

CHAPTER 5:

Parks & Recreation

The Parks and Recreation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan serves two purposes. It provides a long term vision for the parks and recreation system in and around Ironwood, as well as a 5 year plan as outlined by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

For visitors, the parks and other natural features of Ironwood and Michigan's Upper Peninsula are what bring them to this **GREAT DESTINATION**. For residents, it is one of the reasons they stay. Inevitably the parks serve as any city's front yard, and in Ironwood's case we work to make sure the public spaces show us as **A FRIENDLY AND THRIVING COMMUNITY**.

Ironwood's parks are, and will continue to be, an example of what is great about the city. Miner's Park has been enlivened by a **COLLABORATION** of volunteers, the City, and sponsors. By building on the natural resources and coordinating with privately operated recreation opportunities, the parks system fosters the **ACTIVE COMMUNITY** that people value, from cross country skiing to Little League baseball.

Making Ironwood's parks a vital part of the community ensures that the city continues to celebrate its history, from Miners Park and Hiawatha, to Norrie Park and the Depot. Parks are one of the ways the City remembers the past, while creating a whole new generation of **RICH STORIES**.

A love of the **GREAT OUTDOORS** is a defining characteristic of Ironwood residents. Whether it's getting outside to **SKI**, hitting the **SNOWMOBILE** trails, **CAMPING** out, or just strolling through a neighborhood **PARK**, Ironwood offers an array of parks and recreation facilities to support **ACTIVE** and **HEALTHY** lifestyles.

OVERVIEW



Depot Park
(Photo Credit: Sam Davey)

WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

Access to outdoor recreation is one of the top 3 things liked about Ironwood by the public.

An outstanding park system contributes to a great community. Parks can contribute to community pride, encourage private development, create positive health outcomes, provide environmental benefits, and invite visitors to the City.

Image

Parks are the front yard of the community, and they are what will define the “curb appeal” of the city to visitors and residents alike. Whether it is a trucker driving east on Highway 2 past Curry Park, an antiques shopper sitting in the pocket park, a skier coasting through Miners Park during the SISU, or a telecommuter who has chosen to live in Ironwood for outdoor opportunities, the parks and public spaces are what visitors and residents identify with Ironwood.

Healthy/Active Living

People who engage in an active lifestyle are healthier. Parks and trails provide a venue for active living and allow people to get out and exercise more. Whether it is a hike in Miners Park or snowshoeing up Mt. Zion, residents use the park system to be active and healthy.

Community Connections

Parks are the focal points of many neighborhoods. They are places for social interaction, celebrations, and neighborhood gatherings. Sometimes they create connections by hosting block parties, other times it may be as simple as two neighbors sitting on the same bench watching their children play on the playground. Researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign found that residential areas adjacent to parks maintained higher property values and had reduced criminal activity, and neighbors tended to be more supportive and protective of one another.

Tourism

SISU brings people from across the Midwest and beyond to Ironwood. Every year snowmobilers stop at Depot Park to grab a bite to eat in downtown Ironwood. Curry Park provides a place for RVers traveling the country to stop and see what Ironwood has to offer. Additionally, the recreation resources just outside of Ironwood bring people from all over to go skiing, fishing, boating, hiking, and ATVing. These visitors are brought here by the parks and natural resources that are unique to the Upper Peninsula.

Habitat & Natural Education

Trees and vegetation reduce runoff and clean stormwater before it reaches the Montreal River, improving habitat for Trout and other

animals. Open green space provides homes for the flora and fauna of Upper Michigan. Wetlands provide respite for ducks and other waterfowl as they migrate. Parks protect these spaces for animals and residents alike. Children who grow up running through the woods, fishing the streams, or hunting the wetlands improve their understanding of the natural world, and the value of preserving it.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Sitting at the Western edge of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Ironwood is graced with remarkable natural resources and landscape. The Montreal River spills over four waterfalls as it travels from Ironwood to Lake Superior. The mining that defined much of the City's history left 167 acres of natural park adjacent to downtown.

Like many Cities, Ironwood's parks are constrained by the available financial resources. These constraints have left the park system prioritizing improvements and unable to fully implement the park master plan.

Volunteer groups and initiatives help supplement the City's work on the park system. These efforts are invaluable for improving the state of the parks in Ironwood and have led to significant victories. The structure of these groups does need to be solidified so that when a main booster moves away, the projects they were responsible for can be transferred to someone else.

At the same time, the park system is gaining momentum. In recent years, the City formalized the park status of the mining area with the creation of [Miners Memorial Heritage Park](#) and the associated Friends of Miners Park group. With the development of Michigan's Iron Belle Trail, a volunteer organization has been formed to maintain and promote the trail. Ironwood has also started the process of implementing upgrades following the Depot Park Master Plan for the downtown park. Depot Park is now the trailhead for Michigan's Iron Belle Trail that stretches across the Upper Peninsula, supported by efforts to purchase old rail right of way in Ironwood. The City has also upgraded the ice making equipment at the Ice Arena, allowing for a longer season.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Parks, recreation, and the outdoors are a major reason people choose to locate in Ironwood. Residents have been impressed and grateful for improvements to the park system. They also urge the city to be strategic when investing limited resources into the system. The amount of park land is perceived as sufficient, but programs and facilities could be upgraded.

GOALS & POLICIES

GOAL 5.1 CITY PARKS & RECREATION

Serve needs of all users and ensure equitable access.

Policy 5.1.1 Provide parks with playgrounds that are within walking distance of residential neighborhoods.

Policy 5.1.2 Incorporate American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards into park design when feasible.

Policy 5.1.3 Respond to the desires of residents with regards to developing park facilities.

Policy 5.1.4 Design parks to serve residents of all ages.

Policy 5.1.5 Design and maintain parks to be safe, incorporating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design best practices and repairing or upgrading broken or hazardous features.

GOAL 5.2 REGIONAL PARKS & RECREATION

Coordinate connection and access to regional parks, as the gateway to the Upper Peninsula.

Policy 5.2.1 Work with hotels and restaurants to make Ironwood the "home base" for people who are exploring Michigan's Upper Peninsula or Northern Wisconsin.

Policy 5.2.2 Work with regional and state entities such as Ironwood Tourism Council and Pure Michigan to develop coordinated promotional materials and mapping of destinations.

GOAL 5.3 OUTDOOR RECREATION & TOURISM

Support the development of events and destinations that bring people to Ironwood.

Policy 5.3.1 Continue to promote events such as SISU that bring people to Ironwood and celebrate the area's natural beauty.

Policy 5.3.2 Support the promotion of regional destinations such as the ski hills and jumps, Lake Superior, and cross country ski facilities.

