



IRONWOOD

MICHIGAN | *Find Your North*



# 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

IRONWOOD, MICHIGAN

*DRAFT December 2025*

**DRAFT**



## Acknowledgements

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- Lauren Korpi
- Jim Mildren
- Steve Frank
- Tim Dean

### Planning Commission

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# CONTENTS

<b>01 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>7</b>
Introduction	8
Process Overview	9
What We've Heard	10
How to Use this Document	11
What's Included in the Plan?	12
Who Uses the Plan?	12
<b>02 VISION &amp; GUIDING PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>15</b>
Community Vision	16
Guiding Principles	17
<b>03 LAND USE &amp; DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>21</b>
Guiding Principles	21
Overview	22
Issues & Opportunities	23
Goals, Policies, and Strategies	24
Future Land Use	26

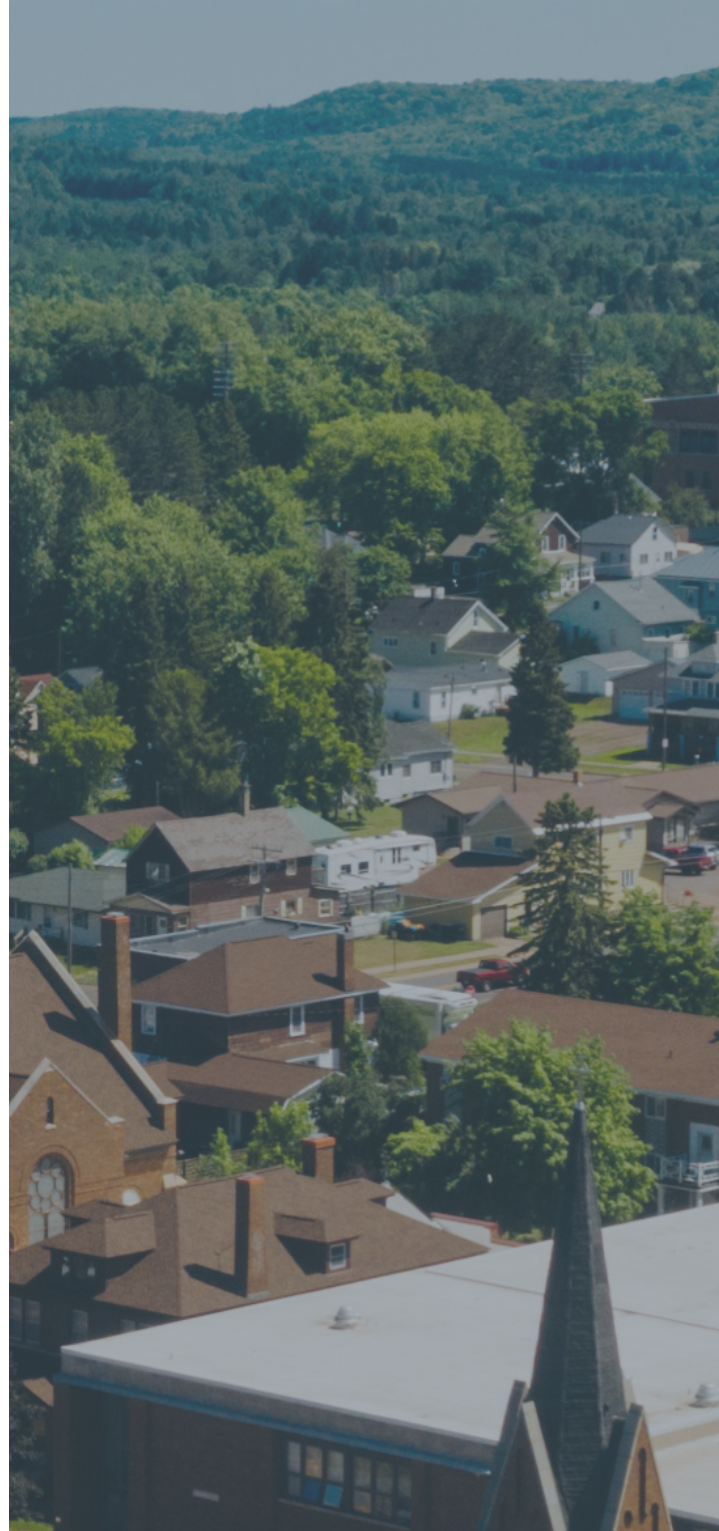


	Framing Concepts.....	33		Framing Concepts.....	91
	Implementation.....	37		Implementation.....	97
<b>04</b>	<b>HOUSING &amp; NEIGHBORHOODS.....</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>TRANSPORTATION.....</b>	<b>103</b>
	Guiding Principles.....	41		Guiding Principles.....	103
	Overview.....	42		Overview.....	104
	Issues and Opportunities.....	43		Issues and Opportunities.....	105
	Goals, Policies, & Strategies.....	44		Goals, Policies, & Strategies.....	106
	Framing Concepts.....	47		Framing Concepts.....	108
	Implementation.....	50		Implementation.....	115
<b>05</b>	<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>INFRASTRUCTURE.....</b>	<b>119</b>
	Guiding Principles.....	55		Guiding Principles.....	119
	Overview.....	56		Overview.....	120
	Issues and Opportunities.....	57		Issues and Opportunities.....	121
	Goals, Policies, and Strategies.....	58		Goals, Policies, and Strategies.....	122
	Framing Concepts.....	61		Framing Concepts.....	124
	Implementation.....	66		Implementation.....	128
<b>06</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENT.....</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>ARTS &amp; CULTURE.....</b>	<b>131</b>
	Guiding Principles.....	71		Guiding Principles.....	131
	Overview.....	72		Overview.....	132
	Issues and Opportunities.....	73		Issues and Opportunities.....	133
	Goals, Policies, and Strategies.....	74		Goals, Policies, and Strategies.....	134
	Framing Concepts.....	76		Framing Concepts.....	137
	Implementation.....	80		Implementation.....	141
<b>07</b>	<b>PARKS &amp; RECREATION.....</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE GOVERNMENT.....</b>	<b>145</b>
	Guiding Principles.....	85		Guiding Principles.....	145
	Overview.....	86		Overview.....	146
	Issues and Opportunities.....	87		Issues and Opportunities.....	147
	Goals, Policies, & Strategies.....	88		Goals, Policies, & Strategies.....	148

	Framing Concepts.....	152
	Implementation.....	155
<b>12</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION.....</b>	<b>159</b>
	Overview .....	159
	Implementation Tools.....	160
	Putting the Plan to Use.....	162
	Achieving the Plan’s Vision.....	164
<b>13</b>	<b>APPENDIX A .....</b>	<b>167</b>
	Authority to Plan.....	168
	Past Planning.....	168
	History of Ironwood.....	172
	Locational Analysis.....	174
	Demographics.....	178
	Population Age and Planning.....	180
	Economic Conditions.....	182
	Existing Land Use .....	187
	Housing.....	190
	Natural Resources/Environment.....	192
	Parks and Recreation.....	195
	Infrastructure.....	200



*Resolution Scan (insert after adoption)*





# INTRODUCTION

The Ironwood Comprehensive Plan is a guiding document that provides a framework for local decision making and informs the direction of Ironwood's future over the next 20 years. The Plan helps **guide** investment, growth, development, and redevelopment throughout Ironwood, offering a **broad vision** for the community and **specific policies, goals, and strategies** for how to achieve that vision.

Comprehensive plans cover topics including land use, transportation, infrastructure and civic facilities, parks and recreation, and community development. The plan helps us understand the big picture of where Ironwood is at today and where we want to be in the **future**.

“The plan seeks to be **visionary**, describing our community's aspirations; **dynamic**, providing a flexible framework for the continued evolution of our city; **functional**, designed to be understandable and actively used by all; and **action-oriented**, offering concrete strategies and implementation steps.”



# 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.



## 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 14-month process undertaken by the City of Ironwood and planning consultants from HKGi. 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; and 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 summary 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 2014, the City of Ironwood has undertaken a number of planning efforts, including an update to the five year parks plan, downtown development and tax increment financing plan, and an update to the zoning ordinance. 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. Engagement strategies and tools employed in this process include:

- Listening Sessions
- Hands-On Community Workshop
- Project Website
- Community Survey (paper and online)
- Word of Mouth
- Newspaper Articles and Notices
- Email Distribution List
- Announcements in other Newsletters/Publications

## 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 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 XX X, 2025. The plan was accepted by the Ironwood City Commission on XX X, 2025.



## What We've Heard

*"Ironwood has been doing a great job in community development. It needs to continue forging ahead, supporting the next generation, and encouraging young people to be involved in our government and move to our town."*

*"Housing is needed across the board. Supporting downtown is critical to a thriving community."*

*"I think Ironwood generally does a good job with streets and maintenance. I'd love to see the city to take another step with connecting areas."*

*"Seniors/all citizens deserve a nice alternative to a single family home!"*

*"If there is one single thing that will enhance the community is a swimming pool, to teach the young and provide exercise for seniors."*

*"Be proactive in building a diverse and contemporary competitive economy as the area grows."*

*"If you take care of the youth with good housing and education, you will have future citizens who want to be here and invest here."*

*"Develop some means of enticing young people who attend college to return to the area to live by providing a healthy job environment and affordable housing, reasonable taxes and quality of life improvements."*

*"Need to invest in existing downtown buildings AND get rid of some of the unsalvageable ones"*

*"The parks are awesome. Downtown is pretty great except for some empty slots. The inherent geography is a great gift that should be marketed."*

*"Ironwood area has so much untapped potential. So thankful to see that there is an investment being made to preserve and enhance this gem."*

*"I think the city should consider a business incubator program."*

*"Recruit innovative small businesses, I love Ironwood, but Ironwood would benefit from an upscale grocery store, a book store, a craft store, better public transportation."*

*"I moved back after realizing what a beautiful and opportunity rich area this could become. I was born here, and am very proud of that."*

*Outdoor recreation and tourism are both important, but a beautiful environment also helps to attract those looking for a home base for remote work or creative enterprises."*

*"For the local economy to improve and business to expand and population to increase, as a City we must invest into more industry"*



# How to Use this Document

## Key Terminology

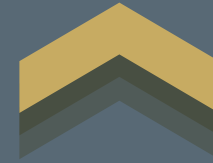
The **community vision** statement describes how the community will look, feel, and function over the next 20 years. It is an over-arching framework that permeates the plan and informs supporting goals, policies, and strategy directions.

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.** Goals are broad statements that describe a desired outcome or end-state. Goals are often long-term in scope.
- **Policies.** The 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.** These 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.** Strategies are actions, programs, and practices that support one or more of the plan's goals and policies. Strategies address at a high level, the "who, what, when, where, and how" of reaching a goal, and may involve multiple sub-strategies
- **Action programs.** The final section of each chapter includes a discussion of how to make these plans a reality, outlining a series of implementation steps for the next 5 years. These programs identify key focus areas and specific action steps for the City and other entities that help implement and act on the strategies identified earlier in the plan.

