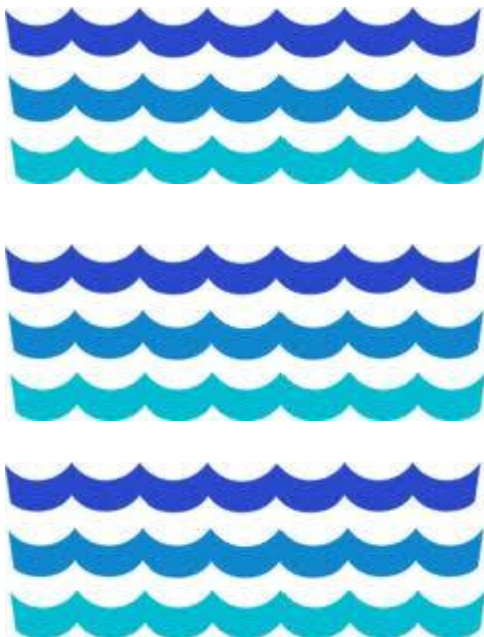




Crane Lake Township Community Plan

2016 Update DRAFT



Adopted x.x.2016

Crane Lake Township Community Plan: 2016 Update

Adopted by the Crane Lake Township Board x.x.2016

Crane Lake Town Board
Jim Janssen, Chair
Jerry Pohlman, Vice-Chair
Butch Eggen

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: This Plan is a Tool	▶ 1
Chapter 2: Proposed Core Development	▶ 3
Chapter 3: The Community	▶ 6
Chapter 4: Opportunities	▶ 11
Chapter 5: General Guidance	▶ 18
Chapter 6: Action Plan	▶ 20

Prepared for Crane Lake Township by the Consulting Team of

Applied Insights^{north} 181 Farley Lane Duluth MN 55803 218.724.2332 djpowers@cpinternet.com	Carduus LLC 140 Charlotte Place Duluth MN 55803 218.724.2678 carduus@charter.net	Community GIS Services, Inc. 126 E Superior Street Duluth MN 55802 218.279.5925 www.commgis.org
--	---	--

Voyageur image used with permission of Crane Lake Township.

This Plan is a Tool

This plan is a tool the Township will use to guide decisions and investments and assist the Township as it seeks to influence, coordinate and cooperate with other governmental entities that make decisions and investments affecting Crane Lake Township.¹

Township will use the plan to:

- Coalesce community energy and secure substantive partnerships dedicated to implementing the core area development plan.
- Invest township funds into community infrastructure and facilities.
- Guide the management of local community services.
- Enhance the local tourism economy.
- Initiate cooperation and coordination with other public and private entities.

¹ This plan updates the 2006 version of the Township's Community Action Plan.

Figure 1 locates Crane Lake within the context of the region and major land management boundaries. These include three that vitally impact Crane Lake: Voyageurs National Park, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and the Superior National Forest.

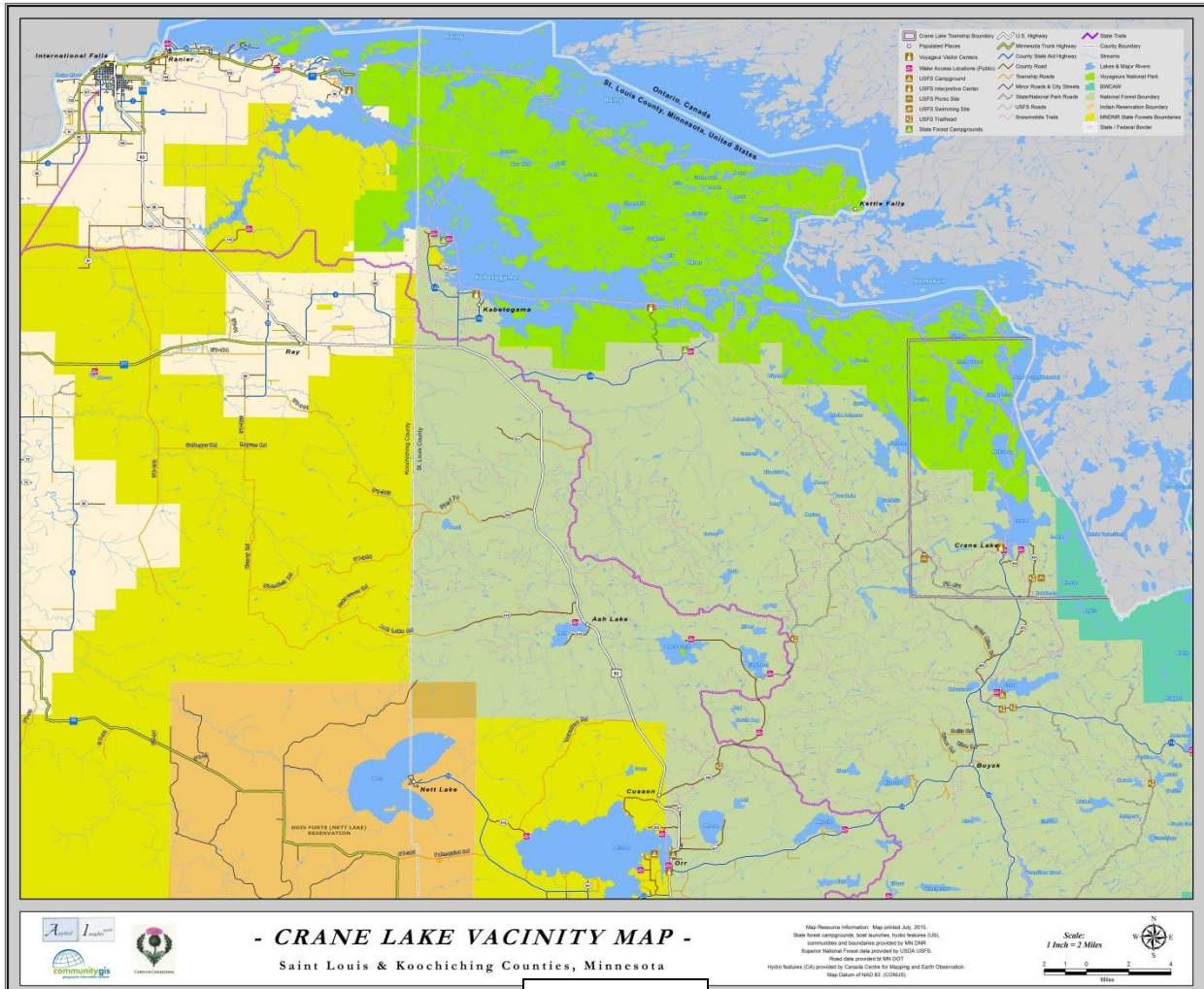


Figure 1

Proposed Core Development

The major initiative set forth in this chapter addresses the most crucial opportunity available to Crane Lake. It does so through an integrated set of actions whose successful undertaking will greatly advance the future of Crane Lake.

