Implementation

The Ironwood Comprehensive Plan provides the POLICY FRAMEWORK to guide physical change in the community over the next 20 years. The effectiveness of the plan depends to a large extent on identifying actions and initiatives to implement the ideas outlined in the plan. To this end, Chapters 3 through 7 each include a section on "STRATEGIES" that outlines a number of general actions, programs, and practices that support the goals and policies of the plan. Also included in each chapter is a section titled "Making it Happen" which organizes strategies into more direct ACTION STEPS and prioritizes immediate and short terms actions. Select strategies were further developed as SPARK PLANS- or "mini action plans" that elaborate on the "who, what, where, and why" of implementing a particular strategy. The following chapter provides direction on how to use these various IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS, as well as best practices that will help to ensure that this plan is and continues to be a USEFUL, LIVING DOCUMENT that results in CONCRETE OUTCOMES.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

The Ironwood Comprehensive Plan provides the policy framework to guide physical change in the community over the next 20 years. The effectiveness of the plan to guide development and public investment decisions depends to a large extent on clearly identifying actions and initiatives to implement the ideas outlined in the comprehensive plan. To this end, the plan includes a number of tools to support implementation and direct future action.

Strategies & Priority Action Steps

Chapters 3 through 7 each include a section on "**Strategies**" that outlines a number of general actions, programs, and practices that support the goals and policies of the plan. Also included in each chapter is a section titled "Making it Happen" which organizes strategies into immediate,short terms, and ongoing actions steps. This section also provides suggestions for how individual and community actions can support the plan's policy directions.

These **Priority Action Steps** are concrete initiatives that are intended to carry out an idea, policy, or strategy identified through the planning process and memorialized in the adoption of the plan. The action steps directly correlate to the vision and guiding principles and the various strategies defined throughout the plan. Action steps will result in both tangible and intangible outcomes. For example, one action step may be to provide a service that enhances quality of life. Providing a service might not result in a physical product but is implementing a policy of the plan. On the other hand, an action step that is focused on growing a business or industry might result in a new development or new jobs, both tangible outcomes.

TABLE 3-3. PRIORITY ACTIONS - LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Plan Detail p. 3-21

The Comp Plan and YOU!

Plan Detail p. 3-20

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 a just a few ideas to get you thinking, talking- and hopefully, taking action!

- Familiarize yourself with the land use directions in the Comprehensive Plan and advocate for future zoning and policy updates that will help to realize the land use vision presented in the plan.

Spark Plans

To ensure that the plan is an actionable document and that proposed strategies translate into concrete results, the City has developed a collaborative implementation and action planning tool known as "Spark Plans". Spark Plans are "mini action plans" that elaborate on strategies described in the Comprehensive Plan, providing additional details about the "who, what, where, and why" of a strategy and the key steps necessary to move toward implementation. Each plan also includes an Action Planning Worksheet that can be used by the City, as well as other public agencies, local businesses and organizations, community groups, and individuals, to develop detailed action steps around a particular strategy. The City can also use the Spark Plans to market studio project ideas to Universities in the region (e.g Michigan State, University of Michigan/Wisconsin/Illinois, etc.) with graduate programs in City Planning, Community Development, Urban Design, and related fields. See Appendix C for the complete set of Spark Plans.

SPARK PLAN #1:

Entrepreneurial Support Spaces

Plan Detail p. C-3

Implementation Planning Spreadsheet

A comprehensive list of strategies (including longer term actions) has been assembled into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that will be used by City Staff to help organize, coordinate, direct, and most importantly, monitor progress made on the various strategies. The spreadsheet includes the following attributes:

- **Plan Chapter:** identifies and links to the chapter containing the strategy

- **Strategy:** description of the overarching strategy

- **Sub-Strategy:** detailed action items within broader strategy

- **Cross-Referenced Strategies:** related strategies that linked to this strategy in the plan

- **Strategy Type:**
  › **Strategic Direction:** a strategy that is more of a policy direction, but one that is more action oriented
  › **Programmatic Investment:** a strategy that results in providing a service or program
  › **Capital Investment:** a strategy that leads to or includes a physical built element

- **Key Goals:** related goals

- **Key Policies:** related policies

- **Plan Page Reference:** reference to page where strategy is described in the plan

- **Spark Plan:** reference to relevant spark plan

- **Implementing Entity:** – the key or lead agency that is the most logical to initiate or carry out the action item

- **Role of City:**
  › **Lead:** suggests the City takes the leadership role on the action item
  › **Partnership:** suggest the city is a partner and may or may not be in the lead role depending on who the partners are
  › **Support:** suggests the city may be a resource or provide assistance with implementing the action plan, but not play a leading role.

