

CITY OF IRONWOOD

RECREATION PLAN

2007 - 2011

ADOPTED: January 22, 2007

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The 2007 - 2011 City of Ironwood Parks & Recreation Plan has been written to guide future parks and recreation development and related activities within the City of Ironwood. The intent of this Plan is to establish recreational goals, review the condition(s) of existing facilities and to establish an agenda for future facility improvements.

An essential component of this plan is public participation. A recreation survey was conducted to determine the community's park and recreation needs and priorities (see Attachment A). A key element of this plan is to design a systematic, objective approach to parks and recreation decision making that will satisfy the greatest majority of city residents.

Parks and recreational opportunities are being recognized as increasingly important elements of community life, as well as economic development. They provide positive leisure time activities for all age groups within the City, and assist in improving the quality of life for all residents, regardless of income level.

This Plan proposes a range of park improvements in the City that will require financial assistance from various state and federal grant programs, as well as private donations and fund raising. The City of Ironwood is not currently in the financial position to entirely fund this program. Because of this fact, innovative financing will be required from as many sources as possible.

Chapter 2

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

LOCATION

The City of Ironwood is located at the western end of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, as shown in Attachment B. It is located approximately 15 miles south of Lake Superior on the Michigan-Wisconsin border. The City encompasses 5.8 square miles, or roughly 3,700 acres. The City acts as a regional service center, and is larger than any community within 100 miles. The closest metropolitan area is Duluth, Minnesota, 100 miles to the west.

LAND USE

The City's land use is predominantly residential. Within the residential areas there are various public and institutional uses such as schools, parks, playgrounds, churches and government and public transportation facilities. This Plan intends on supporting parks and recreational opportunities in close proximity to residential areas, in order for the facilities to be as accessible and as user friendly as possible.

Commercial land uses are located in the historic downtown area, along Business Route 2 and along the US-2 corridor. Additional, lesser commercial land uses can be found throughout the city limits.

Industrial development is primarily located in the City of Ironwood Industrial Park located in the northeast section of the City. Additional, smaller industrial sites are located in other portions of the city.

Two railroad rights-of-way bisect the City, both of which have been abandoned, and the tracks removed. One of these rights-of-way is currently being utilized as a recreational trail, including walking, biking, ATV and snowmobile (traffic).

ZONING

The zoning pattern of the City closely matches the existing land use pattern. The majority of the City is zoned for residential purposes (see Attachment C). Commercial districts are located in the historic downtown district and along the highways. Industrial districts are located in the Industrial Park and on previously abandoned mining sites. The City of Ironwood is currently in the process of updating both the Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan(s), with recreation playing a major role in planning for future growth and development.

TOPOGRAPHY AND DRAINAGE

The topography of the City is gently rolling to the north and steep to very steep to the south. The elevation ranges from 1420 feet above sea level at its northwest corner to 1750 feet on the top of Newport Hill near its eastern boundary. There are plenty of opportunities for sledding hills, scenic overlooks, recreational trails and other outdoor recreational opportunities by utilizing the hilly terrain located in the City.

The City's soils are generally well drained and appropriate for recreational development. Some of the City's soils are low and poorly drained, as shown in Attachment D. These areas will not be developed for active recreational development, but may be excellent sites for wildlife viewing areas, nature trails and interpretive/educational activities.

WATER RESOURCES

The Montreal River serves as the City's (and State of Michigan's) western boundary. The river flows from the south, through the City and eventually terminates at Lake Superior. The shores of the Montreal River contain fascinating topography, vegetation and wildlife. The Montreal River has excellent potential for recreational uses along its shoreline. Future uses may include trails, natural areas, interpretive areas, camping, fishing and boating access.

POPULATION AND POPULATION TRENDS

According to the 2000 US Census, the City's population is 6,293. This compares to 6,849 in 1990 and 7,741 in 1980. The City's population has been on a decline since the 1920's when iron mining was at its peak, and the City had a population of nearly 16,000 (See Attachment E). It is anticipated that the City's population will begin to stabilize, and then slightly increase over the life of this Plan.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

AGE - The City's population is relatively old. The median age is 41.3 years, compared to the State of Michigan average of 32.6. Twenty-seven percent of the City's residents are over the age of 65. Because of the City's relatively old population, future parks and recreation planning must take this fact into account in order to meet this population's recreation needs. Park improvements should include walkways, benches and other more passive recreational uses in order to serve this age group.