COMMUNITY VISION  
+  
GUIDING PRINCIPLES



EACH CHAPTER  
INCLUDES:  
GOALS  
POLICIES  
FRAMING CONCEPTS



STRATEGIES  
ACTION PROGRAM

## 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 Development**

**Chapter 4: Housing & Neighborhoods**

**Chapter 5: Economic Development**

**Chapter 6: Environment**

**Chapter 7: Parks & Recreation**

**Chapter 8: Transportation**

**Chapter 9: Infrastructure**

**Chapter 10: Arts & Culture**

**Chapter 11: Accessible Government**

**Chapter 12: Implementation**

**Appendix A: Ironwood Fact Book**

## 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.

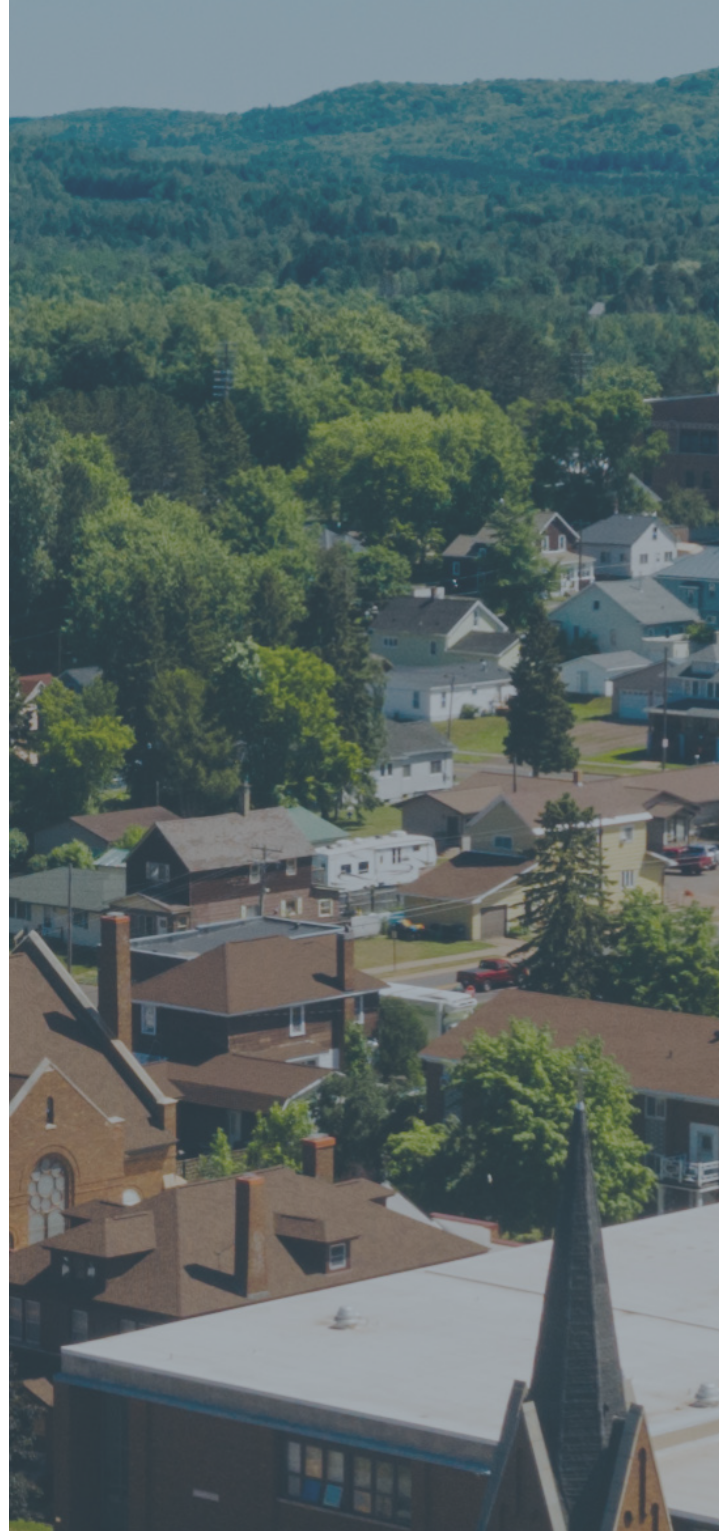
The **Ironwood City Commission, Planning Commission, and other advisory bodies** will use the Plan to establish working goals; inform priorities for the City budget and Capital Investment Plan (CIP); and provide a basis for defending future policy and resource allocation decisions.

**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.

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# VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The community vision statement is a critical component of a comprehensive plan. Developing the vision is the first step in the planning process as it provides the **framework** for developing the goals, policies, and strategies that will help Ironwood make its vision a reality.

The community vision statement and guiding principles are **aspirational**. They seek to describe how the community will look, feel, and function over the next 20 years. They are written in the present tense so that one can put themselves into that aspirational future.





## Community Vision

Forged in the wilderness by hard work and adventure, we are

*Find Your North*

Ironwood and its residents embody the determination of the Sisu spirit, and the warmth of hygge. Together, these characteristics represent the strength of will found in Ironwood's residents and the supportive ties of friends and family that underscore Ironwood's community.

Ironwood is built by those who have come to this area to share in something special; creating and supporting families, growing businesses, and improving our community. We take pride in our work, and in Ironwood, opportunities come to those create them.

But it's not all hard work. We are defined by the four seasons and the vibrant, rugged landscape and natural resources of the Upper Peninsula. Our unique corner of the world provides unparalleled recreation, creative inspiration, and rejuvenating tranquility.

To those who come to experience it, welcome! To those who embrace it, welcome home!

Forged by past challenges, we emerge sturdier on the other side. We face our tests with conviction, from the early miners, to those who answered the call when our country needed them. Today, the community fabric is woven together by our dedication to each other, and we find strength in our connections.

Rooted in our past and present, we have solid ground to stand on while planning our future. Always striving to improve, we are a place to find contentment, a place to make a difference, a place to *Find Your North*





# Guiding Principles

The guiding principles are the building blocks used to achieve the community's vision. They provide a stepping stone for shaping individual goals and strategies so that they can align with the vision. By aligning the goals, policies, and strategies with the different guiding principles, the comprehensive plan will provide a focused, cohesive path forward from today towards Ironwood's vision.

## Key characteristics of guiding principles:

- Orient the community to the **future**
- Require imagination, recognizing that the direction it sets for the community is **ambitious** and **aspirational**
- Look to **current conditions** and **community history** for clues to the appropriate future
- Identify what the community **desires** for itself based on shared understandings
- Serve as a tool for **evaluation** of proposals, projects, ideas, and future directions
- Provide an anchor during conflict, a way of finding **common ground** and **shared values**
- Become a basis for **coordination** and **cooperation**
- Offer a source of **energy** and **enthusiasm** for maintaining a commitment to the future of Ironwood



*Miners Mural in Downtown Ironwood*

# Guiding Principles

## Ironwood is...



### Opportunity

Ironwood provides the opportunity to attain your goals, whatever they may be. From homeownership to starting a business to finding creative outlets in the arts or outdoors, Ironwood offers a canvas for living a rich and fulfilled life. Ironwood provides the possibility to achieve the priorities, adventures, and dreams you choose to pursue.



### Leadership

Ironwood is a city of leaders. Motivated residents, businesses, and organizations exemplify leadership in their passion for continuously improving Ironwood through innovative ideas and an entrepreneurial spirit. City leadership is consistent and strong, allowing Ironwood to lead in the region, building momentum that pushes the City forward and brings along neighboring cities and the region. Ironwood is forward looking, planning for and pursuing a thriving community for generations of residents, businesses, and visitors.



### Connected

Connections are at the heart of Ironwood. Human connection between neighbors, friends, family, and community highlights the physical connection that underscores the Ironwood lifestyle. Connectivity between the community and surrounding natural beauty is enhanced by trail connections to parks, accessibility for all who walk, bike, and roll, and a sense of safety throughout the community. Economic connections foster a diverse economy with trainings, businesses, and industries that complement one another creating a locally supportive and sustainable commercial environment.



## Rooted

Ironwood is both rooted in its surroundings and a place to put down roots. Rooted in its history, the community builds on the importance of place and connection to the surrounding environment for recreation, inspiration, and livelihood. Ironwood fosters lifelong connections with residents and visitors. People choose to return or move to Ironwood because it is a place that offers opportunities to establish a firm footing and nurturing life.



## Welcoming

Ironwood is a friendly community, providing a welcoming place for all. Ironwood's warm atmosphere is embodied in its age-inclusive and accessible infrastructure, support for residents, and open-minded approach to embracing new ideas, initiatives, and businesses.



## Vibrant

The passion of Ironwood's residents is evident in the thriving arts community, energetic pursuit of adventure-based and outdoor activities, and commitment to fostering growth. The vibrancy of Ironwood is seen in its strong downtown that offers inspiration to residents and visitors alike.



## Resilient

The ethos of Sisu underscores Ironwood's resilient nature. Able to react and adapt to a multitude of challenges, Ironwood's resilient community has a strength of will that makes it work. Ironwood residents seize opportunities, act to get things done, and are committed to their community, ensuring Ironwood continues to grow stronger with each generation.









# LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

## Guiding Principles

The Land Use and Development Chapter focuses on the following themes derived from the vision and guiding principles:

The character, composition, and function of Ironwood's homes, businesses, public spaces, and core districts contribute to the **vibrancy** of the community. The Comprehensive Plan provides guidance for the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, as well as the programs and capital improvements that preserve and maintain Ironwood's residential areas, promote growth and prosperity in the downtown and commercial areas, and create welcoming spaces for residents and visitors to recreate and explore. These components are the basis for the **opportunities** created for and by residents to make life their own – whether that is finding employment, owning a home, or recreating year-round.

Through understanding past land use patterns and working towards an efficient and sustainable land use plan for the future, the Comprehensive Plan is **rooted** in the reality of Ironwood's location, population, and opportunities. The framework provided in the land use chapter guides Ironwood towards a **resilient** future by balancing the maintenance and preservation of Ironwood's existing public spaces, commercial centers, and unique neighborhoods with promoting new uses and redevelopment to invite new growth and ideas that will sustain Ironwood's community.



