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IRONWOOD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FACTBOOK

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IRONWOOD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FACTBOOK

Authority to Plan

The 2008 Michigan Planning Enabling Act unified and replaced three prior planning acts for municipalities, townships, and counties in the state of Michigan (Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008). This legislation grants municipalities the authority to create a “master plan” (or comprehensive plan) which acts as the legal basis for the development of land use regulations. While a master plan is not explicitly required, the statute does indicate that for municipalities (such as Ironwood) that have a zoning ordinance, zoning must be based on a plan. The purpose of the master plan is to guide future development towards more harmonious, economic, and efficient use of the land; promote public health, safety, and the general welfare; provide for adequate transportation systems, public utilities, and recreation; and ensure efficient expenditure of public funds (para. Sec. 7). The master plan may project 20 years or more into the future, and its adoption is subject to public hearing and approval by resolution of the municipal planning commission.

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension’s Land Use Team has published a variety of informational materials, guides, and checklists for use by planners, city administrators, and citizens to help explain the planning process and clarify the statutory requirements for community master planning. For more information, go to: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/planning/index>.

Past Planning

2014 Comprehensive Plan

Prepared by HKGi

The 2014 Ironwood Comprehensive Plan outlines Ironwood’s vision, guiding principles, and specific goals, policies, and strategies relating to future growth, investment, and development. The plan provides city staff and officials with a road map for decision-making and prioritization of investments in areas relating to land use, transportation, parks and recreation, community development, and infrastructure. Additionally, the 2014 Comprehensive Plan emphasized the role community leaders, business owners, developers, and citizens could play in implementing the plan across different sectors in Ironwood.

Key Recommendations:

- Update zoning and city ordinances to reflect a district-based approach to land use planning and infill development
- Prioritize, plan for, and construct system-wide improvements to pedestrian, bicycle, and trail networks to support complete streets development and provide both motorized and non-motorized trail systems.

- Implement the investments identified in the Park Action Program and develop master plans for the City’s parks based on annual park user surveys and regularly updated Parks and Rec plans.
- Partner with local and regional economic development entities to encourage investment in workforce, placemaking strategies, and business-supportive environments.
- Encourage rehabilitation of existing housing stock and infill development to strengthen neighborhood capacity and support housing stock variety.
- Prepare infrastructure master plans for potable water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater systems.

Outcomes to date:

- Updated City ordinances, including a new zoning ordinance and zoning map
- A substantial amount of the original 2014 Park Action Plan has been implemented, with updates to the plan occurring every 5 years.
- Street maintenance and reconstruction Plan and infrastructure (SAW grant)
- Working with Ironwood Tourism Council on Marketing the Area (City Partnership)
- New water treatment Plant is currently under construction
- Utilizing the Neighborhood enhancement MSHDA grant program to help with Housing rehab projects.

Parks and Recreation Plan 2024 Update

Prepared by City of Ironwood

The City’s Five-Year Park Plan builds off the 2014 Comprehensive Plan and following 2019 5-year update of the Parks and Recreation Chapter. The Plan provides guidance for future investments, development, and programming for Ironwood’s Parks and Recreation facilities. An annual Parks and Recreation User Survey supports the refinement of Plan goals and policies, providing input on prioritization of capital investment.

Key Recommendations:

- Prioritize capital investment based on the Parks Action Program and set annual implementation goals.
- Develop a park fund for capital improvements and identify efficient and prioritized practices for park maintenance.
- Incorporate implementation of relevant tasks from the Forest Management Plan into the Parks Action Program.

- Strengthen and develop Park Master Plans for Miners Memorial Heritage Park and Norrie Park
- Include park trails and signage, maps, and kiosks in citywide wayfinding plans and provide tools that direct people to Ironwood’s parks.
- Support programming that highlights local history and incorporate Ironwood parks in sporting and recreational events.
- Incorporate public art into parks and open space and encourage community-led art projects

Outcomes to date:

- Addition of mountain bike, fat bike, and more cross country ski trails to Miners Park.
- Development of Downtown Ironwood City Square offering an enhanced downtown experience.
- The new Pat O’Donnell Civic Center provides improved indoor recreation opportunities.

2023 Development Plan and Tax Increment Financing Plan

Prepared by DIDA, City of Ironwood, McKenna

The Downtown Development and TIF Plan is intended to outline a plan for the implementation and financing of projects that preserve and enhance Downtown Ironwood. Specifically, the plan provides for “the acquisition, construction, and financing of the necessary street, sidewalk, lighting, streetscaping, parking, leisure, recreational and other facilities in Ironwood’s Downtown District.” The recommendations in the plan are encompassed by DIDA’s four goals: Building Business, Creating Spaces, Establishing Presence, and Promoting Partnerships.

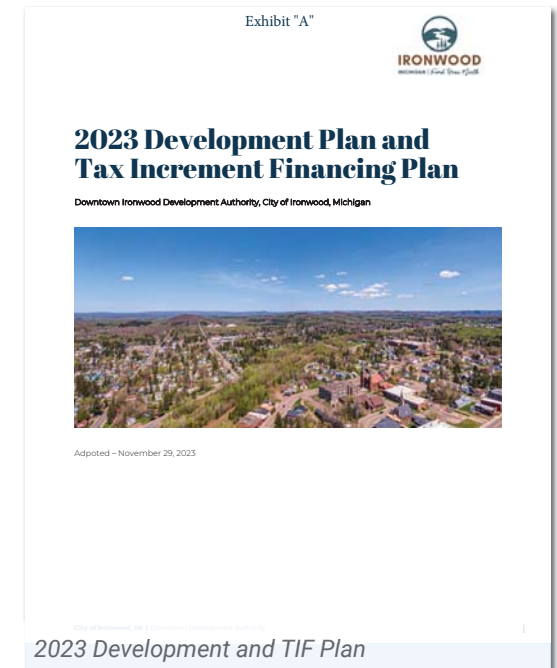
Key Recommendations:

- Continue partnerships with City leaders and organizations to update 2009 Downtown Blueprint Plan and develop an implementation plan
- Assess current sidewalk connections and routes and determine prioritized improvement plan to enhance walking conditions in Downtown areas. Secure funding for construction.
- Façade improvements – administer streamlined process for Façade Improvement Program, develop a schedule for alleyway façade improvements
- Develop and implement a robust marketing campaign highlighting Ironwood’s year-round opportunities for recreation
- Implement placemaking strategies including enhanced landscaping, corridor beautification, public art installation, and pocket park implementation to create a welcoming Downtown.

Community Forest Stewardship Plan (2023)

Compiled by Green Timber Consulting Foresters, Inc.

The Community Forest Stewardship Plan is a 20-year resource management plan. It provides an assessment of current conditions and outlines recommended best management practices for Ironwood’s community forests. The City of Ironwood’s goal in relation to the plan is to manage the forests “for aesthetics, health, and continued recreational use and development.” Additionally, the plan provides for general stewardship strategies to benefit “wildlife habitat, water quality protection, and community



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 habitats of Ironwood and Michigan's Upper Peninsula are what bring them to this GREAT OUTDOORS. For residents, it is one of the reasons they stay. Inventory the parks serve as any city's front yard, and in someone's case we work to make sure the public spaces show as a FRIENDLY AND INVITING COMMUNITY.

Ironwood's parks are not just a place to go, but a part of the community. By holding on to the natural resources and collaborating with privately operated recreation opportunities, the parks system fosters the ACTIVE COMMUNITY that people value, from people enjoying walking to Little League baseball.

Ironwood's parks is a vital part of the community because that the city continues to celebrate its history from Mines Park and Klamath, to South Park and the Great Park are one of the ways the city connects the past, while creating a while with generations of GREAT OUTDOORS.

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.

2024 Parks & Recreation Plan Update

engagement.” A key recommendation in recreation areas is invasive species management of buckthorn, a step necessary to promote growth of long living hardwood tree species. In addition to specific forestry management recommendations, the relevant goals of this plan are incorporated into the 2024 Parks and Recreation Plan update.

Zoning Ordinance (2022)

The City of Ironwood updated its zoning ordinance and zoning map using guidance from the 2014 Comprehensive Plan chapter on Land Use and Community Character. The ordinance went into effect December 22, 2022 and the map June 1, 2023. The updates to the ordinance and map reflect the goals of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan and align the city’s zoning ordinance with modern building standards and state regulations.

Wellhead Protection Plan (2019)

The Wellhead Protection Plan updates the previous 2003 plan and focuses on the protection of Ironwood’s public drinking water supply, which is sourced from six production wells. The purpose of the Plan is to provide the City of Ironwood with regulations and policies to prevent groundwater contamination; ensure protection of groundwater is considered in comprehensive planning and zoning provisions; provide for communication and coordination between local and state agencies during pollution incidents; and ensure there is adequate planning for and tracking of well inventories, maintenance, and addition of new wells. The plan includes a review of potential contaminant sources in the area as well as an overview of the current condition of infrastructure and emergency response procedures.

COMMUNITY FOREST STEWARDSHIP PLAN

LANDOWNER: City of Ironwood
Address: 218 S. Marquette St. Ironwood, MI 49930
Phone: (906) 932-5060
Signature: _____
Date: _____

LEGAL DESCRIPTION
T-47N, R-9W, S-1E
Portions of Sections 21, 22, 23, & 24
City of Ironwood, Gogebic County Michigan
-658 Acres

Green Timber Consulting Foresters, Inc. • 15211 US Highway 41, Peckie, MI 49968
(906) 353-8584 • info@greentimberforestry.com • Greentimberforestry.com

PREPARED BY: Karl Pischke/owner

Community Forest Stewardship Plan

Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) Sanitary Sewer and Water Improvements (2024)

The City of Ironwood and the Gogebic-Iron Wastewater Authority identified the need for a comprehensive approach to replacing aging infrastructure and addressing issues facing the sanitary sewer collection system. This report details specific projects focused on improvements that are part of a longer history of phased improvements from previous PERs and PER amendments. The report details existing conditions, recent improvement projects, and details for the proposed project. More details are available in the Infrastructure section below.

Project Plan for City of Ironwood Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (2023)

This report details the capital improvements to Ironwood’s drinking water infrastructure that are being funded, in part, by a USDA Rural Development grant. Ironwood’s water supply has concentrations of manganese that exceed safe levels as established by the Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act. Additionally, aging water infrastructure including the pump station and clearwell need replacing. The report details existing conditions of Ironwood’s infrastructure and identifies upgrades to the system to address current issues. Further details are available in the Infrastructure section below.

City of Ironwood, Gogebic County
July 2019

Prepared

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Ironwood Wellhead Protection Plan

Gogebic County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020-2025)

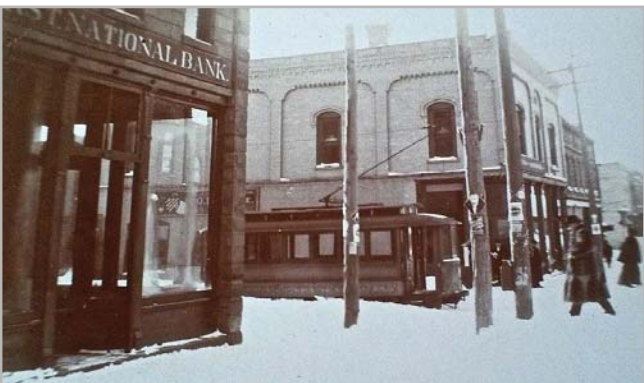
Ironwood is included in the Gogebic County Hazard Mitigation Plan, which provides an analysis of hazards effecting the county, including Ironwood, along with risk assessments and hazard mitigation strategies. The Plan was completed in 2020 and details which local planning mechanisms and programs should incorporate data, information, and hazard mitigation actions from this plan. Components of the Hazard Mitigation Plan should be incorporated as relevant into Ironwood's future Comprehensive Plan, Parks and Recreation Plan, and other planning efforts.



Miners



Downtown Ironwood



Trolley

History of Ironwood

Nearly 2 billion years ago, Ironwood was covered by a shallow sea that deposited iron rich sediments in the area. About 1 billion years later, the North American continent began separating in what is known as the Midcontinent Rift System. The rift created both the basin that became Lake Superior, as well as volcanic formations that left copper deposits and tipped the layer of iron, which is why the iron mines in the Gogebic Range needed to be so deep.

More recently, the south shores of Lake Superior were (and remain) the home to the Anishinaabe people, particularly the Ojibwe/Chippewa. Small tribes traversed the area, connected to the larger Ojibwe region by rivers and Lake Superior. The region provided sustenance with seasonal offerings including wild rice, game, fish, berries, and maple sugar.

Early European contact came from French fur traders and missionaries that travelled around the Lake Superior area. The earliest records from these traders and missionaries in the area date back to the 1600s. The Montreal River, connecting Lake Superior to the lakes region in what is now northern Wisconsin, played an important role moving goods and people throughout the region.

Iron Ore was first discovered in the Gogebic Range in the late 1800s, and the first settlements in Ironwood began in 1884. The growth of iron mining and logging in the range, as well as expansion of the Milwaukee, Lake Shore, and Western Railway Company railroads, brought new and diverse populations to the community. Through the early 1900s, Ironwood continued to grow at a rapid pace, reaching its peak in the 1920s with a population estimated around 25,000.

As demand for iron ore declined following the great depression, so too did Ironwood's population, falling to about 11,000 residents by 1950. Between 1950 and 1970, iron production in the Gogebic Range ground to a halt, leaving mining communities like Ironwood to search for new identity and livelihood. In recent years, various economic development efforts have endeavored to promote new industries



Historic Ironwood

and opportunity in the region. Taking advantage of high annual snowfalls and relatively mountainous terrain for the region, the Upper Peninsula has emerged as a destination for winter sports and outdoor recreation. Ironwood too has sought to capitalize on its natural beauty and local recreational assets, promoting local ski hills, snowmobile, ATV, and cross-county trails, as well as its proximity to regional destinations like Lake Superior and the Porcupine Mountains.

Ironwood's history is indelibly etched in the present-day places and spaces of the community. Neighborhoods, streets, and parks bear the names of the former mines (Norrie, Aurora, Curry); The mining caves themselves extend through the length of the community — the historic spine around which the community was built and thrived for decades. Ironwood takes great pride in its local history and heritage, and through public and private efforts, a number of sites and buildings in the community have been preserved and restored as civic, cultural, and recreational destinations:

Memorial Building*: Completed in 1923, the Memorial Building was built in tribute to Ironwood's World War I veterans. Historical plaques and exhibits within the building recall Ironwood's mining, railroad, and timber past- and honor the sacrifices of the more than 1,500 Ironwood area men who perished in World War I. The building is prized for its Beaux Art architecture, stained glass windows, and collection of public murals and sculpture. The building still functions today as Ironwood's Municipal Offices.

Miners Memorial Heritage Park: Dedicated by the City in 2010, the Miners Memorial Heritage Park (MMHP) encompasses the former iron ore mining locations within Ironwood. Today, MMHP has a number of non-motorized trails for cross-country skiing, walking, hiking, and biking.

Chicago and Northwestern Railroad Building*: Originally built in 1892 and used as a freight and passenger rail depot until 1971, the building is now home to the Ironwood Area Chamber of Commerce and a museum maintained by the Ironwood Area Historical Society. The area surrounding the depot was dedicated as a city park in 2013.

Ironwood Carnegie Library*: The Ironwood Carnegie Library was built in 1901 and is the oldest continuously operated Carnegie Library in Michigan.

Historic Ironwood Theater*: The Historic Ironwood Theater was built in 1928 and remained in operation until 1982. The City of Ironwood purchased the building and the adjacent Seaman Building (today home of the Downtown Art Place) to facilitate its preservation and restoration. The theater reopened in 1988, operating as a non-profit cultural organization, and is today, a regional destination for performing arts.

**National Register of Historic Places*



Memorial Building



Historic Ironwood Theater



Carnegie Library Image

Locational Analysis

The following section looks at the City of Ironwood’s location at three scales: Regional, Community, and City. The regional scale considers Ironwood’s location within the broader region and relationship to major population centers and regional destinations. The community scale looks at Ironwood’s immediate neighbors on the Iron-Gogebic Range, adjacent municipalities, and various jurisdictional boundaries. The city scale focuses on the City of Ironwood proper.

Regional Context

A community’s character is deeply influenced by its regional context and the landscape within which it resides. Ironwood is located in Gogebic County at the northern gateway to the Upper Peninsula and in the heart of big snow country. Ironwood and its neighboring communities benefit from the many open space assets in the region such as the Porcupine Mountains, Lake Superior, the Ottawa National Forest, and some of the Midwest’s best skiing areas. These features draw visitors from towns and cities across the region. Figure 1.2 illustrates Ironwood’s regional neighbors within a 250-mile radius. Neighboring population centers include Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Duluth and Madison.

There are only four areas in the United States designated as National Lakeshores by the National Park Service; Three of these are within 250 miles of Ironwood, and two are within a four hour drive. In addition to these major destinations, there are over 15 waterfalls within 30 miles of Ironwood. The nearby Ottawa National Forest includes nearly one million acres of forest land and 27 public campgrounds. The Upper Peninsula Travel and Recreation Association maintains a thorough and interactive map of the region’s recreation-based assets at www.uptravel.com.

