

Developing the Vision

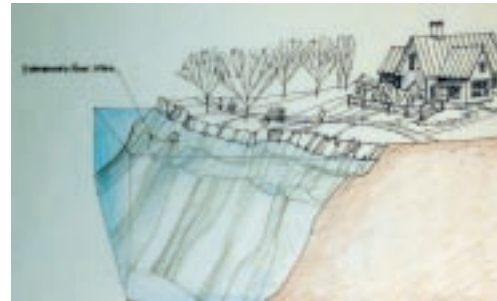
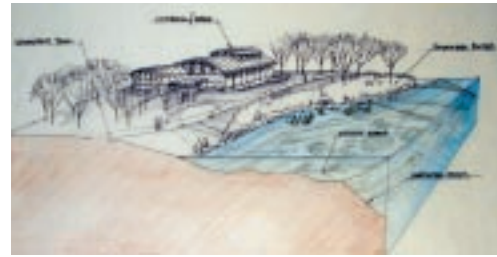
Common Purpose. Central to the Laurentian Vision is the rebuilding of mining landscapes that are productive and valuable sources of community well-being. The capacity of the landscape to be rebuilt into such community and environmental assets can unite the Iron Range around common issues related to the future of the region. The Laurentian Vision encourages such thinking among stakeholders through active engagement in projects and through the use of a variety of design and planning tools.

Engagement. The success of the Laurentian Vision requires collaboration and cooperation by business, government, education, community, and individual interests. Such partnerships

- provide local and other expertise that can help develop new ideas and solutions, or enhance the long term economic potential of a mine site for company and community alike
- increase understanding of the positive opportunities for active and post mine sites
- facilitate positive community participation in the development of alternative landscape scenarios

Although it has coalesced around taconite mining, the Laurentian Vision will build similar alliances among other resource interests in order to promote an all-inclusive regional framework for discussion and decision making.

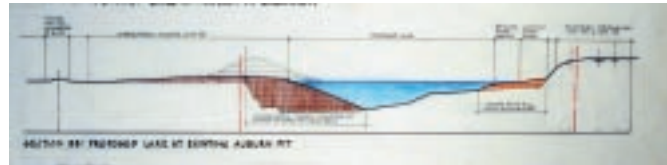
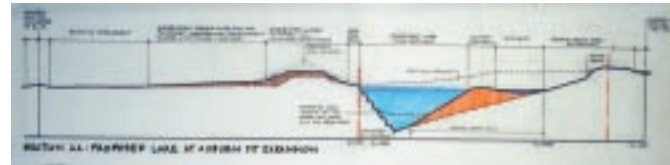
Tools. The Laurentian Vision is using design, planning and collaboration techniques to explore land design options and to build active participation among stakeholders. Key tools include the assembly of mine and other resource data in accessible formats, public design



Building commercial and residential land

For further information, contact:

John Koepke, Head
Christine Carlson, Senior Research Fellow
Department of Landscape Architecture
University of Minnesota
144 Architecture, 89 Church St. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-624-9075
carls250@tc.umn.edu



Cross-section of proposed lake at Auburn Pit

workshops, called charrettes, that explore and illustrate alternative landscape scenarios for active and post mine sites, and facilitation of stakeholder work sessions designed to result in coordinated actions and decision making.

The Laurentian Vision will continue to use these and other tools to increase public awareness about its goals and capabilities, illustrate positive landscape opportunities and promote true collaboration in shaping the transformation of the region.

Partners

City of Virginia, Virginia Economic Development Authority, City of Hoyt Lakes, Cliffs Mining Services Company, EVTAC Mining Company, National Steel Pellet Company, US Steel Minntac Ore Operations, Northshore Mining Company, Meriden Engineering LLC, Iron Mining Association, Range Association of Municipalities and Schools, St. Louis County, Quad Cities Area Alliance, Minnesota Power (Allete), Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board, Virginia/Gilbert/Mt. Iron Area Chamber of Commerce, Blandin Foundation, USX Foundation, Virginia Foundation, Northland Foundation, Design Institute, Natural Resources Research Institute, Department of Landscape Architecture - University of Minnesota

A new landscape for Virginia



The Laurentian Vision



Looking to the Future

Since the late 1800's, northern Minnesota's Mesabi Iron Range has been one of America's richest natural resource regions, providing the nation with most of its iron ore and taconite. Today, more than a century after the first natural deposits were discovered, the region is still meeting the national demand for steel with taconite mines dotted throughout the 110-mile region. It is, however, beginning to anticipate the transition to a future where its scenic natural landscape, strong ethnic heritage, and highly trained work force must provide additional economic, environmental and cultural opportunities that complement the economic and social structures built upon mining and other resource-based industries.

Goals and Objectives

The Laurentian Vision focuses on that transition. It is a voluntary, cooperative effort among business, government, education, community and other interests designed to help make private and public decisions about existing and future mine lands, and land design options that will help Range communities thrive.