Policy 5.3.3 Encourage volunteer or community run recreation programming in parks.

Policy 5.3.4 Coordinate with businesses (hotels, restaurants, etc.) to help visitors stay and play in Ironwood when they come for events.

Policy 5.3.5 Incorporate historic interpretation and recreational opportunities in parks to help tell the story of Ironwood.

Policy 5.3.6 Support athletic tournaments that bring visitors to the area, such as hockey tournaments at the Ice Arena.

Policy 5.3.7 Develop additional programming to get residents into the park system.

Policy 5.3.8 Coordinate cross-border projects with Iron County, Wisconsin.

GOAL 5.4 FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

Provide park services in a financially responsible manner.

Policy 5.4.1 Prioritize park funds to address identified needs within the park system.

Policy 5.4.2 Incorporate life cycle/maintenance/replacement costs into investment decisions for parks.

Policy 5.4.3 Support the development of revenue generating sources within the parks.

Policy 5.4.4 Where possible, seek funding from grants, organizations, and other sources that share similar goals for the park system.

GOAL 5.5 OPEN SPACE, GREENWAYS & HABITAT

Respect and improve natural resources and habitat.

Policy 5.5.1 Protect natural resources and habitat patches and corridors.

Policy 5.5.2 Improve wayfinding and access to natural features such as wooded areas, hikes, and waterfalls.

Policy 5.5.3 Utilize practices that minimize the impact to habitat when developing parks.

GOAL 5.6 TRAILS

Improve recreation trails in Ironwood.

Policy 5.6.1 Connect local trails to regional trails.

Policy 5.6.2 Create loops with the trail network to improve the user experience.

Policy 5.6.3 Keep the North Country Trail alignment in Ironwood.

Policy 5.6.4 Retain and develop trails within parks.

Policy 5.6.5 Where possible, separate motorized and non-motorized trail users.

Policy 5.6.6 Direct recreational use of off highway vehicles (OHVs), and snowmobiles to regional trails and dedicated motorized parks.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

The goals and policies on this page support the vision and guiding principles of the plan and should be used to inform future decision-making and action.

Goals: are broad statements that describe a desired outcome or end-state. Goals are often long-term in scope.

Policies: describe the general course of action or way in which programs and activities are conducted to achieve a stated goal or objective. Policies speak to underlying values, context, or principles and are often place-specific.



When parks work for the oldest and youngest, they work for all. (Photo Credit: Cassandra Duncanson)

FRAMING CONCEPTS



Ironwood's parks are a destination serving both residents and visitors.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

We have a program to clear blighted properties, but then what? What can we do as a community to beautify and activate vacant lots?

RELATED STRATEGIES:

*Strategy 5.2:
Understand User Needs*

*Strategy 5.5:
Park Master Plans*

*Strategy 5.8:
Public Art in Parks*

SEE P. 5-10 FOR MORE ON
THE STRATEGIES LISTED ABOVE

CITY PARKS & RECREATION

The City's parks are classified by who they are designed to serve. A park intended to serve neighborhood residents has different needs than a park that focuses on the community as a whole. This is not to say the parks are exclusive to one group, or that uses can not overlap, but rather it allows for a prioritization of investments based on the needs of the primary park patrons.

For a full list of parks, with classifications and amenities, and the administrative structure of the park system, see [Appendix A: Ironwood Fact Book](#).

PARK TYPES

Neighborhood

Neighborhood parks are the building blocks of the park system. They are active recreation areas, serving the residents and neighborhoods of Ironwood. These parks are typically within 1/2 mile of all neighborhood residences, and ideally within a 1/4 mile. This distance is drawn from the length someone would typically walk in order to get to a park. This means a park may not be serving an area, even if it is closer than 1/2 a mile if barriers such as high speed roads, railroads, or natural features prevent someone from walking there. While some adults may feel comfortable crossing a road like Highway 2, a young child on summer break may not be able to do the same safely.

Neighborhood parks should include basic park amenities such as playgrounds, picnic areas, an open play field area, and sidewalks or trails for walking around. These are features that every Ironwood resident should be able to reach without needing to get in a car. Additional amenities may include basketball courts, tennis courts, natural features, public art, or shelters, among other things. Neighborhood parks should have at least one side that fronts on a public road. This improves safety, use, and maintenance.

There may also be the opportunity to develop temporary, neighborhood serving parkland as a strategy for dealing with vacant lots. A community garden approach or an "adopt a lot" approach could go a long way towards beautification of empty parcels.

Community

Where neighborhood parks are intended to serve people who live nearby, the focus of community parks is to serve all residents of

Ironwood. These parks may have natural features that are unique to one location (such as the river), community history (such as Norrie Park), or a special use (such as the skate park). These parks may be "drive-to" parks, but efforts should be made to connect them by trail as well.

In addition to their unique features, community parks should have gathering locations such as picnic shelters, trails for walking, and parking. Where appropriate, they should also include natural areas. They may also include features found in neighborhood parks such as playgrounds and open play areas. Community parks could include additional community focused features such as a bandshell or a kitchen for catering events.

City athletic facilities are designated as community parks. Working with the sports organizations that use them, the City should provide facilities that improve the sporting experience for the community's youth and adults. They are also what visiting teams will remember about Ironwood. The City should encourage games, matches, and tournaments that bring visitors to Ironwood. The ice arena at Pat O'Donnell Civic Center where hockey tournaments and Ice Crystals Figure Skating Club shows are held is a good example.