The wealth of natural and scenic beauty in and around Ironwood makes the area a year-round destination for outdoor enthusiasts. Winter sports are a major recreational draw. The Ironwood area provides access to hundreds of miles of snowmobile trails and several major ski areas. Downhill ski facilities include Big Powderhorn, Snowriver Mountain, Mount Zion, and Whitecap Mountain and nearby cross-country facilities are ABR and Wolverine. In addition to winter recreation opportunities, the region also is a year-round destination for hiking, cycling, hunting, mountain biking, camping, fishing, kayaking, and sight-seeing. See page A-26 for more on Ironwood area recreational assets.

Mining Projects

There are currently two proposed mining sites within 50 miles of Ironwood in varying stages of planning. While future impacts of new mining operations in Ironwood cannot be fully anticipated at this time, there are employment estimates that provide a baseline understanding of potential job creation

related to these projects.

Copperwood Mine

- Location: The mine site is located approximately 15 miles north of Wakefield in the Wakefield and Ironwood townships in Gogebic County. It is on the western edge of Porcupine Mountains State Park, between the Presque Isle and Black Rivers.
- Status: The Copperwood Mine project has secured all required permits, began site preparation in 2023, and received \$50 million in funding from the Michigan Strategic Fund in March 2024. It is ready to move into construction pending project financing and construction decisions.
- Estimated mine life: 10.7 years
- Company estimates:
 - Capital investment of \$425 million across state and 380 high-wage jobs in Western UP
 - Projected to provide \$15 million per year in local, county, state, and federal revenue

White Pine North

- Location: Across from unincorporated White Pine, 37 miles east of the Copperwood Mine on the eastern edge of Porcupine Mountains State Park
- Status: White Pine North is an old mining site that operated from 1953-1995, it was acquired by Highland Copper and Kinterra Copper. It is currently undergoing the permitting and review process with the state of Michigan.
- Estimated mine life: 21.8 years
- Company estimates: 545 jobs in the Western UP region



Figure 1.1 Ironwood location in Michigan

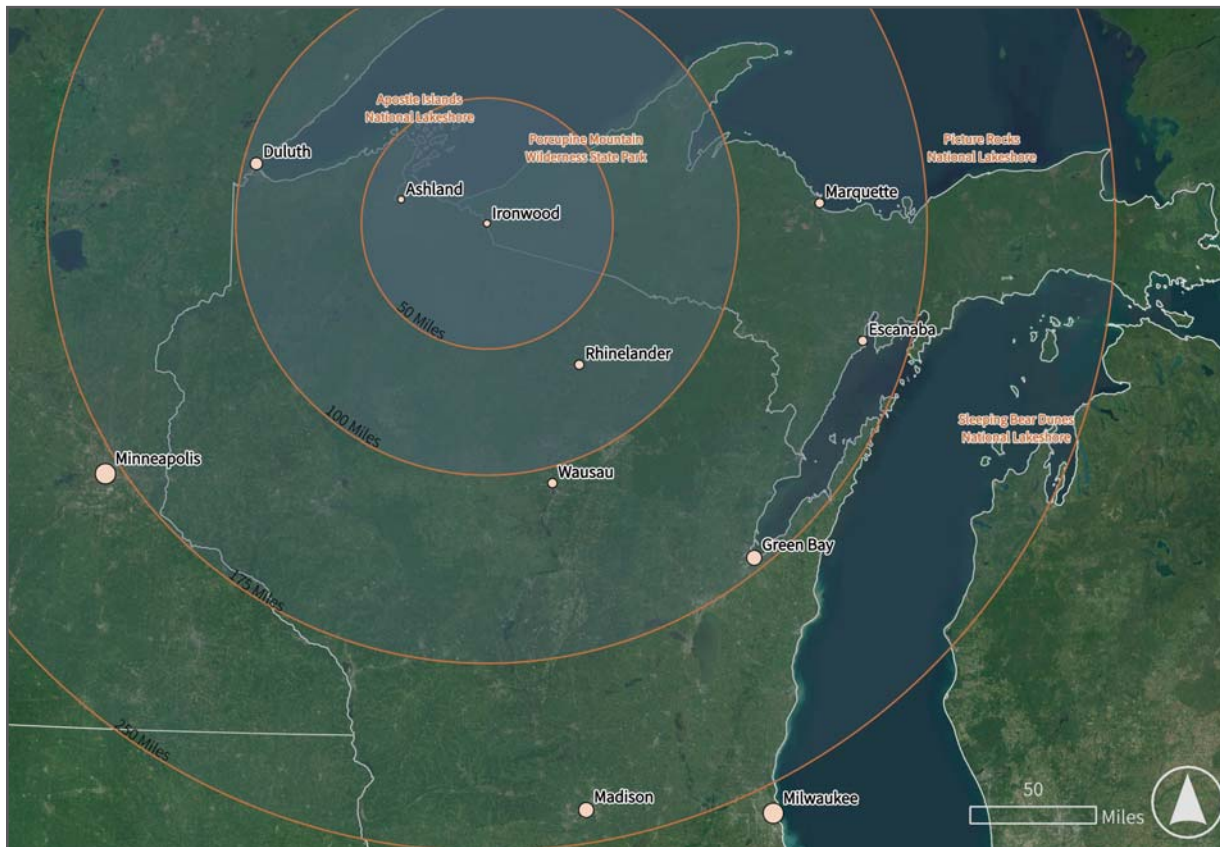
Community Context and Jurisdictional Boundaries

Located along the Michigan-Wisconsin border and at the confluence of several townships and cities, Ironwood is influenced by a variety of jurisdictional forces. Figure 1.3 illustrates the numerous jurisdictional boundaries in the Ironwood area. Individuals living in these communities along the Gogebic Range often work in one municipality while residing in another and may conceive of their “community” as extending beyond their home city/township limits to encompass the broader area, the county, or the Gogebic Range. To the extent that these communities, entities, and citizens interact and share assets and resources, they are, in a sense, one “community” interacting in numerous formal and informal arrangements.

Local Coordination

Iron County, Wisconsin and Gogebic County, while located in different states, have a common interest in promoting economic development, tourism, education, and other initiatives at a regional level. Shared

Figure 1.2 Map of regional population centers near Ironwood



resources include a SWAT team, the Gogebic-Iron County Airport and the Gogebic-Iron Water Authority. The neighboring cities of Ironwood, Hurley, Montreal, Bessemer and Wakefield- as well as the various township areas- share a number of community resources. For example, the Aspirus Ironwood Hospital, located just outside of Ironwood, serves all 5 communities with emergency medical, surgical, and therapeutic services. These cities have also collaborated on initiatives such as the Western Gateway and Riverwalk trails and the Gogebic Iron Area Narcotics Team (GIANT). The cities do however maintain a number of separate services. The five-city area is served by four school districts and separate police and fire departments.

City of Ironwood – Jurisdictional Boundaries

The City of Ironwood shares borders with six different governing entities: The City of Hurley, Wisconsin to the west, the township of Ironwood to the north, Erwin Township to the south, Bessemer Township to the east, Oma to the southwest, and Kimball Township to the northwest. Ironwood also sits at the state and county border. See Figure 1.3 on the next page.

School Districts

Ironwood’s school district encompasses the city proper, but also extends to the north and south, serving Ironwood and Erwin Townships. The Ironwood Area School District is one of four school districts within a 15-mile radius. This is especially notable when you consider the low population density of the area, and the low enrollment numbers within each district. The idea of consolidating school districts was raised by a number of respondents to the community survey. Consolidation has been discussed by the municipalities in the past.

Since the closure of George N. Sleight Elementary School after the 2013-2014 school year, Ironwood Area School District converted the Luther L. Wright High School into the Luther L. Wright K-12 school, housing the elementary, middle, and high school programs all

in one building. Current enrollment in the Ironwood district is 766, which is an increase since 2020-2023 when numbers were hovering around 725, but down from 894 in 2012 and 1181 in 2002. 58% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, down from 75% in 2010.

To the east, Bessemer Area School District serves residents of the City of Bessemer and Bessemer Township. Current enrollment is 359. Hurley School District to the west in Wisconsin serves the residents of Hurley and Montreal, the townships of Carey, Gurney, Iron Belt, Oma, Pence, and Saxon, and the communities of Iron Belt and Upson. Hurley's current enrollment is 533, up from 440 in 2010. Wakefield- Marenisco Area School District serves the City of Wakefield, and Wakefield and Marenisco Townships. Current enrollment is 252. The issue of consolidation is further complicated by the fact that the Hurley School District is in Wisconsin and thus subject to different state education policy and jurisdiction.

Gogebic-Iron Wastewater Authority District

The Gogebic-Iron Wastewater Authority District is owned by the City of Ironwood, Ironwood Township, and the City of Hurley. The area of service is delineated in Figure 1.3. More information about the district can be found in the Infrastructure section on [page A-X](#).

Gogebic Community College

The Gogebic Community College campus lies just outside the northern city limits of Ironwood, and is one of only two community colleges in the western Upper Peninsula. The college operates the Mount Zion Ski Area as part of its distinguished Ski Area Management program. The campus also includes the Pat O'Donnell Civic Center and the Lindquist Student Center. The civic center houses Ironwood's only indoor ice rink and is utilized by a number of local groups and athletic organizations from Ironwood and surrounding communities.

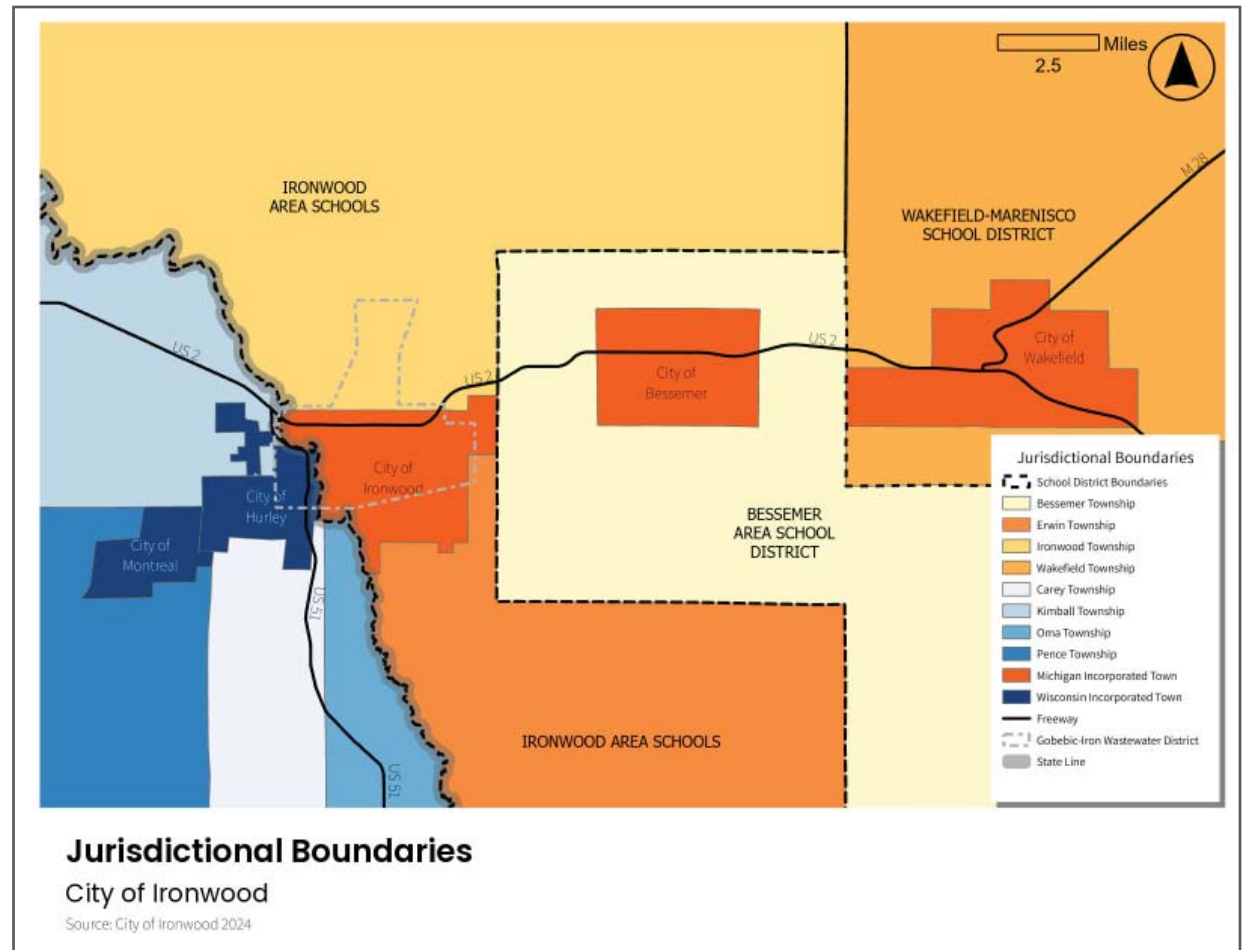


Figure 1.3 Jurisdictional boundaries in and around Ironwood

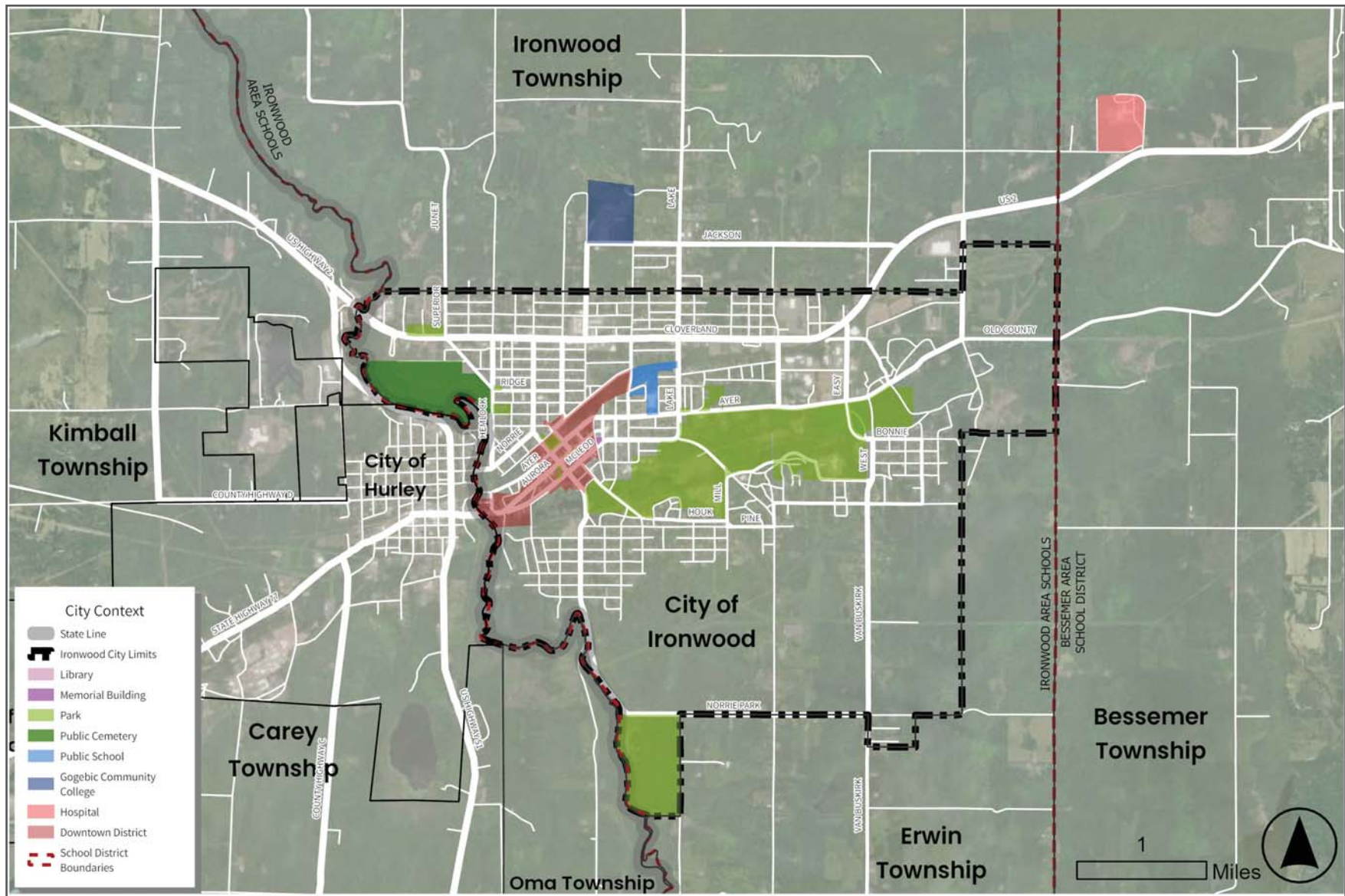


Figure 1.4 Ironwood community context



Demographics

By looking at demographic data, we can better understand current dynamics and potential issues and opportunities in the Ironwood community. Are certain populations growing or shrinking? How have conditions changed over time? How does Ironwood compare to its neighbors, the region, the state? The following section addresses such questions across a range of topics, drawing from the U.S. Decennial Census, American Community Survey, and other sources.