*In a community comprised of **vibrant** neighborhoods, **accessible** parks, a **lively** downtown, and **thriving places** of work, culture, and entrepreneurship, **Ironwood** continues to foster a unique **sense of place** underscored by its historic character.*







## What We Heard

- The biggest priority is infill and redevelopment.
- Redeveloping, repurposing, and revitalizing downtown is important for economic growth, attracting new residents, and maintaining a sense of community identity.
- Growth for a variety of industries is important – we need to create opportunities for small scale manufacturing, mom and pop businesses, and everything in between.
- Encouraging growth of industries that support existing community assets is important. This means restaurants, bike shops, and hospitality businesses that support tourism. It also means small-scale manufacturing that complements existing industries in the region.

## Overview

This section of the Comprehensive Plan includes guidance for how land is used in the future -- for example, which areas of Ironwood should be used for parks vs. homes vs. businesses -- and includes policies and goals for how Ironwood should grow and redevelop over the next 20 years. Careful planning helps balance different land uses to guide development and preserve the character and natural surroundings of the community.

Looking at the patterns and trends of land use within a city can offer insights into the history of that community. This is true of Ironwood, where the size and shape of residential parcels reflect those typically found in mining and mill towns and the railroad corridors and Miners Park directly tie back to the extractive industries that shaped Ironwood's past.

The Comprehensive Plan incorporates future land use planning as one of its core elements. This planning help shapes the future of Ironwood and tells its own story about where the City is heading. Recognizing how past land uses have shaped present character and function within Ironwood directs what areas the Comprehensive Plan should focus on when it comes to land use and development going forward.

The future land use chapter focuses on three major concepts to guide public investment in and policy around land use and development:

- **Redevelopment and reuse** of existing buildings and infrastructure throughout Ironwood's core neighborhoods and downtown will preserve Ironwood's identity while creating economic opportunities.
- **Strategic expansion** of certain land uses, such as the industrial park, will encourage investment without the need for infrastructure expansion, helping limit costs of services throughout the community.
- **Flexibility of zoning standards** can be employed to promote redevelopment, creative reuse of infrastructure, and infill development on vacant lots while ensuring other standards are met to maintain the character of Ironwood's downtown and neighborhoods.

# Issues & Opportunities

The focus areas of the land use chapter are derived in part from an analysis of current issues and opportunities relating to development in Ironwood.

Since the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, Ironwood has updated its zoning ordinance to align with the goals from the 2014 land use chapter, such as infill and redevelopment, modernized standards, and compliance with state regulations. Additionally, the creation of the Downtown Ironwood Development Authority (DIDA) and a downtown TIF district demonstrate Ironwood's commitment to commercial, mixed use, and other types of redevelopment in the downtown area.

When thinking about future land use and planning for development within the City, it is important to consider factors such as infrastructure and service provision and cohesion of uses. Careful land use planning can promote infill and redevelopment within existing neighborhoods and districts. Identifying key redevelopment areas and appropriate uses can help catalyze developer interest while retaining the character of these areas.



## Key Issues

- There are limited opportunities for growth within Ironwood's existing industrial park.
- Zoning standards can create barriers to redevelopment of properties downtown.
- Declining population in Ironwood means that infrastructure and service costs are high.
- There are many vacant lots and empty buildings that are ready for infill or redevelopment in downtown Ironwood and in residential districts.



## Key Opportunities

- Identifying and preserving expansion areas for Ironwood's industrial park area could create opportunities for growth of existing industries and potential to attract new industries. Ensuring land is designated for future industrial growth areas now, will ensure compatible land uses in the future.
- Developing downtown business district areas can create flexibility in redevelopment opportunities while ensuring the character and feel of downtown Ironwood is maintained.
- Identifying redevelopment opportunities in neighborhoods and other areas will ensure existing services are used and further extensions of water, sewer, and other infrastructure is not needed.



*Downtown City Square offers a central location for gathering and events that can bring people downtown.*



*There are limited multi-family housing options in Ironwood.*



*Single-family homes are the most common housing type.*



Empty buildings in downtown are opportunities for redevelopment and reuse.



Buildings like the Luther L Wright School shape the historic character of Ironwood.

## Goals, Policies, and Strategies

### Goal 3.1 Redevelopment and Reuse

*Encourage and incentivize redevelopment, reuse, and infill development in areas of town with existing service and infrastructure provision.*

#### Supporting Policies

**Policy 3.1.1** Pursue public investment strategies such as land acquisition and blight removal to facilitate private redevelopment and infill.

**Policy 3.1.2** Ensure City zoning standards and policies allow for creative use of buildings, such as diverse housing types and mixed uses.

**Policy 3.1.3** Establish clear development review procedures, guidance, and technical assistance for developers and homeowners.

**Policy 3.1.4** Invest in community infrastructure improvements that support revitalization and redevelopment as a priority.

**Policy 3.1.5** Form effective partnerships with private investors to undertake redevelopment efforts.

**Policy 3.1.6** Give priority to development projects that are located on vacant or underutilized sites with existing access to City utilities.

**Policy 3.1.7** Promote continued maintenance of and reinvestment in Ironwood's primary commercial centers in downtown and along Highway 2.

#### Strategies

##### *Downtown Building Rehabilitation/Infill*

Revitalizing and re-purposing existing downtown buildings, along with filling vacant lots, preserves the City's character, increases property values, and promotes sustainable growth. This initiative strengthens the downtown core, attracts visitors, and supports small businesses.

### Goal 3.2 Strategic Land Use Guidance and Growth

*Designate land uses and growth areas as needed to facilitate and advance the efficient use of infrastructure and ensure compatible adjacent land uses*

#### Supporting Policies

**Policy 3.2.1** Guide sites for growth and expansion of light manufacturing and industrial uses in areas with infrastructure system capacity and underutilization.

**Policy 3.2.2** Zone land sufficient to support demand for commercial, industrial, and mixed use development.

**Policy 3.2.3** Focus industrial and manufacturing development in areas with existing industrial uses, appropriate roadway access, and complementary adjacent uses.



- Policy 3.2.4** Evaluate the near term and long term fiscal impact of annexation relative to community revenues and ongoing operations and maintenance costs.
- Policy 3.2.5** Ensure that identified growth area sites are shovel-ready for new development in terms of road access, utilities (water, sewer, electricity, broadband), site preparation (e.g. soil and environmental tests), and land use/zoning regulations.

## Strategies

### Industrial Park Expansion

Expanding the industrial park provides more space for businesses to grow or relocate, attracting new industries and boosting local employment opportunities. Long-term planning for the industrial park ensures Ironwood can cluster industrial uses together, fostering collaboration and preserving other areas for different uses, such as residential neighborhoods. Companies will come and go from the Industrial Park, planning expansion areas will help provide long-term stability and growth opportunities.

## Goal 3.3 Balancing Flexibility and Ironwood's Character

*Facilitate creative and flexible use of spaces in alignment with the community character of Ironwood through adopting flexible standards and allowing a variety of uses.*

## Supporting Policies

**Policy 3.3.1** Support redevelopment on underutilized parcels that is consistent with the historic character of the community and surrounding uses.

**Policy 3.3.2** Ensure zoning standards and zoning districts are updated to balance market appropriate uses and standards that align with the existing and historic character of Ironwood.

**Policy 3.3.3** Support developments that incorporate a mix of uses or create mixed use areas.

## Strategies

### Creation of a New Business District

Establishing a defined business district encourages commercial growth and enhances the City's economic landscape. This could help facilitate redevelopment around downtown, while fostering a sense of community and innovation for entrepreneurs.

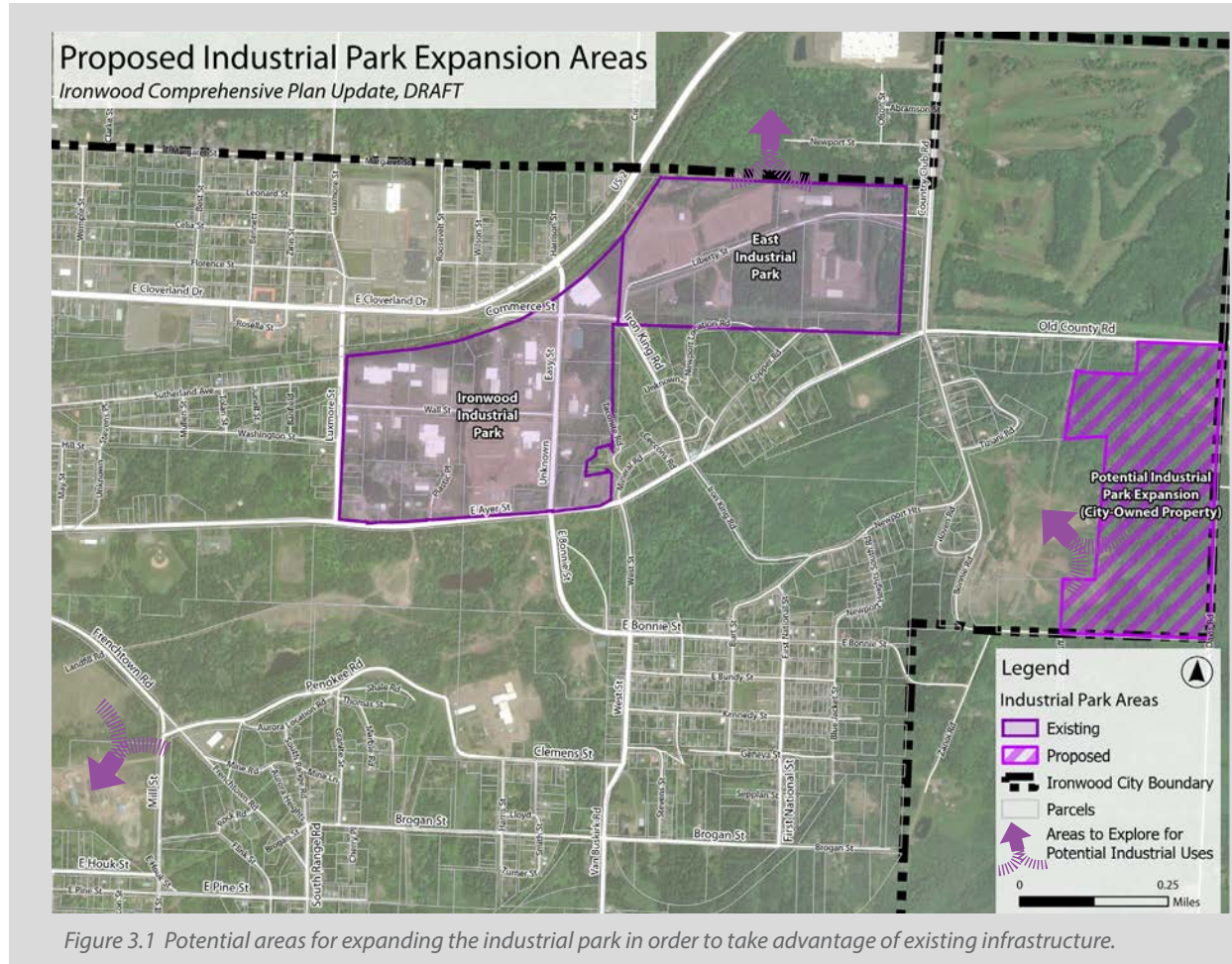


Figure 3.1 Potential areas for expanding the industrial park in order to take advantage of existing infrastructure.