- **Potential Partners:** identifies possible partners in implementing the action step

Screenshot of Implementation Spreadsheet, a Microsoft Excel-based tool to be used by City Staff to organize, coordinate and monitor progress made on various Comprehensive Plan strategies and action steps.

- **Time Frame:** defines when the project should be commenced
  › **Immediate:** start within the next year or two
  › **Short term:** more likely to start within the next five years
  › **Mid term:** likely to not start within the next five years, but within ten years
  › **Long term:** represents a visionary action step/strategy that may not start within the next ten years and likely will continue to be a discussion within the community in future planning efforts

- **Associated Cost:** identifies a general range of costs associated with each action step. Costs are general estimates and should be refined during budgeting process.

- **Description of Associated Cost:** what assumptions or uses are costs associated with

- **Potential Funding Source(s):** what sources could be considered to cover costs

- **Status:** a field to note what the status of the action step is such as: in CIP, in progress, or completed

- **Key Accomplishments:** a place to highlight what the action step resulted in once finished.

KEEPING THE PLAN OFF THE SHELF!

RELY ON THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

No one solution in this plan will be the ultimate answer to community challenges- and not all possible solutions have been explored. The Plan allows for innovation and a degree of flexibility and interpretation of policy directions. However, the Plan's Vision and Guiding Principles should serve as a benchmark for maintaining the integrity of the plan. New ideas should be explored and encouraged- but must demonstrate consistency with the Vision and Guiding Principles of the plan.

Even the most inspirational plan can lead nowhere if the plan just sits on the shelf. Successful implementation requires that the comprehensive plan be used and referenced on a regular basis by various groups in the community.

...City Staff's copy of the plan should be most noted by its torn edges, protruding sticky notes and coffee stains, evidence of extensive use of the plan...

All members of the community have a potential role to play in ensuring that the plan is put into action. The Comprehensive Plan should be used in a number of ways:

The plan as a guide to decision making

The plan is used on a daily basis by **City Staff** in the day to day operations of local government. Staff will reference plan policies and goals to support elected and appointed officials in carrying out their responsibilities in making key decisions relative to public investments, growth, and redevelopment. Requests for land use applications and development projects will be evaluated based on consistency with the plan.

Elected and appointed officials use the plan to justify hard decisions related to land use development, zoning requests, annexation, growth, redevelopment, and public infrastructure investment.

The plan is used by the **development community** to understand how particular projects fit within the community and how it might affect existing or planned future growth around their projects. **Developers, brokers, realtors, and investors** use the plan to help formulate strategies for new development projects or investing in existing development and to help with risk assessment.

The plan is used by **Major Institutions** such as the Ironwood Area School District, Gogebic Community College, Gogebic County, Gogebic-Iron Wastewater Authority, and others to ensure that community systems and infrastructure are in place to support the valuable functions provided by the institutions.

Residents, Businesses, and Property Owners use the Plan to better understand the City's goals and policy directions; to support decisions about where to live, locate, or build in the community; and to spark discussion, brainstorming, and action around community improvement projects.

The plan as a marketing tool

As an adopted policy plan developed through a participatory public process, the Comprehensive Plan can help solidify the support, commitment, and collaboration needed to mobilize the community. The plan should be referenced, celebrated, and promoted to the Ironwood community, the region, and the state seeking to invest or re-invest in the city. In essence, the plan becomes the document that is provided to prospective businesses, residents, visitors, tourists or investors. Lastly the plan's policy directives are important when applying for grant funding from government or non-government entities.

