Mt. Iron Public Library 2009 – 2014 Strategic Plan

Adopted by the Library Board:
September 9, 2009

Prepared by:
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THE PLANNING PROCESS:

The Mt. Iron Public Library completed a comprehensive strategic planning process between April and August 2009. This process was made possible through financial support from the Arrowhead Library System. Composition of the Planning Team included representatives from the Library Board, Friends of the Library, city officials and library staff.

A community-based process was utilized, which centered on answering the questions: 1) *What are the pressing needs in our community?* and, 2) *What is the library's role in helping to address those needs?* Major steps included conducting a focus group with community leaders, reviewing community demographic data and library statistics, discussing organizational values and mission, identifying service priorities, and developing detailed action plans for the first year of implementation. In addition, indicators were established to track progress toward achieving the library's new goals.

The resulting strategic plan is intended to guide the library for the next five years, with action plans to be revised annually.

WHAT WE FOUND:

Several themes emerged through our environmental scan process. First was the lack of a cohesive community identity that defines "Mt. Iron". The City is a widely dispersed collection of neighborhoods and former townships covering almost 50 square miles. Community members expressed a need to find ways to knit these different areas together and help people feel connected to one another – resulting in a greater sense of community.

A need was also expressed to revitalize the Historic Old Town area – of which the library is a central feature – into a livable community. There is a desire for amenities that draw young families in order to revitalize this area with a focus on homeownership.

The community's young people were also on leaders' minds. Education and children's readiness to enter school was a priority. It was felt that more options for constructive youth/teen activities are needed. The importance for young people to get involved in volunteerism and community leadership activities was also emphasized.

The library is seen as an important player in addressing each of these concerns. Recent renovation and new staff leadership has rejuvenated the library. Library traffic and circulation have been on the increase in recent years, despite the fact that the local population has declined. A great deal of new programming has been added, and the Library is seen as a fun place to be. However, the building's lower level has not yet been updated. As a result, it is still not achieving its potential as a community gathering spot.

Finally, community members want to see the Quad Cities working together more cooperatively for the common good in the future (Please see Appendices B, C & D for complete environmental scan reports).

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES:

Friendly Service –
> Our friendly, helpful staff provides a welcoming environment and top-notch service to all ages.

Relevance to Community Needs –
> The Library is in tune with the community, keeps up with today's technology needs, and has a visible presence in community events.

Accessibility –
> Free and open access to information and materials is made possible through our ample service hours and barrier-free facility.

Historical Preservation –
> The heritage of our area, including the historic Carnegie Library building itself, is important to preserve for future generations.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Mt. Iron Public Library provides a friendly, stimulating environment for people of all ages to build community connections, stimulate their imaginations, and enjoy a lifetime of learning.

LIBRARY GOALS (In order of priority):

1. **Library guests will enjoy a comfortable, warm, and cozy atmosphere that draws people together and gives them a feeling of community belonging.**

2. **Library guests will find enjoyment, stimulate their imaginations, and escape from their daily lives.**

3. **Library guests will learn to effectively use technology and other resources to find reliable information to answer their own questions.**

4. **Young children will learn to interact with others, develop a love of reading, and prepare for a lifetime of learning.**

5. **Library guests will continue to nurture their curiosity and learn throughout their lives.**

6. **Youth and adults will be well informed and encouraged to participate in local government and regional issues.**

PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Goal 1 (Comfortable Gathering Place)
- ✓ Number of groups using the meeting room.
- ✓ Number of meetings/gatherings held in the meeting room and total attendance.
- ✓ Survey of groups following use of meeting room regarding whether it met their needs.
- ✓ Number of hits to the Library webpage.

Goal 2 (Stimulate Imagination)
- ✓ Number of teen participating in library sponsored programming.
- ✓ Attendance at adult programs.
- ✓ Survey of program participants regarding benefits of that participation.
- ✓ Number of patron book reviews/recommendations on blog and 'bookmarks'.
- ✓ Number of music CDs added to collection.

