Demographic Assessment

This chapter presents a profile of the people who make up the Big Lake community and identifies major demographic trends that may affect city planning over the next 20 years. Included are population and housing, race and ethnicity, age, household composition, income and employment.

Figures

Major Demographic Issues

The following are the major demographic issues identified through the analysis of conditions. Issues are questions to be discussed, debated and resolved during the planning process in light of other issues. The subsequent analysis of conditions has been prepared to help readers understand why these are issues and why they should be considered.

1. **Household Income and Employment:** What, if anything, should the City do to promote the growth of living-wage jobs, help raise average incomes and reduce the rate of unemployment or under-employment among Big Lake residents, particularly households with children?

2. **Age Structure:** What should the City do to attract and retain more people in the 35 to 64 year-old age group, those in their prime earning years who are looking for move-up housing?

3. **Regional and City Growth:** What additional steps should the City take, if any, to attempt to capture a portion of the projected population growth in the region?

4. **Household Size and Housing Choices:** How should the Land Use Plan respond to the shrinking average size of households and the increased demand for multiple-family housing?

5. **Growing Diversity:** What, if anything, should the community do to successfully accommodate an expected increase in population diversity?

   By 2040, the Seven County Metro Area is forecast to be 40 percent "people of color." Big Lake will likely experience some of that change.

Major Demographic Findings

The following are the major demographic finding and trends that should be considered in the update of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

- Big Lake grew rapidly from the mid-90s through the mid 2000s but has slowed since that time.

- The Minnesota Demographer issued a revised population forecast for Sherburne County in mid-2017. That forecast showed an increase in the county's 2040 population of approximately 10 percent over the 2015 estimate instead of the 40 percent increase forecast in 2014.

- The population in 2015 was approximately 10,285. It is forecast to grow by approximately 2,850 to 13,100 people by year 2040.

- The number of households in 2015 was approximately 3,660. It is forecast to grow by 1,115 to 4,775 by year 2040.

- Big Lake Township has experienced considerable residential growth. The township has increased by 5,910 people since 1970 to approximately 7,618 in year 2015. The rate of growth in the township has slowed since year 2000 compared to the three preceding decades.

- It is assumed that Big Lake will grow slightly faster than Sherburne County during the next 25 years.

- Approximately 1,115 additional households are forecast in Big Lake between 2015 and 2040. This would be an average of 45 households per year. This estimate should be checked every five years using local data and forecasts by the Minnesota Demographer. Please refer to the Land Use and Development Assessment for an estimate of how this household growth may translate into demand for land development.

- The rate of growth in households exceeds the rate of growth in population because the average household size is declining slightly.

There were an estimated 3,660 households in the city in 2015. Of those:
- 74 percent were families
- 60 percent included married couples
- 43 percent had children in the home
- 9 percent were headed by a woman
- 6 percent were headed by a woman and had children at home
- 8 percent were headed by someone 65 years of age or older.
- The average household size was 3.05 people; the average family size 3.5

Demographic Characteristics

Population

The City of Big Lake has been one of the fastest-growing counties in Minnesota. Its location along US Highway 10 between the Twin Cities metropolitan area and the City of St. Cloud has made it an attractive location for business and housing. Big Lake competes regionally with Elk River, Becker, Monticello, and to a lesser extent, Albertville, for population and jobs. Other competition comes from growth in unincorporated locations in the Highway 10 corridor, including Big Lake Township. The bridge over the Mississippi River at Minnesota Highway 25 provides access by I-94 on the south side of the river.