Creating a Dynamic Core for Crane Lake

Background

There are many years of history in the Crane Lake area revolving around actions of the federal government, public agencies, private owners, logging interests and natural resources advocates. Each of the major land-use actions taken over the last 100 years or so, resulting in what we have today, had its supporters and detractors. The most recent chapter was the creation of Voyageurs National Park, forty years ago.

Today, the single most important opportunity for community enhancement once again involves Voyageurs National Park along with the State of Minnesota and a key privately owned property. This plan identifies what actions might be taken, by which parties, to result in a mutually beneficial future:

- Voyageurs National Park Visitor Center
- Voyageurs National Park Campground
- State boat access
- Redevelopment of the former Borderland Resort (Braaten) property
- Space for community functions and commercial activities
- Public beach, playground and picnic area
- Public dock

The combination of these components multiplies their individual impacts to create a dynamic, readily identifiable community center, a hub that creates a sense of arrival into Crane Lake.

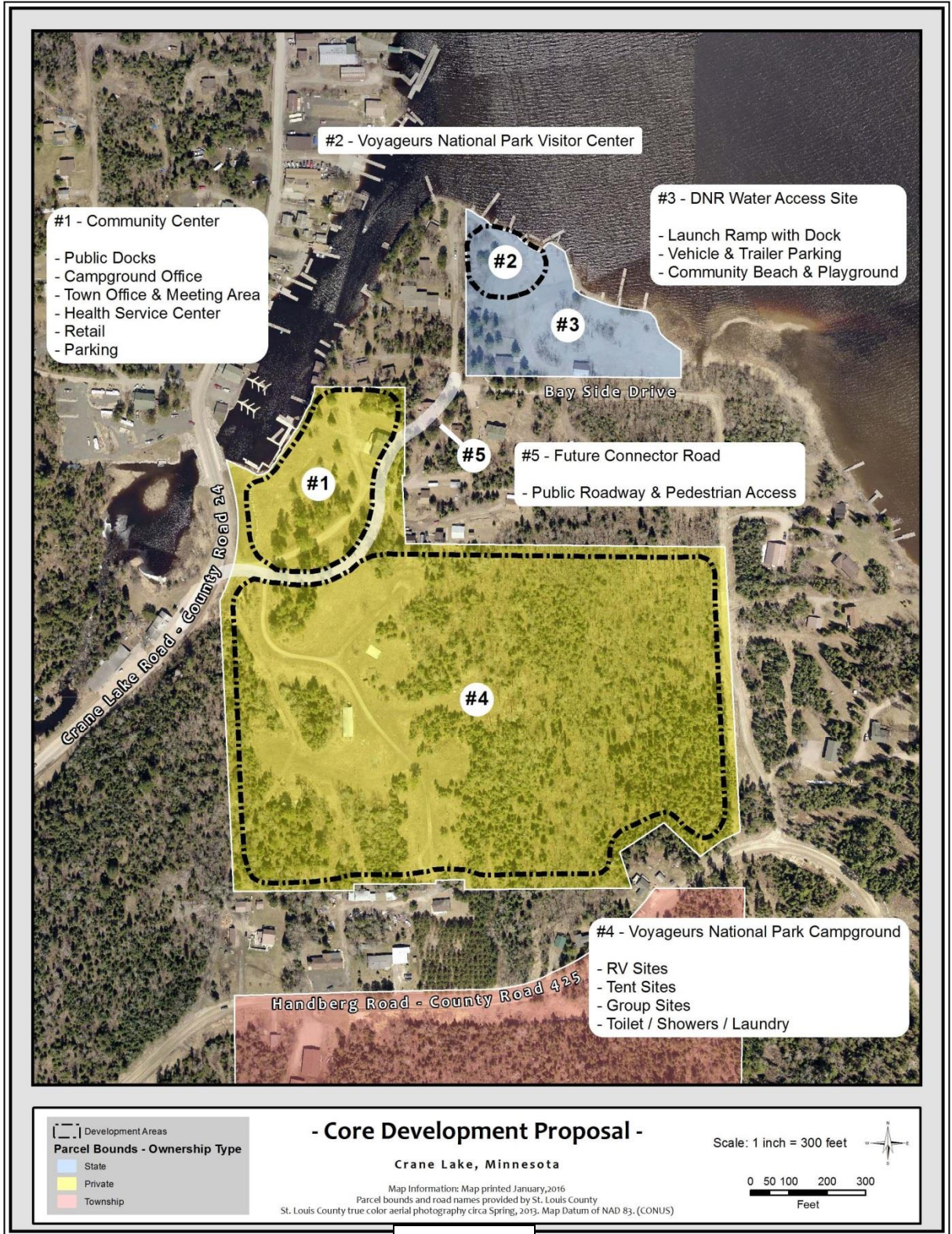


Figure 2

Outcomes

The successful solution to this initiative rests in good part on having agreement from all involved parties regarding: Why we are doing this? What result do we want? To that end, the following list of likely common targets is offered:

1. Increased level of visitation into Crane Lake and at resorts, guest houses, campers, houseboats and VNP.
2. Enhanced day-use access into VNP from Crane Lake.
3. Easy water access for private boaters.
4. New land-accessed camping for VNP and area visitors.
5. Public lakeshore recreation for residents and visitors.
6. Community center with public docking, highly visible from entry to town.
7. Point of contact for VNP visitors in Crane Lake.
8. Capacity to link these functions by trails to other communities.
9. Physical solution that benefits all parties.

Required Actions

The individual actions required to implement this new community core idea are numerous and expensive. It is understood that private parties and the annual budgets of the various agencies could not finance all of the proposed new uses, yet all are required to make this community core viable. The legislative process at both the federal and state levels will be required with a coordinated lobbying and promotional effort from the Town, State, VNP, NPS, Crane Lake Visitor and Tourism Bureau, and VNP Association membership with everyone in lock step. As illustrated in the conceptual drawing (Figure 2) the critical actions are:

1. Town buys the former Borderland Resort (Braaten) property including docks.
2. VNP buys or leases portion of State-owned former Water's Edge property and builds the new Visitor Center.
3. Town acquires land for a public roadway and pedestrian path connecting the Borderland and Water's Edge properties. This will tie these essential activity centers together and with the core of Crane Lake.
4. Town develops the Borderland property into a campground to VNP standards, which is then leased from Town by VNP to operate.
5. Borderland docks become a public landing place and base of operations for a Park concessionaire for day trips into park.
6. A Community Center is built on Borderland property (by Town or private developer) to house: campground office, community space (health service center, meeting room, Town office), and a few small retail spaces.
7. Water's Edge, now an easy walk or drive from Community Center via the new connecting road, has the VNP Visitor Center, State-owned and managed ramp and parking to satisfy original water access intent, and community beach, playground and picnic site.