Regional

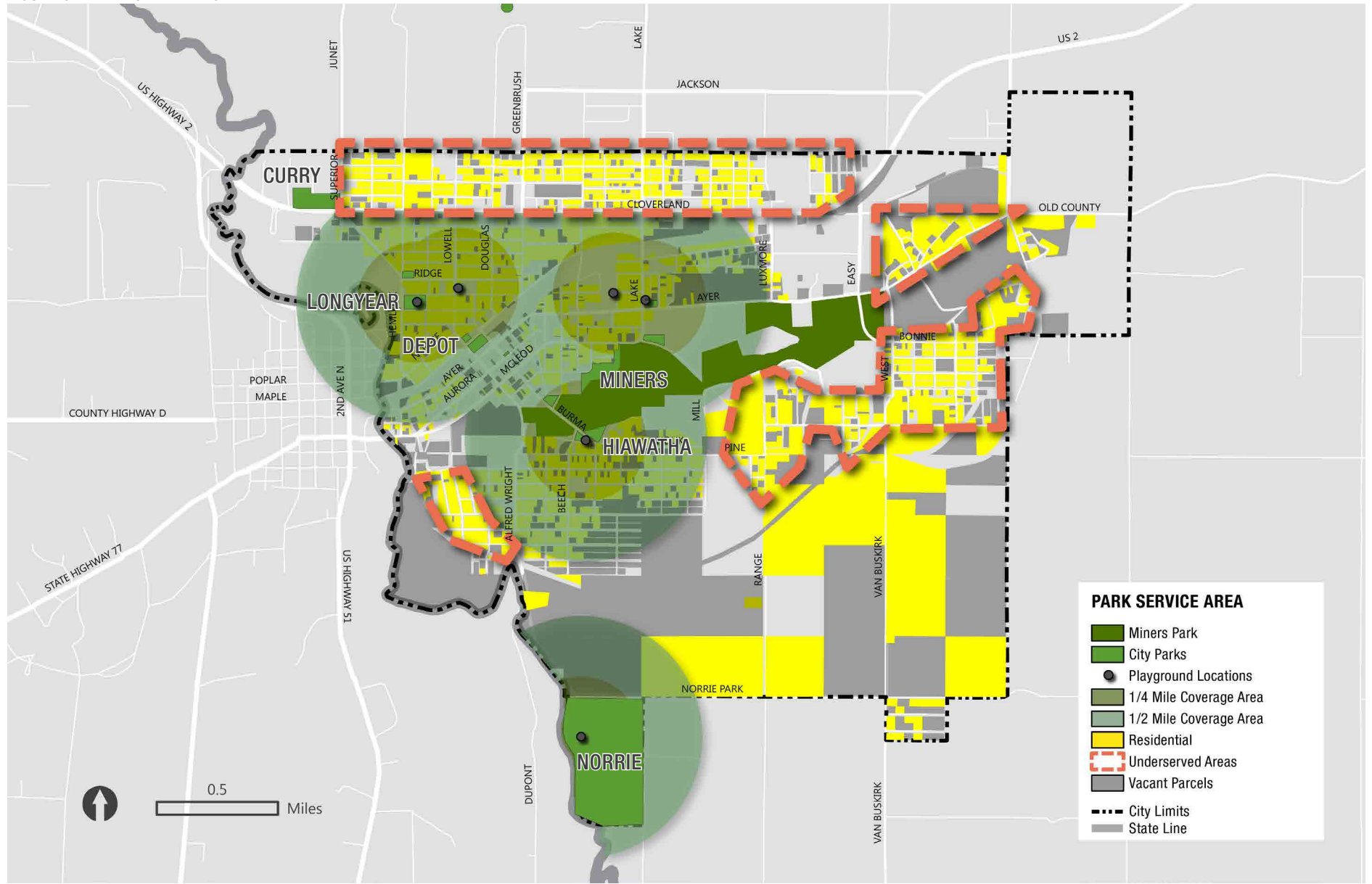
The vision for a regional park in Ironwood would be a park drawing from a wider user group than just the city. There would likely be tourism connections, becoming a destination for people who are traveling through the upper peninsula. The historic interpretation and natural features create a place that is known before visitors even arrive. While Miner's Park does not yet meet this description, there is long term potential for it to develop into a "regional park in the city" as the park continues to move forward. Options for the park could be explored as part of a more in-depth park master plan.

PARK INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

Parks represent an investment in the community, similar to a civic building, a road, or a water treatment plant. Just as it is important to maintain, replace, and improve infrastructure in a prioritized fashion, dedicating resources to parks helps prevent deterioration of the system, unsafe conditions, and helps facilities last longer.

Maintenance is mainly provided by the public works department. In addition to public works, volunteers and special interest groups provide maintenance and repairs as well.

FIGURE 5-1. PARKS FRAMEWORK MAP



FRAMING CONCEPTS



In 2013, Governor Rick Snyder visited Ironwood to celebrate the trailhead at Depot Park and Michigan's Iron Belle Trail that stretches from Ironwood across the Upper Peninsula and to Detroit.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

Our trail system should be leveraged as an economic development opportunity to attract visitors and boost the local economy.

Strategy 5.3:
Natural Resources Plan

Strategy 5.5:
Wayfinding and Parks

Strategy 5.6:
Program the Parks

SEE P. 5-10 FOR MORE ON THE STRATEGIES LISTED ABOVE

REGIONAL DESTINATIONS & RECREATION

Even though they are outside the management of the city, regional destinations are vital to the image and recreation of Ironwood residents and visitors. They help provide the “Connection to Place” that so many residents appreciate about Ironwood. It is important to support and be a part of the larger systems. These efforts take coordination and additional effort, but provide the opportunity to create recreation options that the City would not be able to make happen on their own.

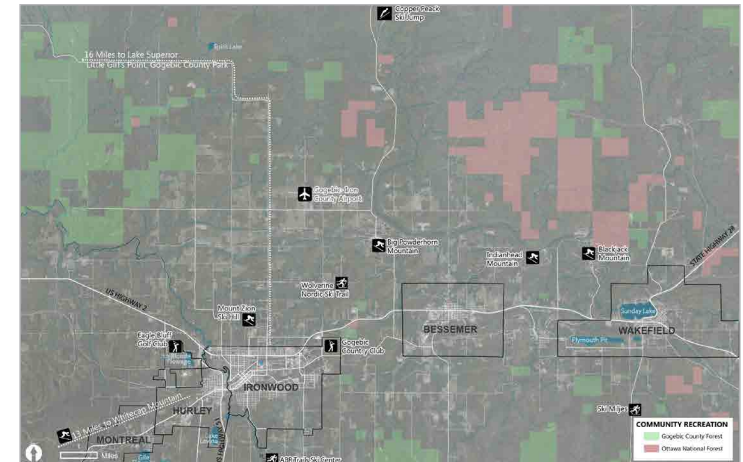
OUTDOOR RECREATION & TOURISM

The area’s ski hills, trails, and scenic beauty bring people from across the Midwest to Ironwood. These recreational amenities should be viewed as a driver for economic development and local tourism, as well as a quality of life enhancement. Outdoor enthusiasts visiting Ironwood help to support the local economy by spending on food, lodging, equipment, services, and other attractions and entertainment. Providing high quality hospitality and retail services, wayfinding, cultural attractions, and other amenities enhances the experience of visiting Ironwood and promotes Ironwood’s image as a welcoming destination and “Gateway to the Upper Peninsula.”

The City should continue to promote itself as a destination for outdoor recreation and market the local trail system as a year-round attraction. In particular, new investments in the City’s bike trail network will help to complement the area’s reputation as a “winter-sports” destination and support year-round tourism and economic activity. Just as other cities around the country have seen [economic benefits from bicycle tourism](#), Ironwood stands to benefit from enhancing its bike trail network and cultivating recreational biking amenities and events.

