

Guidebook Purpose

The northern Great Lakes region contains visual and natural features of unparalleled beauty. Historic towns, beautiful sandstone buildings, and a unique architectural heritage complement the many lakes, rivers, forests, beaches, rolling farmland, and **open space** that provide a familiar backdrop to daily life for area residents. This region includes the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the northern part of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, northern Wisconsin, and the Arrowhead of Minnesota. For many, these natural and cultural features are a major reason for living, working, recreating, and vacationing in the area.

This region has been “discovered” in recent years. People from large **urban** areas, such as Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, and Minneapolis-St. Paul have been moving north to escape the traffic congestion, sprawl, visual pollution, loss of open space, and “lack of community” typical of large cities.

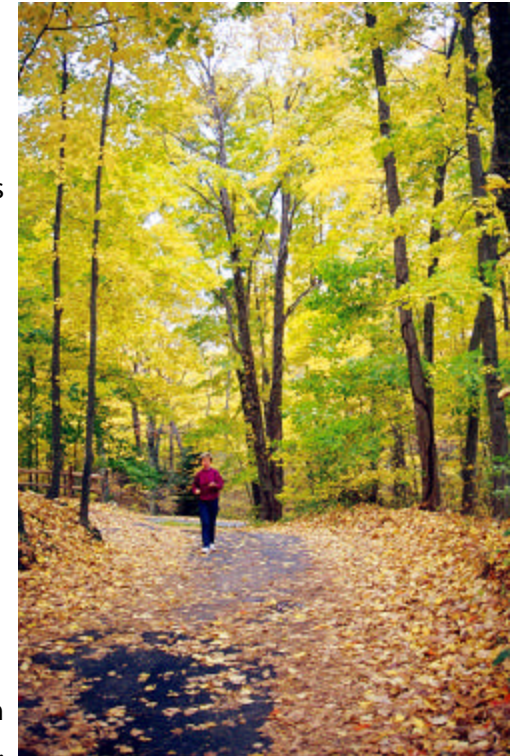
The purpose of this guidebook is to share ideas of what can be done to assure that new growth fits in with the visual appearance and environmental protection of local communities.

The influx of new residents, together with a desire for “progress” and to grow economically, is changing these northern communities to look more like the urban and **suburban** areas left behind. Small, family-owned businesses that have existed for decades are sometimes not able to compete with large **franchise** stores and restaurants coming to the area. The visual appearance of the new franchise stores and restaurants often does not blend in with the north woods or historic character of the area, and they often locate outside of the downtown, causing sprawl. This new growth often increases vehicular traffic, as it is usually not designed for pedestrian access.

Like many things in life, there are positive and negative aspects to community growth:

- New businesses mean more jobs, though sometimes at the expense of existing jobs in family-owned businesses.
- New businesses can increase options for shopping and entertainment, but may also force other downtown businesses to close.
- The products and services sold by new businesses are often welcomed by residents. But when new businesses are poorly designed and located, they may threaten the unique visual, cultural, and natural character of the area.

Can a compromise be struck between these outcomes of growth? Some communities have adopted guidelines and regulations for new business locations, building appearance, landscaping, and parking lot design. This guidebook describes possible guidelines to inform and assist students and community residents in guiding the growth of their community.



Does it matter what a community looks like? Is there value to both residents and tourists in maintaining the unique “northwoods” or historic character of these communities? Could many things that we take for granted be lost—such as public access to Great Lakes' shoreline, open spaces, scenic views, nearby recreation, unique architecture? Is it possible for citizens and community leaders to manage growth in such a way that it does not destroy the area's special character?

This guidebook is based on the belief that **development** is both necessary and desirable to maintain and improve the quality of life for people who live here now and for future generations. The guidelines presented are just that—guidelines. They represent what planners, developers, and natural resource managers call **Best Management Practices (BMPs)**. BMPs can be achieved through voluntary actions or through adoption of ordinances and regulations by township, city, village, or county government officials. Local residents can choose how their community develops and what new growth looks like. The purpose of this guidebook is to share ideas of what can be done to assure that new growth fits in with the visual appearance and environmental protection of northwoods communities.

How to Use the Guidebook

The first half of the guidebook discusses growth trends, challenges, and a vision for the future. The second half of the guidebook provides design guidelines for future development that will enhance community appearance and protect the unique cultural and natural resources of the area. Words that are defined in the glossary (page 58) are in **bold** the first time that they appear in the text.



Economically vibrant downtowns that reflect the community's unique character...



...are being replaced by sprawl, which makes all towns look the same.