The first step necessary to communicate this plan and secure general support among the partners is to create a master site plan that illustrates these elements and their relation to each other. This visual depiction will allow each party invested to understand how the integrated package of components functions as a whole in a manner that would not be achieved with a series of uncoordinated projects. Funding from the IRRRB should be considered for this initial step.

The Community

History and Context

The Crane Lake waterway has been traveled by Native Americans, French and then British fur traders, prospectors seeking Canadian gold, and “rum runners” during Prohibition. Access to the region was enhanced in the 1890s and early 1900s when timber baron Edward Backus and the Backus-Brooks Lumber Company established a network of railroads and roads to transport lumber out and workers into the area.

The roads and rail connections allowed Backus to invite his friends to enjoy the region’s scenic and recreational opportunities. The railroad brought travelers to Tower where they boarded steamboats to Vermilion Dam from which a portage road, built in 1906, connected Lake Vermilion and Crane Lake. The resulting traffic encouraged early settlers to establish resorts.

By the 1930s entrepreneurs began successful resorts establishing the foundation for a thriving tourism industry that endures today. The region’s unique attractiveness was enhanced with the designations of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) in 1964 and Voyageurs National Park (VNP) in 1975.

The community of Crane Lake emerged to serve the resorts and tourism industry, a growing second home market much of which is on water-access only parcels, and as home for workers in area logging operations.

Community Description

Crane Lake is literally at the end of the road where land transportation ends and water transportation begins. The closest convenience center is 30 miles away in Orr; the larger community of Cook with medical and more extensive commercial enterprises is 50 miles away. Students attend North Woods School located between those two cities.

In 2010 there were 82 year-round residents in Crane Lake; there were an estimated 76 in 2014. Although there are no figures for the large seasonal population, it can be approximated by reviewing the number of households in the township. In 2010 there were 38 occupied housing units (i.e., year-round) as compared to 179 seasonal, recreational or occasional use units.

Befitting a community that is so oriented to lakes, a large amount of the privately owned land can only be accessed by water. An analysis based on St. Louis County’s property parcel information suggests that 43% of all privately owned parcels in the township are accessible only by water. These parcels have an estimated 48% of the market value and generate about 49% of the net tax in the township.

Facilities within the community include year-round and seasonal residences, resorts, lodging, eating establishments, seaplane base, a post office, community church, Voyageur National Park ranger station, and a US Homeland Security office that is open year round. Gifts and provisions can be obtained at the resorts or local outfitter.

Crane Lake Township was organized in 2002. It includes the developed area at the south end of Crane Lake, the large number of cabins on Bear Island and along much of the shoreline of Crane Lake, and extensive undeveloped land to the north lying in the Superior National Forest and Voyageurs National Park.

Predating the township are the Crane Lake Fire Department and the Crane Lake Water and Sewer District. Both are separate entities. The Township contracts with the fire department to provide fire and emergency medical service to the community.

Land Use and Community Identity

Land Use

Historically, commercial fishing, logging or other industrial base may have had some presence, but these activities have not been a factor for many years. This might have been a different story had E.W. Backus prevailed with his ideas for dams to facilitate water power, logging, and paper production in the entire region, but the Shipstead-Nolan Act of 1930 precluded this activity on federal lands.

The creation of Voyageurs National Park in 1975 is the most significant recent action relating to land use. Other recent changes include the closing of Borderland Resort and Water's Edge campground.

The town itself seems to be less of a destination and more of a departure point for getting on the water. This interface between the land and the water for visitors and water-based residences will continue as a predominant activity, but as it relates to land-use, it means that much of the area of town is devoted to launch ramps, docks and parking.

There has been active discussion with the National Park Service (NPS) about construction of a Visitor Center for Voyageurs National Park in the Crane Lake area. This would represent a major new activity in the community. No site has officially been chosen but several are under consideration including the one conceptually presented in this plan. The site must serve the needs of NPS and its visitors but also benefit overall community activity.

The former Borderland Resort property is a prime location on the water at the entrance to town. The subdivision that replaced the resort has not yet produced any buyers of individual lots or development and is for sale.

The community initiated a successful land exchange with the Federal government resulting in the Town acquiring an 80-acre parcel. Although removed from the historic center of activity around the water, this public parcel represents an opportunity for new public and private development. Figure 3 shows the location of this tract as well as that of privately owned land and other public ownerships.

