

V. Implementation Priorities

Identifying what Silver Bay wants to become over the next 25 years, its desired future condition, determines the end point of the city's effort. In order to put Silver Bay on the path to achieving its goals, the City has identified a set of priority strategies and actions.

Some of the strategies and actions are specific to a geographic area or policy area, while others are more topical or apply across the city. Similarly, some strategies are supported by multiple goals or objectives, and some are directed toward a single goal. The City has identified eight strategy priorities to move the City toward its long-term vision:

1. Create new economic development capacity and programs.
2. Update development regulation.
3. Enhance and promote recreational infrastructure.
4. Create specific area plans for critical subareas.
5. Create wayfinding systems.
6. Create new housing programs and investment.
7. Enhance City services and public facilities.
8. Improve transportation options.

1. Economic Development

The City's goals and objectives have a strong focus on economic development outcomes. Three primary implementation efforts include:

- a. Enhancing Silver Bay's economic development resources and programs,
- b. Recruiting or developing businesses to enhance diversity of the City's economic base, and
- c. Enabling entrepreneurs to create and grow small businesses.

A. Enhance Economic Development Capacity

Silver Bay has an Economic Development Authority, but has no dedicated staff to conduct initiatives and create programs, and does not use its levy authority to fund economic development initiatives. The EDA has undertaken financial and promotional initiatives in the past, including providing gap financing, storefront loans, and administering community/business partnerships. Moreover, Silver Bay does work with a number of local and regional entities in the private and public sector to conduct economic development activities. As identified in the Plan's goals and objectives, economic development needs to include business recruitment, development of promotional campaigns, identifying access to capital, providing technical assistance to growing businesses, and developing collaborations with surrounding communities. However, the City currently has limited ability to initiate such efforts. The City should investigate opportunities to develop Silver Bay capacity to conduct and direct economic development activities and better leverage the existing public and private economic development work conducted by others.

Creating new economic development capacity in Silver Bay allows more control over programs and initiatives for the benefit of the city, and more direct connection between City goals and economic development activities. Local capacity also allows greater focus on undeveloped or underused local resources and better connections to existing businesses.



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The City should consider options for creating economic development capacity. Economic development options including engaging consultants or other private sector companies to conduct specific programs or marketing efforts, hiring City staff and creating an economic development office, and forming a separate semi-public entity such as an Economic Development Authority (EDA). A key component of selecting a path forward is avoiding duplication of services and deliberate coordination with existing entities and programs the benefit the community.

B. Business Recruitment

Silver Bay has identified several specific business recruitment goals including:

- Attracting new private sector investment.
- Work with Northshore Mining and Minnesota Power to identify and recruit support industries that would expand the economic benefit of those large private sector entities.
- Recruit recreation-focused businesses such as an outfitter, or enable existing or new businesses to provide equipment and services to support a new core recreation industry in Silver Bay.

The City should create specific initiatives that focus on priority recruitment goals. Developing a coherent and successful recruitment strategy involves developing consensus on the appropriate business types, identifying existing businesses (in the region or outside) that are looking for expansion opportunities, assembling financing or other incentives, and ensuring that regulations offer a clear path to achieving recruitment goals. Recruitment is more than developing a marketing campaign, and frequently is a long-term strategy that requires upfront investment and a payoff that might not occur for several years.

C. Create opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs in or near the city center.

Silver Bay has a business incubator in the Mary MacDonal Center, but that space has little availability and has limited value for small businesses that cater to tourist or retail markets. Moreover, some opportunities may exist for redeveloping that space for other uses or moving the facility to private ownership. Developing an incubator or “move-in ready” space for small businesses in the city center area allows for greater visibility, increased synergy with existing businesses, and a clear connection to existing social and cultural events and activities that draw people. Silver Bay has home-based businesses that could move to a more visible area that would enable the businesses to more readily grow, in addition to providing a place for entrepreneurs to locate.