As with Sherburne County, the Big Lake population grew rapidly between the years 1990 and 2010, but the 2015 count reached "only" 10,285. The 2008 recession and the many associated housing mortgage foreclosures in the city and the county were a setback to growth. The County's population is forecast by the Minnesota Demographer to slow substantially out to 2040.
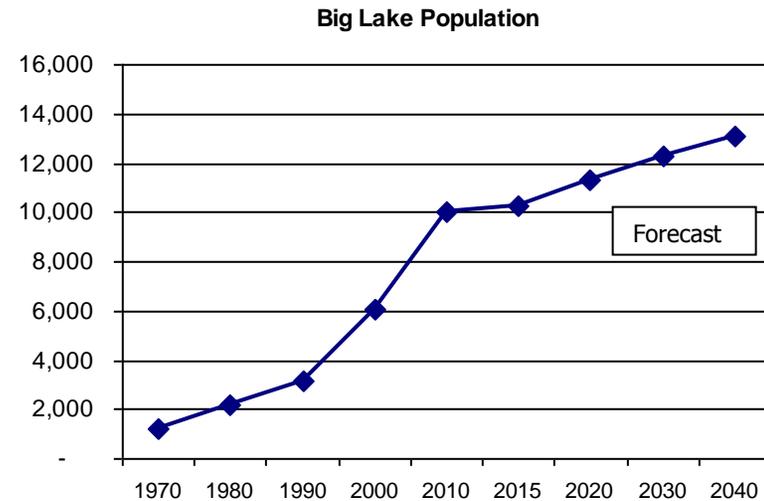
It is assumed that the City's rate of growth will continue to slightly exceed that of the County. Supporting that trend are its highway access, public utilities, rail service and developable land.
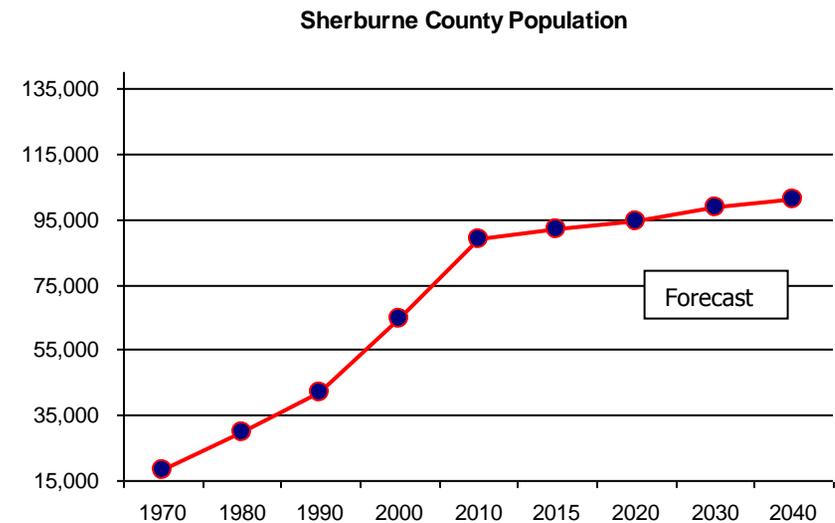
Figure 2-1
City Population, 1970 – 2040

Big Lake Population

Figure 2-2
County Population, 1970 – 2040

Sherburne County Population

Table 2-1: City and County Population

Year	Sherburne County	Ratio of City to County	City of Big Lake	Change per Decade	City Rate of Change
1970	18,344	0.07	1,215		
1980	29,908	0.07	2,210	995	82%
1990	41,945	0.07	3,113	903	41%
2000	64,417	0.09	6,063	2,950	95%
2010	88,499	0.11	10,060	3,997	66%
2015	91,705	0.11	10,285		
2020	94,258	0.12	11,311	1,251	10%
2030	98,248	0.13	12,281	970	9%
2040	101,005	0.13	13,131	850	7%

Sources: US Census; Minnesota Demographer counties forecast
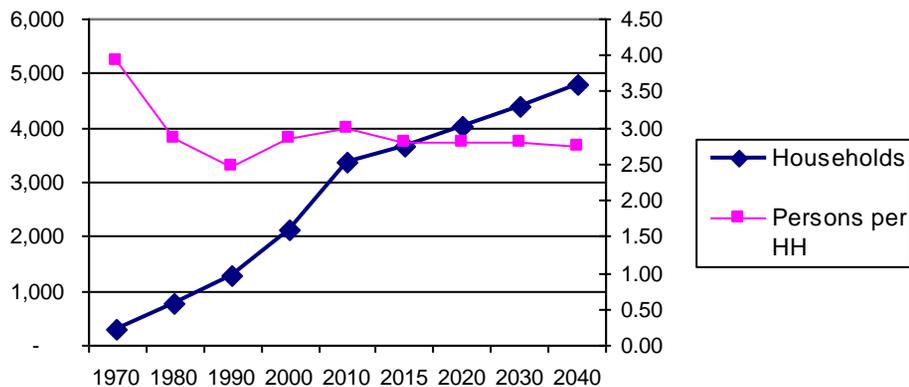
Forecast of ratio by Weber Community Planning