Despite this fact, there is still a sizable young population in need of various recreational opportunities. More than 22% of the City's residents are under 18 years of age. In addition, over 50% of the population is between the ages of 18 and 64.

To cater to these population groups, more active recreational activities serving the entire family must also be pursued.

SEX - The City's population has slightly more females than males, with 54% of the City's residents being females.

RACE AND ETHNICITY - The City's population is predominantly white (99.2%). Other races include American Indian (12 persons), Asian/Pacific Islander (two persons), African American (two persons), and "other:" (three persons). A total of eight persons are of Hispanic origin.

The City's ethnic origins are varied. The greatest number of ancestries reported in the 1990 Census are Finnish (1,996), German (1,267), Italian (1,145), Swedish (932) and Polish (907).

DISABILITY - Of persons between the ages of 16 and 64, 84 persons (or 2.2%) have a mobility limitation. Of those 65 years and above, there are 204 persons (or 12.1%) with a mobility limitation. The special needs of this population group must also be considered when designing park facilities. All facilities should be fully accessible to persons with mobility disabilities.

EMPLOYMENT - Of the 2,526 employed persons 16 years of age and over, 664 workers (or 26.3%) are employed in the retail trade industry. Other major industries include health services (343 workers), educational and professional services (321 workers), manufacturing (271 workers) and general service industries (176 workers).

EDUCATION - Ironwood City residents have a high percentage of persons who have received a high school diploma. Over 75% of persons 25 years of age and over are high school graduates. Over 10% of the population has received a bachelor's degree or higher.

Chapter 3

RECREATION INVENTORY

This section identifies the existing parks and recreation facilities in the City at this time. Each of the City's park areas has been identified and evaluated. Attachment F identifies the major park facilities in the City, and also shows the location of these facilities within the municipal boundaries. Also included is a detailed itemization of the various public, private and school parks and recreation facilities located in the City.

Chapter 4

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process used in the creation of this Park and Recreation Plan places a great deal of emphasis on public participation. The plan was initially drafted by the City of Ironwood Recreation, Cultural and Life Enrichment Committee. This Committee was created by resolution of the City Commission with the express purpose of drafting a Parks and Recreation Plan.

The Recreation, Cultural and Life Enrichment Committee met regularly for approximately six (6) months in order to draft the initial plan. All meetings were open to the public and fully advertised through the local media. Members of the Recreation, Cultural and Life Enrichment Committee represented a broad cross-section of the community, in order to receive input from various sectors. Staff support for the committee was given by Pat Merrill, Community Development Director..

One of the initial steps of the Recreation, Cultural and Life Enrichment Committee was the distribution of a recreation survey. The purpose of the recreation survey was to learn the public's priorities as they relate to parks and recreation opportunities. The survey was heavily promoted through various media outlets, and was made available at numerous locations. The Ironwood Area School District was also a partner in this effort, with more than 150 surveys being distributed to the student body at the local schools. The committee received a response of over 300 City residents, which represents an excellent response when compared to previous efforts.

The complete survey results were previously mentioned, and are included in Attachment A. The survey results are classified by whether the respondent has children, the age of the respondent (and children) and the location of the respondent's home. The information collected from this survey proved to be extremely useful during the planning process.

After reviewing the survey results, the committee decided that the top priorities of the City regarding parks and recreation were the need to improve and better maintain existing parks, as well as add facilities due to the changing recreation priorities of residents. Top facilities that the survey respondents desired to be updated and developed include; rest room facilities, a skateboard park, non-motorized trails, swimming areas and facilities, basketball & tennis courts, baseball fields, winter recreation and the Civic Center (ice arena). Many cultural/arts activities and facilities were also on the wish list of a majority of residents.

Based on the results of the parks and recreation survey, the Recreation, Cultural and Life Enrichment Committee prepared a draft version of the Park and Recreation Plan. After several meetings, the Plan was approved by the committee and submitted to the Planning Commission and City Commission for formal adoption.

On January 22, 2007, the City Commission passed a resolution adopting the five year City of Ironwood Park and Recreation Plan (See Attachment G for a copy of all meeting minutes and the resolution of Plan Adoption).

Chapter 5

BASIS FOR ACTION PROGRAM

The 2007 - 2011 Ironwood Parks and Recreation Plan is a realistic plan based on the results of the community recreation survey, numerous public meetings and citizen involvement. It is also largely based on continuing the improvements that have been made to the park system since the adoption of the original Recreation Plan.

