





# HEALTH & WELLNESS

Resilient communities support healthy and well community members, and health and well community members can in turn better support the wellness of their communities. Wellness is a critical factor supporting and supported by resilience, and strength in each of the other resilience categories contributes to personal and community wellness.

Much of the local sustainability and resilience work has evolved around a Wellness Model for Sustainability that was created by the Bemidji State University (BSU) Sustainability Office in 2008. At the time, traditional sustainability work seemed overly focused on recycling and efficient lighting and other facilities-focused efforts. The sustainability connections to racial equity and social justice seemed insufficient at garnering the broad support needed to make a significant impact on a collective understanding of human's responsibility to the Earth. Students and staff realized they must not only take care of one another and the Earth, but also themselves. Colleagues were not sleeping well and were not making time for physical activity. Anxiety levels were high. Questions arose about the impact this lack of self-care would have on an individual's responsibility to be good role models and stewards. It felt imperative for those students and staff to emphasize the importance of individual wellness through a new sustainability model. Not only is it important to ride a bicycle because it is less expensive and less polluting – when compared to driving an automobile, it is also better for an individual's health. Integrating stand-up desks is important to maintaining proper workplace posture and movement. Consuming organic food is better for soil health, local ecosystems, and the human body.

Over time, BSU's definition of wellness has expanded to include the wellness of an organization or community and considers more-than-human elements. For example, when considering projects, it is beneficial to ponder the "wellness" of water, a spider, or a lakeshore buffer zone. There are hundreds of models and definitions for wellness. This is good. Each individual, organization, and community can work to define what wellness means and work toward its achievement. An individual may need to attend powwows to feed their spirit. An organization may need to fix up old houses to help heal its community. Definitions of wellness can change over time, too, as we learn more about one another, the place we live and work, and our more-than-human relatives.

## WELLNESS THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY

In Bemidji, there is a culture of wellness connected to opportunities for outdoor recreation, a conscious decision to choose serenity and peace as opposed to the hustle and bustle of urban life. Similarly, our neighbors take pride in their sense of heartiness and ability to thrive through northern Minnesota winters characterized by snow and

*"Health and wellness is the foundation of self-resiliency. Without strong healthy bodies, we can't be successful at anything else."*

*"How can we make health and wellness activities more affordable to our community? We have beautiful trails, lakes, and fitness options, but they are not all affordable. We need to create more access to health and wellness activities during the winter."*

*"I feel Sanford Health is "trying to bring healthcare to our town, so we don't HAVE to leave for critical care. Life-saving services are available. Some cancer care can be received here, which is a positive development."*







ice. Yet, resilience in the face of more frequent inclement weather brought about by climate change will be critical to supporting the health and wellbeing of citizens throughout the greater Bemidji area.

The Minnesota Department of Health acknowledges how climate is fundamental to one's understanding for and sense of place. When climate is the source of adverse impacts that fundamentally threaten the places we love, the possibility for both short and long-term negative health impacts becomes very real. The stress and negative emotions experienced because climate change negatively impacts one's homeland, or place of solace, is known as "Solastalgia." A newer term, it lends credence to the experiences felt by climate refugees and others impacted by natural disasters.

The slow changes to landscape and climate shifts associated with global warming can lead to loss of habitat, resources, property, possessions, job, and ultimately forced displacement. Though not an immediate threat for residents of northern Minnesota, many communities are predicted to become resettlement locations for climate refugees, or individuals who relocate following impacts to their initial place of residence. Yet, natural disaster or displacement need not befall an individual for them to experience Solastalgia. The effects of climate change can impact individual wellbeing through negative health outcomes associated with climate anxiety and distress. These impacts are especially true for vulnerable populations, including youth, the elderly, women, BIPOC individuals, and people experiencing housing insecurity.

