people could see what they could use them for, by having a vision of what they could be, it might attract a variety of potential buyers. Maybe seeing other cities plans, that have been successful, would be an important step. How they made it happen, what the larger vision and the long term visions are.
1	Less public housing.
1	Let's make Virginia a safe place to live..from 3rd Ave to railroad Ave there are multiple problems...alley robberies are horrendous..home break ins are on the rise...people walking through alleys constantly trying car doors and scoping for robberies even in broad daylight...need better street lighting. ..possible curfew...seems to be a lot of people out at late hours ...doing what?
1	Limit the number of bars, churches and thrift shops on the main street. No more pedophile buildings. Add MAINTAINED green space downtown. If development/business is being funded, require a business plan; sustainable businesses are needed. Adequacy of public utilities....nobody can afford to heat those big old buildings with city steam. Promote new business/development with funding or alternative financing and infrastructure for affordable utilities. Demolish old buildings and replace with new construction....Professional office space is being constructed along Silver Lake.....would those businesses have chosen downtown if they could have built their buildings downtown rather than be forced to try to retrofit old buildings?
1	Look at the root of the problems and the solutions: the residents.
1	Make 2nd Ave. more inviting

**Count    Response**

1	Make Chestnut Street quaint and fun to visit. Entice shops/businesses to want to be there. Help update buildings inside and out: wiring, heating systems via low cost loans maybe, or demolish if needed and rebuild with a style similar to established buildings. Keep green spaces: parks and lakes. Spruce them up. Try to incorporate some history into the area too. (i.e. logging and mining themed play parks for kids...???) Help the Queen City's crowns sparkle once again.
1	Make Virginia great again
1	Make it more affordable for businesses to start up downtown and also have more security to watch over crime
1	Making Virginia a safe place again, then we can work on the rest.
1	Making our community more profitable with new franchise businesses....e.g. Appleby's, Culver's...
1	Making our downtown attractive to business and tourists.
1	Making people feel safe downtown, get rid of the subsidized rentals above buildings
1	Minimize the amount of bars - Eliminate or update what apartments there are downtown Change and/or update or remodel the Coates Hotel - find an owner with deep pockets
1	More cops on patrol around 2nd Ave to Southside Park
1	More parks, more walking, more bicycles, more gardens (vegetables, flowers, perennials, trees)
1	More spots for gathering for private small businesses to gather. Reasonable price for rental of the space. Bathroom facility included
1	Mostly safety
1	Need to change how the PUC is run and how/where they spend public money.
1	Neighborhood blight, building maintenance.
1	Newer park equipment, clean safe parks, recreation for youth to keep them out of trouble, i.e. Skate park, trails, splash park, promote health and wellness
1	Not available
1	Not really. You never listen anyway
1	Nothing will work without better parking options. Maybe a plaza type atmosphere with parking ramp(s) and more walkable green space.
1	Our city provides unlimited services to under and unemployed people, and has many 1/2 way houses for people with addiction and mental instability, Causing an unsafe and undesirable population. I think revitalizing entire neighborhoods, and eliminating many blighted and rental homes, and replacing them with nice homes and shopping areas would contribute to the community as a whole.
1	Overall, Virginia MN is a reasonably well managed small town, but the treatment and planning of the downtown area is disgraceful..

Count	Response
1	Planning and zoning dept in Virginia should have a better environment for business development.
1	Please add a community center! Bring health and a sense of community to our town all year round. Think big! Such a project would bring and keep families here.
1	Please clean up 2nd avenue and the nearby neighborhoods. There needs to be a rental code to get rid of the slum lords and the problems that come along with them.
1	Please do not make this comprehensive plan blanket statements like so many do. Identify solid priorities and attainable goals. Be honest about the current state of the city and what it can reasonably become. Virginia does not need microbreweries, coffeehouses, and artists' lofts. Specifically, I would like to see a revitalization of downtown that includes creating some sort of Heritage Preservation Commission to ensure proper renovations and remodeling of downtown (and other) buildings. Empty lots, whether residential or commercial, should be built upon. Something drastic needs to be done about 2nd Avenue--people entering Virginia from that direction do not get a favorable impression of the community. Encourage businesses to reuse existing buildings when possible and practical. The new buildings near Super One were, in my mind, unnecessary. Those businesses and organizations could have either used existing space (such as the old clinic...) or could have cooperatively built together. Th
1	Public transportation including late night
1	Relocating the Bell Building-- that would assist with some of the transient population scaring away people.
1	Renovations and cleanup of historic building. Keep the buildings just fix them up. Promote new business for the main street.
1	Rent control. Make it more expensive to live here and take control away from the slumlords. Require regular updates and inspections of rental properties so they are held to a high standard.
1	Rental code. There also needs to be a discussion about the City budget as a whole-- it's less than it was in the mid-90s, and yet the city is trying to take on projects like this.
1	Rental units. Get the rental/owner occupied ratio in check and you'll see pride in ownership downtown again. Crack down on blight. Use the irrrb to bulldoze run down houses. You have to get tough, then the community will rally around government.
1	Residents need to feel safe and proud of our town again. I don't hear much of that when I talk to people about our city.
1	Results. The town was built one hundred years ago and its like nobody every planned ahead or did one thing since the day it was built a century ago
1	Revitalization of downtown. The need to attract young families and creative minds who have passion to live in a unique place and the vision to change the current stalemate.
1	Safer night walking.
1	Safety
1	Safety, cleanliness of downtown and the upkeep Olcott Park.
1	Should address your roads, parking in down town, and cracking down on all the crime in the city.