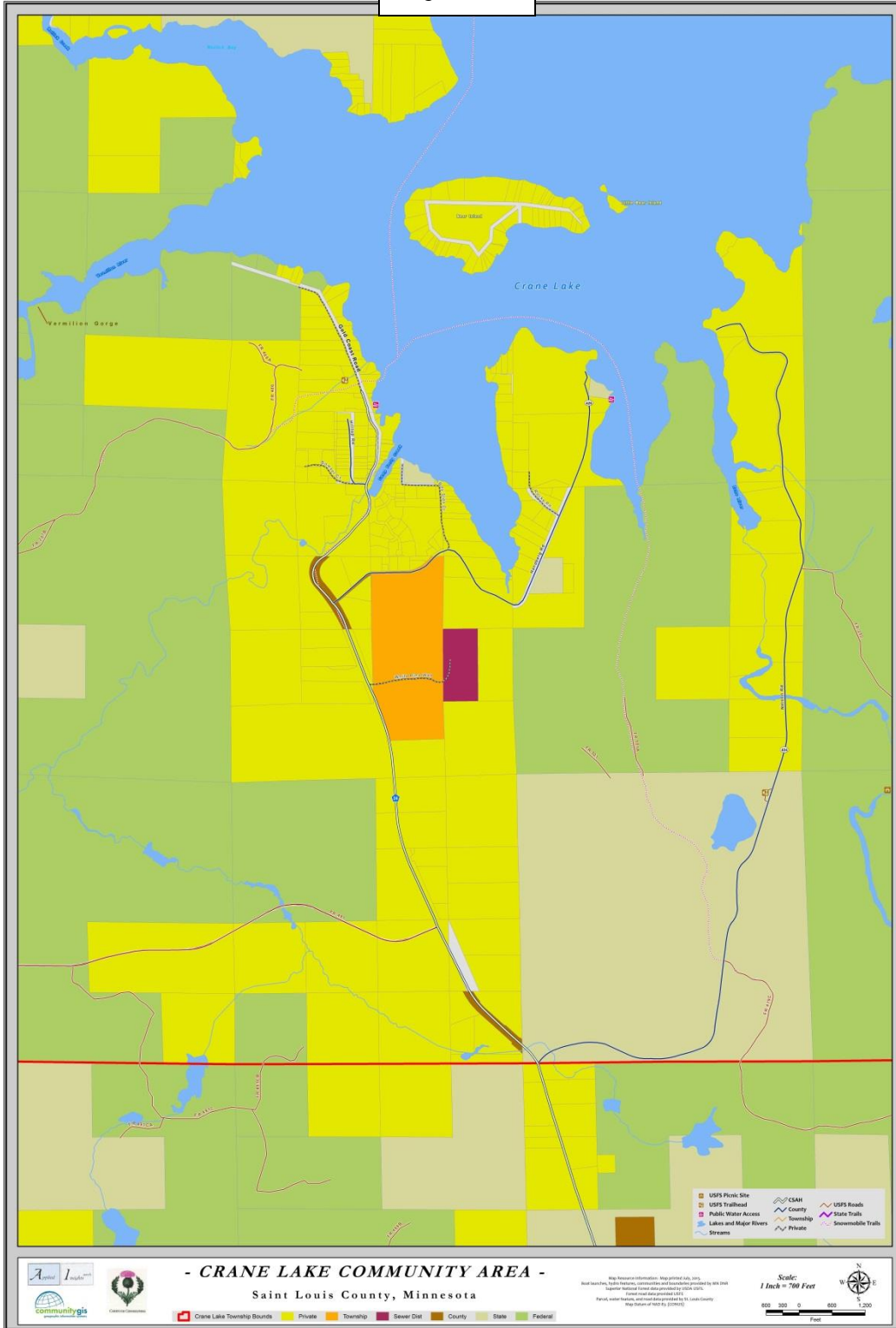
The Water's Edge property was acquired by the State as a water access. This site is one of several under consideration for the co-location of the new VNP visitor center.

Community Identity

There is no strong physical community identify or town center. Elements which typically create or contribute to community identity are 1) public open spaces; park, beach, outdoor performance area, 2) in waterfront communities, public docking for visitors not arriving by car and 3) retail and food service within walking distance of public amenities.

The water is the compelling feature and new facilities and activities that would contribute to community identity will likely be located on the water. Making the town itself more of a destination, rather than access to the water, would greatly benefit from a stronger sense of place. New recreational patterns which cause visitors to stay in town, rather than park and leave by boat would have beneficial effect on both the economy and identity.

Figure 3



Township Government

Crane Lake Township has the power and authority of an urban town as provided in Minnesota Statutes 368.01. It manages the provision of services to residents, businesses and property through a variety of means including direct action by the township, contracting with firms and individuals, and using the services of other entities such as the St. Louis County Sheriff's office. The following narrative presents how Crane Lake Township cost-effectively manages the provision of desired services.

Town Board

- Elected by the voters of Crane Lake Township.
- Policy body for Township.
- Directs day-to-day operations of Township.
- Annual Town Meeting provides guidance to Town Board.

Town Clerk

- Primary administrative staff.

Treasurer

- Handles Township financial affairs.

Road and Bridge

- There are no Township owned and maintained roads.
- St. Louis County and the US Forest Service maintain their respective roadways within the township.

Public Safety

- St. Louis County Sheriff: Sheriff provides primary police protection and investigation services; other departments support sheriff through mutual aid agreement.
- Fire and Emergency Medical Services: Crane Lake Volunteer Fire Department owns its facility and equipment and provides fire and EMS services within township under contract with the Township.

Utilities

- Sewer service is provided to a portion of the township by the Crane Lake Water and Sanitary District, a separate entity from the Township.
- Crane Lake is a member of the Namakan Basin Joint Powers Board which is developing a coordinated approach to collecting and treating wastewater in the communities bordering Voyageurs National Park.

Planning and Zoning

- St. Louis County's land use control ordinances (zoning and subdivision) are in effect within the township. Township uses its Community Plan as basis for commenting on proposed actions within the township.

General Government

- Elections and all other general activities of the Town are directed by the Town Board and the Town Clerk.
- Legal Services: Town contracts with private attorney.

Other

- Town Hall: There is currently no town hall; meetings are usually held in the Crane Lake Chapel or Fire Hall.
- Recycling: There is no recycling center in Crane Lake; residents and visitors use the Portage Township facility.

Community Assessment

The following statements summarize Crane Lake's situation relative to land use and development today and into the foreseeable future.

- From its inception over 100 years ago Crane Lake's rationale for existence and economic heartbeat has been tourism and seasonal homes.
- The exact nature of tourism activity has and will continue to change in response to market demand, private and public investment, and the operating environment (e.g., creation of BWCAW and VNP). The proposed VNP visitor center and campground are the major opportunities for strengthening and broadening tourism activity.
- The interface between the land and the water for visitors and water-based residences will continue as the predominant activity, but as it relates to land-use, this means that much of the area of town is devoted to launch ramps, docks and parking.
- There is no strong physical communit-identifying location or town center.
- Looking to the future it is safe to say that Crane Lake will endure as a community of year-round residents, businesses that serve tourists, and a home for seasonal residents.
- The year-round population will not appreciably grow barring unforeseen and unpredictable investment or action by external entities.
- Making the town itself more of a destination, beyond being a point of access to the water, would greatly benefit from a stronger sense of place.

The test for any future community action is:

In what way does the action enhance the community's ability to anticipate a changing tourism economy, add value to the seasonal home market, or strengthen community life?

Opportunities

Two External Forces

Crane Lake's economic engine is tourism. Anything that acts to enhance or endanger that economic activity is of vital importance to the community. Two such forces are unfolding as this plan is developed – the potential investment by Voyageurs National Park in a new visitor center and a land-accessed campground, and, the ever-changing nature of outdoors-focused tourism.

Voyageurs National Park

Founded in 1975 this national facility has boosted tourism in the region including Crane Lake. However, the community desires the enhanced impact that could come from a visitor center and land-based campground. Currently, the park has three visitor centers – Rainy Lake, Kabetogama and Ash River – but only a ranger station in Crane Lake. All campsites in the park are water-access only. Park staff has indicated a need and desire to locate a fourth visitor center in Crane Lake.

The value of a visitor center to Crane Lake can be seen from recent counts of visitors to the three existing facilities. According to information provided by VNP, in 2014 the Ash River center attracted 6,388 visitors during its May-September season; Kabetogama drew 7,907 during these months. The main center at Rainy Lake attracted 8,807 during those months and 10,203 for the entire year (it is the only center open year-round).