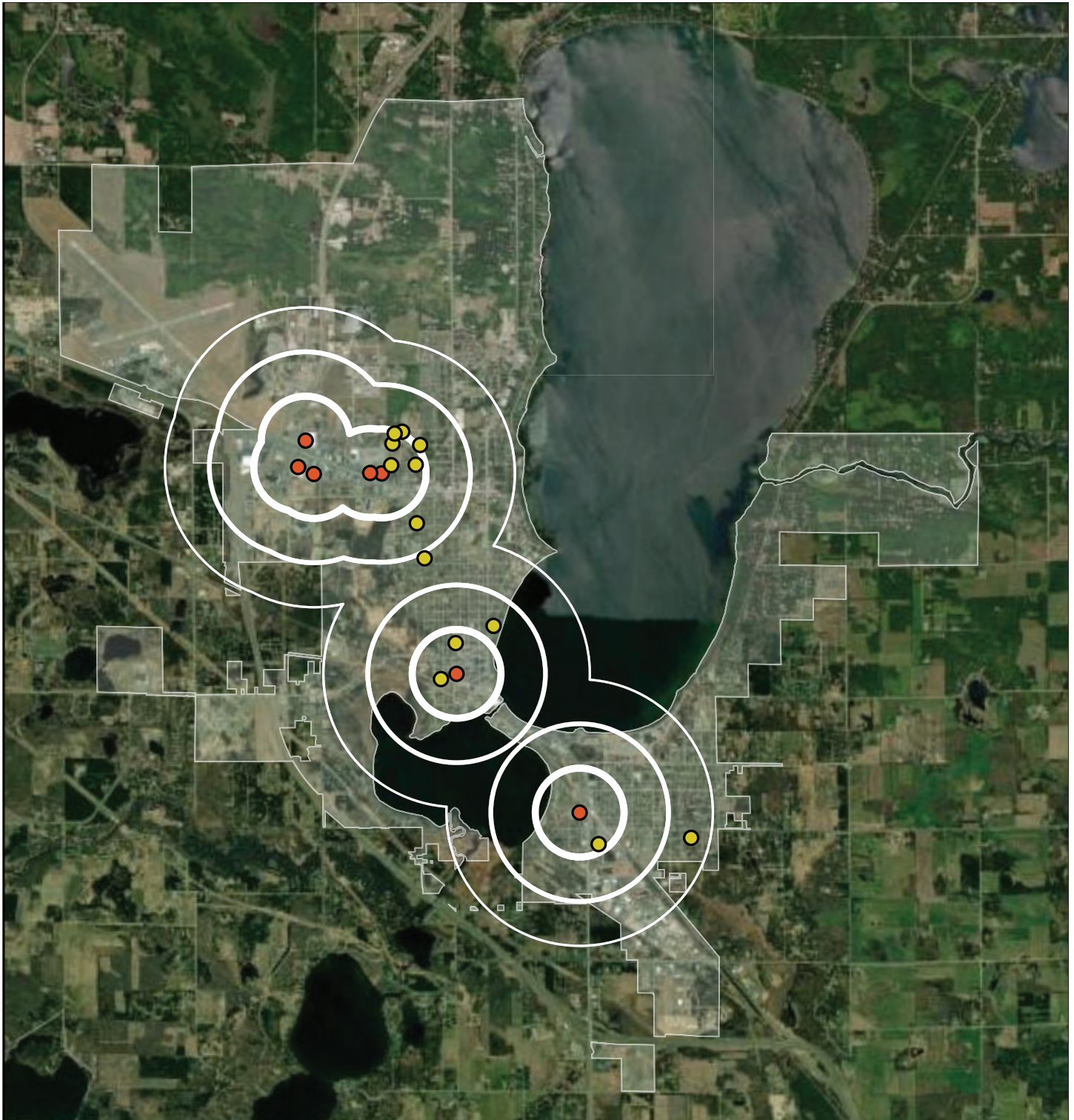
*Negative mental health outcomes of disasters are not only attributable to exposure to the initial event. Many people who experience a disaster struggle with longer-term consequences, including displacement (temporary or long-term), unstable or unknown housing circumstances, lack of access to support services, and loss of employment and possessions.*

*Most people who experience disasters are resilient, and basic support after an event will be sufficient to prevent negative mental health outcomes. However, stress, anxiety, or fear that lasts for several weeks or impacts an individual's daily activities and quality of life may indicate that additional mental health resources and support are necessary.*