# Future Land Use

The future land use plan for the City guides redevelopment and new development towards desired patterns of use, form, and character. The future land use plan builds off existing land use patterns, identifying ways to complement, expand upon, preserve, or renew certain areas through guiding future uses.

Ironwood takes a district-based approach to future land use planning. This means that rather than focus primarily on uses (e.g. industrial, residential, commercial, etc.), Ironwood looks at districts, identifying the character and form of the built environment in different areas and planning for future uses that help create unified districts.

The goal of a district-based approach is to guide future uses that preserve and enhance the existing qualities and identity of a given area. The land use districts identified in this plan build off those designated in the previous Comprehensive Plan. The main change to the districts from the last plan is an emphasis on promoting flexibility to encourage infill and redevelopment while maintaining the character of the district.

The boundaries of the future land use districts identified in Figure 3.2 Future Land Use Map are defined based on existing land use patterns (similarity of uses, form, character), potential for different types of development (infill development, redevelopment, new development), and location relative to existing City infrastructure. Consideration was also given to minimize the number of “non-conforming uses” in any given proposed district.

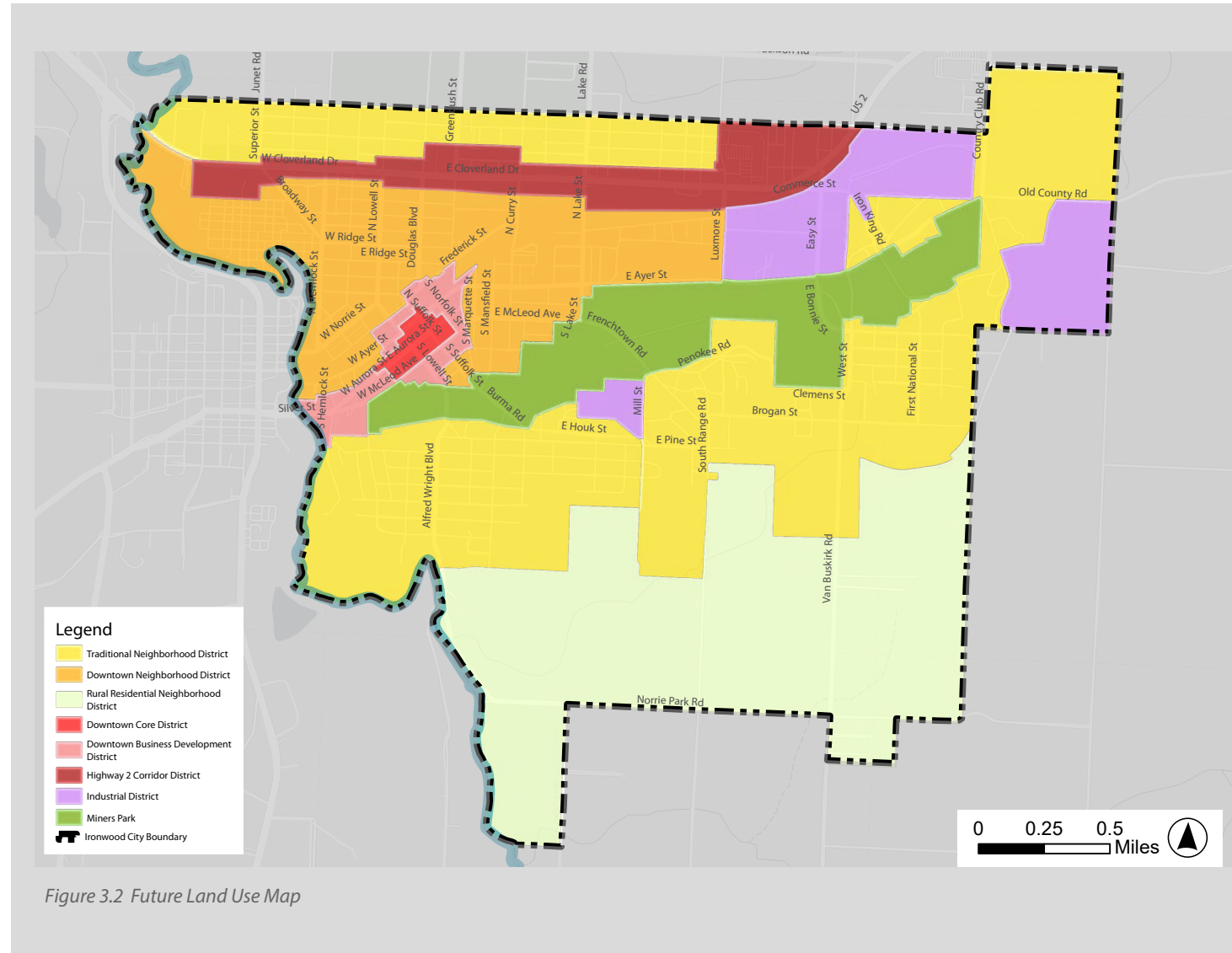


Figure 3.2 Future Land Use Map

## Downtown Districts

Downtown Ironwood is the heart of civic and cultural life in the community. It is characterized by historic and mixed-use development patterns, offering small-scale commercial, such as restaurants and retail, some residential options, and public and cultural institutions including the Carnegie Library, Memorial Building, and the Historic Ironwood Theater. Scattered on the edges of downtown's core are light industrial uses, including automotive repair, machine repair, and metalwork.

The goal of creating two downtown districts is to promote infill and redevelopment throughout the broader downtown area. Identifying core and secondary districts allows for flexibility of uses while maintaining Ironwood's character and historic feel. Providing a range of guidance and standards allows for more creative reuse and development of spaces downtown.

### Downtown Core District

#### Character/Design

The Downtown Core District encompasses Ironwood's historic downtown commercial core. This district emphasizes preserving the form and identity that characterizes downtown Ironwood while encouraging creative reuse and redevelopment of downtown buildings.

- Emphasize redevelopment and rehab opportunities with context-based design standards that help preserve the feeling of downtown while recognizing the unique challenges each project may encounter.
- Promote diversity of uses that generate activity downtown throughout the day, evening, week, and year.
- Support creative housing options including live-work units, lofts, second-floor apartments over ground-floor commercial and other adaptive reuse of spaces for residential uses.
- Reinvest in historic buildings through preserving the integrity of structures and encouraging the use of quality building materials that complement historic architecture.
- Encourage buildings with strong street orientation and active street frontages and ground floors.
- Maintain an attractive streetscape with pedestrian-oriented design that is accessible all year-round. This includes elements such as efficient snow removal, clear crosswalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, seating, and well-kept facades, and landscaping.
- Maintain and improve appropriate trail connections to the district for all trail users.

#### Desired Mix of Uses

- Commercial retail and services, particularly those that feature smaller, local businesses, unique food and retail offerings, and services that support the day-to-day needs of downtown residents, workers, and visitors.
- Public and semi-public institutions, build off the existing concentration of community-oriented institutions and encourage uses that provide cultural attractions, entertainment venues, and other gathering spaces.
- Unique and signature outdoor public spaces such as Depot Park and Art Park that offer community gathering and event spaces. Incorporate public art, seating, lighting, and other elements that create ways for people to gather downtown.
- Mixed-use buildings with active ground-floor uses.
- Medium and high housing densities of 12 or more units per acre.



*Aurora St lies at the heart of the Downtown Core District.*



*Downtown Core businesses should drive foot traffic and have active store fronts*



*The Business Development District allows for a wider variety of uses and appearance in building facade.*



*Existing uses in the Business Development District include small auto repair.*



*There are many redevelopment opportunities.*

## Business Development District

### Character/Design

The Business Development District encourages commercial and light industrial uses that complement the downtown core district and take advantage of the proximity to downtown for increased foot traffic.

- Emphasize infill and redevelopment of underutilized and vacant property with more flexibility in design standards and uses compared to the downtown core district.
- Opportunities for light industrial, studio, and workshop spaces with some design standards to transition from historic downtown character.
- Encourage uses are consumer-facing or employment-focused and bring foot traffic to the areas surrounding the downtown core district.
- Protect nearby residential areas through noise, screening, and other performance standards for more intense commercial or light industrial uses.
- Utilize landscaping, material, and signage standards to create a gateway feel for the area west of downtown around the City boundary.
- Promote diversity of uses that generate activity downtown throughout the day, evening, week, and year.

### Desired Mix of Uses

- Light industrial and small-scale manufacturing that does not require the space and separation from other uses that those uses in the industrial park require.
- Commercial retail and services, particularly those that feature smaller, local businesses and services that support the day-to-day needs of downtown residents, workers, and visitors.
- Offices, studios, and workshops that require larger spaces or more intensive use than appropriate for the downtown core district.



## Neighborhood Districts

Ironwood's neighborhoods developed in patterns typical of mining and mill towns with small lot sizes and gridded street patterns. Many houses were built in similar styles and at the same time, defining the character of Ironwood's residential areas. The majority of uses in neighborhood districts are residential, with amenities and services that residents within those areas.

The three neighborhood districts identified in the future land use map continue to promote a high-quality of life for Ironwood's residents with an emphasis on quality housing options, access to recreation and amenities, and small-scale service and commercial uses that cater to the needs of residents. Distinguishing between three neighborhood types allows for varying levels of flexibility in housing design and density and recognizes the historic development patterns in Ironwood. It also takes in to consideration the efficient provision of City services and infrastructure, including water and sewer services, snow-clearing, and sidewalks.

### Downtown Neighborhood

#### Character/Design

The downtown neighborhood district is characterized by moderate density residential uses, scattered commercial uses, such as corner stores, that serve the residents in the neighborhood without creating a significant increase in traffic flow, and walkable access to downtown and neighborhood parks and trails.

- Encourage infill and redevelopment of underutilized and vacant properties to fill out existing neighborhoods and take advantage of infrastructure provision.
- Allow for flexible standards (setbacks, minimum lot size, parking) to encourage diverse housing development and infill on lots that may not meet all minimum zoning standards.
- Develop accessible pedestrian and bike facilities on primary corridors and in the vicinity of and connecting to neighborhood destinations (schools, parks, institutions, and businesses) and downtown.
- Encourage preservation and rehabilitation of historic homes, structures, and sites while balancing need for accessible, updated housing stock.
- For medium and higher density housing, design context-appropriate housing, meaning the perceived density of housing units should fit with nearby uses and be scaled appropriately for the site it is on.
- Neighborhood-serving commercial and service uses should promote walkability in the area, providing accessible services to neighborhood residents without increasing traffic flows.