Community parks should also be utilized to encourage local tourism, welcome visitors, and connect to regional recreational amenities. This is already happening with trails extending into Norrie Park from ABR, snowmobile parking at Depot Park for riders stopping in downtown, and RV parking and camping at Curry Park. Local parks can also serve as a venue for major outdoor events that draw visitors from around the region and country. The SISU SkiFest course runs through several Ironwood Parks, terminating in downtown. A snowmobile and/or biking event that runs across the Upper Peninsula could start or end at Depot Park, highlighting the regional trailhead and starting point of the proposed [Michigan’s Iron Belle Trail](#).

FIGURE 5-2. MAP REGIONAL PARKS & DESTINATIONS



See [Appendix A: Ironwood Fact Book](#) to view the detailed map



The Michigan’s Iron Belle Trail will connect Ironwood to Detroit, helping to brand Michigan as the “The Great Trail State.”

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

Parks should not and cannot entirely support themselves financially. Many outdoor recreation pursuits that can be profitable are already operating as businesses. The City should still explore opportunities in the parks system for generating some revenue. This could include weddings in parks, concessions, camping permits, or others. Emphasis should be on easy to implement and run programs.

OPEN SPACE, GREENWAYS & HABITAT

People move to Ironwood and the Upper Peninsula to enjoy the natural beauty of the region. It is important to preserve the environment in the city as a defining characteristic of Ironwood. Parks, especially large parks such as Miners Park, Norrie Park, and Mount Zion should be managed to improve the overall habitat in Ironwood and as part of Gogebic County and the Western U.P.

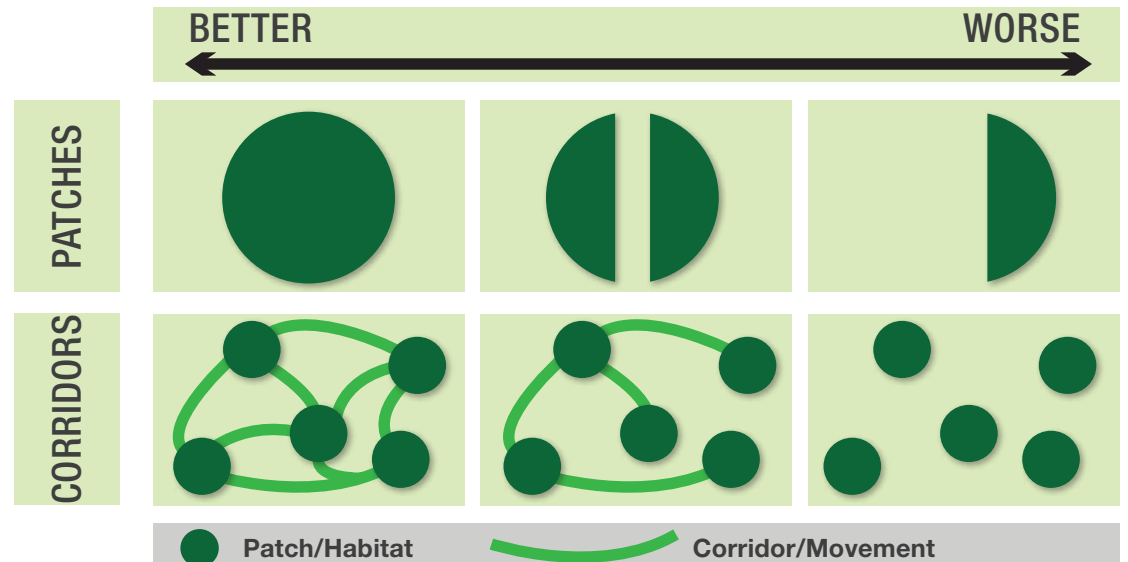
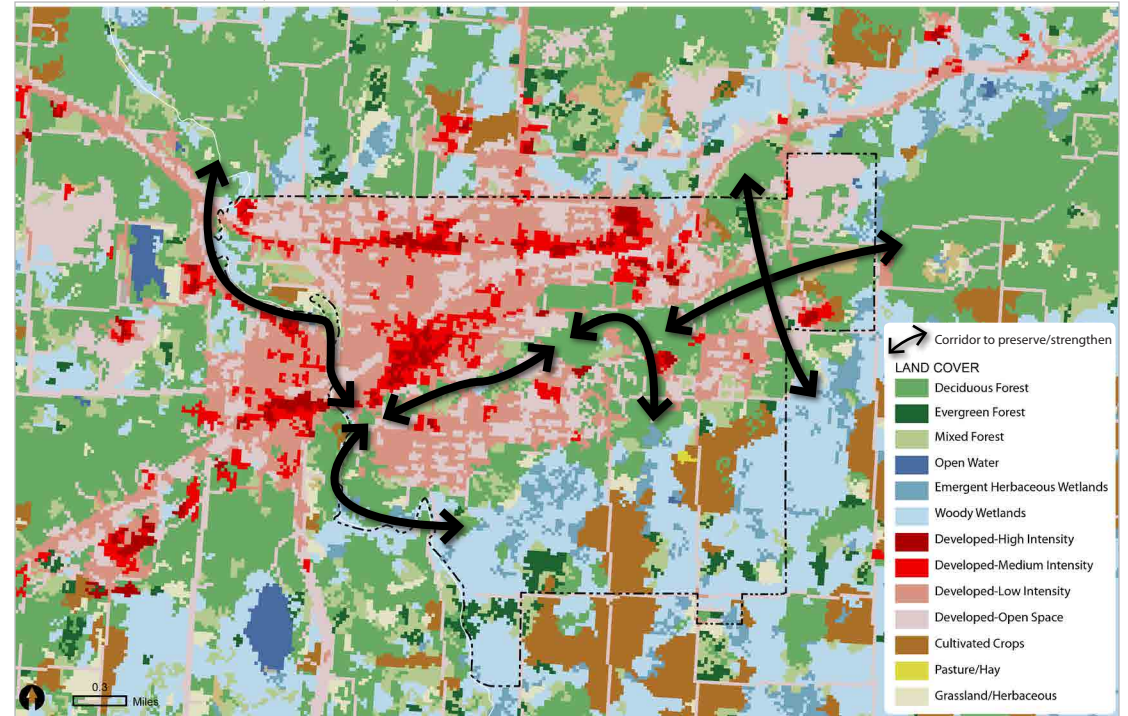
The natural landscape is made up of patches and corridors. Patches are the habitat areas that flora and fauna use as their homes. Typically, the larger the patch, the better the home for wildlife. Many animals also migrate to eat, mate, and adapt to changing seasons. Plants also rely on connections for pollination and seeding. Connections allow for a more diverse and resilient set of species. More connections, and multiple ways of getting from one habitat patch to another, create a better landscape for plants and animals.