Historical Population Trends

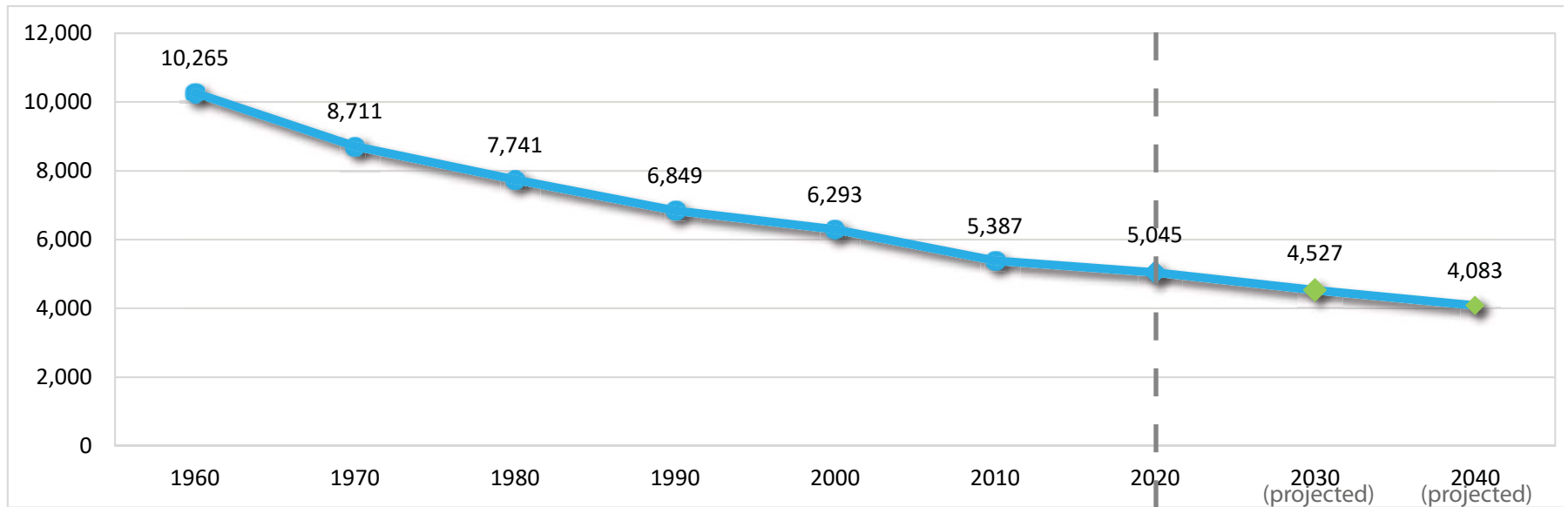
The population of Ironwood has declined steadily since 1960, from close to 10,000, to a little over 5,000 in 2020. This decline is similar in scale to declining population in nearby Wakefield and Bessemer. Regionally, the Western Upper Peninsula (Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon Counties) is experiencing similar patterns in population decline. Out of the six-county region, Gogebic County experienced the second largest population decline from 1970 to 2020. Future population projections from the Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, Department of Technology, Management and Budget predict continuing slow, long-term population decline throughout the region, with the exception of Houghton County. The six counties of the Western UP account for less than 1% of Michigan’s total population.

Population projections from MCDA show similar trends, with an 11% decrease in population between 2020 and 2035 for both Ironwood and Gogebic County.

Table 1.5 Historical population numbers for Ironwood and surrounding areas

Year	Ironwood	% Change	Bessemer	% Change	Wakefield	% Change	Gogebic County	% Change	Hurley	% Change	Iron County	% Change
1960	10,265	-	3,304	-	3,231	-	24,370	-	-	-	7,830	-
1970	8,711	-15%	2,805	-15%	2,757	-15%	20,676	-15%	-	-	6,533	-17%
1980	7,741	-11%	2,553	-9%	2,591	-6%	19,686	-5%	-	-	6,730	3%
1990	6,849	-12%	2,272	-11%	2,318	-11%	18,052	-8%	-	-	6,153	-9%
2000	6,293	-8%	2,148	-5%	2,085	-10%	17,370	-4%	1,818	-	6,861	12%
2010	5,387	-14%	1,905	-11%	1,851	-11%	16,427	-5%	1,547	-15%	5,916	-14%
2020	5,045	-6%	1,805	-5%	1,702	-8%	14,389	-12%	1,558	1%	6,137	4%

Table 1.6 Historical and projected population for Ironwood.



Population projection calculated using least squares method to determine best fit trend for percent change in population, then applies the projected percent change to the current population value to project future population. Population numbers are sourced from the US Decennial Census.

Age + Gender

Ironwood’s gender distribution is even, with 50% of the population identifying as female and 50% as male. The population of Ironwood skews older, with 25% of the population aged 65 or older in Ironwood compared to 18% statewide. The median age in Ironwood is 51.1, slightly older than Bessemer (50.4) and Wakefield (45.10), but younger than Hurley (54.5). Ironwood’s median age is lower than the surrounding Western UP region, which has a median age of 58.8, but much older than the state’s median age of 37.7. While the population is decreasing in size, more recent trends have seen a slight uptick in population returning at some age groups among younger families. The percent of the population aged 60 to 79 increased, which reflects the aging up of “baby boomers” (those born between roughly 1946 and 1964).

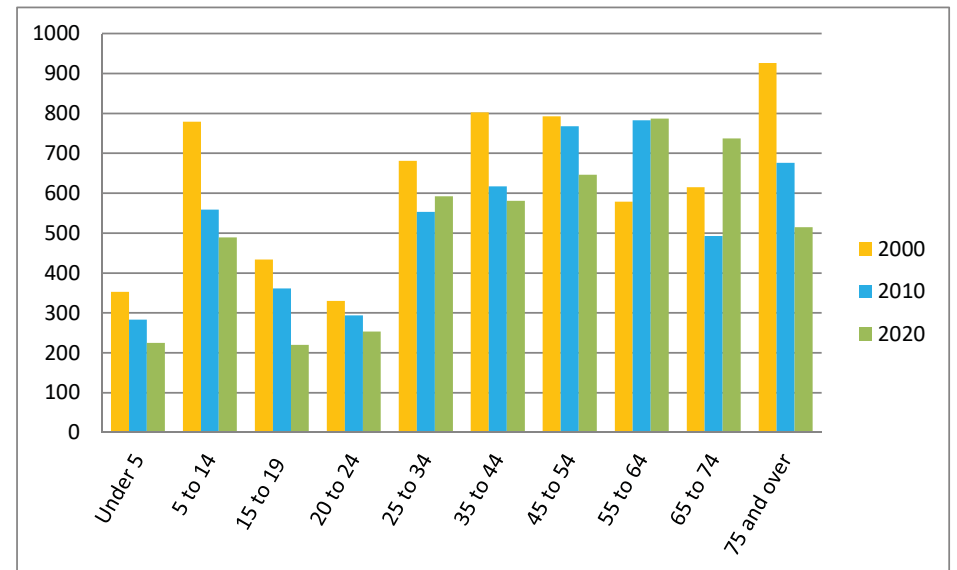


Table 1.7 Ironwood population by age cohort 2000-2020

POPULATION AGE AND PLANNING

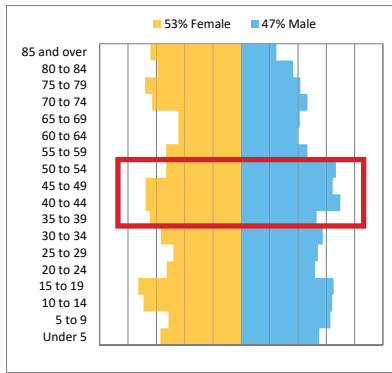


Figure 1.9 Ironwood population, 2000

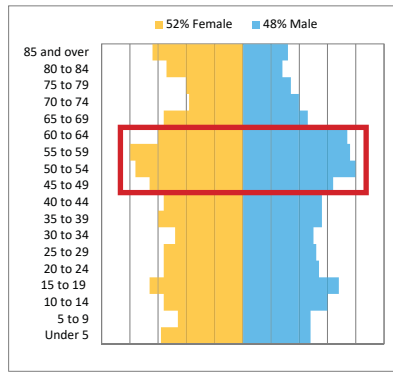


Figure 1.10 Ironwood population, 2010

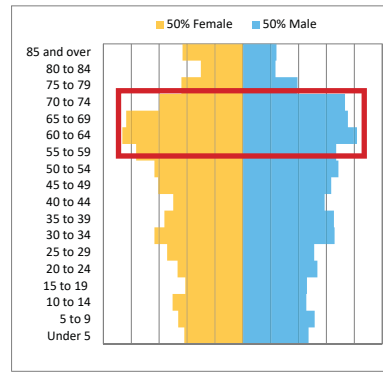


Figure 1.11 Ironwood population, 2020

Population Pyramids

- These pyramids help visualize demographic shifts by showing population by age cohorts. Below are depictions of Ironwood’s population in 2000, 2010, and 2020.
- The red boxes highlight the “Baby Boomer” population, which is clearly shifting through the age cohorts.
- Also notable is the narrowing of the base of the pyramid over time. This narrow base indicates future population decline as there will be increasingly smaller age cohorts.

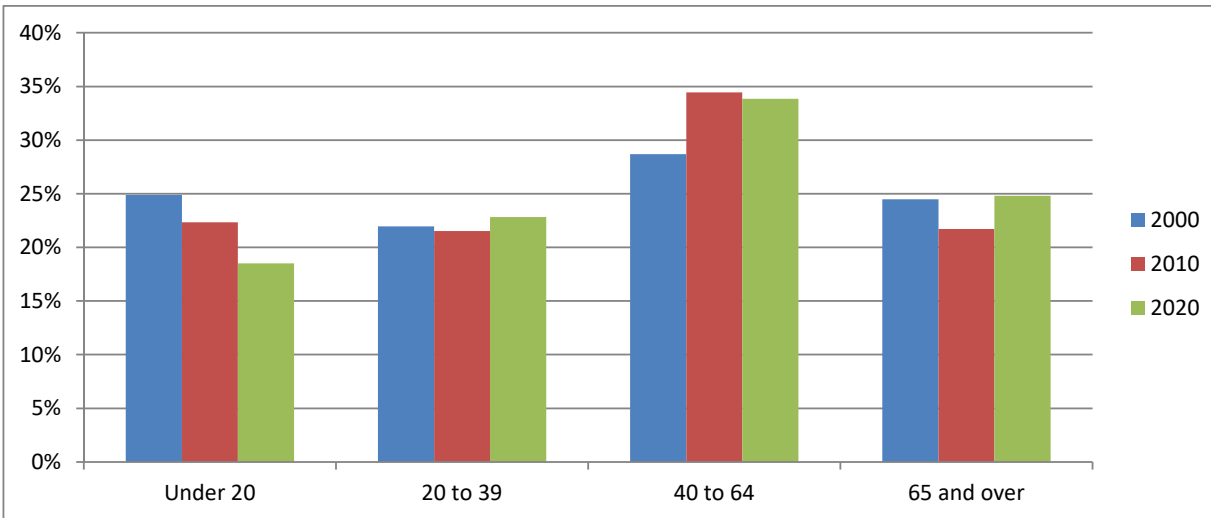


Figure 1.8 Ironwood population by age categories 2000 -2020

Aging and the Future

When looking at demographic information, specifically the age of a population, it is important to understand how generational shifts play out in your community in order to plan appropriately for the future.

Different age groups have different needs and contribute differently within a community context, impacting future planning through housing needs, labor force participation, school enrollments, civic participation, and other facets of community life. Ironwood’s population is aging, but how specifically will that play out? Looking at historical data and population projections within and across age cohorts can provide a more nuanced understanding of how to plan for Ironwood’s future.

Age	Community Considerations
Under 20	Minor economic contribution/impact School enrollment, focus on youth programming
20 to 39	In the workforce, generally lower pay Renters, first-time homeowners Spending higher percentage of earnings Starting families
40 to 64	Mid- to late- career High earners, high savers Spending a lower percentage of earnings
65 and over	Retiree cohort This age group will increase quickly with baby boomers, then decrease Some differences between early and late stages of this group

Race + Ethnicity

The population of Ironwood is predominantly white (91.8%), with 5.6% of the population reporting as “other” or “two or more races,” 1% as American Indian, less than one percent as Black or African American, and less than one percent Asian. 2% of the population is Hispanic.

Households

According to the 2020 Census, there are 2,462 households in Ironwood. Married couple and cohabitating couple households make up 44% of households. The average household size is 1.89, down from 2.09 in 2010. 19% of households have one or more individual under the age of 18 while 38% of households have at least one individual aged 65 or older.

	2000	2010	2020
Total households	2,841	2,520	2,462
Average household size	2.16	2.09	1.89

Table 1.12 Average household size 2000-2020

Household Type	2000		2010		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Households with individuals under age 18	599	23.8%	746	26.3%	476	19.3%
Households with individuals 65 years and older	807	32.0%	1,067	37.6%	941	38.2%

Table 1.15 Ironwood households with individuals under 18 or 65 and over, 2020

Income

The median household income in Ironwood is \$35,722 in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars. Median family income is \$55,400. The percent of households making less than \$15,000 a year has decreased from 21.5% in 2010 to 11.5% in 2020. Similar decreases occur in family incomes, with 12.5% of families making

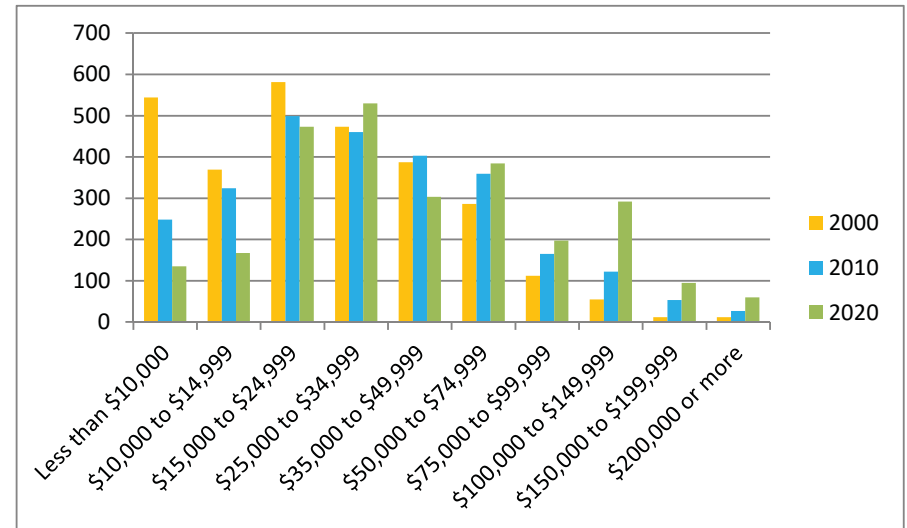


Figure 1.13 Household incomes in Ironwood, 2000-2020

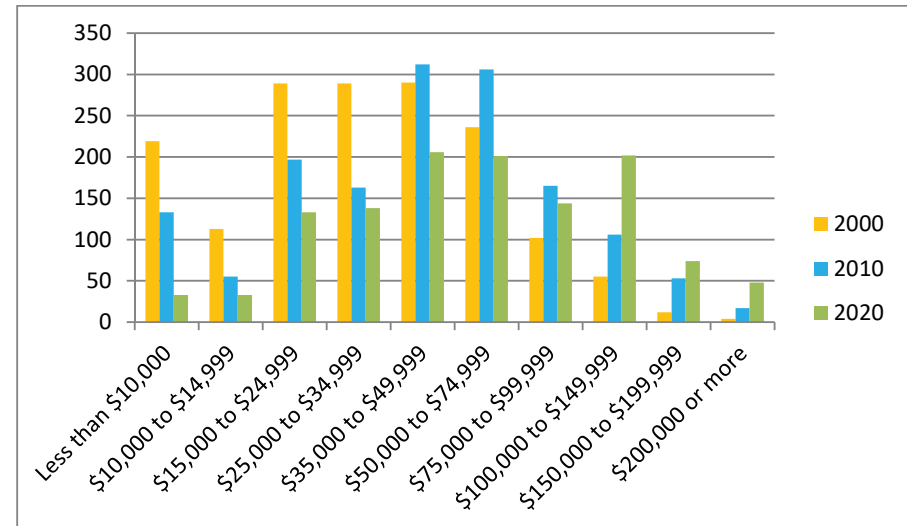


Figure 1.14 Family incomes in Ironwood, 2000-2020

\$15,000 or less in 2010 and only 5.4% in 2020.