VNP also perceives a need for one or more land-access campgrounds to serve a broader range of park users. Currently all campsites are water-access only and this is proving to exclude a growing number of potential visitors from coming to the park.

Crane Lake has met with park staff pushing for both the center and campground to be located in the community. Further, the Town Board authorized its consultant to pursue options to acquire the former Borderland Resort property and develop it for lease to VNP for both functions.

Changing Tourism Landscape

Crane Lake was founded on tourism and exists today as a highly sought after tourist destination and locale for second homes. The following is a brief examination of trends impacting Minnesota and national outdoor recreation with clear implications for Crane Lake.

Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Tourism Assessment²

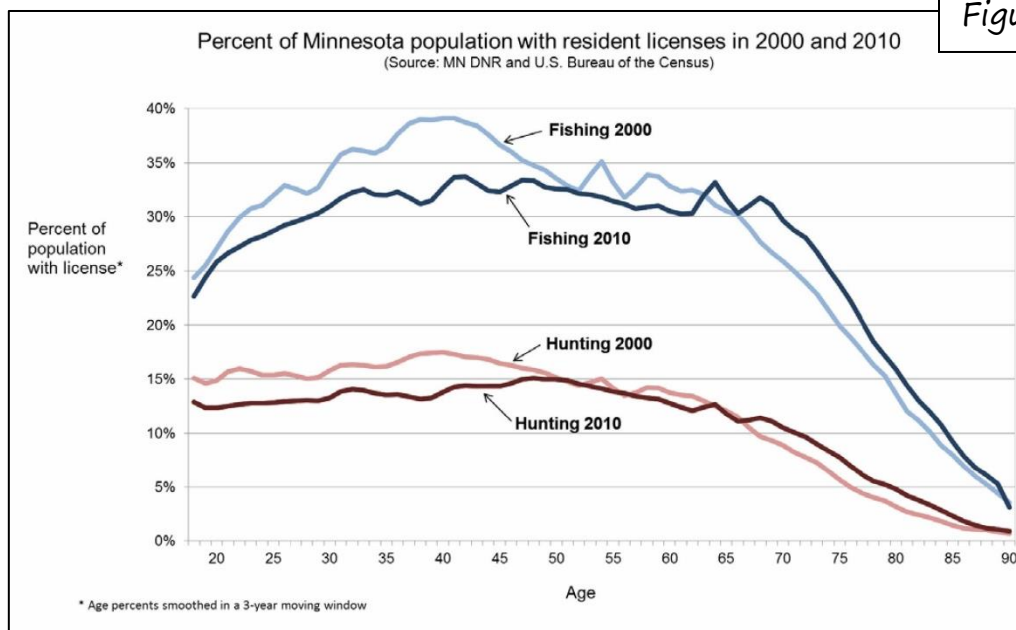
The State periodically produces its outdoor recreation plan to guide state investments in facilities and programming. The following statements are from the current plan and highlight the type and direction of change in outdoor recreation in Minnesota.

“Minnesota is not escaping a broad trend – evident since the 1990s – of declining per capita participation in nature-based outdoor recreation in the United States.... The primary driving factor behind this trend is a decline in involvement among young adults (ages 20-45) and their children.

² *Minnesota's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2014-2018.*

Today's young adults and youth are not as engaged in traditional nature-based activities as older generations.”

“A number of secondary factors also contribute to the decline in participation rates for traditional nature-based outdoor recreation activities. As the population ages, participation in recreation activities generally declines. Similarly, as our state has become increasingly urban as well as increasingly racially/ethnically diverse, participation in traditional outdoor activities has declined. Whether or not this decline is partially offset by a shift to other non-traditional outdoor activities is unclear, but it is plausible that the state's demographic changes are also producing new users who enjoy outdoor recreation in different ways than traditional users.”



US Forest Service 2010 Assessment³

As the state examines recreational trends for Minnesota, the US Forest Service analyzes them at the national level. The following is from the current analysis.

- “What people now choose to do for outdoor recreation is very noticeably different from choices made by and available to previous generations of Americans.”
- Outdoor recreation is growing even though some traditional activities are in decline.
- “[T]here is a clear trend in the overall group of nature-based activities named ‘viewing and photographing nature.’”
- “Three...activity groups – hunting and fishing, backcountry activities, and motorized activities – ended up toward the end of this decade at about the same level of participation as in 2000.”
- “...different segments of society chose different types and levels of participation in different mixes of outdoor recreation.”

³ *Outdoor Recreation Trends and Futures: A Technical Document Supporting the Forest Service 2010 RPA Assessment*, H. Ken Cordell.

- Motivations for seeking outdoor recreation include: get away from the demands of everyday life, to be outdoors, and experience nature.
- The five activities projected to **grow** or decline the most in terms of per capita participation:
 - **Developed skiing: 20 to 50%**
 - **Undeveloped skiing: 9 to 31%**
 - **Challenge activities: 6 to 18%**
 - **Equestrian activities: 3 to 19%**
 - **Motorized water activities -3 to 15%**
 - Visiting primitive areas: -5 to 0%
 - Motorized off-road activities: -11 to 0%
 - Hunting: -31 to -22%
 - Fishing: -10 to -3%
 - Floating activities: -11 to -3%
- The five activities projected to **grow** or decline the most in terms of number of participants:
 - **Developed skiing: 68 to 147%**
 - **Undeveloped skiing: 55 to 106%**
 - **Challenge activities: 50 to 86%**
 - **Equestrian activities: 44 to 87%**
 - **Motorized water activities 41 to 81%**
 - Visiting primitive areas: 33 to 65%
 - Motorized off-road activities: 29 to 56%
 - Motorized snow activities: 25 to 61
 - Hunting: 8 to 23%
 - Fishing: 27 to 56%

Participation Topline Report⁴

A recent study by a recreation-oriented foundation examined the national popularity of recreational pursuits by age groups seeking to reveal emerging trends. Among the findings were:

- Most popular activities among **young people** (ages 6-24) by participation rate:
 - Running, jogging and trail running (29.3%).
 - Bicycling (road, mountain and BMX) (23.7%).
 - Fishing (18.4%).
 - Camping (17.2%).
 - Hiking (13.1%).
- Most popular activities among **young people** (ages 6-24) by frequency of participation:
 - Running, jogging and trail running.
 - Bicycling (road, mountain and BMX).
 - Skateboarding.
 - Birdwatching.
 - Wildlife viewing.
- Most popular activities among **adults** (ages 25+) by participation rate:
 - Running, jogging and trail running (16.2%).
 - Fishing (14.8%).
 - Bicycling (road, mountain and BMX) (13.1%).
 - Hiking (11.4%).