#### Desired Mix of Uses

- Mix of housing types with emphasis on medium housing densities including: single-family housing, duplexes and townhomes; triplexes and quadplexes; cottage courtyards; townhouses/rowhouses; small-scale apartments.
- Small-scale businesses serving neighborhood residents, for example convenience stores, daycare, or dance studios.
- Housing located above neighborhood commercial is encouraged.
- Small-scale home business operations and live-work housing should be encourage (e.g. personal office, small studio/workshop, professional office for doctor/lawyer) provided that business use of the property does not negatively impact the residential character of the district (i.e. noise, odors, traffic).
- Public and semi-public institutions such as schools, civic buildings, and churches.



*Example of multifamily housing that fits Ironwood's character*



*Second stories are opportunities for housing*



*Existing higher density housing in Ironwood*



Example of a typical street in a traditional neighborhood



Much of Ironwood's housing stock is from the same era.

## Traditional Neighborhood

### Character/Design

Traditional neighborhood districts are characterized by a mix of low and moderate residential densities following traditional gridded patterns and quiet local streets. Residential density is typically 1–4-unit homes, though a broader range of middle density housing is allowed.

- Lots are oriented with narrower dimensions along the street frontage
- Housing is typically located closer to the street with detached garages located behind, often accessed via an alley
- Develop accessible pedestrian and bike facilities on primary corridors and in the vicinity of and connecting to neighborhood destinations (schools, parks, institutions, and businesses) and downtown.
- Encourage preservation and rehabilitation of historic homes, structures, and sites while balancing need for accessible, updated housing stock.
- For medium density housing, design context-appropriate housing, meaning the perceived density of housing units should fit with nearby uses and be scaled appropriately for the site it is on.

### Desired Mix of Uses

- Though single-unit detached homes are the most common type of housing in this district, other housing types are allowed and encouraged including: duplexes and twinhomes; triplexes and quadplexes; cottage courtyards; and townhouses/rowhouses.
- Neighborhood parks and recreational amenities such as multi-use trails are scattered throughout the district, providing access within a 5- to 10-minute walk for all residents.
- Small-scale businesses serving neighborhood residents, for example convenience stores, daycare, or dance studios.
- Public and semi-public institutions, such as schools and churches.

## Rural Residential Neighborhood

### Character/Design

The Rural Residential District is characterized by low intensity development. These are areas of the City that receive limited public utility services and are largely undeveloped and rural in character. Limited development potential in this area due to existing wetlands and topography.

- Large lots and dispersed residential development.
- Municipal water and sanitary sewer services are not provided.
- Limited road network/connectivity with pedestrians/ bike facilities on key corridors only (e.g. connecting to outlying recreational destinations at Norrie Park and ABR).
- Low lands with open space and natural areas throughout.

### Desired Mix of Uses

- Open space and natural resource areas.
- Recreation amenities – multi-use trails, parks, natural surface trails.
- Low density and rural residential uses.
- Agricultural and forestry uses.



Rural residential areas have large lots and are more dispersed.



Preserving natural areas is part of land use planning

## Commercial and Industrial Districts

The Highway 2 Corridor and Industrial Districts cover areas that are designed for more auto-oriented and higher-intensity uses. These areas are employment centers and opportunities to drive economic growth through a job-rich and activity-rich development pattern. These districts should be easily accessible from major transit corridors to facilitate freight and other vehicle traffic flows. Nodes of higher commercial activity are appropriate stretching out from key intersections with Highway 2 while industrial uses are typically concentrated together to minimize the impacts of uses that may generate more noise, odors, or traffic.

### Highway 2 Corridor District

#### Character/Design

The Highway 2 corridor aims to preserve a diverse character along Highway 2, while allowing for higher levels of commercial intensity at major activity nodes/corridors, including the intersections at Lowell, Douglas, Greenbush, and Lake, which lead to key destinations. As a critical commercial corridor, this district recognizes the need to accommodate commercial uses, but emphasizes a form and pattern that enhances image, identity, and traffic flow.

- Develop and enforce signage and landscaping standards for private properties along Highway 2 to enhance overall appearance, improve wayfinding, and reduce visual blight.
- Accommodates auto-oriented traffic flows and development while transitioning to pedestrian-friendly environments and connections to nearby neighborhoods.
- Emphasizes safe, multi-modal intersections along Hwy 2 to promote connectivity between neighborhoods and downtown.
- A clear wayfinding system should direct visitors to downtown and other community destinations.
- Connect to the City and Regional trail network from Highway 2; and maintain a clear wayfinding system for City trail network.

#### Desired Mix of Uses

- Higher intensity commercial development compared to downtown districts that features larger lot sizes and more highway-oriented uses such as hotels, gas stations, and restaurants; at the major cross streets, commercial development may extent north and south off of Highway 2, in the direction of other local destinations for short distances.
- Residential development of a moderate density (townhomes or stacked units) should be considered along the corridor, particularly in mid block areas. Residential uses should be set back further from the street edge, and where possible, access should be from side streets.



*The Highway 2 Corridor is more auto-oriented with easy access to Highway 2.*



*Hotels and lodging are examples of common uses along the Highway 2 Corridor.*





The Industrial District groups similar uses together.



Ironwood Plastics is an example of an existing Industrial use.

## Industrial District

### Character/Design

The Industrial district is an area characterized by a wide diversity of jobs including: manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, office, service, and limited destination oriented/specialized retail. These districts carry a wide range of impacts including noise, odors, and heavier traffic.

- Outside storage and heavy equipment should be oriented on the site to minimize impacts on adjacent uses that are not of a similar nature (i.e. sites that are adjacent to a residential district or Miners Park should orient heavier uses and storage away from these districts).
- Building fronts facing the public street right of way should be of a higher architectural character.
- Signage should be scale appropriate and clearly identifiable to the business name and address. Sites have easy access to major roadways and sufficient space for parking and loading to facilitate deliveries and distribution.
- Parking and truck circulation should be well thought out on a district level. Sites that require occasional truck movements might explore shared driveways and access areas to minimize unused hard surfaces; this reduces the area required for snow removal and areas that generate runoff.
- Consider landscaping improvements that are appropriate to the region and include tree plantings where possible.

### Desired Mix of Uses

- Industrial uses ranging from light to heavy uses including production, manufacturing, processing, distribution, warehousing, or storage.
- Destination/specialized retail.
- Professional offices or larger studio/workshop spaces that require outdoor storage or yard space.

# Framing Concepts

## Infill and Redevelopment

Infill and redevelopment is a key goal identified throughout the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to land use, economic development, and housing and neighborhoods. Redevelopment is often a complex undertaking, requiring collaboration between the City, various service delivery agencies, property owners, adjacent property owners, and the developer. There are a variety of roles the City may play in relation to Infill and redevelopment of key sites across Ironwood.

- **City as a Broker:** This applies where City owns the property in question and has the ability to make key decisions. The City's primary responsibility is to package the site and market it to potential users. The City has the added benefit of being able to assist with property entitlements for the site and removing barriers to redevelopment.
- **City as a Facilitator:** This approach requires the City to provide the linkage between prospective developers and property owners.
- **City as a Developer/Partner:** As the developer/partner, the City becomes an invested partner in the project, and as such, the City may have a direct role in completing a public improvement or securing financing in support of the redevelopment project.

Regardless of the role the City is playing in a project, the goals of infill and redevelopment are the same: revitalize underutilized areas, return vacant land to revenue generating uses, and help advance the City's vision.

Identified in Figure 3.3 are examples of sites in the Downtown Districts that represent opportunities for infill or redevelopment.

For more on infill housing development throughout the Neighborhood Districts, see the Housing and Neighborhood chapter and Ironwood's Housing Action Plan.

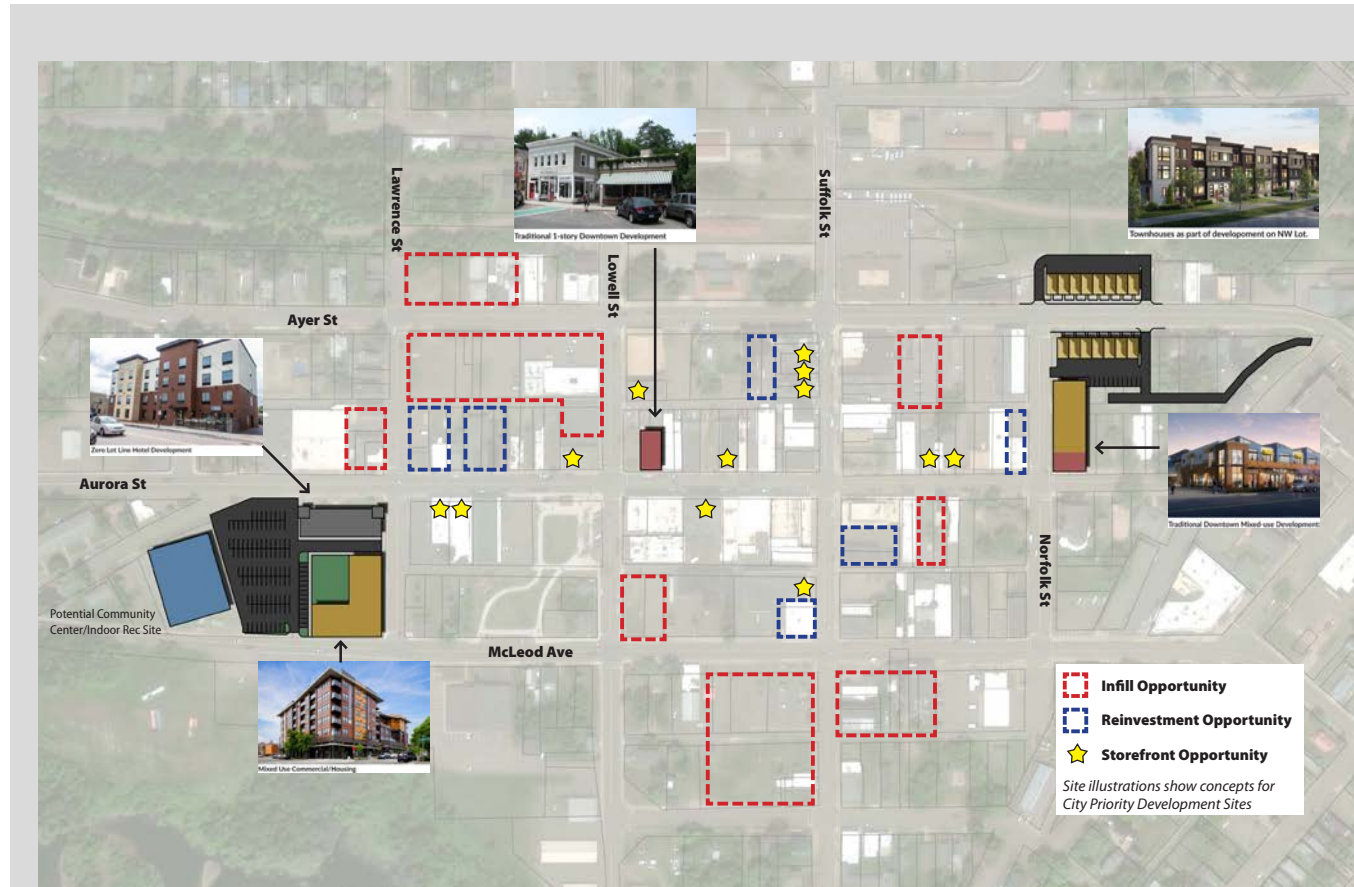


Figure 3.3 Potential redevelopment and infill site opportunities in and around downtown Ironwood.



## Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC)

In April of 2024, the City of Ironwood was certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) through Michigan Economic Development Corporation. An RRC designation indicates that a community has a streamlined development process and fosters a predictable and efficient environment for developers working in the community.

The RRC program outlines best practices to create a development-friendly environment with the goal of attracting new developers. Since 2016, Ironwood has been working to meet RRC standards and receive their designation. This involved aligning City processes and priorities with RRC guidelines in areas including:

- Planning and engagement
- Zoning
- Development review
- Boards and commissions
- Economic development and marketing

The RRC designation provides Ironwood with a variety of benefits including marketing of high priority, redevelopment ready sites; technical assistance match funding; training opportunities; networking; and discounted or free services, such as software and professional photography. The City of Ironwood can leverage its RRC designation to catalyze redevelopment of priority infill and redevelopment sites in downtown Ironwood.

### PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT SITES

The City of Ironwood has preselected development sites that are ready for development or redevelopment. Download the developer packets below to see the potential for these sites:



Priority development sites already identified by the City.

## Marketing Sites for Development

One way Ironwood is living up to the RRC certification is by marketing available sites for development. Easily accessible information on the City website points potential developers in the right direction and links to more information about existing sites and resources about the development process in Ironwood.

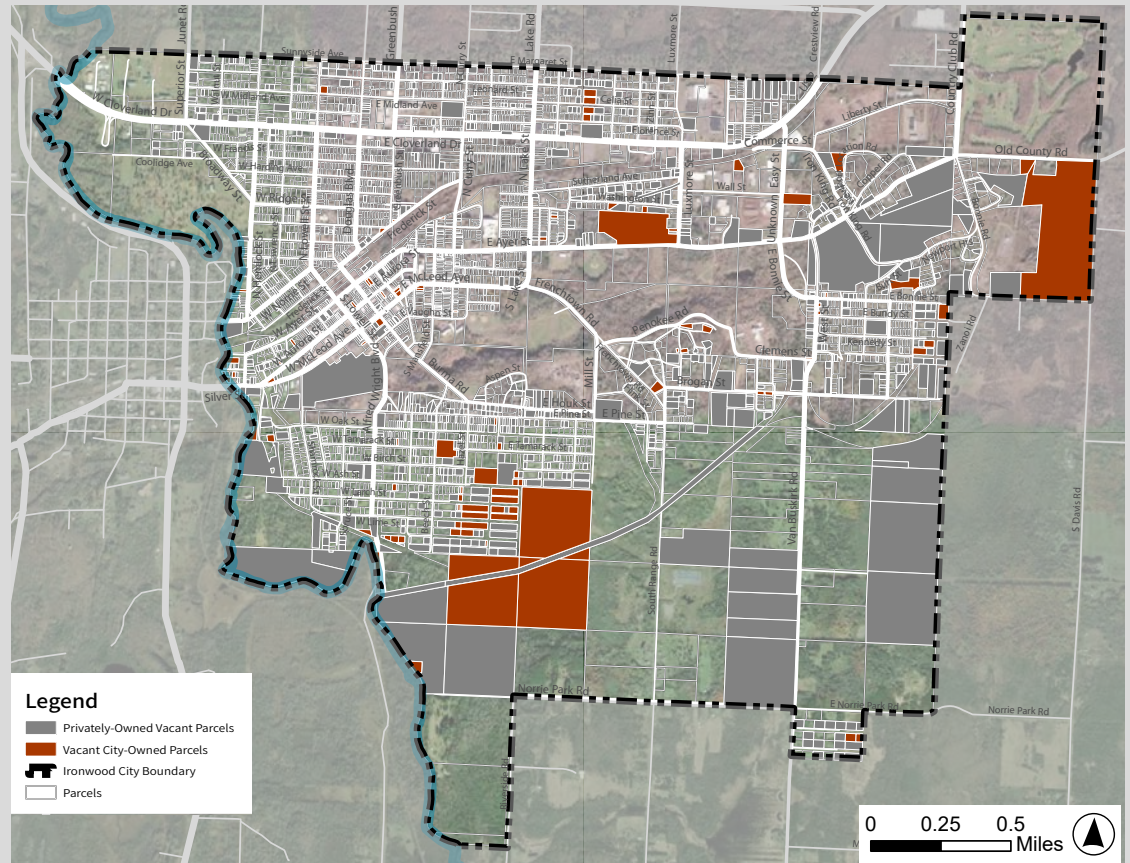
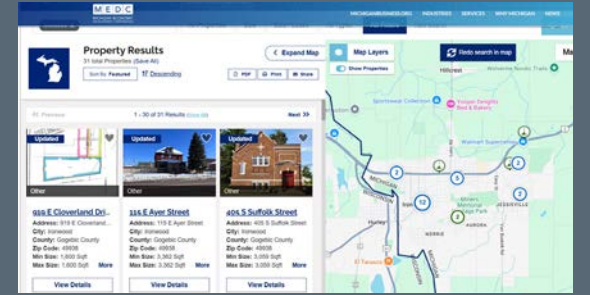


Figure 3.4 Map of vacant property in Ironwood. Keeping an inventory of vacant and City-owned vacant properties helps the City market available sites and provide accurate information to developers.



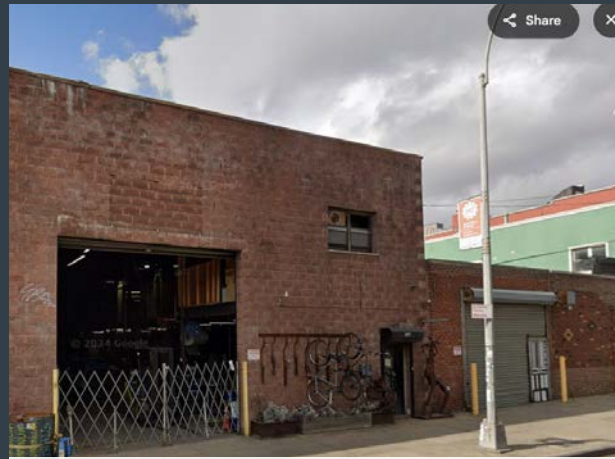
## Business Development District

The goal of a Business Development District is to provide an area where a wide variety of small and expanding businesses can enter the Ironwood market. Through flexible standards and allowing a greater range of uses compared to the Downtown Core District, the Business Development District prioritizes investment and redevelopment close to downtown without impacting the historical character of the Ironwood's core downtown.

Taking cues from existing uses in this area, the Business Development District is meant to provide an alternative location for all types of businesses that benefit from being close to downtown, are not big enough to be located in the Industrial Park, or may not need the access and proximity to Highway 2 in the Highway 2 Corridor District.

From light manufacturing to small motor repair and carpentry to insurance, the Business Development District welcomes investment in many kinds of businesses provided that noise, odor, and similar characteristics do not impact adjacent areas.

There are a variety of underutilized properties surrounding the Downtown Core District. Creating a Business Development District with flexible standards can help activate these parcels and promote investment in both physical improvements and Ironwood's economic landscape. With more businesses of all kinds surrounding the Downtown Core District, there will be more workers, customers, and general traffic in the area, also supporting the restaurants and other service-oriented businesses that make up the Downtown Core District.



*A metalworker set up shop in an underutilized building.*



## Building Reuse

There are many examples of former industrial and warehouse districts that adapt to meet the evolving needs of a community. There are several buildings ripe for reinvestment in the Business Development District. Industrial-style buildings offer unique opportunities to artists, makers, and businesses of all kinds. Buildings with concrete floors and high ceilings can be converted into a great space for a cabinet-maker, an artist, or any number of other uses. An adaptable interior can be converted into a loft or live/work space, offering people a place to live and a different housing type than normally found in Ironwood.



*An old mill building converted into a clay factory and studio with public art displayed outside.*







Figure 3.5 Future land uses in downtown Ironwood.

# Implementation

## Goal 3.1: Rehabilitation and Reuse

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>3.1a</b>	<i>Downtown Building Rehabilitation and Infill Development</i>		
	Identify vacant properties for potential infill development.	City Staff - Community Development; DIDA	General Fund
	Identify vacant or underutilized structures for potential rehabilitation.	City Staff - Community Development; DIDA	General Fund
	Evaluate costs of rehabilitation for buildings compared to cost of removing and rebuilding new structures on the property. Consider partnerships to leverage State and local funding sources and other opportunities for creative collaboration to distribute costs.	City Staff - Community Development; DIDA	General Fund
	Rezone and remove regulatory barriers to development for identified vacant or undeveloped land to zoning districts supporting the Comprehensive Plan's guidance.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Market infill sites and potential building rehabilitation opportunities to developers.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC Grants
	Continue to maintain the status and take advantage of the benefits of being a MEDC certified Redevelopment Ready Community.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund

## Goal 3.2: Strategic Land Use Guidance and Growth

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>3.2a</b>	<i>Industrial Park Expansion</i>		
	Identify areas that meet the Future Land Use description for Industrial Districts, such as areas with easy access to Highway 2, suitable topography, and adequate area for larger industrial uses that can be screened from adjacent land use districts.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Prioritize areas that are part of the existing infrastructure network, including water and sanitary sewer.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Identify complimentary uses that fit with Ironwood's existing manufacturing and other industries and market Ironwood's industrial park to potential new businesses.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund



### Goal 3.3: Balancing Flexibility and Ironwood's Character

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
3.3a	<i>Creation of New Downtown Districts</i>		
	Identify the downtown areas that are compatible with the Downtown Core District and Business Development District goals.	City Staff - Community Development; DIDA	General Fund
	Remove regulatory barriers that currently prohibit or dissuade development and use types that meet the updated Downtown Districts land use goals.	City Staff - Community Development;	General Fund
	Rezone properties as needed in the downtown area to districts that align with zoning districts supporting the Comprehensive Plan's guidance.	City Staff - Community Development;	General Fund

## Land Use Action Program

This table provides guidance on improvements for the next 1-3 years in Ironwood. It is based on the ideas, and community feedback gathered during the planning process and the feasibility and priority of identified strategies.