Ironwood's median household and family incomes are lower than Gogebic County and the state of Michigan median incomes, which are \$47,913 and

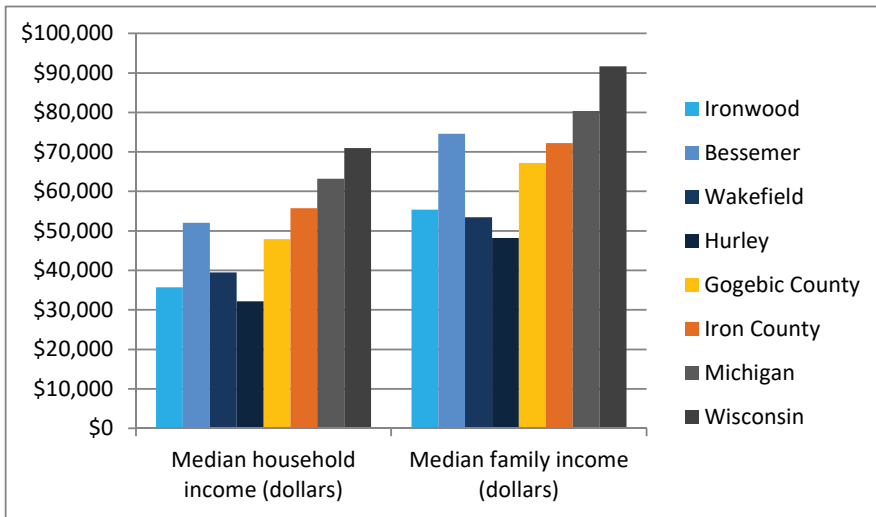


Figure 1.18 Median household incomes in Ironwood and surrounding areas, 2020

\$63,202 respectively for households and \$67,215 and \$80,365 for family income.

Educational Attainment + Enrollment

95% of Ironwood residents aged 25 or older have a high school degree or higher; 20% have a bachelor's degree or higher; and 5% have less than a high school diploma. The level of educational attainment in Ironwood is similar to

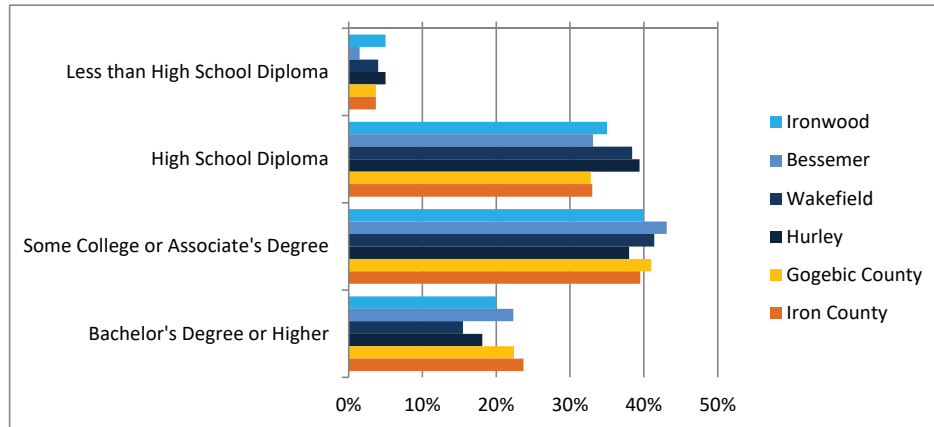


Figure 1.17 Educational attainment in Ironwood and surrounding areas, 2020

that of the surrounding towns and Gogebic County.

Enrollment in the Ironwood Area School District has been declining since 2012, although enrollment in the last couple years suggest this may be changing. Similar enrollment declines are occurring in the Bessemer Area School District. The Wakefield-Marenisco School District has declined less than Ironwood

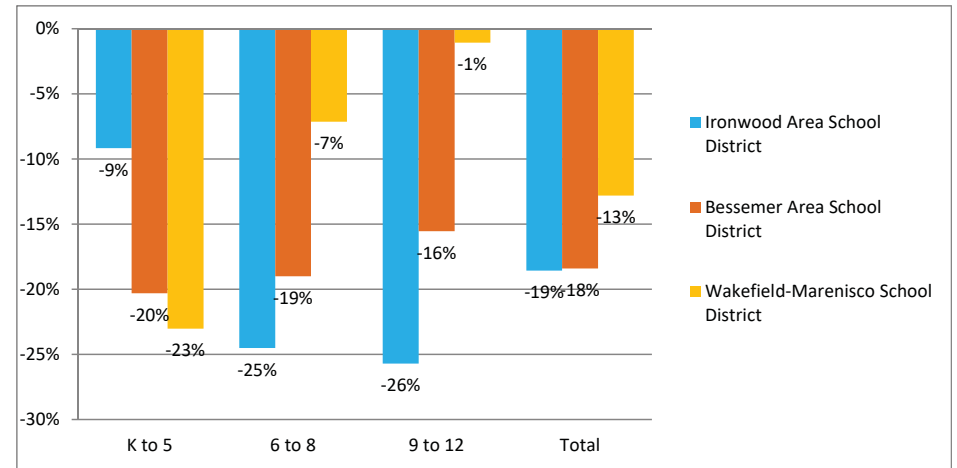


Figure 1.16 Change in school enrollment in Ironwood and nearby districts, 2012-2022

Economic Conditions

Workforce Composition

The working age population includes all residents age 16 or above. In Ironwood, there are 4,433 residents in this category, 52% of whom are currently working or looking for work, and 48% are "not in the labor force," a category that includes students, the long-term unemployed, homemakers, retired workers, institutionalized persons, and those doing incidental unpaid family work. Of employed Ironwood residents, 20% are age 29 or younger, 52% are between the ages of 30 and 54, and 29% are over 55 or older. This demonstrates a slight shift towards an older workforce from 2010, when 22% were age 29 or younger, 55% were between 30 and 54, and only 23% were age 55 or older. This shift in workforce age is unsurprising given Ironwood's general demographic trends.

Ironwood Resident Employment

The two largest categories of employment for Ironwood residents are educational services, and healthcare and social assistance (21%), manufacturing (20%), and retail trade (15%). There has been an increase in residents employed in manufacturing from 14% in 2010 to 20% in 2020. Most other categories have maintained similar levels of employment for Ironwood residents, with the exception of arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services, which decreased from 12% in 2010 to 7% in 2020.

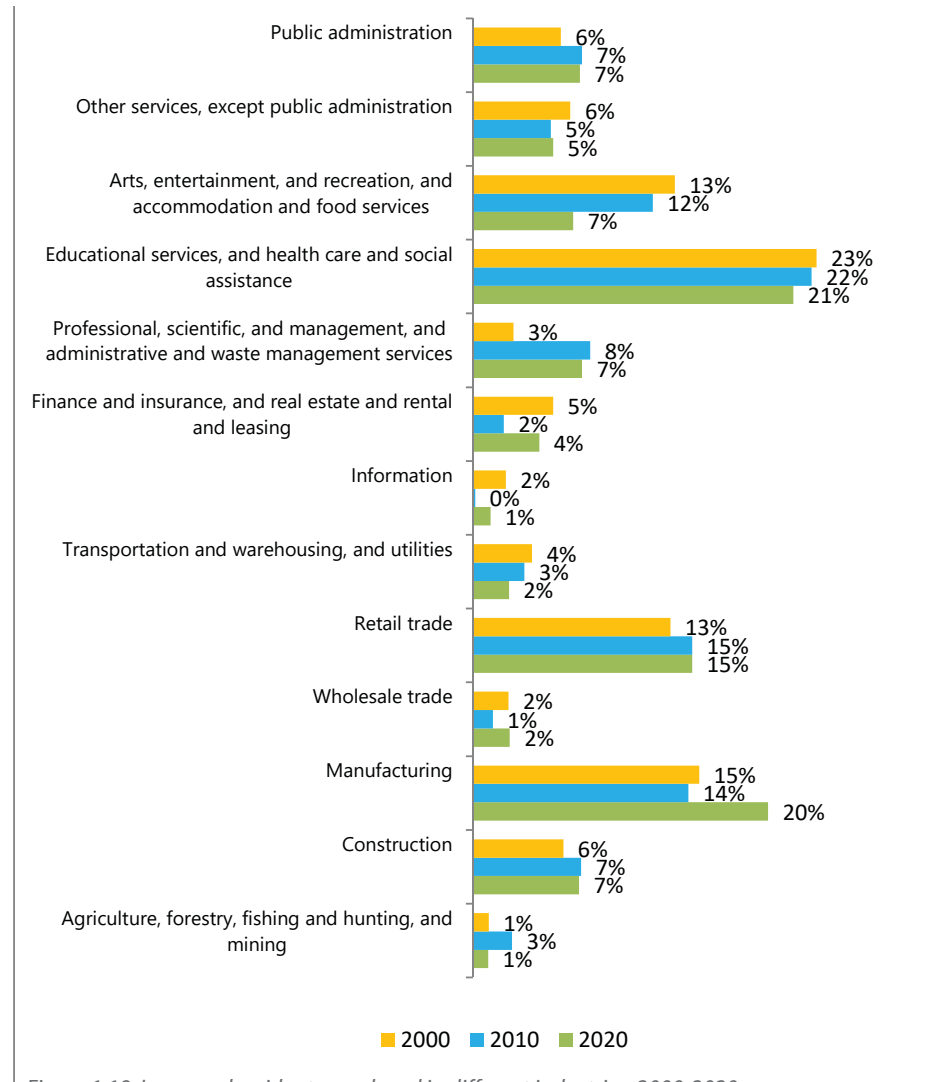


Figure 1.19 Ironwood residents employed in different industries, 2000-2020

Ironwood Industries

Within Ironwood, manufacturing and retail trade are the highest employing industries for workers, regardless of home origin (where workers live). Similar to the trends in resident employment, Ironwood industries saw an increase in the number of people employed in manufacturing, going from 19% in 2010 to 22% in 2020. There was also an increase in retail trade employment from 18% to 25% over the same time frame. Employment in educational services decreased from 13% to 7%, and there was a 4% decrease in accommodation and food service employment.

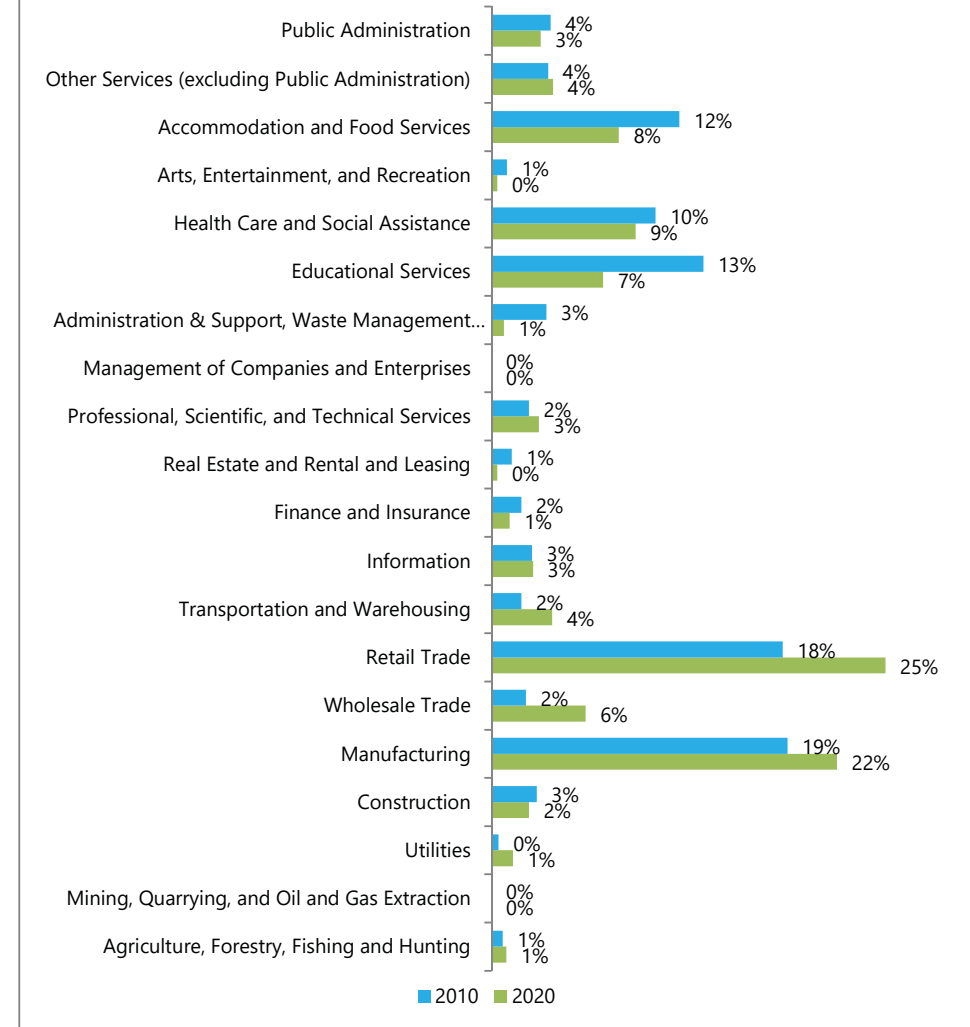
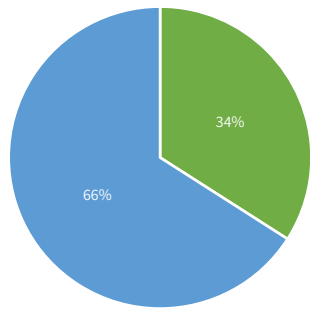
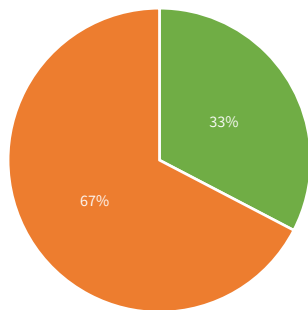


Figure 1.20 Employment types available in Ironwood by industry, 2010-2020



■ Living and Employed in Ironwood ■ Living in Ironwood but Employed Outside

Figure 1.22 Ironwood resident workforce and outflow



■ Living and Employed in Ironwood ■ Employed in Ironwood but Living Outside

Figure 1.23 Ironwood employment and inflow



Figure 1.21 Inflow/outflow numbers for Ironwood

Inflow/Outflow

Inflow/Outflow analysis provides information on the number of Ironwood residents who are employed within Ironwood and those who are employed outside of Ironwood. Similarly, it also offers insights into the number of people employed within Ironwood who live outside of the city limits. There is a total of 2,038 people employed in Ironwood and 1,952 residents living in Ironwood are employed. This means that Ironwood has a net job inflow of 86. However, not all employed Ironwood residents work within Ironwood. Overall, 665 (34%) of working Ironwood residents live and work in Ironwood, the remaining 1,287 (66%) of residents in the workforce live in Ironwood but work outside the city. Similarly, 1,373 (67%) of the workforce employed in Ironwood lives outside of the city.

60% Ironwood residents in the workforce travel less than 10 miles to work, 25% travel more than 50 miles. Similarly, of those working in Ironwood, 68% travel less than 10 miles to work in Ironwood while 22% travel more than 50 miles.

Regional Economic Trends

Recent regional reports from both Western U.P. Planning & Development Region and Michigan Works! highlight regional industry and employment trends. The region faces many of the same demographic challenges as Ironwood, with a declining overall population size, growing senior population, and declining labor force.

Key regional trends and industries

- Unemployment rates in the region have decreased in the last five years, from 6.2% in 2017 to 5.2% in 2023.
- The three top industries in the region represent over half the jobs. These industries are trade, transportation and utilities; leisure and hospitality; and education and health services.
- Information jobs were the only industry that decreased between 2017-2023, with a 24.2% decrease, which contrasts with the growth of that industry in the state.
- Most areas are driven by service industries, largely linked to tourism, and institutions including hospitals, higher learning, and government. These areas remain stable opportunities for employment. However, many jobs in the service industry are lower paying jobs than other industries.
- Manufacturing jobs have rebounded slightly after a decline in the early 2000s, with a few concentrations of specialized manufacturing found across the region.
- Extraction-oriented industries are still relevant to the regional economy despite the overall decline in mining. Timber production continues, which opportunities for value-added users. Renewed mining interests in copper could bring some jobs to the area, but raises the issue of boom-and-bust employment and economic peaks.

Tourism and Events

Regionally, tourism is a key industry throughout the Western UP, with visitors in 2022 spending \$79.9 million in Gogebic County. 760 jobs in the county are directly supported by tourism, with a total of 22.3% of all county employment tied directly or indirectly to tourism. Tourism generated a total of \$23.6 million in labor income for workers in Gogebic County.

Considered the Western Gateway to the U.P., the City of Ironwood plays a key role in attracting and hosting visitors in the region. Efforts by the City, Downtown Ironwood Development Authority, Travel Ironwood, Ironwood Chamber of Commerce, and others have increased awareness and availability of arts-related amenities, downtown destinations, and other attractions to complement nearby outdoor recreational destinations .