Silver Bay should evaluate options for creating entrepreneurial or incubator space in the city center. Options for creating “move-in ready” space include developing new space in the city center as noted above, repurposing existing under-used buildings, or working with existing businesses to expand and reconfigure space. While all the options are likely to require some level of community investment, some opportunities exist for leveraging state or regional economic development resources, or working with private sector funders.



2. Update development regulation to reflect Comprehensive Plan priorities.

With each new revision of the Comprehensive Plan, the City should ensure that its zoning regulations are consistent with Plan goals and objectives. Silver Bay's zoning ordinances have not been comprehensively overhauled through at least two Plan iterations. Consequently, updating development regulations is a high priority, particularly in light of several significant proposed land use changes and redevelopment priorities included in this Plan.

Development regulations, primarily the zoning ordinance, are the primary implementation tool for realizing the Plan's vision narrative, goals, and objectives. However, regulatory tools have several limitations and the City needs to engage the community to determine the extent that regulation is an appropriate tool. Regulations, for instance, are inherently reactive tools; if no development is occurring, the regulations are irrelevant. Moreover, regulations move decision-making authority away from the property owner and toward the community, via the Planning Commission and City Council. The City's legal authority over land use decision-making is fairly broad in this regard, but the community needs to consider the extent to which the City will constrain or direct choices that are being made in the private sector.

A complete ordinance overhaul will reconsider the list of uses identified in the zoning ordinance, the definitions of uses, the list and definitions of zoning districts, and current and new types of standards to be included in regulation that help meet the Plan's goals. Recommendations for updating that ordinance, as articulated in the Plan's goals and objectives, are described below.

- *Identify an appropriate mix of uses for each zoning district or development area.* Re-examine the categories of land uses that define zoning districts, particularly for the City's commercial areas. Not all commercial uses are equivalent; some commercial uses are complementary, while others conflict. For instance, restaurants, coffee shops, and certain types of retail businesses create a synergy when located together. Including an auto repair facility in the same location may detract from that synergy, and uses limited building or land space more appropriately reserved for a complementary use.
 - Encourage destination and gathering-place businesses such as restaurants, coffee shops, specialty shops, tap room or bar, to locate in the city center.
 - Encourage businesses whose market is dependent on tourist traffic to locate on Highway 61.
 - Explicitly limit use types in areas reserved for recreational land uses, such as the proposed County Highway 5 gateway, and create a land use category for recreation-oriented land uses.
 - Limit development opportunities in those areas designated for specific types of development, such as the County 5 gateway and the golf course, until appropriate opportunities arise.
- *Consider creating design standard and landscaping standards for key development areas in the City, including:*
 - Gateway areas, announcing entry into the city.
 - Businesses Park, emphasizing Lake Superior access, views, and recreational amenities.
 - City center, emphasizing pedestrian and "downtown" design.
 - Street standards, reflecting "complete street" design for multiple "modes" of travel (car, bike, pedestrian, and ADA-compliant designs).

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- Encourage “green” or sustainable building design that meets environmental or energy certification standards (Energy Star, LEED, Green Globe, SB2030, etc).
- *Update environmental or natural resource standards.* A number of new best practices for protecting natural resource functions or economic uses have been developed over the last 10-15 years. Silver Bay should ensure that standards reflect current state and federal law, and consider enhanced standards in areas with impacted watersheds or high quality natural amenities. Examples include:
 - Low impact design standards appropriate for North Shore conditions.
 - Conservation design for greenfield sites, allowing flexibility in lot size and shape in order to protect visual and ecological amenities.
 - Buffers around recreational amenities.
 - Standards for renewable energy use – solar, wind, and biomass land uses in their varied forms and scales.
 - Create a recreation district or overlay for the State lands abutting Tettegouche State Park.