Focus for the action program is on:

- Increasing flexibility to promote reinvestment in property across Ironwood
- Reducing barriers that dissuade or stall development
- Continuing to preserve and enhance Ironwood's historic downtown character

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

### 2026 (Year 1)

Status	Description	Cost
	Update zoning ordinance to be compatible with the Comprehensive Plan	\$
	Implement Planning Commission training to ensure consistent interpretation of zoning ordinances	\$
	Work with DIDA to create and/or update inventory of vacant and underutilized properties downtown	\$

### Cost Key

\$: \$0 - \$15,000

\$\$: \$15,000 - \$75,000

\$\$\$ : \$75,000 - \$300,000

\$\$\$\$: \$300,000+

### 2027 (Year 2)

Status	Description	Cost
	Identify compatible industrial uses for growth of industrial park	\$
	Develop targeted marketing strategy for to attract new industries and businesses to the Industrial Park	\$
	Evaluate and compare costs of rehabilitating downtown buildings vs. building new on the site	\$\$
	Develop targeted marketing strategy for downtown development and redevelopment sites	\$

### 2027 (Year 2)

Status	Description	Cost
	For any new Commission members, implement Planning Commission training to ensure consistent interpretation of zoning ordinances	\$
	Evaluate effectiveness of Business Development District through looking at permit applications from prior 2 years; determine what, if any, adjustments should be made or barriers removed	\$
	Continue marketing industrial park sites	\$r
	Continue marketing redevelopment and infill development sites in downtown districts	\$







# HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

## Guiding Principles

The Housing and Neighborhoods Chapter focuses on the following themes derived from the vision and guiding principles:

By promoting neighborhoods that are accessible, connected, and **rooted** in Ironwood's historical development patterns, Ironwood offers residents a place to call home that **connects** them to their neighbors, businesses, and all of the arts, cultural, and outdoor amenities that Ironwood has to offer.

Prioritizing a diverse and high-quality housing stock ensures that all current and future residents have the **opportunity** to find a home that meets their needs. Whether it is a place to rent when first moving to Ironwood, a small house for a first-time homeowner, a larger home for a growing family, or a single-level townhouse for someone looking to downsize and age in place, Ironwood's neighborhoods can meet the community's needs.

Ironwood's neighborhoods have proven their **resilience**, weathering harsh Upper Peninsula winters and changes to historical population patterns. Through a combination of updating existing housing stock and filling in vacant lots with new types and styles of housing, the **vibrancy** of Ironwood's neighborhoods remains a defining characteristic of the community.



*Attractive and friendly neighborhoods offer **diverse housing** options that meet the needs of all residents in **all phases of life**, ensuring Ironwood is a community where people make their **home**.*





## What We've Heard

- Homeownership has historically been a very attainable goal for Ironwood residents.
- Housing prices are going up.
- There are more short-term rentals in Ironwood, limiting the supply of quality housing available to year-round residents.
- There are not enough senior housing options -- or options for anyone who is not looking for single-family homes.
- Blight is an issue. Population decline means there are empty houses that are not maintained.
- Ironwood's housing stock is old, maintaining houses is expensive for homeowners.
- A lack of variety in housing type makes it difficult to attract employees at all positions, from those looking to rent to those desiring a "move-up" property.

## Overview

The Housing and Neighborhoods chapter of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on ways the City can foster an environment that supports diverse, high-quality housing options that meet the needs of Ironwood's residents and potential residents. Through identifying current housing needs and examining the population and market trends at work in Ironwood, this section of the plan aims to create affordable, diverse housing options while maintaining vibrant, welcoming neighborhoods.

The role the City plays in housing development and maintaining affordable and quality housing stock varies depending on the situation. If the City owns property, they can work directly with developers to create housing. In other cases, the City can ensure regulatory processes are favorable to the creation and preservation of affordable, diverse housing. Due to the different roles the City of Ironwood may occupy in relation to housing, the goals, policies, and strategies in this section often require the support of partners, such as homeowners and developers, or rely on public-private partnerships.

The City of Ironwood has recently adopted a Housing Action Plan. The plan provides findings and recommendations to guide City staff, boards, and commissions as they work to improve housing in Ironwood. It also provides valuable resources for developers interested in working with Ironwood. The Housing Action Plan aligns with and complements the goals, policies, and strategies identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Recognizing that housing and neighborhoods are closely related to other areas of this plan, including land use character and development patterns and economic development, this chapter will focus on three major concepts to guide public investment in and policy around land economic development:

- **Accessibility:** Maintain and enhance Ironwood's reputation as an affordable place to live. Ensure that all residents and potential residents can find housing that meets their needs through diverse options of quality housing types.
- **Diversification:** Encourage infill and new development of diverse housing types that suit Ironwood's community character, creatively fit into Ironwood's downtown and neighborhood areas, and takes advantage of existing service provision.
- **Quality:** Maintain and improve the quality of Ironwood's existing and historic housing stock through blight remediation and support for homeowner maintenance, renovation, and reinvestment.



# Issues and Opportunities

For most Ironwood residents, homeownership has historically been an attainable goal. However, the last five years has seen a dramatic cost increase for most housing. Additionally, there is very little variation in housing types, with the majority of housing being single-family housing built in the same style. The age of Ironwood's housing stock is also notable, as most of the housing was built as workforce housing during the 1920s. Quality and diversity of housing options are important for attracting new residents, supporting economic development, and ensuring residents can find housing to meet their needs, from rental options to family homes to senior living.

In addition to improving housing stock overall, addressing maintenance and blight is important for preserving existing housing and the character of Ironwood's neighborhoods. Identifying funding sources and promoting programs that assist homeowners in the basic upkeep of their homes can help address these issues.

As Ironwood's housing stock is diversified, ensuring continued affordability will be key in order to preserve the quality of life available to Ironwood's residents and maintain homeownership as an attainable goal for residents.



## Key Issues

- Ironwood's housing supply is predominately single-family homes, with limited options for renters, senior housing, or other different housing types.
- Over 50% of Ironwood's housing stock was built before 1940, and only about 5% built in the last 45 years
- Due to a declining population, Ironwood has lost housing units, with 112 units lost from 2010 to 2020
- Ironwood has an aging population. There is a mismatch in the types of housing available and the units that will be in demand in the future.
- Construction costs have been rising, and while home prices have risen, they are low enough to deter new construction.



## Key Opportunities

- Average household size is decreasing, this means there are fewer people in each household, driving up demand compared even to 2010 despite a smaller population.
- As Ironwood's population ages, there will be more demand for a variety of housing types, creating a market for diversifying the housing stock.
- There are a significant number of non-owner occupied houses in Ironwood. These houses offer an opportunity to re-introduce houses into the supply of units.
- There is a very limited supply of apartments. The market has very few vacancies and many renters are housing cost-burdened, suggesting there is a need for affordable housing for renters in Ironwood.



*Ironwood's neighborhoods are mostly single family homes.*



*Multi-family housing across in Ironwood.*



*Second story apartments offer downtown living in Ironwood.*



## KEY TERMINOLOGY

Goals and policies in this chapter support the vision and guiding principles of the plan and should be used to inform future decision-making and action. Strategies identify key projects or initiatives that put the policies into action.

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

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

**Strategies:** are actions, programs, and practices that support one or more of the plan's goals and policies. Strategies address at a high level, the "who, what, when, where, and how" of reaching a goal, and may involve multiple sub-strategies.



One of Ironwood's few apartment buildings.

# Goals, Policies, & Strategies

## Goal 4.1 Accessibility

*The City of Ironwood strives to ensure that all residents can access housing that meets their needs through options of quality housing types at different levels of affordability.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 4.1.1** Support the development of rental housing.

**Policy 4.1.2** Encourage development of diverse housing options to provide aging in place and senior living options for residents.

**Policy 4.1.3** Support development of a range of affordable and market rate housing options to meet all income levels.

**Policy 4.1.4** Provide support and education around financial tools for housing rehabilitation and development.

### Strategies

#### *Scattered Site Infill Development Program*

The City owns a number of vacant lots in different neighborhoods. This program would offer a clearer way for re-development of housing on these lots, providing new housing in the community and improving the local tax base.

#### *Strengthen the Rental Market*

The current rental market in Ironwood is very tight, with little to no available units in the larger apartments. Through prioritizing development of rental units and leveraging partnerships and funding opportunities, the City can work to improve access to rentals.

#### *Support Employee Housing Through Public-Private Partnerships*

Working directly with employers to identify housing needs and create workforce and employee housing opportunities can help create additional housing in the community and boost economic development.

#### *Increase Awareness and Utilization of Financial Incentives*

The City of Ironwood can become an expert on the tools and opportunities available to developers that offer financial and technical assistance. The goal of this strategy is to ensure developers and investors understand and access available funding programs.

## Goal 4.2 Diversification

*The City of Ironwood promotes development and redevelopment of diverse housing types to provide a variety of housing options that suit Ironwood's community character, creatively fit into Ironwood's downtown and neighborhoods, and fulfills the needs of residents during all phases of life.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 4.2.1** Encourage development of new housing to fill gaps in the housing market.

**Policy 4.2.2** Support local and new developers in efforts to strengthen local development capacity.

**Policy 4.2.3** Prioritize infill and redevelopment of existing neighborhoods.

**Policy 4.2.4** Promote redevelopment of downtown properties for residential and mixed-use options.

**Policy 4.2.5** Create flexibility in standards and allow differing housing densities while maintaining neighborhood character.

**Policy 4.2.6** Support mixed-use development and creative re-use of underutilized properties.

### Strategies

#### *Development of City-Owned Property*

This strategy would be led by the City during the predevelopment phases, then led by City partners through site development. The goal of this strategy is to develop City-owned land to diversify the housing stock in Ironwood and create additional development opportunities.

#### *Creation of a Housing TIF*

A Housing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program supports neighborhood revitalization by encouraging infill development and investment in underutilized areas. This initiative stimulates private investment and enhances diverse housing options.

#### *Developer Roundtables and Capacity Building*

Supporting the growth of the local development community -- including contractors, investors, landlords, etc. -- through creating a network of local actors can support incremental development efforts in Ironwood. Growing the number and capacity of local developers will help support efforts to rehabilitate and build new housing.

#### *Streamline Development Process and Permitting*

Reducing barriers for developers and first-time homebuilders through simplifying regulatory processes and providing clear and concise information will make it easier to develop all scales of housing.



