

CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

The Ironwood **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN** is a guiding document that informs future investment, growth, development, and redevelopment in the City of Ironwood. The plan seeks to be **VISIONARY**, describing the community's aspirations for the next 20 years; **DYNAMIC**, providing a flexible framework that allows for the continued evolution of the community; **FUNCTIONAL**, designed to be understandable and actively used by all community members, including city staff, community leaders, businesses, and residents; and **ACTION-ORIENTED**, including concrete strategies and implementation steps that will facilitate community action and shared accountability.



INTRODUCTION

AUTHORITY TO PLAN

The 2008 Michigan Planning Enabling Act 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. 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.



(Photo Credit: Rich and Cassie Duncanson)

WHY PLAN?

UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE The “comprehensive” nature of the plan requires that all facets and functions of community life be considered. The data collection, analysis, and public engagement that feeds the plan provides a holistic view of community conditions and dynamics that allow for future planning and decision making to be based on an informed, factual understanding of the community.

FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL DECISION MAKING The vision, guiding principles, goals, and policies outlined in this plan provide a basis for local decision making and ensure that future actions respond to the desires, priorities, and concerns expressed through the public engagement process.

GUIDANCE FOR LANDOWNERS AND DEVELOPERS By articulating a vision for future land use, public investment priorities and policies, and development and redevelopment goals, the plan provides guidance, resources, and reassurance to property owners and developers looking to build or reinvest in the community.

INFORM AND ENGAGE THE PUBLIC The planning process is an avenue for informing community members about the Comprehensive Plan, gaining input on the community vision and priorities, and encouraging broader discussions about community improvement. Just as the public plays a critical role in creating this plan, they are also a key to its successful implementation. Community members have a role to plan as future advocates for the plan, as well as active participants in its implementation.

MOBILIZE FOR ACTION The plan is intended to be action-oriented, recommending concrete steps and strategies that can be implemented by the City in the immediate future. Many of the strategies recommended in the plan require the cooperation of outside groups, agencies, private businesses, and individuals in the community. The plan provides a basis for future partnership and collaboration.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

The Ironwood Comprehensive Plan was developed over an 8-month process undertaken by the City of Ironwood and planning consultants from Hoisington Koegler Group, Inc. The following outlines the key process steps, activities, and inputs that went into creating the Comprehensive Plan.

IRONWOOD FACT BOOK

The first phase of the planning process focused on establishing a baseline understanding of conditions in the community through analysis of demographic and economic data, community mapping, formal and informal conversations with City staff, local and regional agencies, residents, businesses, and property owners. This resulted in the creation of the Ironwood Fact Book (see [Appendix A: Ironwood Fact Book](#)), a compendium of fact, figures, and understandings about the Ironwood community today. The information collected in the Fact Book, along with input collected through the public engagement process (see “Public Engagement” below), served to inform the goals, strategies, and priorities laid out in the Comprehensive Plan.

PAST PLANNING

Since the last comprehensive plan was adopted in 1982, the City of Ironwood has undertaken a number of planning efforts, including a five year parks plan, downtown revitalization plan, and vision plan for the Highway 2 corridor. These plans continue to serve as guiding documents for the City and inform the content and directives of the updated comprehensive plan. A summary of past planning is included in the Fact Book (see Appendix A).

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a vital part of the comprehensive planning process, ensuring that recommendations in the plan are based on a well-rounded understanding of community needs, values, issues, and opportunities. This planning process employed a number of traditional and contemporary modes of public engagement, and provided a range of opportunities for public input throughout the process. For a detailed summary of public engagement and community input, see [Appendix B: Public Engagement Summary](#). Engagement strategies and tools employed in this process include:

- Listening Sessions
- Hands-On Community Workshop
- Student Workshops
- Community Pin-Up
- Project Website (www.ironwoodcompplan.com)
- Community Survey (paper and online)
- Word of Mouth



The “word cloud” above shows the words that appear most frequently in the written comments from the community survey (graphic created through www.wordle.net)

- Newspaper Articles and Notices
- Email Distribution List
- Radio and TV Features
- Announcements in Other Newsletters/Publications
- Photo Contest

GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Advisory Committee

The Ironwood city planning commission served as the advisory body for the comprehensive planning process. Over the course of the process, the planning commission held a number of special workshops prior to their regular meetings to review progress and comment on plan directions. The workshops were open for the general public to attend and listen to discussion.