# DISTANCE FROM GROCERY STORES



## KEY

- Affordable Housing
- Grocery Store



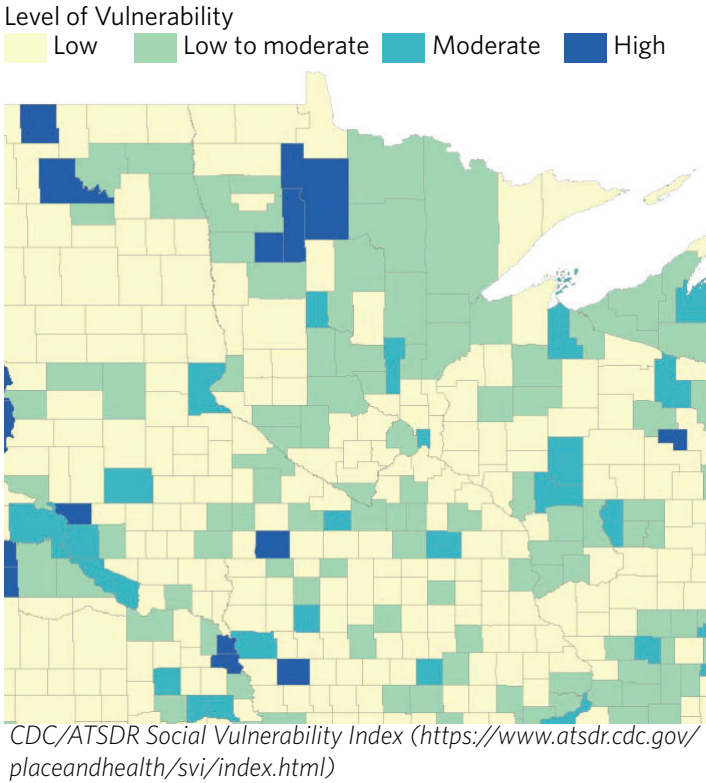
FOOD ACCESS & QUALITY

The food an individual consumes is a critical component of their ability to maintain health and wellness. Access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods is not guaranteed to all individuals. The Economic Research Service (ERS), a primary source of economic research from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), utilizes census tract data to explore the barriers certain populations face as they seek healthy, affordable food. ERS identifies low-income individuals in rural areas as being particularly susceptible to the challenges posed by lengthy travel times, limited availability, and price of certain foods. Its Food Access Research Atlas provides an interactive map for identifying populations simultaneously impacted by low income and low access to a supermarket. Utilizing data collected in 2019 shows a significant number of residents in the city of Bemidji (Beltrami County census tracts 27007450701 and 27007450702) are more than 1 mile from the nearest supermarket. Residents living near Bemidji’s downtown corridor or in neighborhoods along the southwest corner of Lake Bemidji (Beltrami County census tract 27007450600) are identified as living more than ½ mile but less than 1 mile from the nearest supermarket. Striving to increase access to and affordability of food for residents throughout the Bemidji community should be a goal into the future.

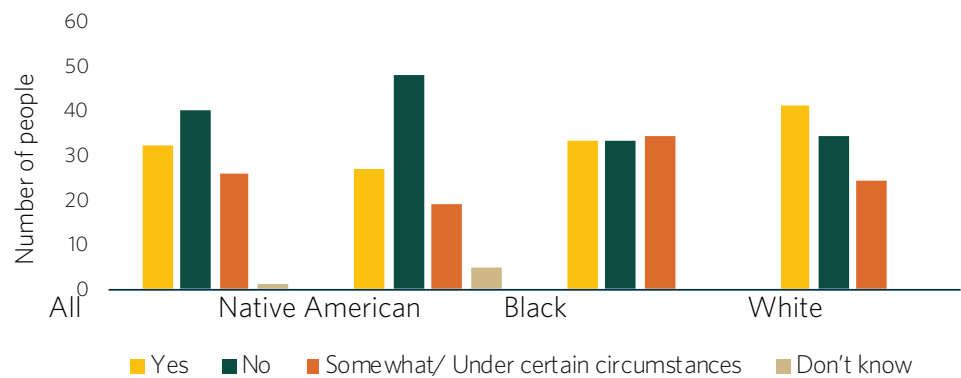
SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX

Social vulnerability refers to the potential negative effects on communities caused by external stresses on human health. Such stresses include natural or human caused disasters, or disease outbreaks. Reducing social vulnerability can decrease both human suffering and economic loss. The CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index (CDC/ATSDR SVI) uses 15 U.S. census variables to help local officials identify communities that may need support before, during, or after disasters. (<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html>) In 2018, Beltrami County scored 0.7771, indicating a high level of vulnerability, the fourth highest county in Minnesota.

