



CHARACTERISTICS

Write a description of your community in terms of socio-economic status, demographics, primary areas of employment and lifestyle. The Demographic ZIP Code report for your primary ZIP codes may be helpful.

Bemidji is a picturesque, progressive city located along the shores of Lake Bemidji. It is a great place to raise a family, become involved in the community, and discover the great outdoors, with thousands of acres of forest, over 400 nearby lakes, hundreds of biking and snowmobile trails. There also are a myriad of art and cultural activities in this regional hub of health care, economics and entrepreneurialism.

Location:

Bemidji serves as the Beltrami County seat and a regional center for health care, retail, education, finance and employment, just 220 miles northwest of Minneapolis/St. Paul. The population is continuing to grow by 100+ households per month, according to the Chamber of Commerce. Known as the First City on the Mississippi, Bemidji sits at the water's edge to the Mississippi River, tying together a series of beautiful and pristine lakes, including Lake Bemidji. Since 1937, Bemidji's friends Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox have become legendary icons and are some of the most frequently photographed landmarks in Minnesota, and even the U.S.

Located 100 miles south of the Canadian border, Beltrami County, Minnesota's fourth-largest county, has particular challenges such as public and community transportation, lower than average wages resulting in high levels of adult and child poverty, and limited access to affordable health care, which is why the church, nonprofit, health care, government and business communities work together to address these issues to better serve those in disadvantaged circumstances and create a thriving community where people want to live, work and play.

Demographics:

According to ESRI Market Data, within a 30-mile radius of Bemidji, the total population is 66,370 with a near 50/50 split between men and women. The population by age is as follows: 20% (0-14), 14.1% (15-24), 13.2% (25-34), 11.1% (25-44), 10.4% (45-54), 13.2% (55-64), 10.7% (65-74) and 7.2% (over 75). ESRI reported that there were 57.5%

white collar jobs, 19.5% service jobs and 23.1% blue collar jobs, making for a balanced community.

Culture:

Bemidji is located between three Native American Indian Reservations: White Earth, Leech Lake and Red Lake Nations. Those identifying as American Indians represent 19.5% of the population, with White residents at 74.7% and those who identified as two or more races 3.8%; all other races and ethnicities were less than 3%. American Indians living in Minnesota represent 1.4% of the state population and 1.3% for the United States. The Red Lake Band of Chippewa and Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe reservations are partially in Beltrami County, while the White Earth Band of Ojibwe reservation sits just southwest of the county.

Education:

Bemidji Public School District enrolls more than 5,290 students drawn from a district area that is almost the geographical size of Rhode Island. Bemidji is lucky to also have alternative options for youth, including four experiential learning charter schools and two faith-based private schools.

Bemidji State University, Northwest Technical College, and Oak Hills Christian College are also located in Bemidji and serve over 6,250 students annually. Leech Lake Tribal College is only 15 minutes outside of town, and Red Lake Nation College is 35 miles north. These higher education centers provide opportunities to engage in myriad of sporting, technology, art and music events on campus and throughout the community.

Also unique to Bemidji is Concordia Language Villages, a leader in language development for youth and adults of all ages. CLV offers a multitude of language immersion programs at their world-class learning facilities.

Outdoors, Sports & Recreation:

Outdoor opportunities are endless! With 400 crystal clear fishing lakes in the region and 440,000 acres of forest, it is home to world-class hunting, fishing, bicycling, golfing and boating. Since 2012, Bemidji has earned its distinction as a Bike Friendly Community with nearly 160 miles of paved trails including the Paul Bunyan State Trail and Heartland Trail that connect Bemidji to other nearby communities of Park Rapids, Walker and Brainerd. During the winter, snow sports abound, keeping the winter months full of motion and excitement: downhill and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing and outdoor rinks for hockey and figure skating. Bemidji is the "Curling Capital of the USA", thanks to a long line of curling champions and Olympic teams, and also the

“Snowmobile Capital of the North” with unmatched scenic beauty, excellent grooming, and 14,000 miles of trails.

City of Bemidji Parks provide acres of natural spaces for youth and families to play. The Paul Bunyan Inclusive Playground, one-of-a-kind in the region, is a universally accessible playground allowing people with varying abilities the opportunity to play together without barriers. Between Bemidji’s natural beauty and the variety of outdoor, sports and recreation opportunities you can keep breathing the beauty and fresh air all year-round!