Goal 3 (Understand How to Find, Evaluate & Use Information)
- ✓ Attendance at technology series.
- ✓ Survey of technology series participants regarding increased skills and confidence in utilizing technology on their own.
- ✓ Hours of staff training on technology topics.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS:

Implementation Steps	*Timeline*
1. Present strategic plan to Library Board for adoption. Presentation of newly adopted plan to City Council.	September 2009
2. Communicate the new plan to stakeholders and the public.	September - October 2009
3. Review strategic plan progress as a regular agenda item at staff meetings; make mid-course corrections.	**Monthly**
4. Discuss strategic plan progress as regular agenda item at Library Board meetings.	**Monthly**
5. Compile progress indicator data for annual review.	**Annually 2010 - 2014** (September)
6. Board/staff annual 'retreat' to review implementation successes and challenges (including indicator data), review goals, revise strategies, and project budget needs.	**Annually 2010 - 2013** (September)
7. Staff develop action plans for the next year.	**Annually 2010 - 2013** (October - December)
8. Full round of strategic planning.	**Fall 2014** (New plan in place by January 2015)

Appendix A:

YEAR 1 Action Plans
September 2009 – December 2010

GOAL # 1: Library guests will enjoy a comfortable, warm, and cozy atmosphere that draws people together and gives them a feeling of community belonging.

Strategy A: Facility Improvements

ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Basement renovation:		
▪ Clear out old furnishings.	Sally (City Maintenance)	November 30, 2009
▪ Design updated space plan to accommodate meetings and gatherings, including incorporation of large display case.	Sally (Staff & Board)	December 31, 2009
▪ Complete renovation based on new space plan.	Public Works Director	Within 90 days of funding - TBD
2. Foyer upgrade:		
▪ Clean out foyer.	Sally	September 30, 2009
▪ Display quilt.	City Maintenance	September 30, 2009
▪ Install drinking fountain.	Public Works Director	December 31, 2009
3. Approach City Maintenance with priority of consistent cleaning of Library's lower level, including public restrooms.	Sally	September 30, 2009

Strategy B: Public Relations

ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Talk to ALS about printing previously developed Mt. Iron brochure.	Sally	September 30, 2009
2. Library web page:		
▪ Training on how to make updates to Library page on City website.	Sally (City Administrator)	November 30, 2009
▪ Make monthly updates to Library page.	Sally	Monthly beginning November 2009
3. Signage:		
▪ Research road sign rules and potential.	Sally	November 2009
▪ Add permanent changeable-display sign street side to promote hours and events/programming.	Sally (Friends funding)	May 2010
4. Research history and approach Legion/City to re-locate wooden sign to Legion property.	Sally	April 2010

Strategy C: Displays

ACTION STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
1. Foyer display case:		
▪ Set a schedule of themes & local art/collections to rotate.	Laurie	November 2009
▪ Change display as per schedule.	Laurie	Bi-monthly beginning November
2. Basement display case (see Strategy A).		

GOAL # 2: Library guests will find enjoyment, stimulate their imaginations, and escape from their daily lives.

Strategy D: Programming		
ACTION STEPS	**PERSON RESPONSIBLE**	**COMPLETION DATE**
1. Teen Programming: ▪ Promote and hold Gaming Night utilizing ALS equipment. ▪ Organize a teen book club.	Laurie (Volunteers) Laurie	November 2009 January 2010
2. Adult Programming: ▪ Plan a bi-monthly adult program series for the 2009-2010 year. ▪ Promote and hold bi-monthly adult programs as per plan. ▪ Grow and organize Friends group to function independently. ▪ Turn over program coordination to Friends.	Sally (Friends) Sally (Friends) Friends Chair (Sally) Friends Chair	December 30, 2009 Beginning January 2010 May 2010 May 2010

Strategy E: Reader's Advisory		
ACTION STEPS	**PERSON RESPONSIBLE**	**COMPLETION DATE**
1. Local book reviews: ▪ Create and promote "book marker" review opportunity for patrons. ▪ Create blog on Library web page for patron book reviews.	Sally Sally	October 2009 February 2010
2. Hold coffee 'an workshop on how to use Novelist.	Sally	January 2010

Strategy F: Collection Development		
ACTION STEPS	**PERSON RESPONSIBLE**	**COMPLETION DATE**
1. Addition of music compact discs to collection: ▪ Create a CD area. ▪ Conduct a donation drive.	Sally Sally	June 2010 June 2010

GOAL # 3: <u>Library guests will learn to effectively use technology and other resources to find reliable information to answer their own questions.</u>

Strategy G: One-to-one & Group Instruction		
ACTION STEPS	**PERSON RESPONSIBLE**	**COMPLETION DATE**
1. Technology series ▪ Survey patrons regarding technology training needs. ▪ Host technology series at ALS IT lab with 1-hour sessions on different topics (e.g. databases, downloadable books, digital cameras).	Sally ALS IT staff or Community Education	January 2010 March 2010 (4 Sessions)