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX (SVI) IN MINNESOTA



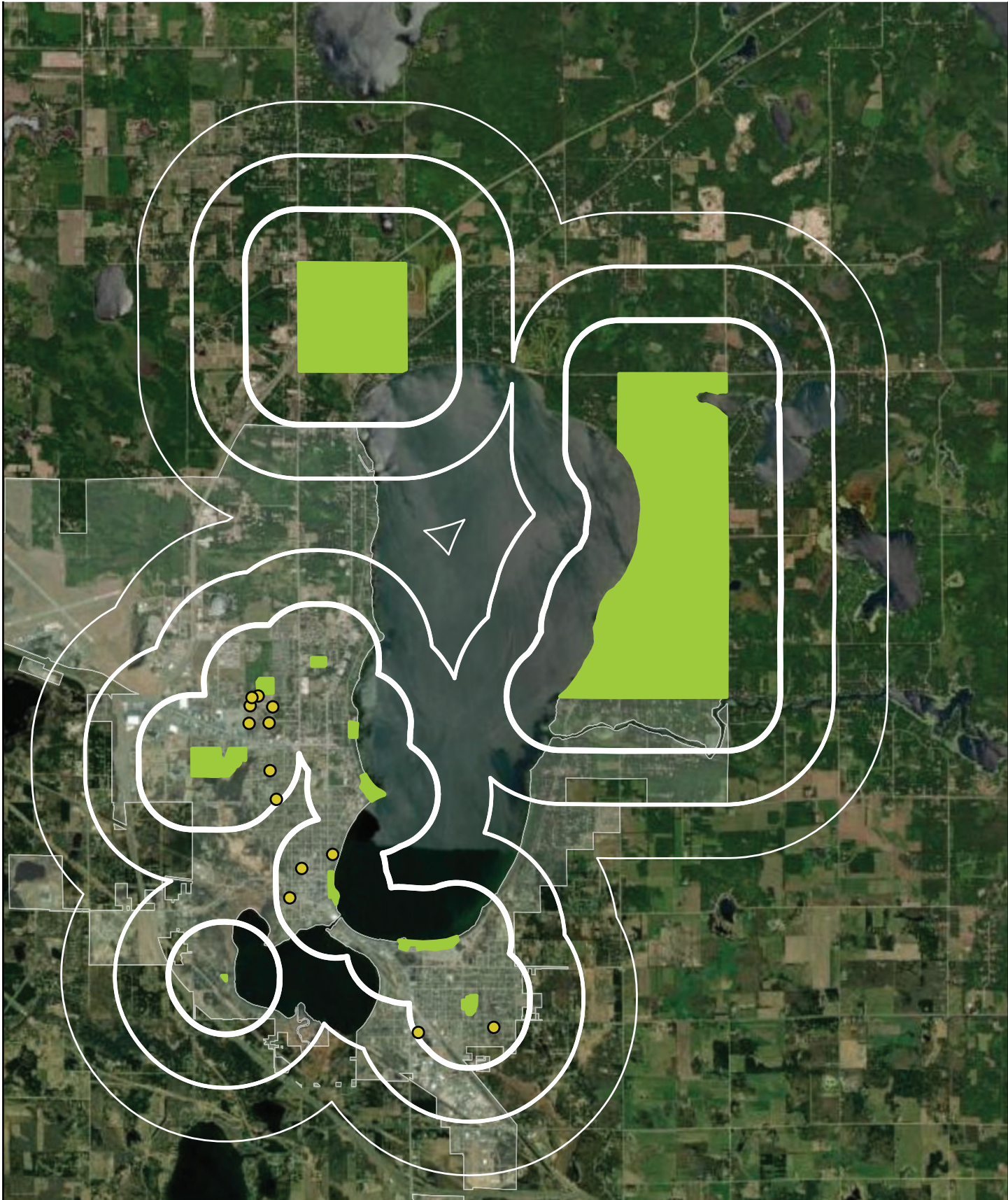
DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE A VOICE WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE IN THE COMMUNITY?



Data Source: 100  
Cups of Coffee, 2021



# DISTANCE FROM PARKS



United States Census Bureau

**KEY**

● Affordable Housing      ■ Park



## ACCESS TO GREEN SPACE

Unlike many communities which see great disparities in who has access to green space, parks, and recreation, Bemidji has an abundance of access to nature, with parks being located within a quarter mile from most affordable housing and within the most dense parts of the City. This is an asset to be celebrated, however, ability to walk to these locations is limited by the lack of sidewalks in some areas.

While recreational opportunities abound in summer for many people, there is a desire to create that same access year-round for all members of the community. Participants identified a hope to expand opportunities for community gardening to ensure access for all neighborhoods. They would also like to see equitable access to exercise equipment (bike, skis, snowshoes, kayak, etc) and opportunities for indoor physical activity (bowling alley, walking @ P.B. Mall, etc). In 100 Cups of Coffee conversations, indoor recreational space was identified as a top community desire.