Arts & Music:

Art and music are alive in Bemidji – and very important to this thriving community. The Region 2 Arts Council supports local artists through grants and trainings, and the Bemidji Sculpture Walk hosts beautifully designed statement pieces on downtown street corners that visitors and locals can enjoy. Bemidji is also home to the Watermark Art Center and Gallery North, both showcasing frequently revolving art. Additionally, BSU has the Touché Art Gallery and the Talley Gallery that include campus and community art. For the musically inclined, there are many ways to get involved formally or casually. From the Bemidji Symphony Orchestra to Bemidji Chorale, Bemidji Area Community Band to the Headwaters School of Music, there are many options for people to take lessons and showcase their talents during open mic nights. Mississippi Music on the Lake Bemidji Waterfront is held each Wednesday evening throughout summer, offering free live music outdoors along the water’s edge. Bemidji is also home to the Historic Chief Theater, bringing talent from around the country to Bemidji through Paul Bunyan Playhouse productions and local talent through Bemidji Community Theatre. The Rail River Folk School cultivates a culture of community by embracing individuality – in arts, music, culture – elevating our community, a fun place to imagine and create!

Economy & Health Care:

Bemidji, a regional center for health care, air service, entrepreneurial minds and tourism, still has a small-town feel with a sweet downtown featuring eclectic gift shops, boutiques, coffee and ice cream parlors, hometown bakeries, meat markets, a natural co-op grocery store and our very own brewery.

Downtown is a revitalized home to an entrepreneurial community called the LaunchPad, which aims to harness the power of professional growth, idea-sharing and talent discovery to support the economic successes of the region. Greater Bemidji, the economic development entity, works tirelessly to attract business, resources and talent to the area. Bemidji is hometown to nationally recognized businesses such as Paul Bunyan Communications, Aircorp Aviation, LaValley Industries, Northland Fishing Tackle, Indian Harvest, North Central Door, Potlatch and West Fraser to name just a

few. Paul Bunyan Communications leads the nation in fiber optic internet speeds up to 10 gigs, which lays the community framework for those wishing to telecommute, home office and stream games and movies in a flash. Delta Airlines and Bemidji Aviation provide convenient air service in and out of our local airport.

Sanford Health is the largest health care provider in the region with over 120 physicians, multi-specialty group practice and includes 1,450 employees. The 118-bed Sanford Bemidji Medical Center, including a Level IV trauma center, has also grown over the past decade to include expanded services such as behavioral health, orthopedics, and cardiology. In 2018, Sanford opened the doors to an epicenter of advanced cancer care in Northern Minnesota, allowing cancer patients to get the best care possible while staying in the community surrounded by family and friends, making for better health outcomes.

Dining & Entertainment:

Locals and visitors can easily dine at national chain restaurants like Applebee's, Green Mill and Buffalo Wild Wings, but there are also options to enjoy fresh made sushi, Thai, Italian, Mexican and a farm-to-table options, along with a variety of delicious American fare from locally owned businesses.

The Sanford Center is greater Minnesota's premier facility that attracts conventions, exhibits, sport activities, hockey tournaments, a variety of concerts and entertainment and is also the home to Bemidji State University's men's and women's hockey.

The non-profit scene and volunteering:

Community members are supported by a legion of nonprofits that are coordinated by Community Resource Connections and the United Way with a focus on education, health and basic needs. They include, but are not limited to, the Headwaters Science Center, Boys & Girls Clubs, Senior Center, Scouts, Reading Corp, Community Table (soup kitchen), Northwoods Battered Women's Shelter, Evergreen Youth & Family Services, Hope House, and Meals on Wheels.

Volunteer opportunities abound at local nonprofits, communities of faith and with special community events such as the annual Dragon Boat Festival, County Fair, Loop the Lake Festival, Art in the Park, just to name a few.

Centralized volunteering is now accessible through VolunteerBemidji.org.

Additional sources:

Three great sources of additional information are:

- Chamber of Commerce: <https://www.bemidji.org/welcome/>
- Greater Bemidji: <https://www.greaterbemidji.com/living-here/>
- Visit Bemidji: <https://www.visitbemidji.com/>