- Recreational Destinations include:
 - Iron Belle Trail
 - Porcupine Mountains
 - Miner's Memorial Heritage Park
 - Mt. Zion Ski Hill
 - Ottawa National Forest
 - Lake Superior
 - Ski hills and Nordic ski trails
- Events and Festivals:
 - Festival Ironwood
 - Emberlight Festival
 - Jack Frost Festival
 - SISU Ski Fest
 - Downtown Ironwood First Fridays
 - Plaidurday
- Arts-related attractions:
 - Historic Ironwood Theatre
 - Downtown Art Place
 - Downtown Art Park

- Historic and heritage sites:
 - Ironwood Carnegie Library
 - Memorial Building
 - Old Depot Museum
 - Hiawatha Statue
 - Little Finland (Hurley, WI)



Plaidurday



Mountain Biking at Miner's Park



SISU Ski Fest



Farmers Market

Table 1.24 Economic development organizations in Western UP region

Economic Development Group	Function/Role of Group											Geographic Focus / Priority													
	Marketing/Promotion	Funding	Consulting/Advisor	Own/Develop	Mentor	Event/Organizer	Operators	Broker	Recruiter	Job Creation	Training/Retraining	Partner	Downtown Ironwood	Ironwood Industrial Park	City of Ironwood	City of Hurley	City of Bessemer	City of Wakefield	Gogebic County	Ontonagon County	UP	Iron County, WI	State	US	
Downtown Ironwood Development Authority	P			S		S	S	P	P			P	X												
Foundations																									
Gogebic Brownfield Redevelopment Authority		P																	X						
Gogebic Community College	P		P		P	P				P	P			X		X	X	X					X		
Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action	P	S	P			P	P	S	P	P		P						X	X						
Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Foundation		P				P					P							X	X						
InvestUP	P		P		S				P	P	P										X				
Ironwood Area Chamber of Commerce	P				S	P		S				P	X	X	X	X	X		X						
Ironwood Economic Development Corporation	P	P	P	S	P		S	P	P			P	X	X	X										
Ironwood Tourism Council	P	P										P	X	X	X										
Michigan Economic Development Association			P		P	P					P	P	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		
Michigan Economic Development Corporation		P	P						S			P												X	
Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center	S		P		S	S						P	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				
Michigan State University Extension			P		P	S						P									X		X		
Michigan Works	S		S			S				P	P	P	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				
Northern Initiatives	S	P	P										X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Private Companies (banks, utilities)																									
UP Collaborative Development Council											P												X	X	
UP Economic Development Alliance	S					P						P											X		
UPWard Initiative	P					P						P											X		
US Department of Ag Rural Development		P											X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Western UP Convention and Visitor Bureau	P	P	S		P	P						P	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X			
Western UP Planning & Development Region		P	S			S						S			X		X	X	X	X	X				

Economic Development Groups

There are a number of organizations engaging in economic development activities in the Ironwood area and the broader region and state. Table 1.24 is a comprehensive list of organizations/agencies that provide varying levels of economic development-oriented services. The table lists the key roles/functions of these groups, as well as their geographic focus areas.

Existing Land Use

One way of observing patterns in Ironwood is through an analysis of existing land use patterns. Existing land use is a snapshot of how lands are currently used at a point in time, in this instance spring 2024. Existing land use was determined through an analysis of current tax classification, parcel data (including year built and building values), current zoning designations, ownership data, an evaluation of aerial photos, and knowledge of past land use. The following categories describe the existing land use pattern in Ironwood:

Commercial

Commercial land uses represent locations where retail goods and services are bought and sold. These sites are characterized by proximity and visibility to and from major road corridors or key districts such as downtown Ironwood. Generally, these uses generate significant vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Limited neighborhood commercial services can also be found serving many of the residential neighborhoods. These uses tend to be smaller building foot prints and often located in what used to be residential structures. Outside of downtown, commercial uses area characterized more with an auto orientation (parking lots, large highway oriented signage, buildings set back from the street with parking in front). Within the downtown district (and to a degree at some neighborhood nodes), commercial uses are more pedestrian oriented, largely due to the historic nature of downtown and the time period in which it was developed.

Industrial

Industrial uses tend to be more job intensive uses or manufacturing intensive uses that require larger footprints and generate greater levels of by-products such as noise, truck traffic, dust, or outside storage. Examples of industrial uses can be found in the city industrial park or on some outlying parcels.

Residential

The predominant land use pattern in the city is devoted to single family detached residential housing uses. Residential neighborhoods within the areas adjacent downtown typically follow a similar platting pattern of 45-50 foot wide residential lots oriented towards an east/west neighborhood street and platted with alley access. Many home sites combine two lots or more platted lots per single family home. In some cases, small apartments or multifamily housing is introduced into the neighborhood fabric. Across all residential land uses, there are approximately 3.3 units per acre of residential land .



Commercial / Mixed Use

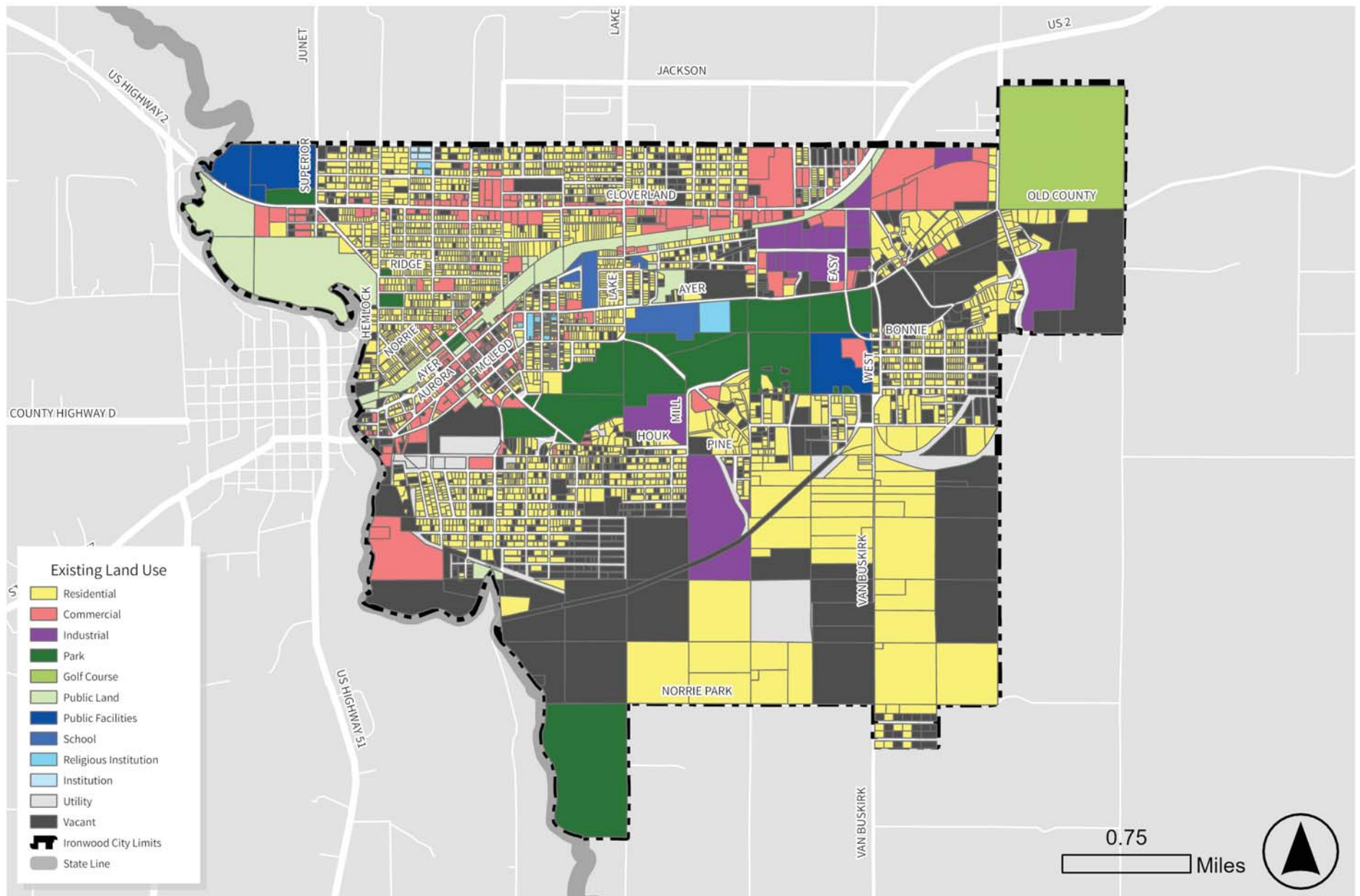


Public Facility - Library



Single Family Housing

Figure 1.25 Existing Land Use in Ironwood, 2022



Public Facilities

Public facilities generally include such uses as the County Fairgrounds, maintenance facilities, government service centers such as the Memorial Building, or other public oriented uses. These uses are often located in or near commercial corridors or districts and generate a fair amount of vehicle traffic, particularly during key events or peak periods.

Schools

Schools are also public facilities; however, locating schools requires a more considerate account of proximity to housing, parks/open space, and transportation corridors. Schools include K-12 facilities in Ironwood. Gogebic Community College located just north of the City is not included in the existing land use inventory but is recognized as being an integral part of the community.

Religious Institutions

This category essentially includes churches and schools or other assembly type programs that are directly affiliated with a church. These uses historically have located in residential neighborhoods; however, they are characterized today by being more of an auto oriented destination generating vehicle traffic at key peak periods during assembly or congregation events.

Institutions

Uses that have characteristics of more service providers and public/non-profit orientations are grouped into the “institutional” designation. These uses might include nursing homes, day cares, or social service facilities.

Park

Park is predominantly city owned public park land, which might be active play fields/facilities or more passive trails and open space.

Public

Public represents publicly owned lands that are not principally park land but are also not generally situated for future active development. This includes the cemetery and some miscellaneous open space parcels.

Utility

Public and private utilities include service stations or sub stations.

Vacant

A key part of assessing the land use patterns is understanding lands that are currently not occupied by buildings or structures and are generally not being put to a productive use. These lands do not include park lands or lands that are intended for storage or other use. Vacant lands might include public or private land areas that could be sold or developed/improved.

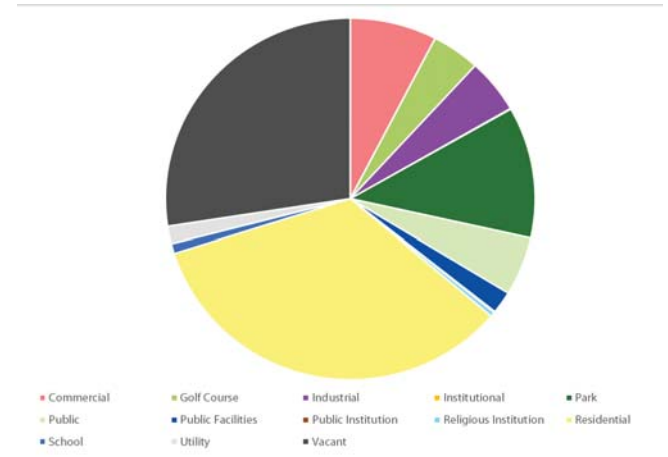


Figure 1.27 Existing land use by land use category

Land Use	Acreege
Commercial	290.72
Industrial	186.10
Residential	1297.13
Public Facilities	76.55
Schools	34.06
Religious Institutions	15.32
Institutions	6.50
Park	448.86
Public	199.89
Utility	59.73
Vacant	1049.72
Golf course	161.44
Total Acreege	3826.02

Table 1.26 Acreege of existing land use categories

Units in Structure	Number
Total housing units	3,015
1-unit, detached	2,456
1-unit, attached	7
2 units	70
3 or 4 units	121
5 to 9 units	154
10 to 19 units	68
20 or more units	139
Mobile home	0
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0

Figure 1.28 Housing units by type

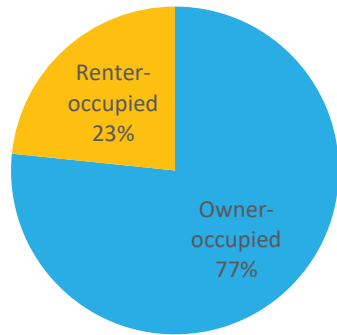


Figure 1.29 Ironwood housing occupancy rates

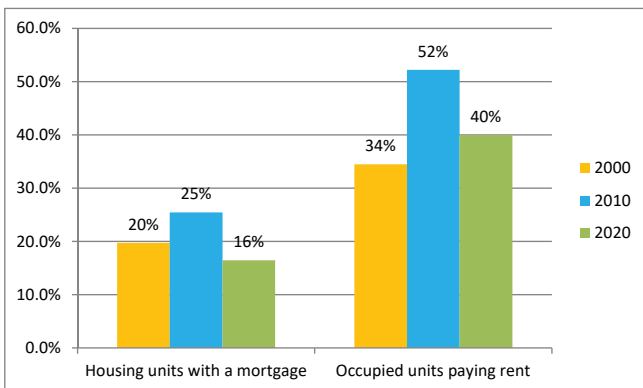


Figure 1.30 Housing cost-burdened rates in Ironwood

Housing Housing Conditions

The majority of housing units in Ironwood are single-family, detached houses. The total housing stock has decreased between 2010 and 2020 by just over 100 units, from 3,154 units to 3,015 units.

Ironwood's housing stock is older, with very little housing built between 1980 and 2000, and only 53 units added between 2000 and 2020, with all of those added between 2000 and 2009. 55% of housing stock was built before 1940. The median home value increased from \$59,400 in 2010 to \$67,700 in 2020. The number of homes valued at or below \$50,000 decreased from 43.4% to 33% between 2010 and 2020, with home values in other value brackets increasing slightly.

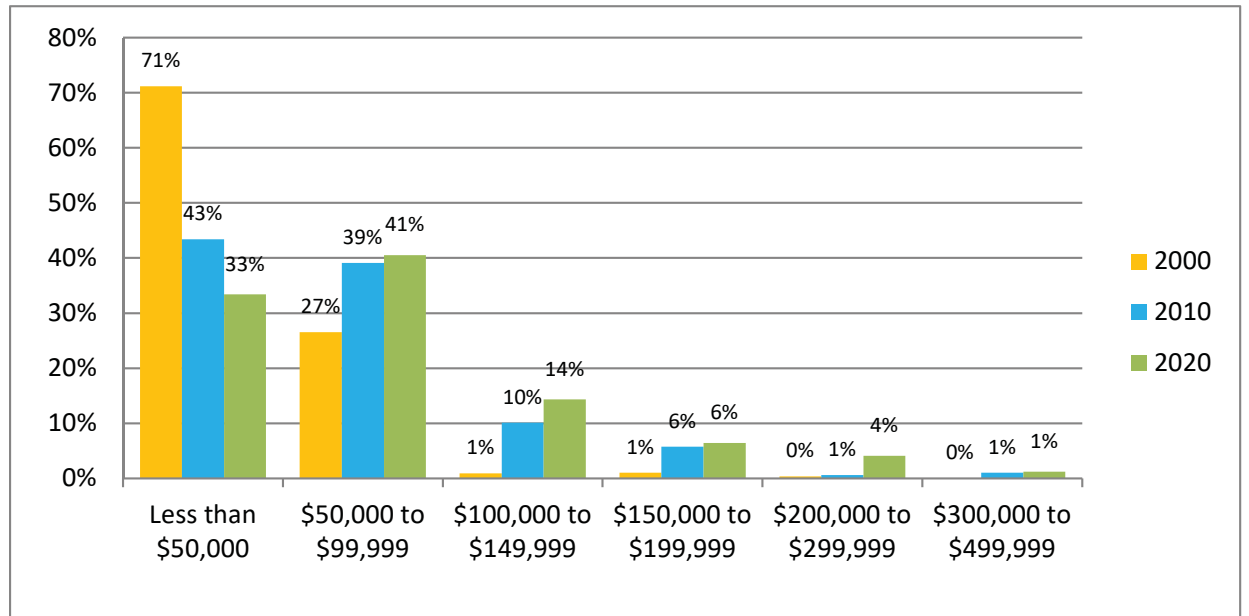


Figure 1.31 Ironwood home values, 2000-2020

Housing Tenure and Costs

77% of housing units in Ironwood are owner-occupied and 23% are renter-occupied. The percentage of households who are housing cost burdened has decreased for both renters and owners since 2010. 40% of renters are housing cost burdened, down from 52% in 2010. Housing cost burdened owner-occupied households also decreased, down to 17% in 2020 compared to 25% in 2010.

Vacancy Rates and Short-Term Rentals

13% of Ironwood's housing units are vacant. This includes units used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Due to the role of tourism in the region, many vacant units are short term rental units (STRs). In the Western UP, 28.5% of all housing units are STRs. In Gogebic County, 34% of units are vacant, and a total of 27% of all housing units are STRs, which represents a large portion of the vacant units in the county.