## WELLNESS AT BSU

BSU fosters everyone to pursue a sense of balance across their academic, vocational, physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual health. Individuals are encouraged to create a personal connection to the land we occupy, and foster a sense of place and purpose that reflects an ethic of environmental responsibility. Campus community members are intentional about endorsing the time, space and resources to foster this holistic sense of self-awareness and wellness.

Programs to foster wellness on campus include the “Best You at BSU” wellness model, Living Well Working Well, wellness activities, a center for Diversity Equity & Inclusion, recreational activities, and support services, not to mention direct access to Lake Bemidji. Students would like to see more access to non-competitive physical activities, the advancement of a culture of wellness on campus, and an increase in time, space and opportunities for wellness and group activities. (<https://www.bemidjistate.edu/offices/human-resources/living-well-working-well/>; <https://www.bemidjistate.edu/campus-life/best-you-bsu/>)

## COMMUNICATION

While there are many opportunities to enhance wellness at BSU, the campus lacks clear communication about these opportunities and a core gathering space, open at all hours, to enable coalescence of shared identity as a campus. With BeaverLink Contract to soon expire, what could be improved in a subsequent iteration? How do students stay informed about what happens on/around campus? Better communication channels are necessary.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

BSU provides many support services for students which are increasingly utilized.

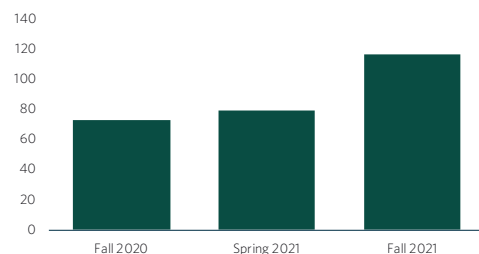
- Most Commonly Identified Disabilities
  - Psychiatric/Mental Health
  - Learning Disabilities
  - ADD/ADHD
  - Systemic Disabilities
- Most common Types of Accommodations Provided (Fall 2021)
  - Extended Time on exams
  - Alternate Testing site
  - Class Notes/Recording lectures
- Functional Limitations declared:(2020-2021)

– Breathing: 18	– Writing: 25
– Sleeping: 40	– Interacting with others: 39
– Seeing: 17	– Sitting: 15
– Hearing: 10	– Reaching: 2
– Caring for Self: 32	– Manipulating: 10
– Ingesting: 18	– Standing: 8
– Thinking: 68	– Walking: 7
– Concentrating: 90	– Bending: 5
– Learning: 66	– Lifting: 10
– Reading: 50	
– Speaking: 15	

*“Disabilities definitely challenge the ability for a person to be more sustainable. Income is also an issue if you can not afford rent. The cost of living sustainably is expensive but so are medical bills and those have to be paid in order to keep receiving medical treatment.”*

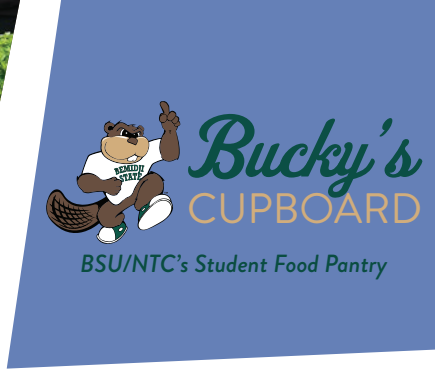
*“Accessibility also means mental health but can also come at odds with sustainability due to ease.”*

## BSU STUDENTS USING ACCOMMODATIONS



Data Source: Bemidji State University Director of Accessibility Services.







## FOOD AT BSU

When it comes to reducing environmental impact, BSU places special emphasis on sourcing responsibly, operating efficiently, minimizing food waste and reducing packaging.

BSU purchases local, seasonal and responsibly raised, grown and sourced products whenever possible. BSU firmly believes responsible sourcing has a direct impact on people, animals, and the environment. By engaging suppliers and partners BSU sources environmentally and socially responsible products. Additionally, BSU reduces food waste across operations with the dual goals of conserving resources and keeping food out of landfills. Practices include back of house operational practices to reduce waste before it's generated, programs to help consumers decrease food waste, feeding those in need during instances of excess safe, unserved food, and implementing composting programs wherever possible. BSU also implements practices to conserve natural resources to reduce environmental footprint, fueled by the understanding that our day-to-day actions have an impact. Lastly, BSU minimizes waste by reducing, reusing and recycling. Across operations, BSU has established practices from initial purchase to final waste disposal that decrease the overall cost of waste both environmentally and financially. With special emphasis on reducing single-use plastics – skipping straws and stirrers across operations.