Strategy H: Technological Equipment		
ACTION STEPS	**PERSON RESPONSIBLE**	**COMPLETION DATE**
1. Update public access computers: ▪ Install consistent software (current version of Word) on all machines. ▪ Get sound working and headsets for all machines.	Sally (City Administrator) Sally (City Administrator)	November 30, 20009 November 30, 2009
2. Purchase a laptop for public use.	Sally	November 2009 (per funding)
3. Technology Plan: ▪ Look at existing technology plans from other libraries. ▪ Develop a technology plan for periodic updating of computers.	Sally Sally (City Administrator)	February 2010 March 2010

Strategy I: Staff Training		
ACTION STEPS	**PERSON RESPONSIBLE**	**COMPLETION DATE**
1. Identify and participate in training on software, basic repairs, and computer maintenance.	Sally & Laurie (ALS)	December 2010

Appendix B:

Community Focus Group – Summary

May 2009

Community Focus Group – Summary of Responses
Mt. Iron Public Library
5-6-09

A total of 8 community members participated in the focus group. Representation included local business, elected officials, youth/recreation, law enforcement, fire department, elder services, and a community activist.

ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY VISION

Participants first imagined a time in the future when the community has achieved its full potential and everyone is proud to call it home. They then answered the question: *What does that success look like, and for whom?*

Who	Result
Preschoolers	Ready to begin school and be part of the community.
Children	An elementary school that is <u>in</u> the community.
Youths	Constructive activities that keep them out of trouble.
Young Families, Seniors	Affordable housing.
Young Families, First-time Homebuyers, Whole Community	Re-develop downtown area to new use, including new use of school building and emphasizing homeownership.
Seniors	Not socially isolated and have services to meet their needs.
Whole Community	Greater cooperation between Quad Cities so each has a focus and complement one other rather than competition and duplication.
Whole Community	Have new business/industry that draws in new population.
Whole Community	All the different neighborhoods/pockets are knitted together somehow and people feel connected.

STATE OF THE COMMUNITY TODAY

Considering the community's current situation, participants were asked to identify: 1) conditions that could help the community move toward the vision outlined above (strengths & opportunities), and 2) conditions that might impede progress toward that vision (weaknesses & threats).

Strengths/Opportunities
+   Strong, positive, progressive government (City Council and active EDA).
+   YMCA.
+   Highest new housing starts in the area.
+   Low, stable taxes.

+ Good public services (utilities, law enforcement, etc).
+ Have available land for industrial, commercial, and housing development.
+ Library is a gathering place.
+ New community center is busy and well utilized.
+ Accessibility to services – nearby and access via two trunk highways.
+ Downtown has features of a 'livable community'/easy access by foot (sidewalks, walking trails, etc).
+ Park and recreation facilities and diverse options (fields, rinks, playgrounds, West Two Rivers campground, baseball, etc).
+ Good medical care close by.

Weaknesses/Threats
− Spread out with many separate neighborhoods/communities within the Mt. Iron community.
− City's own identity (some residents have Virginia addresses due to post office politics).
− Aging population; population is flat not growing.
− Aging infrastructure in downtown/old town.
− Economy.
− Lack of more diverse industry (too much reliance on mining).
− Resistance to change.
− Limited tax revenue due to the low rates.
− Lack of public transportation.
− Schools have limited offerings and buildings are in decline.
− High incidence of chemical dependency which is likely to worsen in bad economic times.
− Potential for arson to increase also as a result of poor economy.
− Land development has not always taken the long-term view.
− Don't have career fields and jobs available to attract young people.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Given where we are today, and where we want to go, participants responded to the question: *What needs to be done to make progress toward the vision?*

▪ More skilled fields of employment (such as high tech) with career growth opportunities to bring in young, educated population that will settle and raise families here.
▪ Cultural opportunities and other amenities that this 'urban' population wants (e.g. Reif Center, upscale restaurants…).
▪ Conference/entertainment facility and associated lodging.
▪ Marketing of the Quad Cities area.
▪ Get younger people involved in volunteerism and community leadership activities.