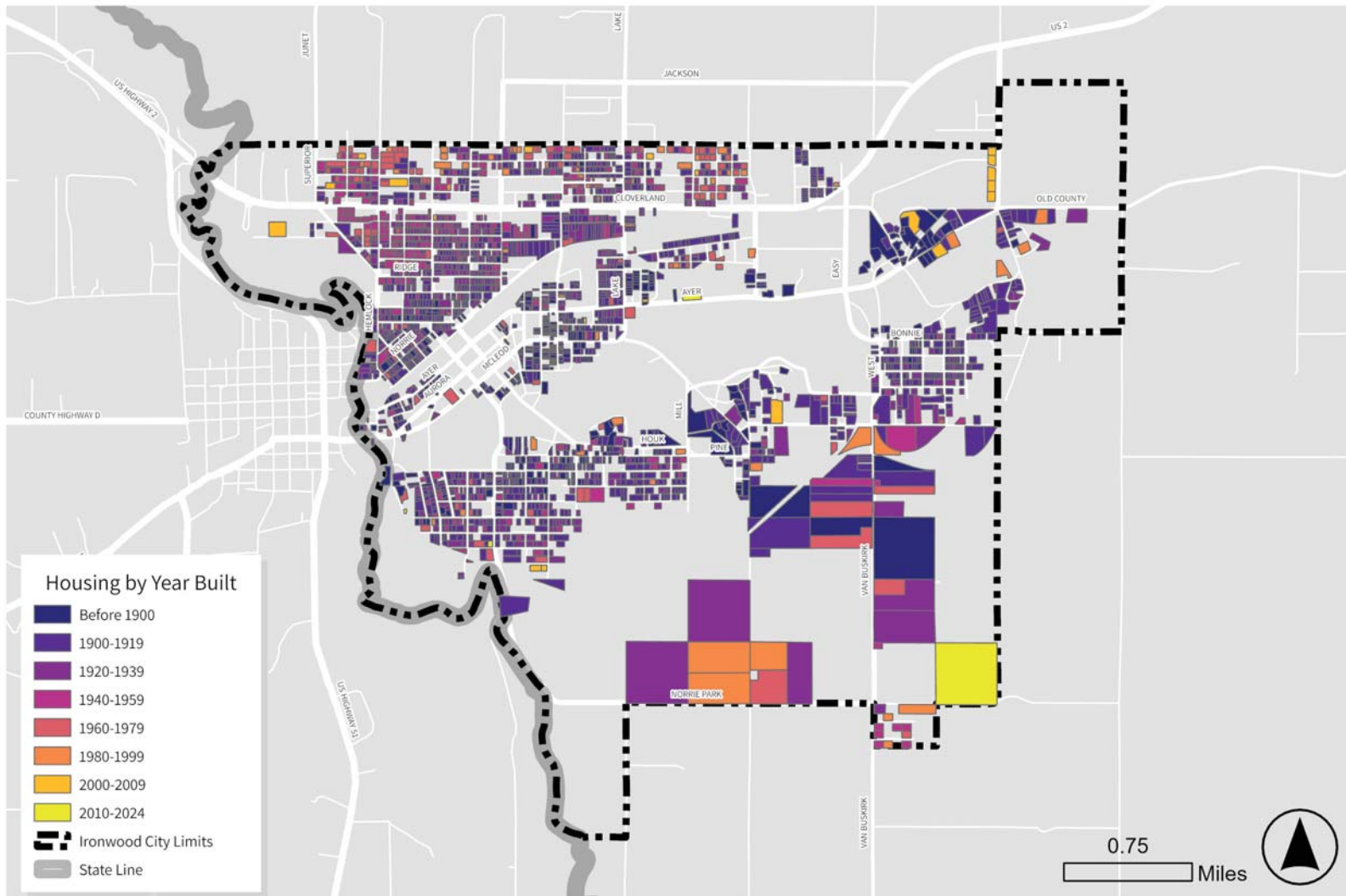


Figure 1.32 Ironwood housing by year built

Natural Resources/Environment

Topography

The elevation within Ironwood ranges from 1740 to 1430 feet above sea level, a difference of 310 feet. This topographic relief hints at nearby faults within the Gogebic Iron Range and the North American Mid-Continent Rift, within which the city lies. Local topography, including the two ridges that characterize the Gogebic Iron Range, can be seen in Figure 1.34.

Water Resources

The Montreal River Corridor: A designated trout stream, the Montreal River begins some 20 miles southwest of Ironwood at Pine Lake, flowing into Lake Superior's Oronto Bay and forming the Michigan-Wisconsin border for much of its course.

Within Ironwood the Montreal is well-buffered from development by deciduous forest and open space, with the exception of an approximately half mile segment between West Aurora Street/US Business Highway 2 and North Hemlock Street at West Gogebic Street, where a number of residential properties abut the river. A specific area of concern within this segment includes the city-owned Ironwood Manufactured Gas Plant site at Water Street (Hemlock and West Ayer). A 2011 EPA report notes the presence of visible contaminants from coal tar at the site, and clean-up was completed in 2013 by the EPA.

The Gogebic-Iron Wastewater Treatment Plant discharges treated effluent into the Montreal from its location at the very northwest corner of the city. The effluent currently meets state standards for levels of contaminants, but may have difficulty meeting new mercury restriction levels anticipated to change in the future.

Streams/Creeks/Waterways: In addition to the Montreal River, there are several small creeks that flow thru or near Ironwood; Whisker's Creek along the south border and into Norrie Park, Welch Creek just north of town, Siemen's Creek northeast of town, and an unnamed stream that enters the Montreal north of West Norrie Park Road. There are also four scenic ponds in Miners Park that are the result of mine pits subsiding and retaining water.

Wetlands/Floodplains: The south/southwest portion of the city consists largely of emergent herbaceous wetlands and woody wetlands. Figure 1.35 shows this distribution.

Soils

Ironwood area soils are generally characterized by the Gogebic-Cathro-Rock Outcrop Association. Gogebic soils comprise 72% of the association, and are moderately well-drained with loamy parent material and fine sandy and silt loams in the surface layer. Cathro soils make up 7% of the association and are very poorly drained, with a mucky surface layer over organic then loamy parent material. Rock Outcrops make up 3% and soils of minor extent the remaining 18%.

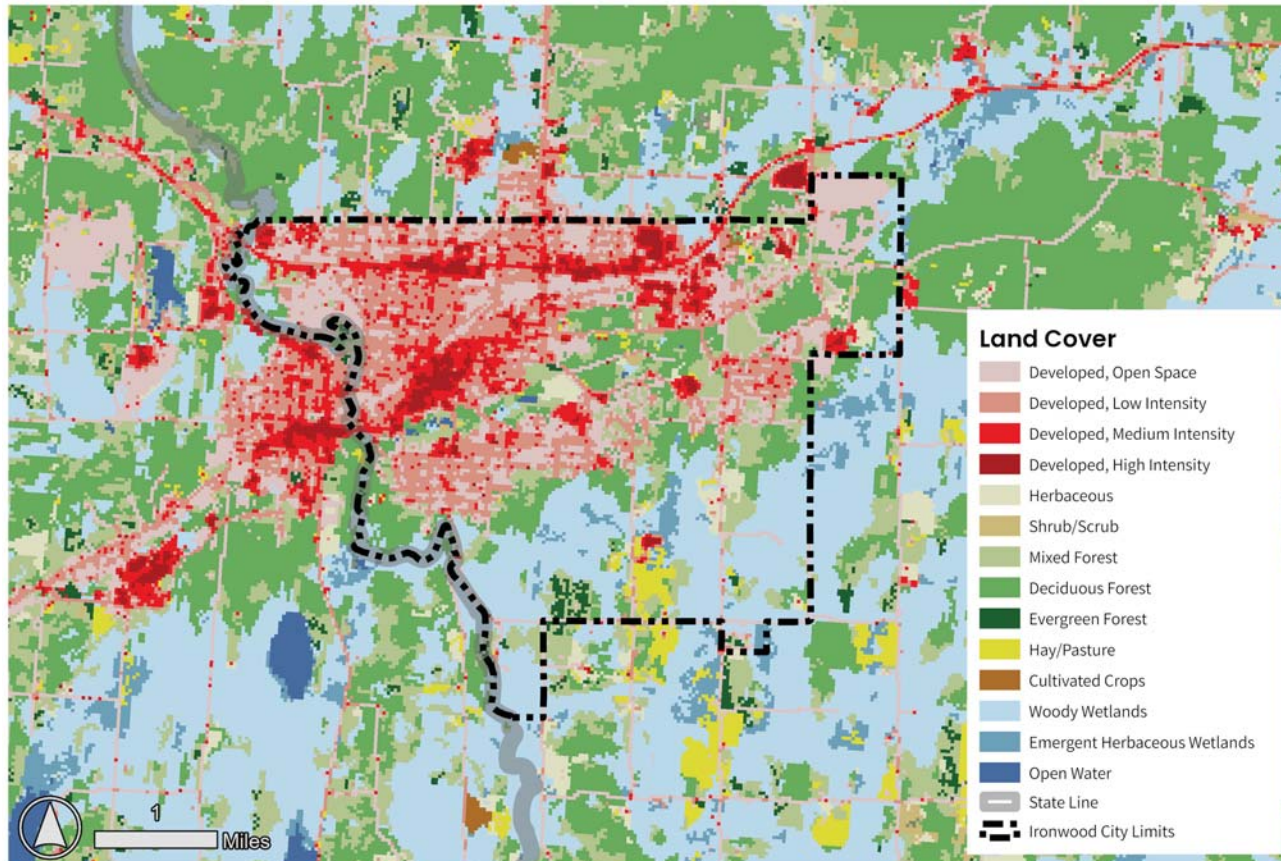


Figure 1.33 Land use classification in and around Ironwood, 2021

Mineral Resources

The presence of mineral resources in the region continue to be of import to the Ironwood community. The Ironwood Iron Formation that spurred some 40 mines in the region from 1877 to 1967, produced over 325 million tons of ore during that time. While mining operations have slowed significantly, new technologies in mining and mineral processing, combined with global demand for earth metals have resurfaced the economic feasibility of mining in the region. Current estimates put economically recoverable ore at 3.7 billion tons within the Ironwood Formation . [See p. A-X](#) for more on proposed mining projects in the region.

Forest Resources

Ironwood lies within the Superior Mineral Range Ecoregion, typified by hemlock/sugar-maple/white pine forests, swamp conifers, and cedar/hemlock forests. Red pine, white pine, red oak, and paper birch grow on bedrock ridges with thin soils, while hardwood forests of hemlock, sugar maple, basswood, and yellow birch occur on areas with glacial loamy till soils.

Ironwood is flanked by two National Forests within 50 miles: the Chequamegon and Ottawa National Forests. The Ottawa comprises nearly one million acres of forest in the region. More locally, the Gogebic County Forestry and Parks Commission manages over 50,000 acres of forest, producing world class sugar maple sawlogs and veneer.

Since 2000, a decline in the forest products sector has been observed for the Northern Region of the US, including the Ironwood area. This decline in production has contributed to large volumes of standing and growing timber stock in the vicinity. Defining the Ironwood vicinity as the western eight counties of the Upper Peninsula and the seven northwest counties of Wisconsin, the U.S Forest Service estimated in 2009 8.8 million acres of timberland with a standing volume of 10.6 billion cubic feet. Timberland does not include forests reserves such as wilderness, parks, and municipalities .

Habitat

Two animal species federally recognized as threatened or proposed as endangered have habitat ranges that include the Ironwood area; Northern Long-eared Bats and Canada Lynx. Northern Long-eared Bats, currently proposed as endangered, hibernate in caves and mines and live in upland forests during spring and summer, and have been documented in Gogebic County. Canada Lynx are listed as a threatened species. The presence of a lynx was recently documented in the Upper Peninsula, and forested areas of Gogebic County are considered by the US Fish & Wildlife Service as likely lynx habitat.

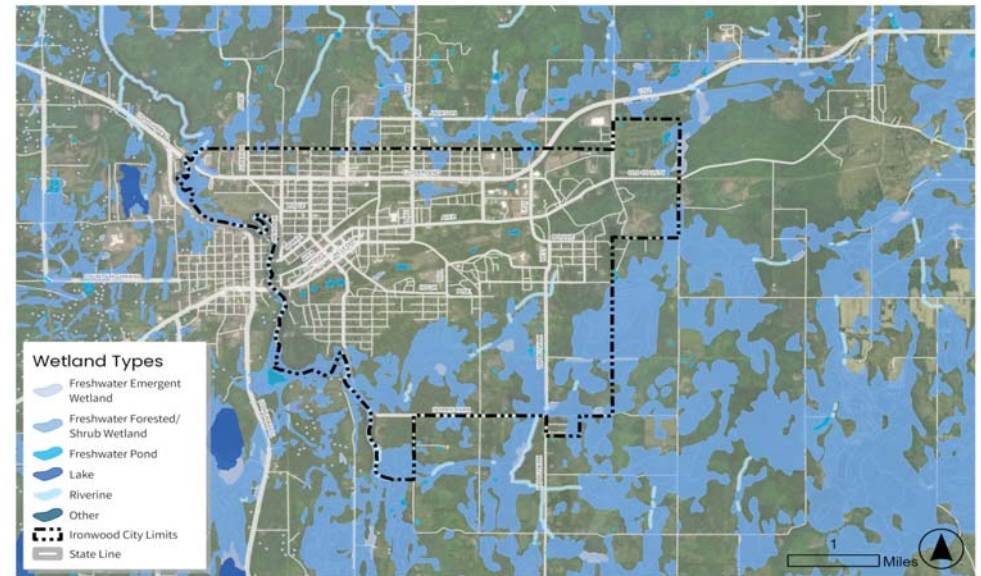


Figure 1.35 Wetlands in and around Ironwood



Figure 1.34 Topography in and around Ironwood

Climate

Ironwood falls along the western side of Lake Superior’s “snowbelt,” meaning it experiences lake effect weather patterns and snowfall. Ironwood’s mean annual temperature from 1981-2010 is 40.1 degrees Fahrenheit with an average of 1 day per year above 90 degrees and 179 days per year below 32 degrees. Mean annual precipitation is 34.9 inches (rainfall plus the water equivalent found in snowfall).

Predictions from Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments (GLISA) offer some insights into what Ironwood’s climate might look like in the next 20 to 40 years, from 2040-2059. Using data from the University of Wisconsin Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research, GLISA generated predictions for changes in average temperature, precipitation, and other climate indicators. These predictions, based on a higher emissions scenario (RCP 8.5) show a projected increase in average annual temperature in Ironwood of around 4 degrees Fahrenheit with the average annual number of days above 90 degrees

Projected Change in Average Annual Temperature by Mid-Century
 Period: 2040-2059 | Higher Emissions: RCP 8.5

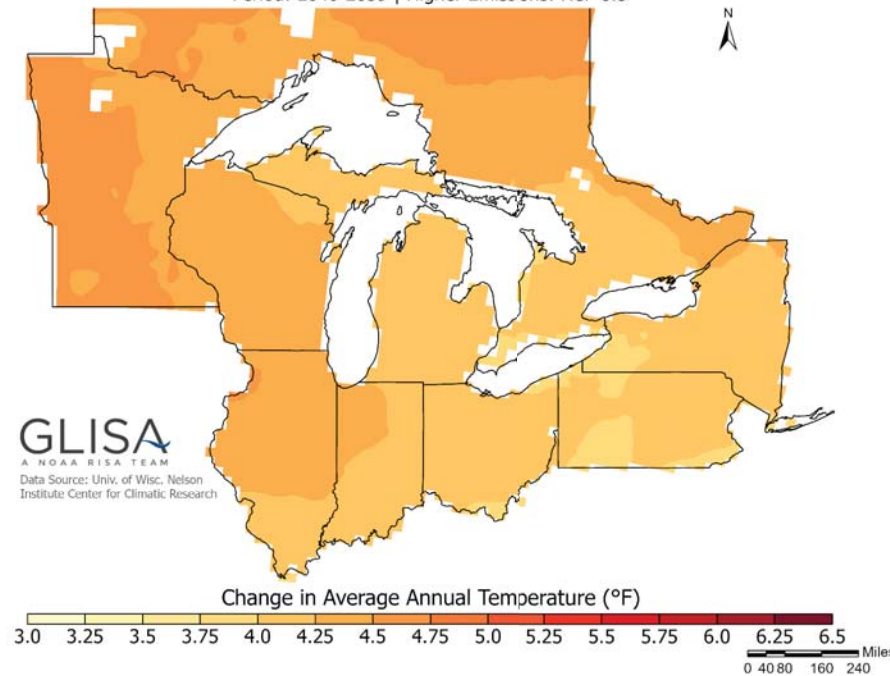


Figure 1.36 Projected change in average annual temperature. Source GLISA

Projected Change in Days with over 1" Precipitation by Mid-Century
 Period: 2040-2059 | Higher Emissions: RCP 8.5

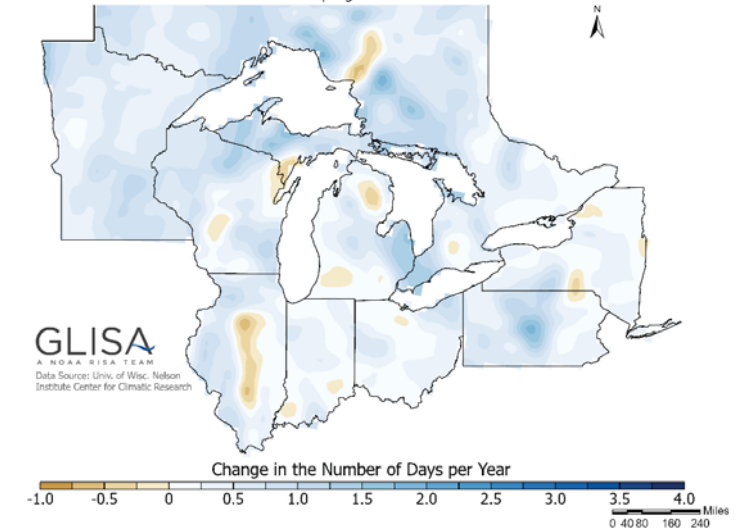


Figure 1.37 Projected change in days with over 1" precipitation. Source GLISA

increasing by 12.5 to 17.5 days and the number of days below 20 degrees decreasing by 7.5 to 12.5. Average annual precipitation is predicted to increase by 1.75 to 2.5 inches.