Count	Response
1	Should not include HUD or Section 8 housing.
1	Skateboard park. Microbreweries.
1	Small shops around the lakes - not housing.
1	Stop importing welfare and low income people from shitty areas like Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, and New York. Stop the give aways. Take the HUD housing out of the town. Give business tax breaks to GOOD company's.
1	The Mall! What is happening to the mall...what a dump. The parking lot is a mess. And what is happening to all of the stores in the mall? What standards is the mall held to?
1	The Mirage bar!!!
1	The choices for eating in Virginia are miniscule.
1	The city's public utilities need to stop stealing from its customers.
1	The crime DOWNTOWN. We need to offer incentives to new business possibilities - 10 years of tax free like Mt Iron did to encourage new businesses.
1	The dilapidated rental units and rental houses in Virginia, along with the liberal welfare program throughout Saint Louis County has drawn individuals and families to this town that do not positively contribute to the community.
1	The mall.... what's to become of that?
1	The old way of running the town isn't working. Start improving and letting in new business ! The good ole boys club has to end . Start enforcing blight! Virginia is known as the shit hole of the range.
1	The over policing of downtown has killed it. Nobody wants to come to this town anymore
1	Things for kids
1	To address the issue of housing (I am talking market-rate, not government-subsidized!), perhaps keeping businesses out of neighborhoods...i.e. Spectrum facility on our beautiful Fifth Avenue! This property was not advertised or promoted adequately for housing. Ask the City Council how they would like this facility across the street from their homes?
1	Until landlords are held accountable for their tenants, no amount of money pumped in will do anything. We need improved housing/rental standards.
1	Upgrading to make everything modernized and accessible
1	Virginia is anti-business, the current city council needs to be replaced completely.
1	Virginia needs expanded supportive services for low income and disabled people...more and better housing, occupational development, educational programs, etc. Also, the City Council needs to do far FAR more to support business growth downtown.
1	Vitality of our community ! Green space !

Count	Response
1	We need some kind of task force against the drug dealers & their customers. We don't want them here. They have pushed their way in & are taking over. We need to push back. Enough already. Maybe through the summer months we could have police present all the time. There are plenty of office spaces open to have a location for a small office. They could be out on the Main Street walking & talking to people. My parents tell me stories of how awesome downtown used to be. I hope it can be again!
1	We need stable income. The mines go to lay offs and the town dies with in hours. The mall is empty. The housing standards are shit. I'd rather live in Chisholm and their cops hit elderly.
1	We need to provide incentives and start up money for new small business. Think, an Iron Range Shark Tank, type of idea. Don't be afraid to spend money to diversify economy and keep people local.
1	Why does this survey key in on downtown? The rest of the town is crumbling around us. Any new additions to downtown will simply attract more undesirables.
1	Working on crack down of crime city wide and also make it so more shops can afford to open a business
1	Yes, the comprehensive plan MUST address downtown Virginia, especially the enhancement and preservation/restoration of the Virginia Commercial Historical District
1	Yes. Until Virginia cleans up 2nd Avenue, downtown and deals with our drug issues there is no hope.
1	You're not going to change anything if you can't change the people. Everybody is waiting for the next mine to open. It's time to invest in different industries and provide support for start ups. The city needs to be welcoming to tourism, it needs to focus on bringing in different trade jobs. Start a bottled water company, Boundary Water and sell it to citioits who love the BWCA. I could literally come out of any Iron Range to wns tap. Portion of the proceeds goes to BWCA. Fund some craft beer breweries. Get some mental health programs.
1	Young people and how to attract and keep them. Entertainment
1	curbs, sidewalks and streets
1	dilapidated housing and rental properties, need rental code
1	homes for 'snowbirds' of moderate means
1	less rental housing. Code enforcement of rentals (328 8th st. South as an example). Olcott park needs more events. Essentia hospital needs better security service. Our officers should not be up there for hours doing the security guards job. Remodel the fire station more parks workers and enforcement of blight. Homes in town are falling apart and covered in saplings.
1	not now - re-do questionnaire iat a future date after more is known.
1	overall drugs and crime rate
1	reduce low rent rental units that attract thugs