Local and Regional Agencies

The planning team reached out to local and regional agencies to gain key input and institutional knowledge and to establish lines of communication around the formulation of the plan, shared goals and objectives, and potential for partnership, collaboration, and support for the plan's implementation.

Approval and Adoption

The Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Ironwood Planning Commission on July 2nd, 2014. The plan was accepted by the Ironwood City Commission on July 14th, 2014.

What We've Heard

This planning process employed various modes of community engagement and provided a range of opportunities for input and discussion. Sound bites, feedback, and images from the community process are highlighted on this page. For a detailed summary of public engagement and community input, see [Appendix B: Public Engagement Summary](#).

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS:

An online Community Survey was made available through the project website and mailed out with tax bills to solicit feedback from the community and provide the planning team with a better understanding of key issues and priorities. Over 500 survey responses were received. The following is a summary of top survey responses:

1. Why do you live in Ironwood (pick 3)?

TOP 3 RESPONSES:

To live near Family (57%)

I was Born Here (45%)

Outdoor Recreation Opportunities (44%)

2. What do you like most about Ironwood (pick 3)?

TOP 3 RESPONSES:

Access to outdoor recreation, nature, etc. (70%)

Safe community (52%)

Summer and winter silent sports (43%)

3. What do you like least about Ironwood (pick 3)?

TOP 3 RESPONSES:

Access to jobs (51%)

Diversity of jobs (46%)

City infrastructure (46%)

4. If you had a blank check and unlimited funding, what would you invest in (pick 3)?

TOP 3 RESPONSES:

Economic development, job creation, expansion (68%)

Improve the road/street system (67%)

Improve the educational system (35%)

5. If you had a blank check and unlimited funding, where (geographic location) in Ironwood would you invest in (pick 3)?

TOP 3 RESPONSES:

Strengthening existing neighborhood infrastructure (streets/water/sewer) (63%)

In Downtown (57%)

Along the Highway 2 Corridor (35%)

6. Think about the following statements and tell us how important they are using the scale provided (from not important/no opinion to very important)?

OVER 75% OF RESPONDENTS LISTED THE FOLLOWING AS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT:

Encouraging new business development/growth (96%)

Working with existing business to promote job growth (91%)

Improving existing streets in town (90%)

Enhancing the image of the community (88%)

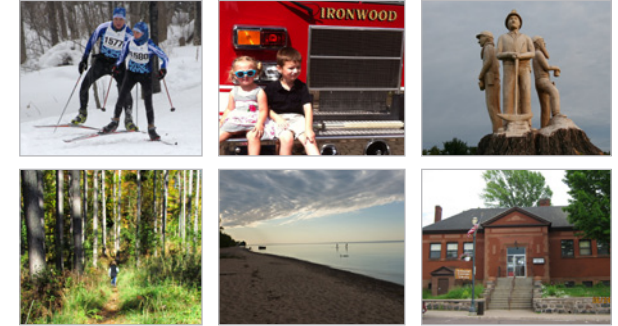
Promoting tourism and outdoor recreation opportunities (86%)

Coordinating/cooperating on a regional level for delivery of services and economic development (80%)

Improving city sewer and water systems (79%)

Supporting recreation programs for youth (79%)

PHOTO CONTEST:



Community members were invited to submit personal photos of places, people, and events in and around the Ironwood community to be used as part of the Comprehensive Plan document.

PROJECT WEBSITE:



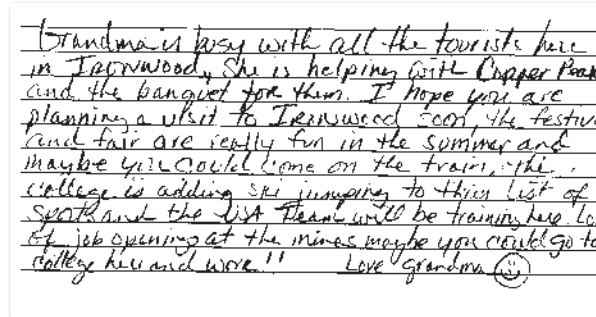
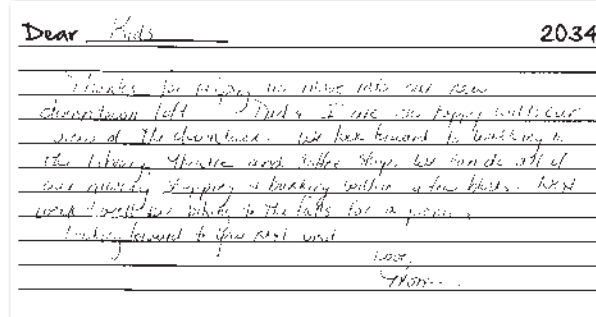
A project website was maintained throughout the process to share updates, key documents, and notices about community engagement activities.