⁴ 2013 *Outdoor Participation*, The Outdoor Foundation, 2014.

- Camping (10.6%).
- Most popular activities among **adults** (ages 25+) by frequency of participation:
 - Running, jogging and trail running.
 - Bicycling (road, mountain and BMX).
 - Birdwatching.
 - Wildlife viewing.
 - Hunting.

Opportunities for Crane Lake

In 2001 and 2006 Crane Lake prepared Community Action Plans to direct energies on desired projects and activities. As a result, the community successfully organized as a township, executed a land exchange with the Federal government, started the sanitary district, secured cell phone service, and launched initiatives to expand recreational trail connections, especially for ATVs, to other regional destinations.

At the public workshop held in January as part of this planning process the community identified and discussed opportunities available to Crane Lake. The following are the current opportunities that pose the greatest potential for enhancing community viability.

Voyageurs National Park Visitor Center

Development of the fourth VNP visitor center in Crane Lake is the primary opportunity. The center would enhance Crane Lake's role as a gateway to the park, attract a new user base, and provide facilities for community use.

The location and design of the VNP visitor center will clearly need to meet VNP needs and standards. However, from the community's perspective, both the location and design need to also benefit Crane Lake. A location that best serves Crane Lake is one that reinforces visitor vehicle and foot traffic to businesses both existing and potentially new, reinforces the creation of a definable community focal point and identity, and provides/enhances interior and exterior space for community activities and functions.

Voyageurs National Park Visitor Campground

A land-accessed campground, which would not necessarily be located on the same site as the center, would greatly expand the park's ability to attract users that are not inclined to camp at water-access only campsites. Crane Lake is ideally situated for the first such campground given its location, array of tourist services including rental boats and guides, and available sewer service.

Property's in Play

There are three properties whose futures are important to Crane Lake. The first is the former Borderland Resort site, now owned by Robert Braaten. No property is more centrally located whose location and size makes its redevelopment so key to reinvigorating the community and establishing the sense of arrival into the community.

The second site is the former Water's Edge campground property. The State of Minnesota under the auspices of the DNR recently acquired this parcel for the primary purpose of providing additional boat launching capacity. The 5-6 acre site has room enough for additional public uses.

The third parcel is the 80 acres obtained by the Township through the land exchange with the Federal government. While it does not have the same intrinsic value as shore land property, its size and central location along an existing road provide the potential for substantive development of various sorts. As noted below, the creation of a public beach and play area that provides public access to the lake would greatly enhance the appeal of off-lake development.

Public Recreational Facility Expansion

Crane Lake has many opportunities to expand its offering of recreational facilities as a means to better serve the existing base of tourists coming to the area but also to broaden the area's appeal to other tourist market segments. These facilities would also be amenities benefiting residents and possibly attracting new people to the community. Among the possible enhancements and expansions are:

- Multi-purpose trail to Ely that would link Crane Lake to that regional tourist center and through it to trails that connect to the North Shore of Lake Superior.
- Continue action to expand Crane Lake's links to other areas via regional ATV trails.
- Develop local and connecting mountain biking trails as one way to appeal to a growing tourism demographic.
- Create a complex of non-motorized groomable trails primarily on the USFS land that lies between Nelson and Handberg Roads. The system would feature hiking, biking and skiing trails and such activity areas as bog board walks, bird and wildlife viewing stations, and educational kiosks.
- Establish a public day use area in the core of Crane Lake with a beach, picnic facilities, and children's play area. This would provide additional appeal for visitors but would also grant access to the lake for people with inland homes and thus increase marketability of undeveloped lots for new residential development (including the Township-owned 80-acre parcel).
- Encourage Voyageurs National Park to increase the number of day use areas and to provide improved access to interior lakes (through more and better portages and provision of watercraft at the lakes).
- Work with the USFS to improve, perhaps relocate, the trailheads for the popular trails to Vermilion Gorge and Harriman Lake.

Infrastructure and Services

The provision of certain public or quasi-public services is important to enhancing Crane Lake's attractiveness to visitors and upgrading the quality of life for residents. Two items focus on telecommunications. Currently AT&T is the sole provider of cell phone service to the community. This can be a serious impediment for seasonal residents and visitors who use other providers.

As part of its broadband Internet service to Crane Lake Frontier Communications is providing two public "hot spots" but they are literally across the road from each other – the fire hall and Crane Lake Chapel (because it serves as the Township's meeting place) – and neither provides coverage in the developed heart of town. Other hot spots are available but they are provided at specific businesses and are not public.

The Town does not provide its own recycling service. Residents and visitors use the Portage Township facility. The problem with this arrangement is that the facility is not conveniently located

in town and, more important, it has limited hours of operation which makes it exceptionally inconvenient to use.

Sanitary sewer service has been expanded from its initial area along Gold Coast Road to areas east and out along Handberg Road. There is some interest in expanding service either via extensions of the pipe collection system or through management of individual septic systems and holding tanks.

The nearest health care facility is over 40 miles away in Cook. This places pressure on the local volunteer emergency medical providers. This situation has generated several ideas on how to enhance local emergency and general health care. Among them are: provide training to increase the level of certification for the local EMTs, place automated external defibrillators at various locations around the town, and secure regularly scheduled service times for health professionals from Cook Community Hospital in Crane Lake.

Promotion and Marketing

Tourism promotion is the responsibility of the Crane Lake Visitor and Tourism Bureau but there remains a vital role for the Township, as the local unit of government, to contribute to the tourism industry. Ways in which the Township can help expand the area's attractiveness include: strengthen the otherwise less active winter season by staging a new festival or event; highlight local history by installing of educational markers and kiosks throughout the area; identifying activities and events that would appeal to the next generation of outdoor recreationalists; and, as is discussed earlier, striving to expand the area's system of trails. Finally, the Township can support initiatives by local tourism businesses by creating partnerships with other regional governments and entities. Possible actions along these lines could be to expand the tourism market by attracting national tours into the region.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Anything that hinders or imposes upon tourism and the visitor's experience in Crane Lake is of vital interest to the community. Given the town's location on the US-Canadian border and the fact that a sizeable portion of tourist activity involves transiting the border making that transit easier is in the community's best interests.

The US has special regulations for people crossing the "remote" border from Pigeon River west to Lake of the Woods. While most persons re-entering the US would have to do so in person at a border station; by filling out a I-68 form people can report by telephone if the office is closed. The catch with that form is that everyone over the age of 14 must complete the form in person at the border office prior to entering Canada. The Homeland Security office in Crane Lake has longer summer hours but they still close at 6:00 pm; many tourists arrive in Crane Lake later than that for planned trips yet that evening into Canada. This is an inconvenience that while not critical to the area's ongoing success if removed it would be one more enhancement to positive tourist experiences in the area.