Topography, mining, and wetlands have shaped the development pattern of the city and have preserved significant swaths of habitat, especially in the south part of the city and just north of the city limits. To the extent possible, efforts should be made to strengthen connections along the Montreal River and into Miners Park.



Preserving habitat is vital to keeping the natural character of Ironwood (Photo Credit: Christine Collins)

FIGURE 5-3. OPEN SPACE, GREENWAYS, AND HABITAT FRAMEWORK



Diagrams based on *Landscape Ecology Principles in Landscape Architecture and Land Use Planning* by Dramstad, Olson, and Forman

FRAMING CONCEPTS



Trails in parks for walkers and hikers may not need to be paved, but trails for cyclists need to have a hard surface.
(Photo Credit: Heather Brown)

See p. 4-8 in the Transportation chapter for definitions of various trail types

RELATED STRATEGIES:

Strategy 5.2:
Understand User Needs

Strategy 5.5:
Wayfinding and Parks

Strategy 5.6:
Program the Parks

SEE P. 5-10 FOR MORE ON THE STRATEGIES LISTED ABOVE

RECREATIONAL TRAILS

Recreational trails are a big part of Ironwood culture, and an important aspect of the city's recreation system. While, the following discussion focuses on recreational trail use, trails are also discussed as part of multi-modal transportation in [Chapter 4: Transportation](#).

Recreational Trail design must consider a variety of possible users, of which there are many in Ironwood, including:

Motorized Trail Users:

- All-terrain vehicles
- Snowmobiles

Non-motorized Trail Users:

- Walkers & Runners
- Road & Mountain Bikers
- Cross County Skiers
- Snowshoers
- In-line skaters

Not all trail uses are compatible and can pose safety hazards when combined. To reduce conflicts between user groups and maximize safety, motorized and non-motorized trails should be separate.

Within Ironwood City limits, motorized recreational trails should be limited to the former Chicago Northwest Railway grade, known as Trail 2 for snowmobilers and authorized for ATV use by the City. For more information on proposed motorized access routes for snowmobiles and ATVs, see [p. 4-14](#) in the Transportation chapter.

The northern rail grade is dedicated for Michigan's Iron Belle Trail, and upon completion, will provide a great resource for non-motorized trail users on a local, regional, and potentially even a national level. Ironwood should capitalize on the current designation of a temporary connector portion of the North Country Trail thru Ironwood by combining Michigan's Iron Belle Trail with the North Country Trail, capturing the benefits of connecting to a trail that stretches from North Dakota to New York.

Figure 5-4 at right outlines a system of existing and proposed trails that accommodates a wide variety of user types, fills gaps in the existing network, and creates recreational loops. Proposed trails largely align with city-owned and vacant parcels, utility right-of-ways, existing informal trails and footpaths, and stream corridor buffer zones.

Trail Design Considerations

1. SAFETY

- 1st choice-separate trail from vehicle
- 2nd choice-minimize vehicle crossing of trail
- 3rd choice-if trail co-exists with road then choose route with lower speed and volume

2. CONNECTIVITY

- Connected lengths of trails make longer trips possible, increasing usefulness for commuting and exercise
- Provide trail access points and connect trails to bicycle and pedestrian network in City-owned Right-Of-Way

3. CONTEXT

- Trail changes to meet opportunities and constraints of its surroundings

4. DIVERSITY

- Provide range of trails to meet needs of all ages and abilities so everyone benefits, including those with disabilities

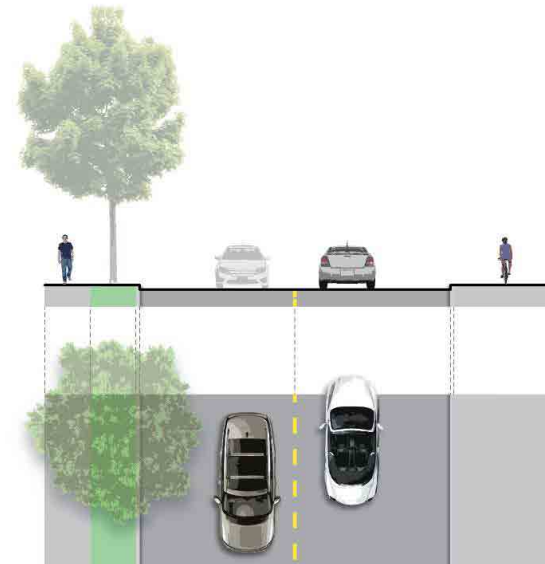
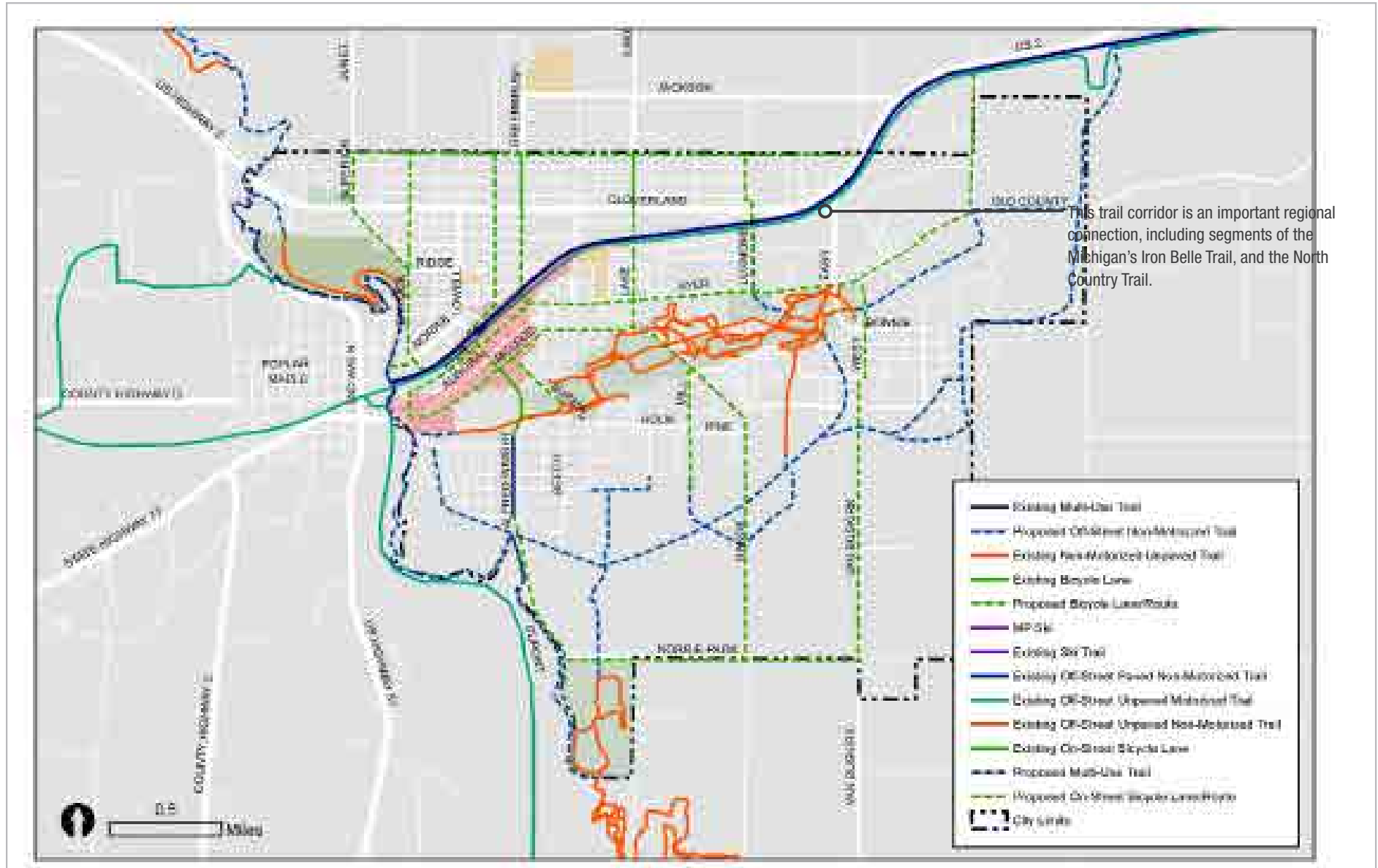