www.ironwoodcompplan.com

POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE:



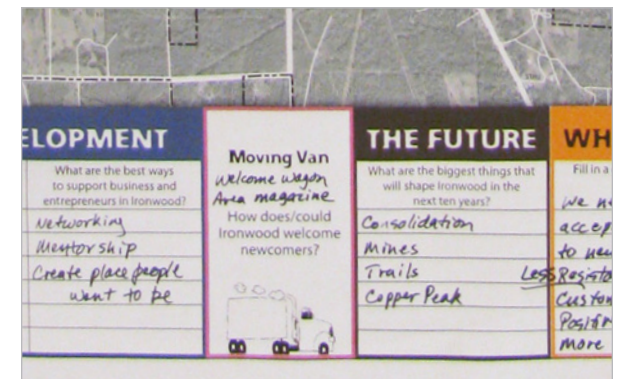
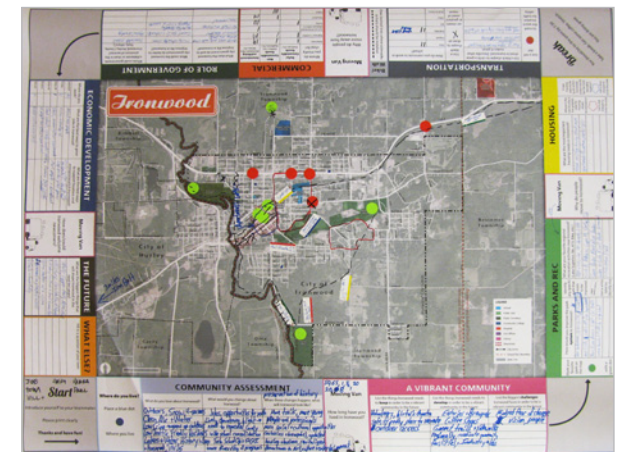
The "Postcard from the Future" is a creative engagement tool used to encourage community members to imagine how Ironwood will look and feel in twenty years. The postcard prompts respondents to write a letter addressed to a friend or family member from the year 2034, describing changes and improvements in the community. Postcards were distributed through the community workshop and other public events.



GAME BOARD ACTIVITY:



1-5



COMMUNITY WORKSHOP:



A hands-on community workshop was held on January 21st, 2014 in the Memorial Building auditorium. The goal of the workshop was to provide community members with an opportunity to learn more about the planning process; to engage in discussions about key issues and opportunities in the community; and to start to define a future vision for the city of Ironwood.

The primary interactive activity of the community workshop involved a community "game board" (see images right) designed to stimulate small group discussion across a range of topics. The game board activity walks participants through a series of questions about the community. Topics covered in the activity include: Parks and Recreation, Housing, Jobs, Shopping, Transportation, as well as general likes and dislikes.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT



Key Terminology:

The **COMMUNITY VISION** statement describes how the community will look, feel, and function over the next 20 years. It is an over-arching framework that permeates the plan and informs supporting goals, policies, and strategy directions.

The **GUIDING PRINCIPLES** serve as a yardstick to measure the appropriateness and results of future initiatives. The guiding principles are a tool for future decision-making and help to define the character, values, and priorities of the Ironwood community.

Each chapter includes:

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

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

FRAMING CONCEPTS provide more detailed discussion of the big ideas expressed in the goals and policies. This may include maps that show where in the community particular goals and policies apply, detailed description of specific policy directions, diagrams, and photo imagery.

STRATEGIES A program, action, or practice that supports one or more policy statements. Strategies address at a high level, the “who, what, when, where, and how” of reaching a goal. A strategy may include multiple sub-strategies.

MAKING IT HAPPEN! The final section of each chapter includes a discussion of how to make these plans a reality, outlining immediate, short term, and mid-term action steps for the City and other entities and suggesting resources to facilitate future action.