At a different level of intergovernmental cooperation are regulations on recreational activities. The goal is to the highest degree possible have common regulations across jurisdictions and the international border. In all such matters Crane Lake would have to work with other entities to achieve its aims as these matters exceed the Township's level of authority. Among areas where enhanced cooperation could be beneficial are: cross border fishing regulations, and, recreational speed limits (e.g., snowmobiles) in areas controlled by different land managers.

Community Development

Scott's seaplane base is vital to Crane Lake's tourism economy. According to the town, it is the second most active such base in the state. However, as a privately owned facility it is not eligible to receive apportioned payments of the tax on fuel disbursed at the facility; if it was publicly owned it would be. Thus, it may be in the best interests of the community if the Township secured ownership of the base and contract with Scott to be its operator. This would open a new revenue stream for making improvements and maintenance.

Another air transport related possibility is the creation of a land-based airstrip. This would allow another segment of the visitor market to reach Crane Lake. This is clearly a longer-term initiative but one worth advancing to see if there is support for it.

Adequate housing for seasonal workers is an issue in all rural tourism-dependent communities. While Crane Lake's businesses tend to have sufficient housing for single workers, placing couples or people with families is more difficult. Although the Township itself would not likely be the entity to provide the housing, it could support such an effort through a variety of means including having the development on the Town owned 80 acre parcel.

A good part of Crane Lake's allure is its end-of-the-road and edge-of-the-wilderness rustic charm. That said some form of community wide beautification could strengthen the sense of place and community.

General Guidance

Crane Lake's future depends on taking advantage of key opportunities facing the community. There are, however, additional topics for which guidance is needed; this is offered in the following statements.

General Guidance for Community Actions

Transportation

- 1) There are no Township roads within Crane Lake.
- 2) The Town will work with the County regarding maintenance and upgrade of existing county roads within the township.
- 3) The Township has no plans to develop new roads or to assume the responsibility for the maintenance of existing County or private roads.

Utilities and Community Facilities

- 1) Sanitary sewer service is provided by the Crane Lake Water and Sanitary District (CLWSD) or is the responsibility of the individual property owner. The CLWSD is a separate entity from the Township.
- 2) CLWSD has installed sewer in western and eastern service areas as per the district's master plan. The master plan has identified additional service areas.
- 3) The Crane Lake Volunteer Fire Department (CLVFD), which is a separate entity from the Township, provides fire protection and emergency medical service to the community. It has a fire hall and firefighting and first responder equipment. The Township pays the CLVFD to provide service.
- 4) There are no Township-owned public parks, recreation facilities, library, town hall or other similar facilities. Certain of these functions such as recreational facilities and meeting places are provided by private entities.
- 5) The Township may consider establishing a town hall or recreation facilities separately or in conjunction with the potential development of the 80 acres of recently acquired Township land, the proposed VNP visitor center, or the new DNR-administered boat access.

Land Use and Housing

- 1) Crane Lake does not exercise official land use controls as authorized under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 394; such controls are under the authority of St. Louis County. Crane Lake is not seeking to adopt and administer its own land use control ordinance.
- 2) Township will work with County as the County goes through its process to update its comprehensive plan. Crane Lake's primary objective is to retain the Multiple Use designations (both Shoreland and non-shoreland areas) so as to support the mix of residential, commercial and institutional uses that characterize the community.

- 3) The Township will create a plan for the development of the recently acquired 80 acres of town-owned property. A wide range of possible actions could be considered including selling for immediate private development, providing for future town hall and other community facilities including recreation, and subdividing for various types of housing. If land is sold to a private developer that person must evidence the capacity to undertake the proposed development and initiate it immediately upon acquisition of the land.

Natural Resources, Recreation, Tourism, Arts & Culture

- 1) Tourism based on outstanding natural resources is Crane Lake's reason for existence. As such, the community is committed to protecting and preserving the area's natural features, water quality, historical and cultural resources.
- 2) The Township recognizes that mining is a regionally significant economic enterprise. However there is no active exploration for minerals in the Crane Lake area. Even if commercially viable mineral resources were present, the community's location abutting both the BWCAW and VNP would effectively prevent any development.⁵
- 3) Crane Lake will support, partner and/or undertake on its own actions that strengthen and enhance the spectrum of recreational activity within the area and region. This includes parks, trails, historical sites, and community events and festivals.

Implementation

- 1) As a small community Crane Lake recognizes the necessity to develop strong partnerships with other entities to achieve community objectives. The range of potential partners includes St. Louis County, VNP, the US FS, the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board, the Minnesota DNR, other regional townships and cities, and private organizations and interest groups.
- 2) Implementation of one or more initiatives of this Community Plan may require the Township to increase its level of investment into specific undertakings.
- 3) This Community Plan will be updated within 4-5 years as determined by the progress the community is making to implement this version.
- 4) The Township seeks to secure the fullest possible level of citizen participation, including both year-round and seasonal residents, in all Township activities.

⁵ "Index Map to Iron Mining & Mineral Exploration Activity in Northern Minnesota", Minnesota DNR, Division of Lands and Minerals, February 2013. While Crane Lake is not within either the State BWCAW Mineral Management Corridor or the BWCAW Mining Protection Area, both of which place limitations on mineral extraction activity, the community's immediate bordering on the BWCAW and VNP would pose significant permitting issues for any potential development.

Action Plan

Crane Lake’s prior plans were entitled “Action Plans” and they successfully identified specific actions that were taken to improve the community. While this document is more expansive in nature than the prior ones it remains similarly focused on substantive action.

The list of desired community actions is extensive but without any doubt the most vital is the multi-faceted community core development initiative. After that the actions are presented in a general sense of priority but actual implementation of any given action and its timing will depend on the emergence of a champion for it, community resources, and the level of support from partners.

Community Core Development	
<i>Create a dynamic, multi-functional area of activity at Crane Lake’s center.</i>	
1	Retain designer to create a master site plan illustrating the development concept as basis for securing partners, conveying key components, and pursuing implementation funding. Request funding from IRRRB for this initial step.
2	Pull together project partnership including State, VNP, NPS, Crane Lake Visitor and Tourism Bureau and VNP Association to refine master site plan and pursue its coordinated implementation. Designer will work with partners on plan refinement.
3	In accord with the master site plan pursue funding for land acquisition, site development and the like.
4	Actively work with and support steps by VNP and DNR: to locate VNP visitor center on DNR property, designate the Borderland Resort property for VNP campground development, and develop community beach and play area on DNR site.