The plan as a "to do list"

Almost everyone maintains their "to do lists" at home stuck on the fridge or bulletin board or at work on a sticky note on the computer. The Comprehensive Plan informs the City of Ironwood's to do list and should be a resource for city departments, boards, and commissions as they establish annual goals and work programs. Successful implementation of the comprehensive plan results in checking off some of the projects on the list. As items get checked off the list, it is an indicator that the plan be revisited and refreshed.

KEY IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES

Grow and Promote Volunteerism and Philanthropy

Volunteerism is important within small towns across America. It is of critical importance to the community in Ironwood. Volunteerism helps build ownership in the community, strengthens civic engagement, builds relationships, and ultimately, contributes to the "quality of life" aspired by the Ironwood community. It can be very rewarding when a plan or idea is supported by a shared vision created by an entire community. The new comprehensive plan has been prepared with many opportunities for the public to participate in a dialogue. As Ironwood moves forward with implementation, it must continue the dialogue and grow the community participation in that dialogue. Changing times require continuously planning for the future and the ability to adapt to change and seize opportunities as they emerge.

A key strategy for growing volunteer participation is to open up more opportunities for community members to volunteer their services, expertise, and time in the pursuit of carrying out the vision, guiding principles, and comprehensive plan ideas.

Key actions to consider include:

- Establishing a coordinator of volunteer activities: this person would be responsible for helping recruit volunteers, align interests and skills with volunteer opportunities, hold volunteers accountable (a friendly nudge/reminder) for following through on intentions, recognize volunteer contributions.

- Provide a means to align and connect community members strengths, skills, passions, and assets with the appropriate implementation strategy, project, or idea.

- Establish specific targets and goals for volunteerism (i.e. number of new volunteers participating, total estimated volunteer hours logged, projects completed, projects initiated, etc…).

- Establish a recognition and appreciation program that celebrates accomplishments and recognizes contributions, tap into civic organizations: Rotary, Kiwanis, or others.

- Create/advocate for matching contributions from local organizations that seek to benefit by the volunteer activities and efforts.

Responsible Entity: City Commission/Administration/Ironwood United

Timing: Immediate and ongoing

Cost Implications: will require staff time to initiate/start up – minimal budget impacts

Funding Sources: general fund, grant resources, philanthropy

Key Measurements: create a volunteer database and record total volunteers, new volunteers added on an annual basis, total volunteer hours logged and measured on an annual basis. An important measurement is also to be able to measure the diversity in the volunteer base, particularly new residents vs. long term residents and age of volunteers (kids, young adults, families, retirees, seniors.)

Establish a "Future of the City Forum"

Establish a "Future of the City Forum" or similar event to review the Comprehensive Plan on an annual basis (or every other year) and facilitate a community dialogue about what has worked well and what has maybe not worked so well. This evaluation should lead to identifying a need for amendments or updating the "to do list" on an annual or every other year basis. The event should be designed to "take the pulse of the community" and celebrate community accomplishments.

Responsible Entity: Planning Commission/Community Development

Timing: ongoing

Cost Implications: will require staff time to initiate/start up – minimal budget impacts

Funding Sources: general fund, philanthropy

Key Measurements: number of total participants in the community dialogue – number of new participants in the dialogue.

Maintain and Update the Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive Plans are not static documents. Rather they are dynamic plans that inspire innovative thought and a desire for progress. They must be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The implementation tools provided in this plan (action plans, spark plans, implementation database, and future of the city forum) provide a means to evaluate progress towards implementing the plan.

Michigan state law requires that Comprehensive Plans be updated every 5 years; however, more frequent updates may be warranted. Key indicators for major plan updates include:
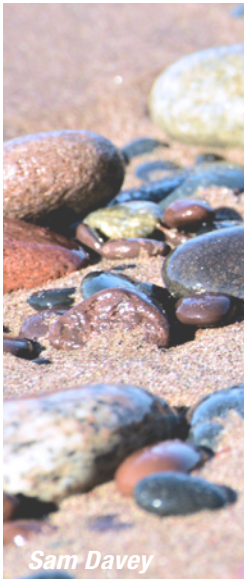
- significant economic or physical change occurs in the community

- frequent requests for variances from policies and laws are received and granted

- completion of several spark plans or action items

- four years have passed and little progress has been made

Photo Credit: Heather Brown

Photo Credit: Sam Davey

Sam Davey