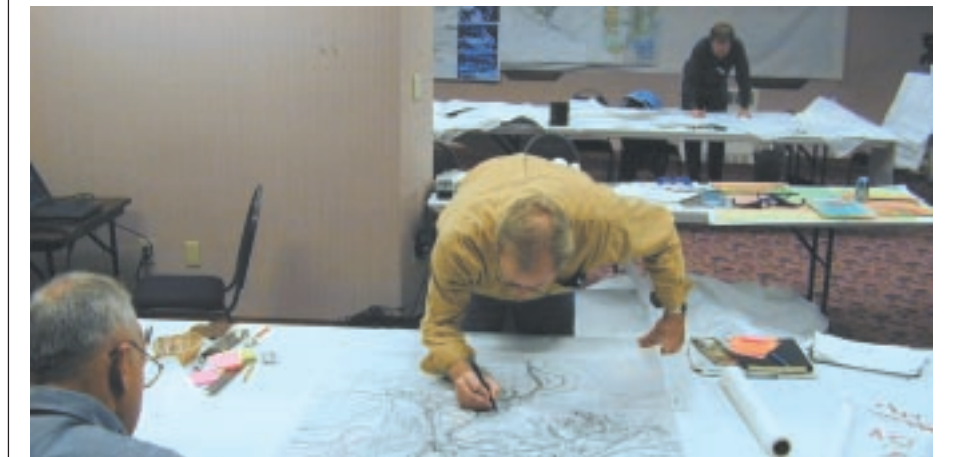
The goal of the Laurentian Vision is to identify alternatives for the Mesabi Iron Range as an attractive place to work and live. In order to accomplish this, the project will

- provide information that identifies areas of high mining potential
- create a framework for comprehensive, collective decision making about resource use in order to promote sound resource management
- produce technical tools for landscape planning and design that will help direct current mining activity to make useful future landscapes
- engage all affected parties and facilitate flows of information, resources, and ideas in order to build effective working relationships among interests and communities throughout the Mesabi Iron Range.

Cultivating Productive Partnerships

The Laurentian Vision was organized to facilitate discussion and decision making about the future of the Iron Range, especially as it, initially, relates to mining. It is self-organized, active interaction between a variety of interests that analyses existing and future mining operations and their opportunities, studies current and future adjacent land use activities, and identifies alternative uses for former mine lands. As such, it coordinates dialogue between environmental and economic interests in order to sort through options for action that affect more than mining, and work toward decisions that recognize the interrelationships among all regional resources.

The teams at work



Practice in Action

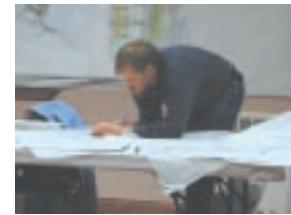
The right tools can enlighten decisions about the use of regional resources for everyone. They can help partners imagine the possibilities for the landscape and identify what strategies will work. They can also help resolve issues that reach across the boundaries of specific interests and communities. Two such tools are being developed in the Laurentian Vision - the design charrette and a regional resource atlas.

Design Charrette: Visualization of Possibilities

A design charrette is an intensive, carefully structured workshop of site visits and design and brainstorming sessions. It is organized to allow local and outside professionals and non-professionals to work together to quickly generate ideas for a specific site. It is both a process for generating ideas and a product - the diagrams, drawings and illustrations of those ideas. A charrette does not result in a final plan. It illustrates possibilities and establishes an effective process for beginning detailed design and planning work.

The first charrette, hosted by the City of Virginia, Minnesota, and the Quad Cities Area Alliance, from October 10 -13, 2001, focused on designs for EVTAC Mining Company's Auburn taconite pit, a 500+ acre active mine within the city limits. Fourteen landscape architects, working in three teams, collaborated with city officials, planners, businessmen, mining experts, and citizens for 3 1/2 days to formulate concepts for important areas of shared concern - community development and housing, economic development, recreational open space and natural resource restoration - issues previously identified by a local planning committee. Public open houses were interspersed with the work sessions to obtain community information and input about these issues. The design teams were also asked to

- demonstrate the relationship between the earth moving practices of the existing mining operation and the potential for creating productive land and water areas
- demonstrate the range of potential uses that could be developed within and adjacent to the mine site
- illustrate how the distinct characteristics of the mine could be incorporated into and enhance the value of other land uses
- demonstrate the connections between the existing cityscape and proposed uses and activities
- demonstrate the usefulness of the charrette as a process for studying and planning mining sites in relation to a local context



Developing a concept



The teams produced three distinct scenarios for the Auburn pit, and made several recommendations for its future connection to other features and uses within Virginia. While the charrette itself was too short to cover all aspects of what the Auburn pit could be in the near and extended future, it clearly

- established the feasibility of using existing mine land as infrastructure for future, buildable land
- provided tangible examples of how the Laurentian Vision can enhance local economies and environments
- allowed participants, especially the mining company and city decision makers, to see and review changes that new land uses could have on the existing built environment of Virginia
- provided an opportunity for anyone with a stake in the project to participate
- illustrated a quick, effective process for the Laurentian Vision to use in exploring mine land projects with other Range interests and communities

Future charrettes will be conducted in other parts of the region to inform mining companies and communities about the Laurentian Vision, and to facilitate collaborative site design and problem-solving.

Regional Atlas

A comprehensive regional atlas is also being developed. It will provide information about the future of mining, and help local and regional decision makers look at restoring and improving the environmental, aesthetic, social, and economic values of community areas adjacent to active and depleted mine lands in a systematic way. The atlas covers existing natural, cultural, biological, and social resources, and past, present and future mining resources, including magnetic taconite reserves and non-magnetic ferrous resources. It includes GIS coverages for projected reserve development and land use requirements, and short term non-mining development opportunities. It also includes GIS modeling techniques to help users view potential changes to mine sites, adjacent, and other landscapes. The atlas will be made available in a variety of hard copy and computerized formats.



Forming land during mining