	<p>Multi-purpose Trail to Ely</p> <p><i>Establish multi-use (motorized and non-motorized) year-round trail connecting Crane Lake to Ely.</i></p>
1	<p>Town Board enters into formal or informal agreement establishing a project partnership with Ely and other regional entities.</p> <p>Town Board appoints representatives to serve on project work group.</p> <p>[Note: Consider extending the partnership to include those involved with trails that link Ely to the south and east all the way to Lake Superior trail systems.]</p>
2	<p>The Project Partnership will identify actions and determine work assignments. Areas to be covered will include: defining uses and alternative corridors, identifying property ownership, drafting trail design, estimating costs and the like.</p>
3	<p>Town will work with Project Partnership to help secure funding and initiate development.</p>
4	<p>Once developed, Township and Crane Lake Visitor and Tourism Bureau will coordinate with the partnership and regional tourism entities to promote the new trail.</p>

	<p>Area and Regional Trails</p> <p><i>Enhanced trail systems in and around Crane Lake including improved connectivity between Crane Lake and regional trail systems.</i></p>
1	<p>Continue efforts to expand regional ATV trail system connectivity through such actions as supporting linking routes and securing use of USFS by ATVs.</p>
2	<p>Work with USFS to enhance, upgrade and, if necessary reroute trailheads and trails to the Vermilion River Gorge and Harriman Lake.</p>
3	<p>Task user groups to devise a system of consistent and attractive trail signage for the area. Then act upon the recommendations.</p>
4	<p>Encourage user clubs to coordinate planning and development of trails.</p>

	<p>Crane Lake Trail and Activity Complex</p> <p><i>Create a day-use non-motorized recreational trail and outdoor contact activity complex in the general area between Crane Lake, and Nelson and Handberg Roads.</i></p>
1	<p>Initiate creation of a project team with Federal and State land managers, user groups, and other interested parties.</p> <p>Town Board appoints representatives to serve on project work group.</p> <p>Town may wish to seek funding to finance design consultant to assist with this effort.</p>
2	<p>Project team will prepare proposed design, capital and operating budgets, schedule, maintenance and upkeep plan, and other materials for the complex.</p> <p>Among the uses to be considered are: hiking, skiing, and biking trails; bog walks; bird and wildlife viewing areas.</p> <p>System would address range of user levels including degree of difficulty and length of time for visits.</p>
3	<p>In accord with final approved project design, Town will assist in effort to secure funding.</p>
4	<p>Once the complex is developed, Town will work with Crane Lake Visitor and Tourism Bureau and other regional tourism entities to promote the area along with other community and regional trail systems.</p>

	<p>Additional Internet Public “Hot Spots”</p> <p><i>Establish enough wireless Internet “hot spots” to provide convenient service to visitors within core of Crane Lake.</i></p>
1	<p>Town Board establishes committee or identifies a lead person to undertake the initiative.</p>
2	<p>Work with Frontier and Northeast Services Cooperative regarding creation of hot spots in addition to the two to be installed by Frontier at the fire hall and Crane Lake Chapel.</p>
3	<p>As part of action #2, work with specific property owners to allow placement of equipment for public “hot spots”.</p>
4	<p>Develop a plan for ongoing maintenance and payment for service (recognizing that the first two hot spots are provided free by Frontier for two years after which service fees will be charged).</p>
5	<p>Present plan of action to Town Board.</p>

Additional Cell Phone Service Provider

Seek at least one more provider of cell phone service.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Town Board establishes committee or identifies a lead person to undertake the initiative. |
| 2 | Establish understanding of the issues and opportunities concerning existing tower and service, potential for co-location, need for new tower (e.g., replace existing with one that can handle co-location, or, erect new second tower), etc. |
| 3 | Contact other providers to determine the desire to provide service to Crane Lake and issues related to doing so. |
| 4 | Develop plan of action and present to Town Board. |

Township-owned Property Development

Develop a plan of action for the development of the Township-owned 80-acre parcel of land.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Town Board defines the purpose for which the property should be put to use. This could be in terms of benefit to Township such as revenue generation, range of acceptable uses, relationship of development to rest of community, etc.). |
| 2 | Town Board establishes a planning committee to devise development plan to achieve the purpose as defined by Town Board. Development plan is to include schematic design of development and implementation framework for development (e.g., ownership, covenants, easements, cost sharing, etc.). |
| 3 | Present plan to Town Board. |

Community Recycling

Make recycling more convenient for residents and visitors.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Town Board or its designee investigates options for providing more convenient recycling for residents and visitors. Likely options could include: financing hours at the existing Portage Township facility or establishing a facility in Crane Lake. |
| 2 | Proposed course of action is discussed at Town Board meeting. |
| 3 | Town Board acts upon the recommendation. |

Health Care	
<i>Enhanced access to health care in Crane Lake.</i>	
1	Town Board requests Crane Lake Volunteer Fire Department to: create and propose a program for upgrading certification levels for department staff, and, install Automated External Defibrillators throughout Crane Lake. Town Board to act on recommendations and assist with implementation as required.
2	Town Board appoints a task force to explore provision of regularly scheduled health care services at a location in Crane Lake. This would most likely involve working with Cook Hospital. Committee to present its recommendations to Town Board for its consideration and action.

New Recreational Activities	
<i>Expand the mix of recreational activities intended to attract new visitor markets to Crane Lake.</i>	
1	Town Board and Crane Lake Visitor and Tourism Bureau establish a task force charged with identifying new visitor markets and the types of activities that Crane Lake could offer to bring them to the area.
2	Task Force will also be charged with bringing partners into the effort including Federal and State agencies.
3	Task Force identifies and evaluates demographic markets not currently being served or fully served by Crane Lake. Further, identify the types of recreational activities, amenities and events that could bring these markets to the area. Activities could include winter camping, dogsledding (rides, camps, etc.), fat tire biking system, national tours, rock climbing, educational/hobby classes, ElderHostel, etc.
4	Task Force is to present its recommendations to the Town Board and other partners with intent to pursue one or more of the most viable ideas.

Other Actions	
1	Town Board meet with Voyageurs National Park to discuss specific inland lakes within the Park needing enhanced access (e.g., improved portages) and/or amenities (e.g., placement of watercraft) as means to improve level of visitation to the Park.
2	Continue Town Board pursuit of the transfer of ownership of Scott's seaplane base to the Town.
3	Town Board tasks a committee or individual to prepare and present a detailed plan for beautification of the community. Plan is to identify specific actions, responsibilities, capital and maintenance budgets, and the like.
4	Town Board solicits proposals for the development of workforce housing, especially couples with children.