FIGURE 5-4. NON-MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL TRAIL NETWORK MAP



STRATEGIES

KEY TERMINOLOGY

“Strategies” are actions, programs, and practices that support one or more of the plan’s goals and policies. Strategies address the “who, what, when, where, and how” of reaching a goal, and may involve multiple sub-strategies.

The following Parks and Recreation strategies support the goals and policies described in this chapter:

STRATEGY 5.1: IMPLEMENT THE PARK ACTION PROGRAM

The [Parks Action Program](#) acts as a capital investment guide for parks. The program is a guide for future parks planning and expenditures. See [p. 5-14](#) for details.

Strategy 5.1(a): Review and set goals based on the Park Action Program

- The Park and Recreation Commission should annually review and set goals based on the Park Action Program and the user feedback gathered as part of Strategy 5.2 (below).

Strategy 5.1(b): Develop a park fund for capital improvements

- A fund should be established as part of the City budget to complete projects identified in the Park Action Program. Unused funds would rollover from year to year, providing resources for bigger projects that may require multiple years’ worth of funding. This fund along with the Park Action Program can be used to leverage additional funding from grants, loans, fees, and the general fund.

STRATEGY 5.2: UNDERSTAND AND BALANCE THE NEEDS OF PARK AND TRAIL USERS

Understanding and responding to the needs and desires of residents and other park users is key to providing a vibrant system that keeps people coming back, minimizes use conflicts, and best serves the community. It also helps prioritize investments in the system. The City should gather feedback on the park and trail system to maintain and improve it.

Strategy 5.2(a): Conduct an Annual Park User Survey

- Continue to ask the community and user groups how we are doing with the parks, and how we can improve them.

Strategy 5.2(b): Hold an Annual Parks and Recreation Summit

- Build on the meeting held as part of the Comprehensive Plan process.
- Get all users in the same place to discuss priorities and needs.
- Develop common goals and trail use and sharing agreements.

STRATEGY 5.3: PREPARE A NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY AND PLAN

The City, working with other regional entities, should prepare an inventory of the natural resources and habitat in and around Ironwood. The plan should also develop directions for preserving and strengthening that habitat.

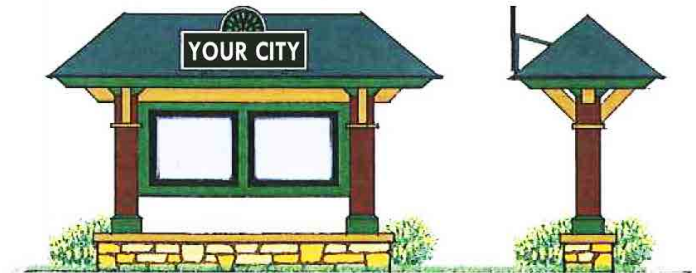
STRATEGY 5.4: DEVELOP PARK MASTER PLANS

Master plans identify the vision for a given park, validate the investments that will be put in them, and ensure the maximum benefit from future park improvements.

Strategy 5.4(a): Update and strengthen the master plan for Miners Memorial Heritage Park

- The Friends of Miners Memorial Heritage Park have identified preliminary ideas and vision for the park. Further planning and refining the long term goals, amenities, and program for the park will provide guidance as the park develops and better position it for funding.

Strategy 5.4(b): Continue implementation of existing Depot Park master plan



STRATEGY 5.5: PROVIDE TOOLS THAT DIRECT PEOPLE TO PARKS IN THE COMMUNITY

Parks and trails signage, maps, and kiosks should be included as part of the citywide wayfinding strategy. See [p. 4-16](#) in the Transportation Chapter for more details. The citywide wayfinding strategy should consider:

- Integrating City-branded wayfinding in the parks and trail system

- Providing interpretive signage for historic sites within parks
- Directing drivers, pedestrians, and trail users to nearby parks
- Signing recreational trail loops

City parks and trails should also be highlighted on local maps and other promotional materials available at visitor centers, hotels, restaurants, and other tourist destinations in the area. See also [Strategy 6.6\(b\): Develop and distribute promotional community maps.](#)

STRATEGY 5.6: PROGRAM THE PARKS

Strategy 5.6(a): Support programming that highlights local history

- Work with community partners such as the Historical Society and Friends of Miners Memorial Heritage Park (FMMHP) to develop historic interpretation programs in the park. This may include:
 - › Historic re-enactments and walking tours
 - › Exploring the potential for Mine Tours (see [Adventure Mining Company](#) in Greenland, MI)

Strategy 5.6(b): Support sporting and recreational events that utilize the parks in Ironwood

- Work with local recreation groups to develop events in the parks. See also [Strategy 6.7: Encourage Events & Festivals.](#)
- Some event ideas generated through public involvement include:
 - › Motorsport Race/Ride across the UP or across Michigan that starts in Ironwood.
 - › Expanding SISU to include a summer event
 - › Mud Run/Challenge Course/Extreme Race
 - › Marathon/Triathlon
 - › Mountain Bike Events

STRATEGY 5.7: DEVELOP EFFICIENT AND PRIORITIZED PRACTICES FOR PARK MAINTENANCE

- Utilize low maintenance, natural plantings for low-intensity use areas of parks
- Examine the life cycle, maintenance, and replacement costs and efforts associated with materials that are put in parks



STRATEGY 5.8: INCORPORATE PUBLIC ART INTO PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Use public art to beautify and celebrate local history in parks and open space - through city led and community based efforts.