The City also developed a number of **Spark Plans**, or “mini action plans,” to support implementation of high-priority strategies. The Spark Plans address select strategies in the Comprehensive Plan, particularly those that require additional explanation, coordination, and planning to implement effectively. The Spark Plans focus on strategies that may be implemented by entities outside of the City agencies (community groups, civic organizations, individuals, etc.) and may require public-private partnership or citizen-led action. The complete set of Spark Plans is included as an Appendix to the Comprehensive Plan (see [Appendix C: Spark Plans](#)).

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PLAN?

The Ironwood Comprehensive Plan is a guiding document that informs future investment, growth, development, and redevelopment in the City of Ironwood and addresses a range of topics pertaining to the health of the community. The plan describes the community's aspirations for the next 20 years, identifies goals and policies, and provides a flexible framework for the continued evolution of the community. The plan also recommends concrete strategies and implementation steps that will facilitate community action and shared accountability. The Comprehensive Plan document includes the following:

[Chapter 1: Introduction](#)

[Chapter 2: Vision & Guiding Principles](#)

[Chapter 3: Land Use and Community Character](#)

[Chapter 4: Transportation](#)

[Chapter 5: Parks & Recreation](#)

[Chapter 6: Community Development](#)

[Chapter 7: Infrastructure & Community Facilities](#)

[Chapter 8: Implementation](#)

[Appendix A: Ironwood Fact Book](#)

[Appendix B: Public Engagement Summary](#)

[Appendix C: Spark Plans](#)

[Appendix D: Parks & Recreation - Supplemental Materials](#)

WHO USES THE PLAN?

This Comprehensive Plan is shaped by the values, opinions, and interests expressed through the community engagement process. As such, the Plan serves not only as a guiding document for City agencies, but a resource that can be used by a variety of stakeholders across the community to ensure that future decision-making and action supports a common vision for the future of Ironwood.

City staff will use the Comprehensive Plan document to guide day-to-day decision-making; inform the City's zoning ordinance and other regulations; and develop programmatic priorities around economic development, housing, community building, recreation, and other areas.

The **Ironwood City Commission, Planning Commission, and other advisory bodies** will use the Plan to establish working goals; inform priorities for the City budget and Capital Investment Plan (CIP); and provide a basis for defending future policy and resource allocation decisions.

Residents, Businesses, Property Owners, and Developers can 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.

Community Groups & Institutions can use the Plan to coordinate and align outside planning with City goals and investment priorities; and to learn more about various community improvement strategies, potential funding sources, and partnership opportunities with the City and other public and private entities.

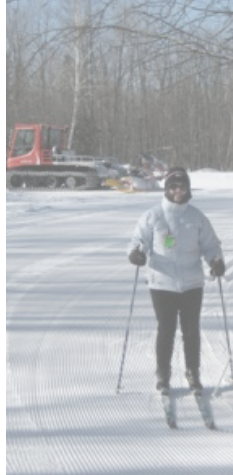


Photo Credit: Susan Murphy

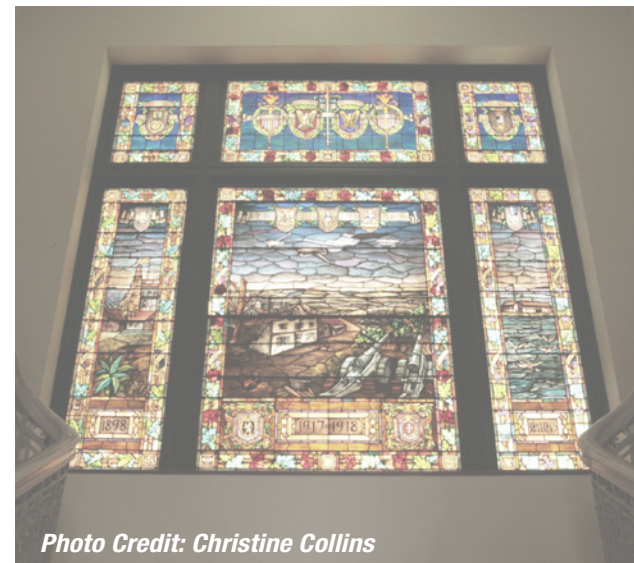


Photo Credit: Christine Collins