Households

The number of households in the City of Big Lake during prior years was obtained from the US Census. The forecast of households is based on the forecast of population shown in Table 2-1 divided by a forecast of persons per household. The rate of change for the number of persons per household was based on the trend forecast for Sherburne County by the Minnesota Demographer. As the percentage of attached housing units increases in the city, a trend observed in other small, growing towns, the average household size will decrease.

Table 2-2

Big Lake Households and Persons per Household, 1970 to 2040

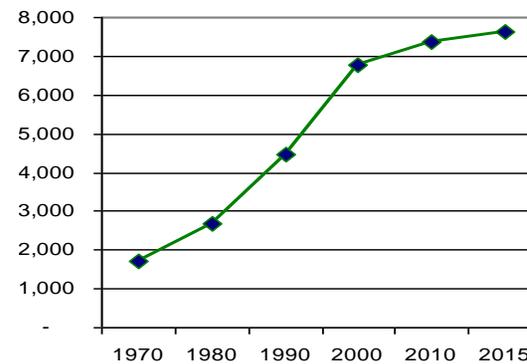| Year	Big Lake Population	Persons per H'hold	Big Lake Households	Change per Decade	Rate Per Decade
1970	1,215	3.92	310		
1980	2,210	2.86	774	464	150%
1990	3,113	2.46	1,264	490	63%
2000	6,063	2.86	2,117	853	67%
2010	10,060	2.98	3,377	1,260	60%
2015	10,285	2.81	3,660		
2020	11,311	2.80	4,040	663	20%
2030	12,281	2.80	4,386	346	9%
2040	13,131	2.75	4,775	389	9%

Source: US Census; Weber Community Planning.

Growth in Big Lake Township

The City is surrounded by Big Lake Township, whose population grew most rapidly in-between years 1980 to 2000 but has slowed since then. Still, the population of the Township is three-quarters as big as that of the City, with Township residents living almost entirely in single-family detached houses on large lots with individual wastewater systems and wells.

Table 2-3

Big Lake Township Population

Year	Population	Numeric Change by Decade	Rate of Change by Decade
1970	1,708		
1980	2,679	971	57%
1990	4,452	1,773	66%
2000	6,785	2,333	52%
2010	7,386	601	9%
2015	7,618	232	

Figure 2-3

Big Lake Township Population

Households and Families

There were an estimated 3,369 households in the city in 2015. Of those:
- 74 percent were families
- 60 percent included married couples
- 43 percent had children in the home
- 9 percent were headed by a woman
- 6 percent were headed by a woman and had children at home
- 8 percent were headed by someone 65 years of age or older.
- The average household size was 3.05 people; the average family size 3.5

The number of households fell slightly from year 2000 to 2015 even as the population rose slightly. This indicates a slight increase in housing vacancy (likely temporary as a hang-over from the recession) and a rising average number of people per household.

Average Household Size

The average number of people in a household across the city (and state) has been declining for many years, and that trend is forecast to continue, mirroring statewide and national trends. This has implications for the type and size of housing units to be built. In general, families are having fewer children and more people are choosing to live independently.