Strategy 5.8(a): Incorporate parks into Citywide Arts Planning

- See [Strategy 6.8\(a\): Develop a community wide arts plan.](#)

Strategy 5.8(b): Encourage community-led art projects

- Projects could be located on vacant, City owned parcels. Artists could “Adopt a Lot” to turn it into a temporary gallery for projects including (but not limited to) sculpture, landscape design, community engagement, games, or performance space.



Expand historic interpretation and programming in Miners Park



Develop new sporting and recreational events that utilize the local parks and trail system (Photo Credit: Sam Davey)

MAKING IT HAPPEN!

Priority Actions for the City

Priority action steps are identified in the matrix on the following page. This matrix focuses on immediate (0-1 year) and short-term (1-5 year) action steps, as well as ongoing actions and practices. A complete matrix including longer term actions has been prepared and is maintained by the City as part of the on-going comprehensive planning process. Once these immediate and short term actions have been substantially completed, the city should initiate a comprehensive plan update process to revisit the vision, guiding principles, goals, policies and strategies and renew the list of action steps. The matrix identifies the key strategy, related sub-strategy, responsible implementing entity (most often the City), partnership resources, general costs, and possible funding sources.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plans recommended in this chapter require a planning process in order to identify, budget for, and prioritize capital improvements. These system master plans should be considered as a capital investment in the community.

The Comp Plan and YOU!

The Comprehensive Plan serves not only as a guiding document for city government, but as a collective expression of community values, desires, and visions. Just as the creation of this plan was fueled by the input and ideas of community members like you, its successful implementation requires your continued engagement, advocacy, and action.

So, what can you do to support the vision, goals, and policies expressed in this chapter? Here are just a few ideas to get you thinking, talking- and hopefully, taking action!

- Use the parks! Take your kids to the playground. Have a family reunion at a picnic shelter. Ski the trails at Miners. The parks are there for you to enjoy and use. Get to know your Ironwood parks.
- Consider sponsoring the efforts to improve the parks. Whether it is new fencing for a softball field or new signage for historic interpretation, the people who use these parks will notice and be appreciative of your help.
- Get out to some of the other outdoor recreation areas such as the motocross park, downhill ski resorts, and cross country trails. Supporting these businesses helps them thrive and bring in more tourists.
- Join or start a “Friends of...” group. These groups are tasked with planning for, developing, maintaining, and advocating for specific parks. If you’ve got a park that you love, consider it.
- Start a community garden or put some art in the vacant lot in your neighborhood (with the City’s permission).

KEY TERMINOLOGY

The City has developed a number of **Spark Plans**, or “mini action plans,” to support implementation of select strategies in the comprehensive plan. Spark Plans focus on strategies that: (1) are high-priority actions, (2) may require additional explanation and planning, and (3) may be implemented by groups other than City agencies (community groups, civic organizations, individuals, etc.). Strategies for which a Spark Plan has been developed are noted in the priority action matrix with the following symbol: ★

See [Appendix C: Spark Plans](#) for the complete set of Spark Plans.

Performance Measures

To ensure accountability around the Plan, the community needs to measure and report on accomplishments. Performance measures provide a way to measure progress and success in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. Some performance measures are quantifiable, concrete figures; others are more qualitative in nature. The following are the key performance measures for the parks and recreation-related action steps recommended in this chapter:

- Non-motorized trail users have increased
- Motorized trail users have increased
- Increase in funding available for dedicated park projects
- SISU Skifest grows or expands to other events
- Number of outdoor/sporting events hosted in Ironwood
- Number of attendees/participants at outdoor/sporting events

TABLE 5-1. PRIORITY ACTIONS - PARKS & RECREATION

IMMEDIATE ACTION (0-1 YEARS)						
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	Implementing Entity	City Role	Potential Partners	Cost	Possible Funding Sources
5.4 Develop park master plans	5.4(a) Update and strengthen the master plan for Miners Memorial Heritage Park *	City (Community Development)	Partnership	Friends of Miners Park	\$\$ (\$10,000-\$50,000)	General Fund, DNR, User Groups
	5.4(b) Continue implementation of the existing Depot Park master plan	City (Community Development)	Lead	User Groups	\$\$\$ (\$50,000-\$200,000)	General Fund, DNR, User Groups
5.5 Provide tools that direct people to parks in the community *	-	City (Community Development)	Partnership	User Groups - Chamber of Commerce	\$ (0-\$10,000)	General Fund, Philanthropic
5.8 Incorporate public art into parks and open space *	5.8(a) Incorporate parks into Citywide Arts Planning	City (Community Development)	Support	DAP	NA	NA
	5.8(b) Encourage community-led art projects	City (Community Development)	Support	DAP	\$\$\$ (\$50,000-\$200,000)	Grant Resources, Philanthropic
SHORT-TERM (1-5 YEARS)						
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	Implementing Entity	City Role	Potential Partners	Cost	Possible Funding Sources
5.3 Prepare a natural resources inventory and plan	-	City (Community Development)	Partnership	DNR - County	\$\$ (\$10,000-\$50,000)	Gen. Fund, DNR, County Conservation, User Groups
5.6 Program the parks	5.6(a) Support programming that highlights local history *	City (Community Development)	Support	Historical Society - User Groups	\$\$ (\$10,000-\$50,000)	Grant Resources, Philanthropic
ONGOING						
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	Implementing Entity	City Role	Potential Partners	Cost	Possible Funding Sources
5.1 Implement the Park Action Program	5.1(a) Review and set goals based on the Park Action Program	City (Community Development)	Lead	User Groups	No additional cost	NA
	5.1(b) Develop a park fund for capital improvements	City (Community Development)	Lead	User Groups	\$\$\$\$ (\$200,000-\$1 million)	General Fund, DNR, User Groups, Philanthropic
5.2 Understand and balance the needs of parks and trail users	5.2(a) Conduct an annual park user survey	City (Community Development)	Partnership	User Groups - School District - College	\$ (0-\$10,000)	General Fund
	5.2(b) Hold an annual parks and recreation summit *	City (Community Development)	Partnership	User Groups	\$ (0-\$10,000)	General Fund
5.6 Program the parks	5.6(b) Support sporting and recreation events that utilize local parks	City (Community Development)	Support	User Groups, Schools, College, Chamber of Commerce	\$ (0-\$10,000)	General Fund, User Fees, Sponsorships
5.7 Develop efficient and prioritized practices for park maintenance	-	City (Public Works)	Lead	Volunteer Groups	No additional cost	NA

* Strategy for which a Spark Plan has been developed. See Appendix C: Spark Plans for the complete set of Spark Plans.