LIBRARY PRIORITIES

Finally, participants were asked to vote on library priorities by answering: *What roles can the Library focus on to make the greatest contribution toward addressing community needs?*

Library "Service Responses"	Number of Votes
Build Successful Enterprises: Business & Nonprofit Support	11
Make Career Choices: Job & Career Development	8
Create Young Readers: Early Literacy	8
Be an Informed Citizen: Local, National, and World Affairs	7
Know Your Community: Community Resources & Services	6
Connect to the Online World: Public Internet Access	6
Succeed in School: Homework Help	5
Make Informed Decisions: Health, Wealth, and Other Life Choices	5
Celebrate Diversity: Cultural Awareness	3
Visit a Comfortable Place: Physical & Virtual Spaces	3
Stimulate Imagination: Reading, Viewing & Listening for Pleasure	3
Express Creativity: Create and Share Content	2
Welcome to the United States: Services for New Immigrants	1
Understand How to Find, Evaluate, and Use Information: Information Fluency	1
Get Facts Fast: Ready Reference	1
Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning	1
Discover Your Roots: Genealogy & Local History	1
Learn to Read & Write: Adult, Teen, and Family Literacy	0

Appendix C:

Library SWOT Analysis

June 2009

Mt. Iron Public Library
SWOT Exercise
June 4, 2009

The purpose of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) exercise is to assess the Library's current environment. This exercise was conducted by a Strategic Planning Team comprised of representatives from the Library Board, Friends of the Library, City officials, and staff.

Strengths of the Library:
- Friendly staff.
- Programming for adults and kids.
- Physically accessible building.
- Newly renovated, comfortable, air conditioned facility.
- Staff and patrons are up-beat and enthusiastic.
- Lots of open hours.
- Wireless access.
- Community and City government are supportive of Library.
- Don't have it – we'll get it; timely automated Inter-Library Loan system..

Weaknesses of the Library:
- Gap in programming for teen age group.
- Budget limitations.
- Security (especially lower level).
- Available hours.
- Need more staff training (especially to keep up with technology).
- Age of building.
- Lower level needs remodeling.
- Cleanliness.
- Collection needs (e.g. non-fiction is not up-to-date).
- Lack of webpage.
- Marketing/public relations/visibility.

Potential Opportunities:
- Potential bonding to improve lower level of building.
- Internet.
- Marketing (highway signage, being visible/involved in local events).
- Volunteerism.
- Collaboration with other organizations, clubs, etc.
- Renovation for more community use of meeting rooms.
- Active local churches.

Potential Threats:
- Economy could lead to budget cuts or potential closure.
- Hard to keep up with automation.
- USX expansion into Old Town.
- Lack of imagination in the digital age.
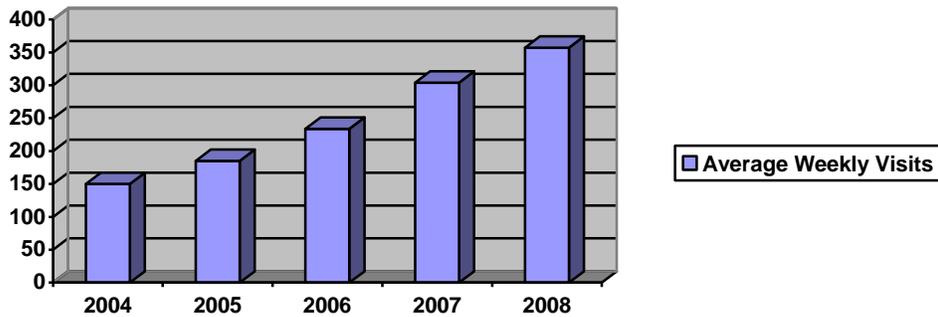
Appendix D:

Library & Community Profile

May 2009

Library & Community Profile:
Mt. Iron Public Library
## May 2009

I. LIBRARY STATISTICS

<u>Library Traffic</u>

The Mt. Iron Library is currently open 34 hours per week, reflecting a slight increase (2 hours/week) since 2005. Traffic into the library has shown a consistent positive trend, growing 138 % over the past five years.