3. Enhance Recreational Assets and Infrastructure

Part of Silver Bay’s desired future is to be a recreational center on the North Shore, emphasizing the trails, parks, and water recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. This theme runs throughout the Plan, and the goals and objectives describe a number of infrastructural improvements and investments over the next 25 years that will help the City realize this component of its long-term vision. The Plan identifies three focus points for recreational infrastructure investments:

- a. Gateways
- b. Parks and Scenic Areas
- c. Regional Trails and Parks

A. Gateways

The four Gateway areas targeted for investment in recreational assets include: the entrance to the developed City at the intersection of Highway 61 and County 5; the County 5 entry at the west end of the City, the Hwy 61 entry at the Marina, and the east Hwy 61 entry. An additional gateway can be considered at the County 5 entry to the City Center. Gateway improvements are a combination of city, state, and private investments to connect Silver Bay’s gateway areas to commercial and recreational assets. City dollars can likely leverage state or regional grants to enhance trail systems and developing non-motorized (bike and pedestrian) gateways to Silver Bay. Private sector enhancements can potentially be added at the time of commercial redevelopment

B. Park and Scenic Areas

A number of recreational and natural feature amenities in Silver Bay could be targeted for strategic investments to achieve the City’s vision of being a regional recreational center. The City should prioritize the investment opportunities and seek funding and strategic partners. Some of the opportunities can become part of commercial redevelopment, while others will require upfront public dollars or grants. The Plan identifies a number of investment opportunities:

- Connect the Northshore Mining scenic overlook to nearby recreational destinations and amenities such as a campground, the Gitche Gami trailhead, Black Beach, and the ATV trail access points

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- Build campgrounds as noted on the future land use map with appropriate amenities to provide lodging for cyclists, hikers, and other north shore tourists. Black Beach and the Marina site will require participation of Northshore Mining. Public access at Black Beach and other amenities will also create substantial activity and interest if coupled with campground facilities.
- Develop and manage lakeshore parks and aquatic recreation areas, including the kayak trail and public access points.
- Consider developing new active recreation areas, events, or facilities that will use Silver Bay's natural amenities.

C. Regional Trail/Park Improvements

Silver Bay has access to a number of regional park and trail amenities that already draw thousands of people. Access to these amenities and supporting facilities are, however, necessary to fully realize the potential of these assets. Most notable among these assets are Tettegouche State Park, the ATV and snowmobile trail connections, and the Gitchi Gami bicycle trail. Connections to DNR trail and park assets are already designated as having “regional significance” which qualifies these investments and planning projects as eligible for State funding. The City should work with the State to designate additional local resources and connections as regionally significant in facilitate completing trail connections and developing trailhead amenities for these assets. A longer term but ambitious element of the Plan is to work with the State to create a “backdoor” entrance for non-automobile traffic to Tettegouche, with supporting facilities inside the City limits.

4. Engage Community and Develop Specific-Area Plans

The Plan identified several priority areas for development or redevelopment over the next 25 years. The City should engage its community residents and businesses, and out-of-community people and businesses that are potential markets for the redeveloped areas, to create development or redevelopment small-area plans for these areas:

- City Center (Downtown)
- Business Park
- Golf Course Area
- Marina Areas
- Gateway areas

A. Downtown

The most significant priority is likely to be the Downtown (city center) area. This is the commercial heart of the City and many of the existing public and private buildings could be updated to create visual appeal and a better sense of this area as the heart of the community. Public space that takes advantage of the scenic lake views would add significantly to the “pull” of this space for both visitors and residents, and create more activity for retail commercial businesses. The City should complete a small-area plan that includes urban design changes and new public space to create “pull,” engaging residents about priority outcomes, and conducting a market analysis by a qualified professional. Part of the study could be a visual preference survey or similar community engagement to identify design guidelines and outcomes. Moreover, the City should investigate developing a downtown organization by participating in the Minnesota Main Street program, or creating a similar program to coordinate community and individual business efforts to build economic resiliency in the downtown.