PARKS ACTION PROGRAM

This section provides guidance on improvements for the next 6 years in Ironwood. This program is based in the community feedback and ideas generated as part of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan and through a trail & parks user summit in December of 2018.

Focus for the action program is on:

- Implementing the trail plan and creating connections to regional trails and loops
- Signage and wayfinding
- Facilities to meet the community's needs and desires
- Recognizing the costs associated with maintenance
- Continuing the dialogue with the community to ensure parks are meeting the needs of residents and goals outlined in the plan

At the end of each year, the city should go through the checklist to see what they were able to accomplish. Inevitably, some new projects will arise, and others will slide into the next year. As part of the annual checklist there should be a self evaluation of how well we did implementing the plan and why there were successes or struggles.

	Neighborhood	Community	Regional
Maintenance	Continue to maintain neighborhood parks to maintain safety. Consider less intensive maintenance regimes such as native plantings in underused areas.	Consider less intensive maintenance regimes such as native plantings in underused or more natural areas.	Support the maintenance efforts of Friends of Miners Memorial Heritage Park
Repair and Refurbish	Re-install and upgrade playground facilities at Hiawatha Park.	Support athletic groups' efforts to improve facilities	
Facilities Expansion & Special Project Areas	Playground facilities at the eastern end of Miners Park to serve Newport, Jessieville, and Aurora Locations Vacant Lot Strategies	Additional study for athletic facilities Add outdoor rink in the Downtown Dog Park River Walk	Examine feasibility of Miners Park as a Regional Park
New Parks	Pursue the acquisition of neighborhood parkland north of Highway 2 as part of redevelopment		
Trails	In parks	In parks Make loops	Trailheads

2019		
Status	Description	Cost
	Land Acquisition for Trails	Var.
	Develop & Improve Trails & Trailheads	Var.
	Implement Bike Routes on City Streets (Stripe/Sign)	<\$1k
	Depot Park Improvements	Var.
	Establish Community & Flower Gardens + Art	<\$5k
	Outdoor Rink in Downtown	\$5-10k
	Miners Park Master Plan	\$10-50k
	Playground North of Hwy 2	\$40-80k
	Historic Signage	\$2-5K
	Park Wayfinding	\$10-\$20K
	Mt. Zion Improvements	\$10-20k
	Downtown Community Park Space	\$1.8M
	Maintenance/Operations	\$105k
	Parks User Survey and Summit	None
	Annual Review of Parks Action Program	None

How did we do? _____ Why? _____

2020		
Status	Description	Cost
	Land Acquisition for Trails	Var.
	Develop & Improve Trails & Trailheads	Var.
	Implement Bike Routes on City Streets (Stripe/Sign)	<\$1k
	Depot Park Improvements	Var.
	Establish Community & Flower Gardens + Art	<\$5k
	Expand on existing Dog Park	\$5-15k
	Playground Upgrades at Hiawatha	\$40-80k
	Land Acquisition for River Walk	\$100-200k
	Construct MMHP Mountain Bike Trails	\$400K
	Improvements to Little League Field	\$5-30k
	Shared Park & Trail Maintenance Equipment	\$60K
	Invasive Species Removal	\$10K
	Maintenance/Operations	\$105k
	Parks User Survey and Summit	None
	Annual Review of Parks Action Program	None

How did we do? _____ Why? _____

2021		
Status	Description	Cost
	Land Acquisition for Trails	Var.
	Develop & Improve Trails & Trailheads	Var.
	Implement Bike Routes on City Streets (Stripe/Sign)	<\$1k
	Depot Park Improvements	Var.
	Establish Community & Flower Gardens + Art	<\$5k
	Playground at East Side of Miners Park	\$40-80k
	Lighted Ski Trail in Miners Park	\$75-150k
	Explore Museum Feasibility (nature/childrens)	\$10-50K
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Outdoor Fitness Park	\$50K
	Invasive Species Removal	10K
	Maintenance/Operations	\$105k
	Parks User Survey and Summit	None
	Annual Review of Parks Action Program	None

How did we do? _____ Why? _____

2022		
Status	Description	Cost
	Land Acquisition for Trails	Var.
	Develop & Improve Trails & Trailheads	Var.
	Implement Bike Routes on City Streets (Stripe/Sign)	<\$1k
	Depot Park Improvements	Var.
	Establish Community & Flower Gardens + Art	<\$5k
	Hiawatha Playground Upgrades	\$50-\$75K
	Depot Park Pavilion Upgrades	\$15-50k
	Construct Beltline Trail (Multi-use)	\$400 - \$800K
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Invasive Species Removal	\$10K
	Maintenance/Operations	\$105k
	Parks User Survey and Summit	None

How did we do? _____ Why? _____

2023		
Status	Description	Cost
	Land Acquisition for Trails	Var.
	Develop & Improve Trails & Trailheads	Var.
	Implement Bike Routes on City Streets (Stripe/Sign)	<\$1k
	Depot Park Improvements	Var.
	Establish Community & Flower Gardens + Art	<\$5k
	5 Year Parks System Plan	\$20-50k
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Invasive Species Removal	10K
	Maintenance/Operations	\$105k
	Parks User Survey and Summit	None
	Annual Review of Parks Action Program	None

How did we do? _____ Why? _____

2024		
Status	Description	Cost
	Land Acquisition for Trails	Var.
	Develop & Improve Trails & Trailheads	Var.
	Implement Bike Routes on City Streets (Stripe/Sign)	<\$1k
	Depot Park Improvements	Var.
	Establish Community & Flower Gardens + Art	<\$5k
	Improvements to Dam at Norrie Park	\$500-\$1M
	Construct River Walk	\$500-\$1M
	Water Trail Development	\$250K
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Fill in new + spillover from last year	
	Invasive Species Removal	10K
	Maintenance/Operations	\$105k
	Parks User Survey and Summit	None

How did we do? _____ Why? _____

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Funding sources are available from a number of different sources for improving and developing parks in Michigan.

- City of Ironwood
- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
- Wildlife and Aquatic Habitat Grants
- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Recreation Passport Grant
- Other State & Federal Programs
- Neighborhood Preservation Program (MSHDA)
- MDOT
- Private Sources: Donations, Fundraising, Sponsorships, In-Kind Work
- Additional grants are listed for specific projects such as forestry, stewardship, education, safe routes to school, trails, water resources, and ORVs by the DNR.