<u>Number of Resident Borrowers</u>

In the past, all library card holders were maintained in the system regardless of whether they were active. In 2005, ALS began purging inactive users on a periodic schedule. The dip in borrowers in at that time, and again after 2007 is reflective of the purge process. According to current population estimates, only 47 % of Mt. Iron residents have library cards.
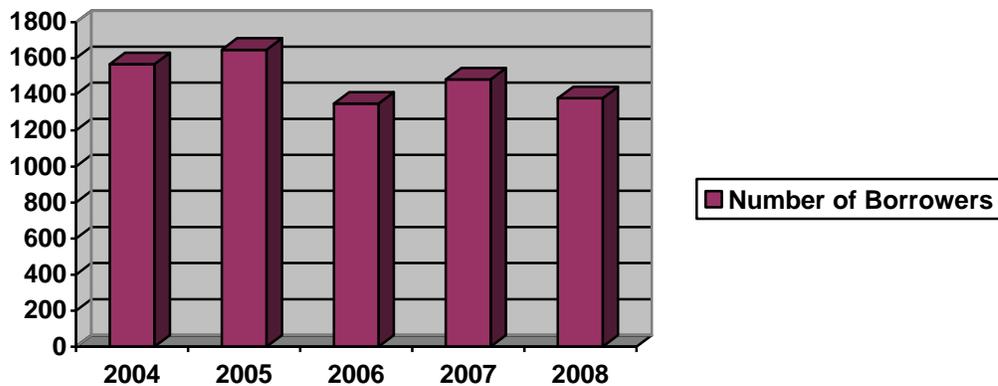

<u>Collection Size</u>

Type of Material	2004	2008	Change
Total (state report)	29,724	22,434	
Total (ALS)		12,856	

An April 2009 review of last check-out date identified 1,369 items in the library's collection (about 11 %) that have not circulated during the past three years.
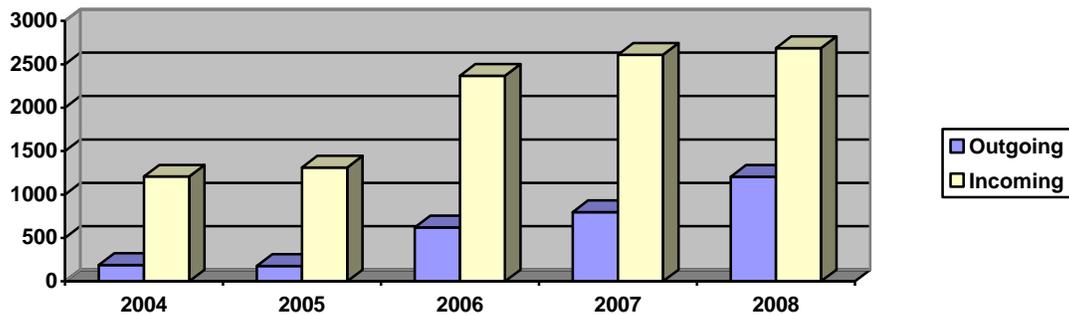
Circulation

Circulation of materials has increased dramatically, coinciding with a change in library staff leadership. Total volume last year was slightly more than double that in 2004.
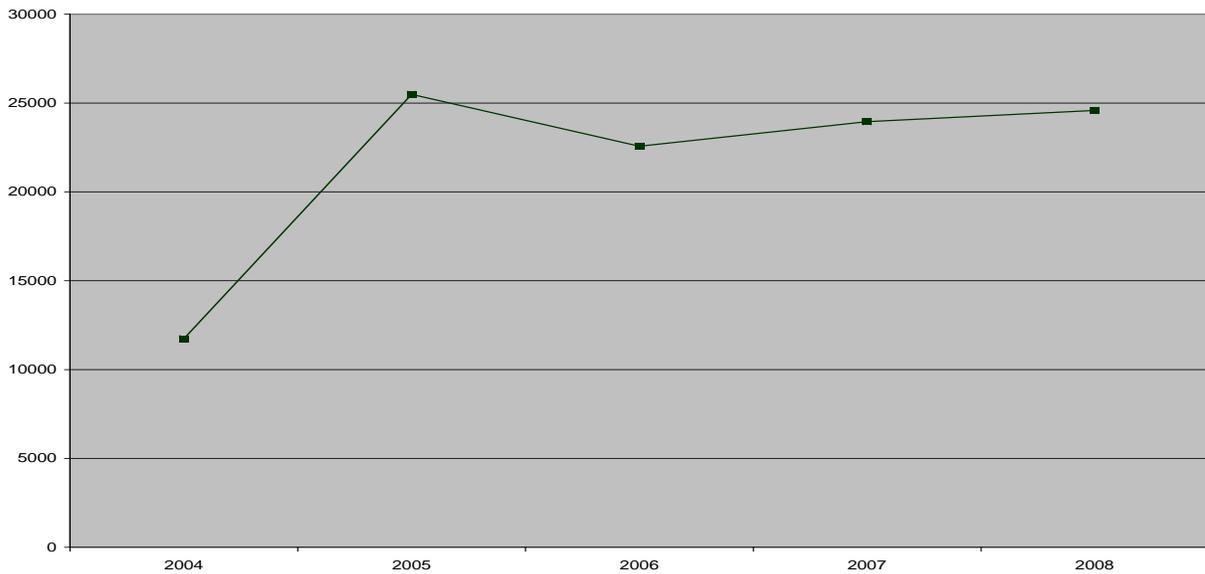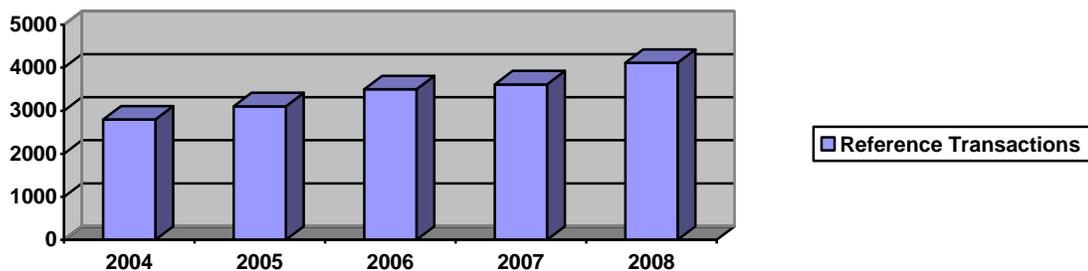