The major emphasis of the original Plan was to improve the existing City Park system. Very significant improvements have been made to the parks since the adoption of the 1996 - 2001 & 2001 - 2006 Parks and Recreation Plans, including; Norrie Park Riverfront trails, restrooms and pavilion improvements; Longyear Park Bank Shell, Curry Park Campground and building improvements, Lake/Ayer Playground improvements and Kuitunen Park improvements.

The community has embraced these improvements as evidenced by the on-going efforts to make further park improvements and additions. In the City's two major parks, Longyear and Norrie Parks, various community groups have initiated park revitalization projects designed to further enhance the parks, and increase accessibility, and user options.

An example of this is that once the City completed the Norrie Park Riverside Improvement Project (funded by a \$53,700 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant); three community groups have stepped forward to make additional improvements to the park. First, the Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action Agency wrote and received a \$12,000 grant to create a community vegetable garden in Norrie Park. Secondly, the local running club and a nearby cross-country ski trail system have partnered with the City to expand the trail system for both summer and wintertime use. This Plan takes these projects into account, and Norrie Park, at 105 acres, will continue to be developed in the future.

The Action Program intends on building on the success of the past to create enhanced park opportunities in all of the City's parks. Based on the survey results, the City of Ironwood will continue to meet the community's recreation needs by investing funding (private, local and grants) in the areas that were deemed a high priority by the community.

One of the leading park facilities owned by the City of Ironwood is Norrie Park. The park is located along the banks of the Montreal River, and offers excellent outdoor based recreational opportunities, such as fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, skiing, picnicking and camping. Many of these improvements were put into place with the MNRTF grant.

Additional improvements to Norrie Park include the development of a campground, in order to fully take advantage of the current amenities, as well as utilize the Park's location on the

Montreal River. These improvements will meet the needs of the community, based on the results of the recreation survey and will make the park a major regional draw. A campground would also generate revenue to be used for park maintenance, and would greatly improve park security.

Longyear Park is centrally located within the city, and easily accessible from the chief residential areas of the City. It is a well-established park that has the distinct advantage of being surrounded by residential housing on three sides. This increases the usage and visibility of the park, and helps to reduce vandalism. Now that many park improvements are in place, or nearly complete, including the band shell, playground improvements, basketball courts and improved bike/walking paths, the park will receive a significant increase in use. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to offer restroom facilities at this site. This amenity was a high priority of the residents (according to the recreation survey), and can also be used to serve the adjacent Patterson Tennis Courts.

Another major element of the Action Program is the development of a community-wide trail system to connect parks, schools, residential areas and the downtown. The system would use the former Chicago-Northwestern Railroad corridor that the State of Michigan currently holds a recreational easement on. The trails would connect the Depot Park in the downtown district to other trails, both local and regional. The Depot Park area would serve as an excellent trailhead to this system. Bike and walking trails were two of the top requested facilities in the recreation survey, and any new trails will be constructed to serve all age groups in the City, while providing many different recreational options including; walking, biking, rollerblading and skateboarding and motorized sport opportunities.

Because of the high cost of this project, it is proposed to be handled in three phases. A Trail Master Plan is currently in the works, which will allow us to complete an inventory of the current trail system, and how to best connect these existing locations to each other, as well as the regional trail system.

Chapter 6

ACTION PROGRAM

This Section details the five- year action program for the City of Ironwood. The action program is based on considerable pubic input including input from the Community Recreation Survey.

The action program calls for a focus on improvements to the current park system, as well as the development of additional facilities in order to more fully meet the community's needs. Funding for this program is intended to come from a variety of sources including; state and federal grants, donations, fund raising, foundations and City contributions. This is fully outlined in Table 5 (below).