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B. Business Park (Silver Bay Eco Park)

The Business Park on the lakeside of Highway 61 has substantial development potential, but has not attracted much investment since its creation. The Plan identifies several options for the City to explore a redesign and create a small-area plan for the area that takes advantage of the newly created Black Beach and recreational amenities. Options to be considered in the small area planning process include:

- Conduct market analyses for developing tourist-oriented businesses in the area.
- Examine opportunities for district heating, community shared solar, or other sustainable energy systems.
- Identify priority businesses for a recruitment and marketing strategy, emphasizing businesses that have synergy or common theme.

C. Golf Course/Commercial Area

A large area of undeveloped City-owned land north and east of the golf course was originally slated for golf course expansion. Such expansion may be feasible in the future, but the area also has potential for development of other amenities including housing, recreational and tourist amenities, and complementary development to the golf course. Market demand for new development is uncertain, and additional study is warranted. Two infrastructural investments are needed for the realization of this development concept; extension of water and wastewater systems to the area, and construction of a road and bridge over the East Beaver River connecting to County Highway 4.

D. Gateways

Silver Bay's gateways are currently unremarkable and largely fail to create "pull" or stopping power for potential visitors traveling along Highway 61. A conceptual gateway sub-area or design plan would include the following elements:

- Create concept gateway designs for all four gateway areas.
- Identify landscaping or design elements along the public right of way from the gateway into the city, to create the feel of a corridor.
- Identify costs associated with maintaining landscaping or new infrastructure along rights-of way.

E. Marina

The Marina and associated park area is one of the City's most underutilized amenities. Moreover, some opportunity may exist to work with Northshore Mining to create a commercial or recreational "gateway" on the upland side of Highway 61. While the potential is great for this area, a number of barriers also exist in ownership, liabilities, connectivity, infrastructure, and availability of capital. The City should develop a small area plan to frame out barriers and opportunity, aid in fund raising or private sector recruitment, and identify new private or public investments necessary to fully utilize the substantial scenic and natural amenities of this area.

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5. Wayfinding

Silver Bay has a number of economic, natural and recreational amenities that are underused by visitors to the region. Some of the Plan's priority goals are to enable Silver Bay to become a regional center for recreation, and to diversify the economy via improved links between business and natural/recreational traffic. One relatively simple but essential step in doing so is to create a "wayfinding" system and brand to assist visitors in both knowing about and finding Silver Bay's many assets. Wayfinding concepts include:

- Branding City signs with a highly visible and consistent look that helps visitors see information and directions to public amenities and businesses catering to visitor needs.
- Signage that directs visitors to business destinations and recreational opportunities, from the perspective of a visitor who may never have been to the City.
- Develop welcoming and directional designs of streets and rights-of-way at gateways to assist in guiding visitors to business areas.
- Clear identification of all of Silver Bay's recreational assets, trails, trail heads, parking, etc.
- Branded signage announcing Silver Bay's Lakeshore assets; the marina and marina park, Black Beach, and Scenic Overlook.

The City should consider working with MNDOT, the County, and business associations to create a brand and a wayfinding system. The process would need to also engage the community and tourism and wayfinding professionals to understand what works in a wayfinding system and the varying level of public investment needed to complete such a system. The City may be able to leverage state and regional economic development resources with some of its own public investment and discuss with businesses the opportunities and value of sponsorship.

6. Housing

Silver Bay's population forecast is for a stable and possibly declining population and a slight increase in the number of households over time. Consequently there is no large demand for new housing. However, even to support a stable population Silver Bay needs to actively attend to the diversity and condition of its housing stock. Most of Silver Bay's existing housing stock was built in the same generation, from the 1950s through the 1960s. While many of these homes have been well-maintained and improved, many others are near the end of their life and are targets for housing redevelopment. Moreover, as the community continues its transition from a mining town to a stand-alone regional center on the North Shore, the housing styles and diversity of housing types needs to follow the market. Finally, the demographic changes faced by Silver Bay and the rest of the State warrant attention to sustaining housing stock with an increasingly older population.