Inter-Library Loans

The Mt. Iron Library is handling a growing number of inter-library loan requests.

Reference Requests

The number of reference transactions has increased 47 % in five years.

16

Programs

Library programming has been growing in Mt. Iron, especially for children. The number of children's programs has increased tenfold, with attendance almost tripling. Adult programming was added in 2006. Although opportunities for adults are a much smaller piece of the program pie, they have also tripled in number, with last year's attendance eight times greater than in 2006.

Target Audience	Number of Programs	Type of Programs	2008 Attendance
Adults	8	Author visits, book club, Tea on Tuesday, game night	120
Children	32	Class visits, Summer Reading Program & events, ALS performers	580
		Total Attendance:	**700**

Meeting Room Usage

The Library has two meeting rooms available. In 2008, these rooms were used to host 104 gatherings.

Public Computer/Internet Usage

The Library has increased the number of public access computers from 5 to 10 in the past five years. Although actual usage is not tracked, the computers are used fairly continuously each day between 2:30 – 7:30 PM. Wireless service also became available at this location last year. The Library does not have a web site.

Operating Expenditures

Year	Staffing	Collection	Other	Total
2004				$ 110,493
2008				$ 130,000

Staffing has decreased from 1.67 FTEs in 2004 to the current level of 1.37 FTEs. Staff includes a Library Director and part-time Library Assistant.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

The City of Mt. Iron has experienced a 13 % decrease in population since 1990. Below are some key demographic indicators [*Figures taken from the 2000 U.S. Census unless otherwise noted*].

Time of Count	Number of Residents	Change from Previous Period
1990 Census	3,362	
2000 Census	2,999	- 363
2007 Estimate	2,921	- 78

Race

Although the vast majority of residents (98 %) are Caucasian, the 2000 Census counted 51 persons of color in Mt. Iron. In addition, 12 individuals identified themselves as Hispanic.

Age

Age Group	Number of Residents	Percentage of Total Population
Children 0-17	687	23 %
Adults 18-64	1,846	62 %
Adults 65 & over	466	15 %

Education

The Mt. Iron-Buhl School District operates two schools in the city. The District's 2007 on-time graduation rate was only 63.0 % [*Source: MN Department of Education*]. There are also 20 children being home-schooled in the area. Only 18.8 % of the adult population (age 25 & over) has a bachelor's degree or higher in Mt. Iron.

School	Number of Students [January 2009]
Merritt Elementary Pre K – 6	289
Mt. Iron-Buhl High School 7 – 12	232
Total Students:	**521**

Income

In 2007, the average wage of $ 34,684 in St. Louis County was nearly $ 8,000 below the state average [*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics*]. The County also has a high unemployment rate which just reached 10.1 %, compared to 8.2 % in Minnesota overall [*March 2009, DEED*]. The 2000 Census indicated that 10.7 % of Mt. Iron's residents (323 individuals) were living below the poverty line.

Housing

Housing Type	Percentage of Total
Owner-occupied	66 %
Rental	28 %
Vacant housing units	6 %

In 2000, Mt. Iron's median assessed home value was $ 75,400, and average rent was $ 457.