General observations and predictions for the Great Lakes Region show similar trends. The average temperature in the region has increased by 2.3 degrees since 1951 with winter temperatures rising faster than other seasons. Across both low and high emission scenarios, average air temperatures are predicted to increase by 3 to 6 degrees by 2050. Lake temperatures are warming faster than air temperature. Lake Superior summer surface water temperatures have increased 4.5 degrees from 1979-2006 and winter ice cover is declining. Annual precipitation has increased 14% since 1951 and is projected to continue increasing, though with variations across seasons. Through 2050, an increase in lake-effect snow is predicted with possibilities of more winter rain after 2050. Lake effect snow is likely increasing due to warmer surface water temperatures and declining lake ice. In areas with non-lake effect snow, snowfall amounts are expected to decline. The occurrence of extreme precipitation events has increased since 1951 and is predicted to continue increasing with more frequent storms such as thunderstorms, heavy rains, and snow storms. Other extreme weather events are too uncertain to predict. Factoring in extreme weather events into infrastructure and other planning is an important factor in climate adaptation and community resilience.

Parks and Recreation

Ironwood Parks and Recreation is overseen by an seven person Parks and Recreation Committee. Committee members are appointed and serve three-year terms. The Committee is tasked with maintaining and updating the Parks and Recreation Plan, coordinating the activities of the City, organizations, and other groups working in this area, and balancing the needs of residents while appealing to tourists and visitors to the area. Ironwood updated its 5-year Parks and Recreation Plan in 2024.

City Parks, Recreation, + Trails

The following section provides an inventory of Ironwood Parks and Recreation facilities and a brief overview of regional recreational assets. Ironwood's parks fall into six classes of parks: Neighborhood, Community, Special Use, Mini-park, Private Facilities, and School.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks are the basic unit of a community's park system, and serve as the recreational and social focus of a neighborhood, and provide a setting for informal active and passive recreation. Neighborhood parks include Kuitunen, Hiawatha, Midland, Lowell, and Lake & Ayer Street Parks.

Community Parks

Community Parks are designed to serve the broader community and meet city-wide recreation needs. They may also preserve special landscapes and open spaces. Community parks include Depot, Longyear, Norrie, Miners Memorial Heritage, and City Square. The Municipal Memorial Building also serves some community scale recreation purposes.

Special Use Parks

Special Use Parks include a broad range of park and recreation facilities geared toward a single-purpose use such as RV camping (Curry Park), Skiing/Outdoor Recreation (Mt. Zion), and other sports (Randa Field, Hiawatha Skate Park, Pat O'Donnell Civic Center, and Krznarich Little League Field).

Mini-Park

Mini-parks are used to meet limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs, and are typically between 2,500 square feet and one acre in size. Ironwood's downtown pocket park and downtown art park are examples of mini-parks.

Private Facilities

Lindquist Student Center: The community college also provides access for area residents to the Lindquist Student Center's 11,205 square foot gymnasium, 1/11 mile indoor walking track, aerobics area, and weight room.

Mount Zion Recreation Complex: Also part of Gogebic Community College, the Mount Zion Complex is open to the public and features free cross country skiing

and reasonably priced lift tickets, ski/snowboard lessons, and snow tubing.

Elected and Administrative Structure

The Parks and Recreation Committee of Ironwood was founded in 1987 and charged with:

...analyzing, planning, and recommending procedures affecting the recreational, cultural, and life-enrichment aspects of community life, maintaining the city's Recreation Plan; help coordinate activities of the various groups working in this area so as to encourage initiative, but also to make the best use of the limited resources available, bearing in mind the needs of the residents and the appeal of the activities to tourists and other visitors to the area.

The Parks and Recreation Committee makes recommendations to the City Commission regarding park and recreation capital improvements. The City Commission has final authority over the parks and recreation system and decisions. All meetings are open to the public.

The City's Parks are managed by the Ironwood Public Works Department. Some services are contracted to local businesses. Volunteers and Organized groups support the City with maintenance and donations.

The City of Ironwood Parks and Recreation Committee communicates and collaborates with:

- Ironwood Planning Commission
- Ironwood City Commission
- Downtown Ironwood Development Authority
- Ironwood Area School District
- Gogebic Community College
- Local civic, community and recreation groups

Community Recreation Destinations

The Ironwood area offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including: hundreds of acres of Gogebic County and Ottawa National Forest land; a multitude of cross-county and downhill ski areas; camping and hiking destinations; and access to Lake Superior and other local water bodies. Perhaps the most unique facility in the area is the Copper Peak Ski Flying Hill located north of Bessemer. While inactive as a ski jumping facility since the 1990s, in 2015 Copper Peak was granted approval by the Federation of International Skiing to renovate the facility and become the only ski flying hill outside of Europe. Recently, Copper Peak received \$20 million in funding from the state and is slated to reopen in 2026. Figure 1.39 shows recreation destinations in the Ironwood Area.

Table 1.38 Ironwood parks and park amenities

Park & Classification	Size	picnic tables	grills	fire pit	tennis courts	play equipment	basketball court (lighted)	parking lot	band shell	baseball field	spectator seating	concessions	restrooms	portable restrooms	pavilion	softball field (lighted)	walking paths	horseshoe pits	ice-rink	benches	splash pad	cross country ski trails	community garden	soccer field	football field	track	swimming pool	ski/snowboard/tubing	gymnasium	disc golf	sledding hill	sand volleyball	camping				
Community Park																																					
Longyear Park	3.22 acres	•			•	•		•					•				•			•																	
Norrie Park	105 acres	•	•		•	•		•					•		•		•	•		•			•								•						
Miners Memorial Heritage Park	168 acres	•	•			•		•					•				•			•											•						
Municipal Memorial Building	n/a					•	•	•			•	•	•																•								
Depot Park	3.3 acres	•				•		•					•		•		•			•													•				
Downtown City Square		•		•					•					•			•			•		•															
Neighborhood Park																																					
Kuitunen Park	.5 acres																•			•																	
Hiawatha Park	1.04 acres	•				•								•	•					•																	
Midland Park																																					
Lake & Ayer Street Park	.4 acres	•				•	•													•																	
Special Use																																					
Pat O'Donnell Civic Center	30,000 sqft							•			•	•	•						•																		
Curry Park	9.25 acres	•	•	•		•							•																							•	
John Krznarich Little League Field	2.75 acres	•				•		•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•			•																	
Randa Field	1.4 acres										•					•																					
Mount Zion Overlook Park	1 acre	•													•					•																	
Hiawatha Rotary Skate Park	1.2 acres	•						•						•																							
Peterson Tennis Courts	.77 acres	•			•	•		•												•																	
Mini-Park																																					
Downtown Pocket Park	.08 acres																•			•																	
Private Facility																																					
Lindquist Student Center	n/a										•	•	•				•								•				•								
Mount Zion Recreation Complex											•																	•									
School-Park																																					
LL Wright K-12 School	2 acres					•	•	•		•	•	•	•				•			•				•	•	•			•								

Regional Recreational Destinations

Regionally, Ironwood is situated in the midst of a very active outdoor recreation area, with land set aside for conservation and public use. Figure 1.41 shows the location of major scenic and recreational amenities in the region.

Trails

Trails are a valued amenity in Ironwood. Many people use trails for snowmobiling, biking, hiking, skiing, walking, snowshoeing, and as part of their routine transportation. For the purposes of this report, trails are classified into five categories (as shown in Table 1.40): Regional, Park, Connector, On-street Bikeway, and Driving Tour.

Regional Trails and Driving Tour Routes

Regional trails include multi-use trails that make connections beyond the individual city. Regional trails in Ironwood include Michigan's Iron Belle Trail, the Western Gateway Trail, Gogebic Range Trail Authority State Snowmobile Trail #2, and a temporary connector portion of the North Country Trail, a national hiking trail connecting New York and North Dakota.

Michigan's Iron Belle Trail follows the railroad bed of the former Canadian National Railroad through downtown Ironwood to Bessemer. It then follows existing trails, networks and new connections, for more than 2,000 miles ending in Belle Isle in Detroit. It offers two routes, a cycling route and a hiking route and is 71% completed. Motorized trail users have access to over 2,000 miles of trail from the Gateway Trail in Ironwood, which also follows the bed of the former Canadian Railroad through downtown before connecting to other regional trails.

The Lake Superior Circle Tour, popular among motorcyclists, loops around Lake Superior along highways closest to the lake. The Michigan portion of the tour starts in Ironwood and extends to Sault Ste. Marie.

Park Trails

Park Trails in Ironwood can be found within Miners Memorial Park and Riverside Cemetery. Miners Memorial Park trails, with the exception of a motorized north-south crossing for ATVs and Snowmobiles, are non-motorized walking, biking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing trails. Riverside Cemetery offers non-motorized trails for snowshoeing, hiking, and cross-country skiing.

Connector Trails

Connector Trails emphasize a safe mode of travel for non-

motorized users between parks and other community assets. There are several connector trails within Ironwood. See Figure 1.39 for locations of such trails.

On-street Bike Lanes

Currently, Ironwood's proposed on-street bike lanes outnumber the existing, but there are plans to make lengthy on-street connections for bikers .

Private Trail Facilities

Two private trail facilities contribute to the overall system within Ironwood; including The Wolverine Trail System, which offers non-motorized use winter trails and summer mountain biking and ABR Trails.

Figure 1.39 Existing parks and trails in Ironwood

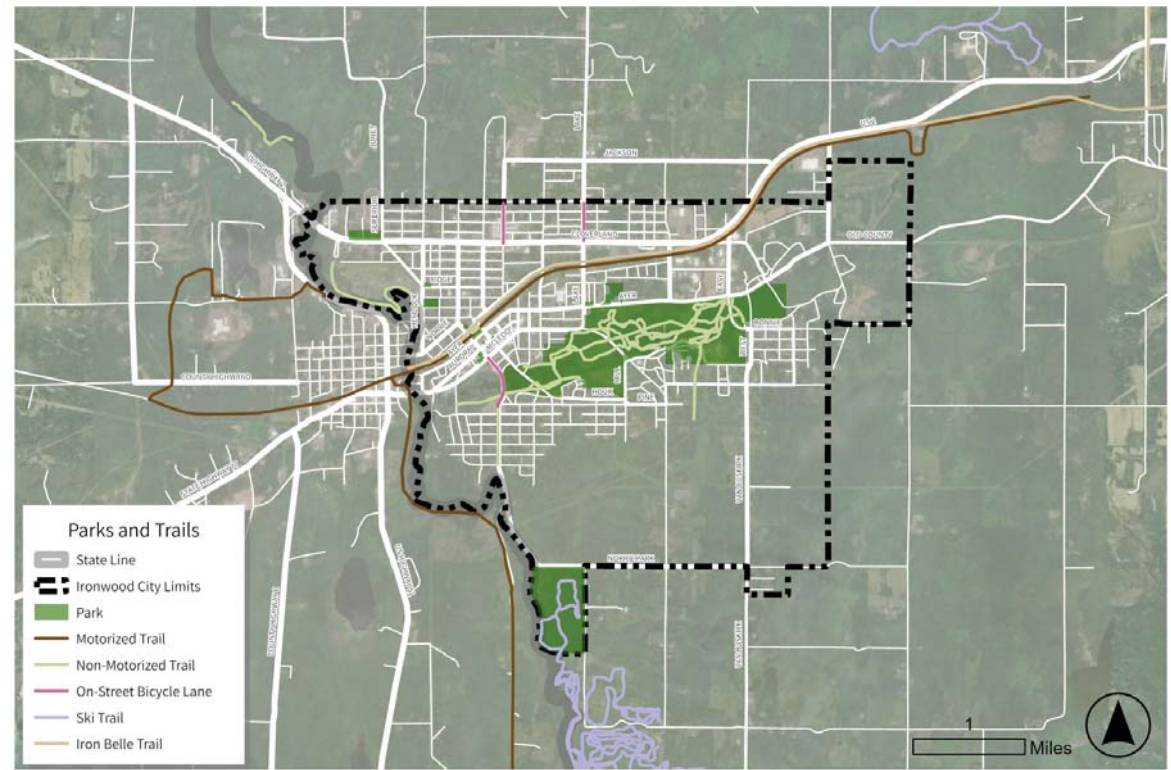


Table 1.40 Ironwood trails and trail characteristics

Trail & Classification	General Description	Uses						Surface
		Walk/ Hike	Bike	ATV	Snowmobile	Cross country ski	Snowshoe	
Regional Trail/Tour Route								
Gogebic Range Trail Authority Snowmobile Trail	Motorized trail connecting users from Wisconsin to thousands of miles of trails in Western Upper Peninsula. Proposed non-motorized section through Ironwood.			•	•			Unpaved with Exception of segment in Depot Park
Iron Belle Trail	Non-motorized crossing Michigan from Ironwood to Detroit. It includes a bike route and a hiking/walking route.	•	•					Varies across management units, paved in Ironwood
North Country Trail (temporary connector)	Non-motorized national trail hosted by many land management units across multiple states. Policies vary by section	•				•	•	Varies across management units
Lake Superior Circle Tour	Scenic Driving Tour around Lake Superior							Paved (On-road)
Park Trail								
Miners Memorial Heritage Park Trails	Non-motorized system in Miners Memorial Heritage Park	•	•			•	•	Unpaved
Riverside Cemetery	Non-motorized network in Riverside Cemetery	•	•				•	Unpaved
On-street Bikeway								
NA	Bike lanes on portions of Greenbush Street, Lake Street, and Alfred Wright Boulevard		•					Paved (On-street)
Private Trail Facilities								
ABR trails	Private ski touring facility on over 1,100 acres, including a portion of Norrie Park	•				•	•	Unpaved
Wolverine Nordic Ski Trails	Operated by a non-profit, the Wolverine network is donation-based and open to the public	•	•			•	•	Unpaved