Table 5
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEDULE

YEAR	PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE
2007	Longyear Park Restrooms	\$50,000	1,2,4
	Skateboard Park	\$50,000	1,4,5,7
	Trail Master Plan	\$15,000	1,4
	Mt. Zion Access Improvements	\$10,000	1,4
2008	Patterson Court Resurfacing	\$20,000	1,4,7
	Phase I of Recreational Trail (Including seating & landscaping)	\$60,000	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
	Civic Center Improvements	\$100,000	1,3,4,7
2009	Phase" of Recreational Trail	\$200,000	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
	Norrie Park Campground &	\$85,000	1,2,3,4

	Beach Improvements		
	Patterson Court Lighting	\$30,000	1,2,4,7
2010	Phase III of Recreational Trail	\$200,000	1,2,3,5,6
	Norrie Park Playground & Courts	\$50,000	1,2,3,4,7
2011	Depot Area Park Improvements	\$30,000	1,4,5,7
	Phase IV of Recreation Trail	\$200,000	1,2,3,5,6

Funding Source:

- 1 - City of Ironwood,
- 2 - Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund,
- 3 - Land and Water Conservation Fund,
- 4 - Private Sources (fund raising, donations, etc).
- 5- Neighborhood Preservation Program (MSHDA),
- 6 -M-DOT, SAFETEA-LU Funding
- 7 - Foundation Grants.

Chapter 7

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The Ironwood City Commission appointed a Recreation, Cultural and Life Enrichment Committee to develop this Parks and Recreation Plan. The Ironwood Planning Commission makes recommendations to the City Commission regarding capital improvements, and was also responsible for the update and review of the 2006-2011 Parks and Recreation Plan. All Planning Commission meetings are open to the public, and are advertised in the local media.

The City Commission has the final decision making authority as it pertains to parks and recreation funding, but considers input and recommendations from the Planning Commission, Parks Commission, staff and the residents of the community.

Parks and playgrounds are maintained by City crews. During the summer months, the Parks and Recreation Director is in charge of summer youth workers responsible for additional park maintenance. Routine park and cemetery mowing services are contracted out to local businesses.

Volunteers from local organizations regularly assist the City with maintenance, especially at the four ball fields, the Civic Center and Norrie Park. Various organizations have donated a considerable amount of time and money over the past several years to park and recreation improvements and programming.

The current year budget for park and recreation programming, development and maintenance is \$110,000. Of this, approximately \$11,000 is available for facility development.

The organizational chart of the City as it pertains to park and recreation decision-making and maintenance is shown in Attachment H.

TABLE I

DESCRIPTION OF CITY OWNED RECREATION FACILITIES

- 1) Curry Park - Location on W. U.S. Highway 2. Amenities includes picnic tables and grills, 56 camp sites, 9 full service hook-ups, showers, laundry, and sanitary dump station. 9.25 acres.
- 2) Patterson Tennis Courts - Ridge and Hemlock Streets. Two (2) tennis courts. .77 acres.
- 3) Longyear Park - Arch and Hemlock Streets. Includes walking track, basketball court, band shell and children's playground equipment.. 3.22 acres.
- 4) Kuitunen Park - Lowell and Frederick Streets. Features fountains, benches and various [omls of native vegetation. .5 acres.
- 5) Little League Field - Day and Vaughm Streets. Regulation Little League Field including spectator seating, concession stand and restroom facilities.
- 6) Kiwanis Tot Lot - Burma Road. Playground equipment for young children.
- 7) Hiawatha Park - Burma Road. World's tallest fiberglass Native American, also includes a pavilion and playground equipment.. 1.04 acres.
- 8) Randa Field - Bunna Road and Houk Street.. Lighted softball field with spectator seating. .2 acres.
- 9) Norrie Park - Norrie Park Road. Picnic tables and grills, two (2) tennis courts, volleyball, restrooms, walking trails, open space, two (2) horseshoe pits, pavilion, playground equipment and ADA compliant fishing platform. 105 acres.
- 10) City of Ironwood - Snowmobile, ATV and non-motorized routes.
- 11) Municipal Memorial Building - Marquette Street. Gymnasium and Auditorium.
- 12) Lake and Ayer Street Park - Playground equipment for younger children.
- 13) P.J. O'Donnell Civic Center - Jackson Road. Ice Arena.
- 14) Mt. Zion Overlook - Mt. Zion Road. Scenic viewing with benches.

City of Ironwood, MI. Parks



LEGEND

- 1) CURRY PARK
- 2) TENNIS COURTS
- 3) LONGYEAR PARK
- 4) KUINEN PARK
- 5) LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD
- 6) KUWANIS TOT LOT
- 7) HIALIATHA PARK
- 8) RANDA FIELD
- 9) NORRIS PARK
- 10) SANGUINOLE ROUTE
- 11) MEMORIAL BUILDING
- 12) LAKE/AYER STREET PLAYGROUND
- 13) PAT O'DONNELL CIVIC CENTER
- 14) MT. ZION OVERLOOK