The Plan's goals and objectives direct specific priorities for encouraging new investment in housing by current residents, new residents, and the public sector. The Plan calls for several deliberate housing programs or strategies:

- Rehabilitation of homes to preserve the small, affordable, housing market. Silver Bay's small homes respond well to an important part of market demand, but encouraging additional amenities and updated services will preserve those homes over the long-run. Ensuring smaller homes can support an aging population allows existing residents to age in

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place and will appeal to future older residents looking for an affordable home on the North Shore.

- Redevelopment within the existing City plat to diversify housing stock. Redevelopment is the most cost-effective strategy for diversifying the housing stock, as it uses existing infrastructure (streets and sidewalks, water, wastewater, gas and electric, stormwater). Diversifying the housing stock and creating a new generation of homes within the historic housing plat will help sustain the neighborhoods over time.
- Prepare selected areas for new housing development as market conditions warrant. Some large lot development will appeal to an important part of the housing market, and should avoid needing to extend water and wastewater infrastructure. Some pro-active extension of infrastructure (within the existing City boundaries) may be warranted to encourage development of some amenities, such as the golf course area.

The City should consider creating programs that encourage rehabilitation or redevelopment of the existing housing stock. Selective redevelopment can occur within the private sector market if the City modifies regulations to encourage combination of lots and development of new homes. Some public sector investment may be warranted to acquire dilapidated homes when available on the open market and assembly of lots for redevelopment.

New housing stock should be encouraged to be built to enhance sustainability and minimize development impacts on Silver Bay's natural environment. When the City is a financial partner in a development (via financial incentives, assembly of lots, or special regulatory approvals) the City can ensure that cost effective energy efficiency and natural system infrastructure are incorporated into the housing stock. Doing so makes the housing stock more viable over time, lower cost over time, and placing a lower burden on City services and natural systems. The City can consider encouraging new homes to meet sustainable building standards, including LEED, Energy Star, Green Globe, Solar/Renewable Energy Ready, or SB2030 standards.

7. City Services and Management

A significant part of the Plan is the assessment of City facilities and services. The City should develop a specific facilities plan to address systems at or near the end of their life, identify financing needs for meeting infrastructure investment needs, and consider adequacy of facilities (condition and capacity) for the services being provided.

- Discuss with County and other government entities the opportunities for consolidating operations in a single facility. Analyze the cost/benefit of revitalizing and upgrading existing City buildings providing services to the public compared to repurposing and consolidating operations.
- Develop a capital facilities planning process that responds to the facilities analysis included in this plan and engages residents and stakeholders in prioritization and financial planning.
- Consider green design requirements for new and substantially renovated public buildings.

Additional action items for City administration and services include:

- Adopt a financial plan to maintain strategic savings or reserves for unplanned needs.
- Produce an annual report on City services and events for residents and businesses that highlights City services and successes.

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- Working with the County, school district, and State and Federal agencies to reinvent and improve services to children, families, and senior citizens.
- Ensure that public participation in City planning and decision-making is easy and encouraged, such as going to where people already gather (school, church, community events) in order to get feedback on residents' priorities and concerns.

8. Transportation

The Plan identifies a number of transportation initiatives that will help the City realize its long term vision and desired future condition. The highest priority items are to develop financing and an implementation plan for improving local streets and sidewalks, consistent with the capital improvement section of the Plan. Several other transportation implementation initiatives were identified in the Plan, including:

- Develop "complete street" standards that guide the street and sidewalk redevelopment process that connects housing (existing and new) to the Town Center. Incorporate landscaping and green infrastructure to manage storm water into street designs when redeveloping.
- Begin discussions with local health providers and businesses on creating local paratransit (small scale public/private transit) services or options. Work with existing shuttle or cab services to create regional shuttle services, including offering services for people utilizing the areas recreational trail system.
- Work with Minnesota Power and other energy providers to install electric vehicle charging stations near business districts and recreational trailheads.

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