Age of the Population

Compared to the Seven County Metropolitan Area, Big Lake has a higher percentage of children and a lower percentage of seniors. The City and the Metro Area populations are quite close in their proportions in the 20 through 34 and the 35 through 64 age groups.
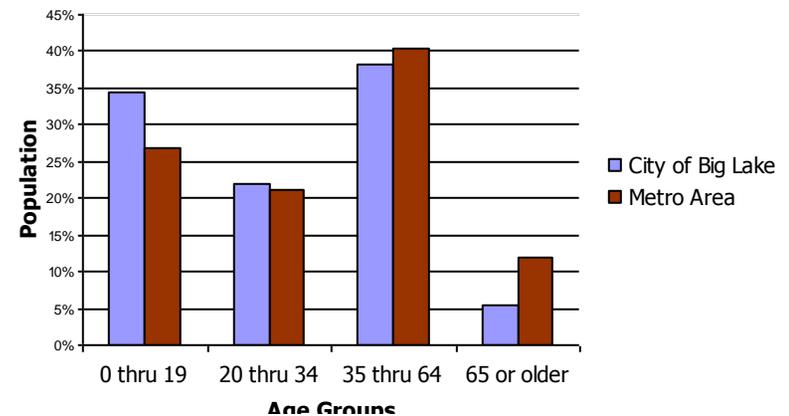
The median ages of Big Lake and the Metro Area were 31.5 and 36.6, respectively.

Source: American Community Survey, US Department of the Census, 2015.

Table 2-5
Population by Age Group

| | Percentages | |
Age Group	City	Metro Area
0 thru 19	35%	27%
20 thru 34	22%	21%
35 thru 64	38%	40%
65 or older	5%	12%
	100%	100%

Percentage of Population by Age Group

Occupation and Industry

The labor force populations of Big Lake and Sherburne County are quite similar in their occupations and industrial employment. However, compared to the Metropolitan Area, Big Lake is lower in management but higher is transportation and production occupations. Compared to the Metro Area, Big Lake is slightly higher in manufacturing and retail trade but slightly lower in professional, scientific, education and health care.

Table 2-6: Occupation and Industry, by Percentage

	Big Lake	County	Metro
Management	28	34	43
Service	17	16	16
Sales and office	23	23	24
Construction; natural resources	8	11	6
Transportation; production	23	16	11
Industry			
Manufacturing	16	15	14
Retail trade	15	12	11
Professional; scientific	10	8	12
Education; health care	21	22	23

Source: American Community Survey

Table 2-7: Travel Mode and Place of Work, by Percentage

Means of Transporation to Work	Percent
Car, truck, or van	94
Drove alone	82
Carpooled	12
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	2
Walked	1
Bicycle	0
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other	0.3
Worked at home	3
Place of Work	
Worked in county of residence	21
Worked outside county of residence	79

Other Demographic Comparisons

Table 2-8
Other Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic / Big Lake	Big Lake Is in Comparison to:	
	Sherburne Co.	Twin Cities Metro
Families as a % of h'holds / 74 %	3 percent lower	9 percent higher
Married couples, % of h'holds / 60 %	3 percent lower	9 percent higher
Children in the home / 43 %	4 percent higher	11 percent higher
H'hold headed by a woman / 9 %	0.5 percent higher	1 percent lower
H'hold headed by 65+ person / 8 %	1 percent higher	2 percent lower
Average h'hold size / 3.06	0.15 person larger	0.5 person larger
Median age / 31.5 years	4 years younger	5 years younger
Children as a % of total / 38 %	3 percent higher	7 percent higher
High school graduate / 27 %	1 percent higher	5 percent higher
Bachelor's degree / 16 %	3 percent lower	9 percent lower
Native born US / 94 %	3 percent lower	4 percent higher
Language other than English / 9 %	4 percent higher	4 percent lower
Unemployment rate / 4.8 %	0.4 percent lower	1 percent lower
Mean travel time to work / 33 min.	I minute longer	8 minutes longer
Median household income	$12,000 lower	$6,000 lower
Median family income	$17,000 lower	$19,000 lower
Median earning per worker	$4,000 lower	$5,000 lower
White race / 94 %	1 percent higher	14 percent higher
Hispanic ethnicity / 9 %	7 percent higher	4 percent higher
Cash public assistance / 6 %	4 percent higher	3 percent higher
Families, income < poverty / 7 %	2 percent higher	1 percent higher

Source: American Community Survey of the US Department of the Census.
Numbers rounded for understanding and to reflect the range of error in the source data.