Ironwood's Downtown City Square



Trail users crossing the street

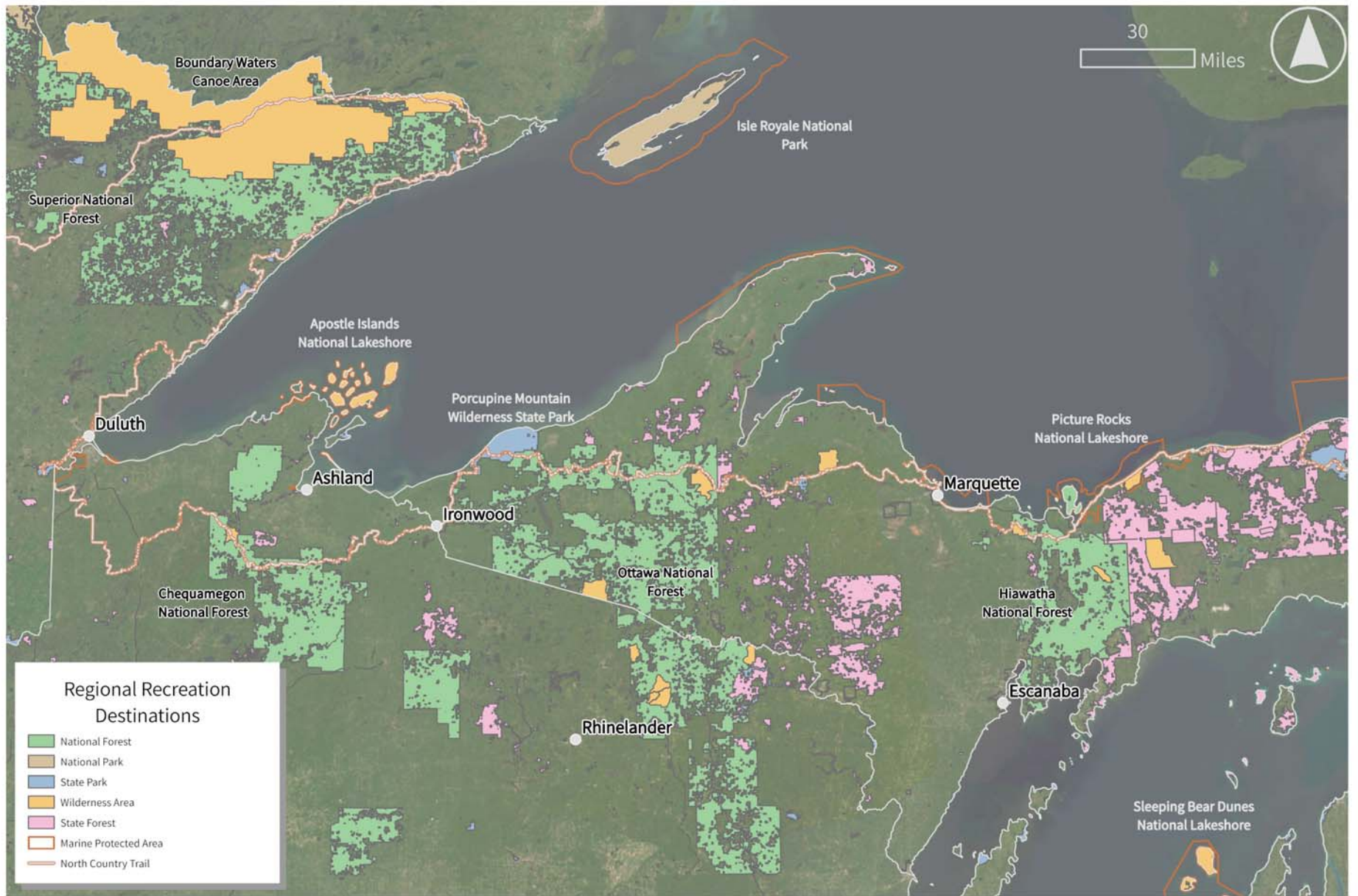


Figure 1.41 Regional recreation destinations and assets

Infrastructure

Community infrastructure includes the systems that provide drinking water, sanitary sewer, rainwater/snowmelt management, energy/power, and telecommunications technology. These “utility” systems include both underground and above ground infrastructure. As above ground infrastructure, their presence often has an impact on community image and identity, such as a water tower logo or iconic design, or massive power lines spanning a prominent corridor. Underground infrastructure is less visible, but keenly felt if, for example, the water does not flow or backs up where it shouldn’t. Much of the infrastructure in Ironwood was built in the early 20th century when the community was experiencing its greatest growth. Since then, the city has been in more of a manage and maintain mode, with the exception of introducing new technology such as telecommunications infrastructure.

The following section highlights the basic elements and current status of the City of Ironwood’s key infrastructure systems.

Potable Water

Governance and Jurisdictional Agreements

Ironwood’s potable water system is managed by the City’s Water and Sewer Department. The city sells water at bulk rate to the City of Hurley, Wisconsin, and to a few customers in Ironwood Township.

Well Fields (Water Source)

The city currently has 6 wells that range in depth from 54 to 140 feet. The wells draw drinking water from two glacial aquifers. The well fields are the Big Springs and Spring Creek well fields and are located generally north/northwest of the city of Ironwood. The city has a well head protection plan/ordinance adopted in 2003 and most recently updated in 2019 as a means to protect the well areas from land uses that could potentially threaten water quality.

Treatment System (Water Treatment)

The water treatment plant was originally built in 1923. In 1999, the plant underwent an expansion that increased and enhanced its ability to treat water drawn from the city’s wells for drinking needs. The plant currently has a capacity to pump 3.5 million gallons of drinking water per day (MGD).

Due to infrastructure age and the need to address high levels of manganese in the water supply, the City applied for USDA and EGLE funding to construct a new pump station and water treatment plant. The \$23MIL project is currently under construction in two phases. The first phase is in the process of being completed in December 2024 and will create a new pump station facility. The

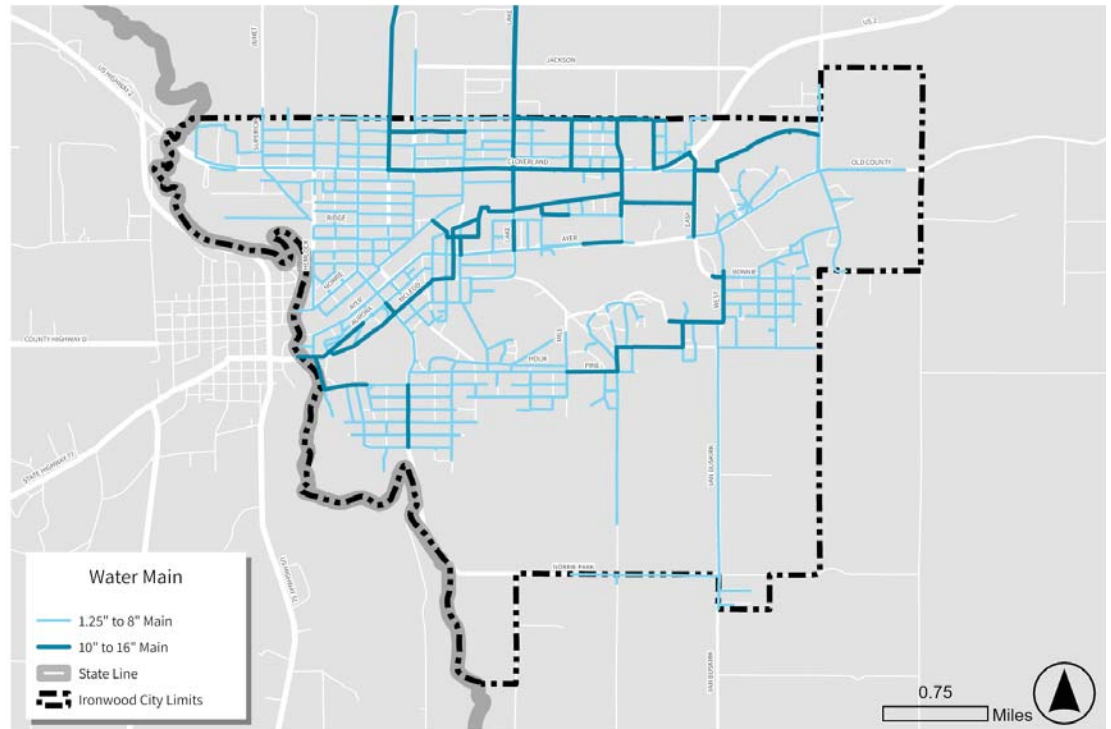


Figure 1.42 Existing water mains in Ironwood

second phase will add water treatment and will be completed in 2026. The capacity of the new plant will be 2 MGD. The current average usage is 1.1 MGD, with a maximum demand of 1.5 MGD.

Water Towers (Water Storage)

The city has a 150,000 gallon water tower located in Jessieville and an underground storage tank located at Mount Zion. These facilities provide sufficient storage capacity for Ironwood’s current and anticipated future water supply.

Distribution system (Water Distribution)

The City of Ironwood water pumping and distribution system is responsible for maintaining 71 miles of pipe that was built for a population of 15,000 people dating back to 1923. This system also includes approximately 500 fire hydrants and 2,900 meter service connections.

There were approximately 900 lead or “unknown” water services that the City is actively working to inventory and replace. The City received funding for several grants that are working to replace the majority of these connections in the next few years.

City staff annually repairs water breaks as well as maintain the system such as replacing meters, flushing hydrants and exercising valves.

Capital Improvement Plan

The city has a number of improvements planned in its CIP for water system improvements in addition to annual maintenance and fire hydrant replacements. Those improvements include Phases 1 and 2 of the Water/Filtration Plant project, including installation of filters for the removal of iron and manganese, and implementation of security measures around exposed wells.

Sanitary Sewer

Governance

Sanitary sewer infrastructure is managed by the City through the Gogebic-Iron Wastewater Authority (GIWA). GIWA includes the cities of Ironwood, Hurley and Ironwood Township. The City received funding through the Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater (SAW) grant program to develop an asset management plan, conduct an asset inventory, condition assessment, GPS survey, smoke testing, and video televising of the sanitary sewer. The resulting report was compiled from 2014-2016 and is still used to identify and implement system improvements.

In 2024, a Sanitary Sewer System Study and Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) was completed by Coleman Engineering to assess the existing sewer infrastructure and a plan for improvements to the system.

Plant age and Capacity

The GIWA's treatment plant was completed in 1986, and it replaced the City of Ironwood's treatment plant, which was converted into the Flow Equalization Basin. The plant was designed to serve 14,914 people, with an average daily flow of 3.4 MGD. According to the 2024 PER report, the sanitary sewer system currently serves approximately 2,640 customers.

The treatment plant has an excess flow equalization and treatment process that stores and treats a portion of flows above 8.5 MGD and all flows above 10 MGD. The plant can treat up to 14 MGD with the excess flow systems. Average flows at the plant in 2013 were 2.54 MGD with peak flows of up to 11.5 MGD. In 2023, GIWA received \$32MIL worth of grant and loan funding to renovate the 40 year old wastewater plant and give it extended life for the decades to come. This project will be carried out from 2023 through 2026.

After water is treated, effluent outflows to the Montreal River. State and federal rules regulate the quality of the water that is released.

From 2010 to 2019, the City implemented four phases of sanitary sewer system improvements with funding from the USDA Rural Development Rural Utilities Service. The City has also completed a number of reconstruction and

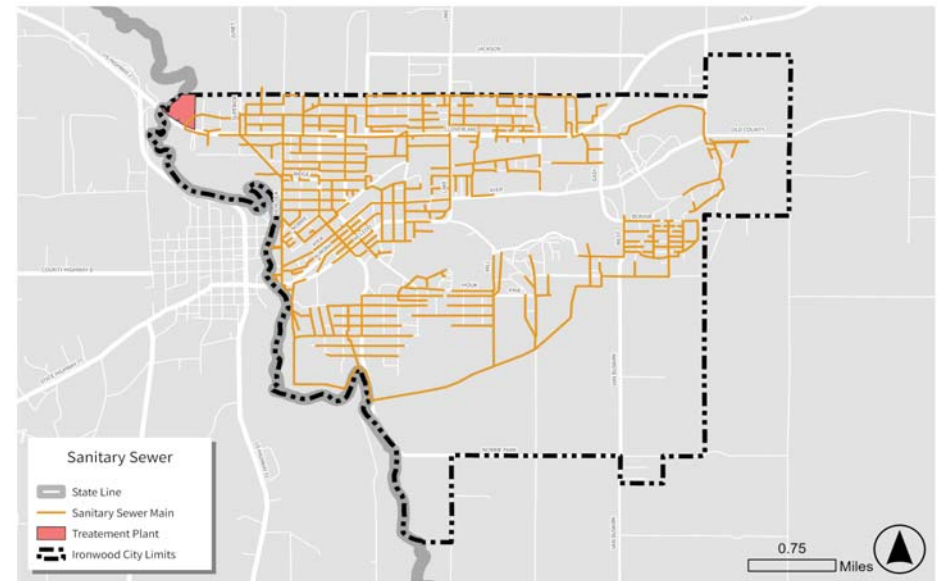


Figure 1.43 Existing sanitary sewer system in Ironwood

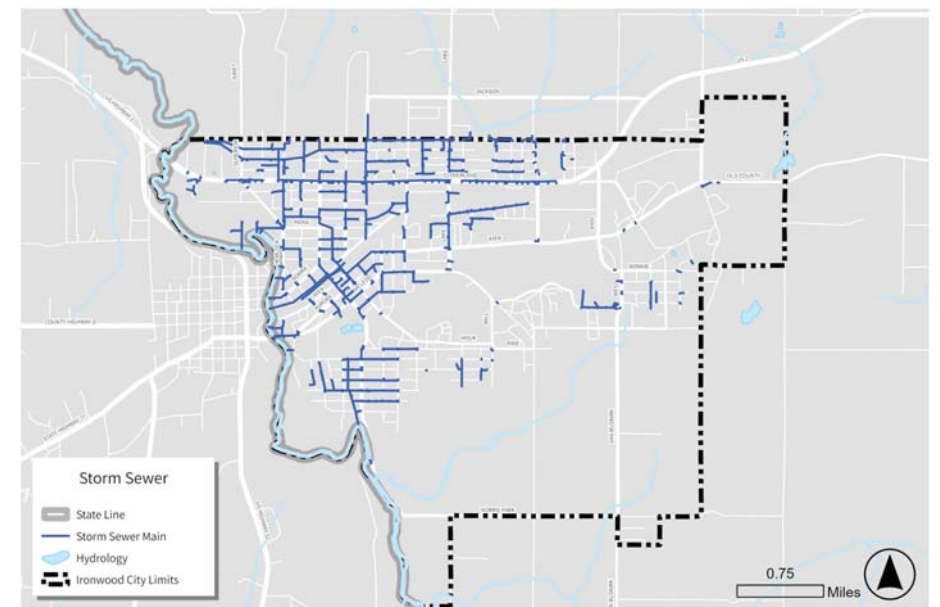


Figure 1.44 Existing storm sewer system in Ironwood

replacement projects totaling approximately 86,500 linear feet of sanitary sewer collection main, 330 manholes, and 880 sanitary sewer laterals since 2010. Phase 5 is currently underway which will replace another \$4.5MIL worth of sanitary sewer infrastructure and \$11MIL worth of water infrastructure from 2024-2026.

Collection System

The City of Ironwood maintains approximately 50 miles of sanitary sewer pipe, the majority of which is a gravity fed system.

Lift Stations

The City of Ironwood maintains one lift station in the community. The City is currently installing a generator to provide backup power to this lift station when there are power outages.

Infiltration/Inflow issues

Peak flows increase during periods of heavy rain and spring thaw/snow melt. This pattern of increased flowage during these times is evident of inflow/infiltration problems where rainwater or snow melt water gets into the system through cracks or sump pumps in home draining directly into the system. This is a common problem with older sewer systems. The City is working with EGLE on implementing strategies to reduce I&I into the system.

Capital Improvement Plan

The City annually budgets for sanitary sewer infrastructure replacement and maintenance. Key projects include the implementation of recommendations from the Stormwater Asset Management and Wastewater System Plan (SAW) grant.

Stormwater

The City has an existing storm sewer improvement district covering a portion of the City and generally follows Best Management Practices (BMPs) when undergoing infrastructure replacement project. These BMPs focus on managing the volume of rain water runoff and establish procedures to treat run off before it enters surface water systems which ultimately drain into the Montreal River. The biggest challenge in Ironwood relative to managing stormwater and occurs during the spring snow melt.

Telecommunications

Broadband internet access is widely considered a critical service. The Covid-19 Pandemic highlighted the importance of broadband access for everything from education and work to telehealth options to accessing important information from local, state, and federal officials. With remote work a popular strategy for attracting new residents to rural communities, and a variety of services such as mental and behavioral healthcare now available virtually providing expanded

access in rural and remote places, access to broadband is an important component of community infrastructure.

80% of Ironwood households have some form of internet subscription, including dial-up, a cellular data plan, or cable, fiber optic, or DSL connections. Of the households with internet, 65% have broadband access in the form of cable, fiber optic, or DSL, while 13% have a cellular data plan with no other internet subscription. 20% of households do not have any form of internet subscription. This level of access is comparable to Gogebic County levels, (82% of households have access), but lower than state levels (90% households have access).

Gas and Electric

Xcel Energy provides electric and gas service to the City of Ironwood. No usage report is available for review.

There are 5 electric substations that serve the city and surrounding area. Xcel has plans to convert the city from 4.16kV to 12.47kV. With this conversion will be an upgrade to distribution line facilities as needed and the retiring of one substation.

Streets

The City maintains over 65 miles of streets within the City. Two State roads BR2 and US 2 are the only streets not owned by the City and thus not maintained by the City. However, snow removal of these roads is handled by Ironwood public works crews.

Since 2014, the City has invested in replacing and maintaining many key corridors and road segments.

Transportation

There are limited public transportation options in the region.

Gogebic County Transit operates public transit within the county. They offer on-demand and scheduled rides for residents in the region. There are no fixed routes, however, by having buses in different locations throughout the day provide faster response times for on-demand service as needed. A primary program of Gogebic County Transit is their "Rides to Wellness" program that provides rides for local users to non-emergent medical appointments. They also help coordinate rides for out-of-area medical appointments if requested. Indian Trails Bus Line offers regional bus service connecting the upper Midwest. Bus routes that pass through Ironwood include connections westward to Duluth and eastward to St. Ignace and Sault Ste. Marie.

The school district also runs a bussing system for students of the district.