*Many Ironwood homes were built at the same time, from the same blueprints. Over the last century they have been modified and seen different levels of upkeep and reinvestment.*



## Goal 4.3 Quality

*The City of Ironwood supports residents in reinvesting in, maintaining, and rehabilitating Ironwood's existing and historic housing stock.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 4.3.1** Support investment in and maintenance and rehabilitation of existing properties.

**Policy 4.3.2** Collaborate with community partners to support housing development and rehabilitation.

**Policy 4.3.3** Build capacity at the neighborhood level for community improvement projects and maintenance of neighborhood identity.

**Policy 4.3.4** Ensure all homes, including long- and short- term rentals, are maintained in safe condition.

### Strategies

#### *Housing Rehabilitation Programs*

Utilizing resources available through the State and other sources, housing rehabilitation programs provide funding to ensure homes are safe and livable. These programs raise the quality of the housing stock and reduce health and safety risks.

#### *Code Enforcement to Address Maintenance and Blight*

Strengthening code enforcement would address blight concerns by helping maintain property standards, prevent blight, and preserve housing stock quality.



#### *Monitor and Address the Impact of Short-Term Rentals*

Monitoring short-term rentals ensures they balance economic benefits with community well-being. Thoughtful policies promote tourism while preserving neighborhood character, housing affordability, and ensuring that short-term rentals are safe and contributing to the welfare of the community. Considerations include rental inspections, easier nuisance reporting and enforcement, and participation in the Ironwood Tourism Council.

#### *Rehabilitate and Revitalize Downtown Properties*

Ironwood offers a walkable downtown with many assets including parks, trails, theater, shops, and restaurants. Many downtown buildings have apartments on the second level. Reinvestment in these existing structures would support housing development and preserve the character and history of downtown.

#### *Tool Libraries for Community Maintenance*

Tool libraries are shared tool collections that neighbors and residents can borrow for maintaining homes, yards, sidewalks, and community spaces. Community members would lead this initiative and take charge on borrowing and using tools for needed maintenance.



*With care, these older homes can be valuable assets in a community, but that requires ongoing maintenance and investment*



# Framing Concepts

## Diverse Housing Types

The need for diverse housing types is cited throughout this plan, but what does that really mean? And why does Ironwood need diverse housing options?

Housing type refers to the style of house and type of units it offers. To the right are examples of different housing types that provide a range of options.

Providing different options for housing meets the needs of people in different phases of life. As people move through different life stages, they also require different things from their housing.

A young person who has recently moved to Ironwood for work is likely not ready to buy a house yet. They might be more interested in a one or two bedroom apartment. A young couple looking to buy their first home can more easily afford a one to two bedroom single-family house. Meanwhile, the family down the street who has a few kids is looking for a larger three or four bedroom house to grow into. As children move out and people age, they might look to downsize and find a home that requires less maintenance and they can comfortably age in place, such as a townhome or single-level flat.

By offering a variety of rental and for-sale housing types, a community can ensure that residents are able to meet their housing needs during all phases of life. This makes a community attractive for potential residents and ensures current residents are able to call Ironwood home their whole lives.

## Housing Types



### Small Scale Apartments

This housing type is a multi-unit building with multiple floors, similar in height to the surrounding buildings, and a shared building entry.



### Senior Living

Units in a variety of layouts or building types that are limited to individuals ages 55 or older. Residents may be independent, need a lower-level of services provided (assisted living), or require high-level 24-hour care due to dementia or other health issues.



### Townhouse/Row Houses

This is a group of attached housing that increases density while providing for defined, separated living spaces in an efficient design. The property could include a shared lawn, garden, or walking paths.



### Detached Courtyard Housing

A group of smaller detached houses that are built closer together and located around a common open space, which could include a shared lawn, garden, or walking paths.



### Mixed-Use

Housing units located above or within the same building as businesses or uses other than residential



### Twinhomes/Duplexes (2-4 Unit Houses)

Multiple units in the same house structure that can either be side by side or lower/upper levels and could have separate or shared entries.



### ADUs/Tiny Homes

A smaller, self-contained residential unit that is legally part of a residential lot that includes another home. Accessory dwelling units can be internal to or attached to another home, incorporated into a detached garage, or a separate detached structure.



*New construction on a vacant lot in Ironwood.*



*Maintaining existing housing helps preserve housing units.*



*Investment in existing houses supports the overall market.*

## Rehabilitation

While building new housing seems like the obvious answer to a housing shortage, building the way out of a housing crisis is a very difficult task. In Ironwood, fewer than 200 homes have been built since 1980. Building enough housing units to increase the supply by even 2% (60 units) would represent a 10x increase in the number of homes built from 2014-2023. So, how can Ironwood provide more, quality housing? The answer is in Ironwood's existing housing stock.

Rehabilitation and reinvestment in the existing housing stock helps to maintain quality housing, enhance aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods and supports preservation of the fabric of Ironwood's historic neighborhoods. However, individual homeowners may find such improvements to be costly and time consuming, and may lack the skills or ability to complete these projects on their own.

City programs should seek to remove barriers to rehabilitation and maintenance by providing financial and technical support for homeowners who might want to pursue home and property improvements, including historic preservation and restoration.

## Infill Program

Infill housing refers to developing vacant lots or redeveloping underutilized buildings to create new housing within the existing neighborhood fabric. By emphasizing infill development, Ironwood can add to its housing stock while adding vibrancy to neighborhoods and utilizing existing infrastructure networks. The City of Ironwood has a number of vacant lots that were platted at a time when the City had significantly more population. Over the course of the last few decades a number of homes have come down, leaving behind these vacant lots, that are still adjacent to a number of City services, such as roads, water, and sewer, and proximate to amenities like downtown. While many are in private ownership, these lots represent an enormous opportunity to build new housing.

In the last 10 years, Ironwood has lost around 112 housing units. This means there are a number of vacant lots in residential areas that are well-suited for housing. The City already owns a handful of these vacant properties, creating the conditions to try a scattered site infill program. The City of Jackson, Michigan offers an example of a successful infill development program. Though the scale of Jackson's infill program is larger than Ironwood needs, it offers an example of how to work with developers, lenders, and the community to create a viable program.



## Jackson, Michigan: 100 Homes Project

### The Problem

The City of Jackson needed housing, specifically, they needed quality housing that was affordable to the community.

The City had a lot of blighted houses and properties beyond a state of repair. After receiving state funding, they tore down houses, creating 1,500 vacant properties. This solved one problem: you need land in order to have development. Now the City owned plenty of vacant, development-ready properties.

### The Process

The City of Jackson then turned to identifying how to create an infill housing program that made financial sense for the community, for developers, and for lenders. Through conversations with developers already working around the community, City staff identified a type of product at an attainable price-point for the community, ways to streamline the regulatory processes, and what scale of development was needed to make it work for the builders.

Similarly, the City sat down with banks and credit unions to work out a financial package to streamline the financing for future homeowners. On the back end, the City established a system to pre-screen applicants and ensure that the approved applicants would be eligible for the lending package. This included working with community partners to remove barriers and bring people up to the eligibility requirements.

Next, Jackson needed someone (a developer or builder) willing to build in the City. Through an RFP process, Jackson asked for builders who would commit to building a certain amount of homes if the City sold them the vacant lots at minimal cost (just enough to cover the administrative costs). A development agreement ensured the developers would build housing within a few years.

### The Product

The housing built through the 100 Homes Project are a combination of two- and three-bedroom homes with a sale price of \$175,000. They are sold to qualified buyers earning up to 120% of area median income. All homes must be owner occupied. Through a combination of City and ARPA funding, the City is able to provide \$25,000 in downpayment assistance per home. Additional downpayment funds are available through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

As of early spring 2025, the program had approved 41 buyers with 20 homes sold and occupied and 14 currently under construction.

### Community Pride

Another key element in the 100 Homes Program is community buy-in. In order to make the project a success and devote City resources and staff time, the City wanted a program that community members would rally behind. The City of Jackson also recognized that it was important to work with local developers or those who were familiar with the community. The developer needed to buy-in to the project as well, finding pride in developing housing to fill a need in the community. One of the primary developer's, Norfolk Homes, advertises their involvement in the 100 Homes Program on their website, underscoring how the program is a partnership between all the players involved.



*Housing plans and built products that are part of the 100 Homes Project.*

*Image Source: City of Jackson & Norfolk Homes*

# Implementation

## Goal 4.1: Accessibility

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>4.1a</b>	<i>Scattered Site Infill Development Pilot Program</i>		
	Review and build on the vacant property inventory and analysis in the Ironwood Housing Action Plan to identify infill sites.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
	Identify local developers and contractors, lending institutions, and other partners who can support the program.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
	Connect with the City of Jackson, Michigan and Michigan Economic Development Corporation to develop a scaled strategy to pilot an infill program.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
	Identify funding sources to support the program.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
	Develop a schedule and process for the pilot program.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
<b>4.1b</b>	<i>Strengthen the Rental Market</i>		
	Partner with local housing commissions and non-profits to identify ways to increase affordable rental units.	City Staff - Community Development Ironwood Housing Commission	General Fund MSHDA grants
	Learn about potential funding, such as rehabilitation funding, and support developers in accessing these funding opportunities.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MSHDA grants
<b>4.1c</b>	<i>Support Employee Housing through Public-Private Partnerships</i>		
	Identify and partner with major employers to understand the types of housing their employees need.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation	General Fund MSHDA grants MEDC grants
	Identify one or two regional employers to pilot a workforce housing program.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MSHDA grants MEDC grants
	Collaborate with CDFIs and community organizations to establish a revolving loan fund for housing rehabilitation.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MSHDA grants MEDC grants
<b>4.1.d</b>	<i>Increase Awareness and Utilization of Financial Incentives</i>		
	City staff should research and become knowledgeable in State and Federal incentive programs to serve as a local resource for developers.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund



### Goal 4.1: Accessibility (Continued)

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
	Develop a Housing Development Financial Tools Guide outlining tax abatements, low-interest loans, and grant opportunities.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Host workshops and roundtables to educate local stakeholders on incentives, such as the Michigan Community Capital's Build MI Community initiative.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Strengthen relationships with local lenders to encourage investment in small-scale projects.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund

### Goal 4.2: Diversification

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>4.2a</b>	<i>Development of City-Owned Property</i>		
	Continue to pursue developers interested in the 26-acre Ayer St property and 205 W Aurora St (the former Wells Fargo location)	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants RRC resources
	Work with interested parties to develop a final site plan that aligns with the City's goals for each site. For the Ayer St property, goals include: a mix of housing types, a mix of affordability levels, and extending green space and trails that serve the community and help market the development.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
<b>4.2b</b>	<i>Creation of a Housing TIF</i>		
	Define the boundaries of the potential TIF district.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Work with MSHDA through the Housing Tax Increment Financing Program to understand how to implement and market the TIF to encourage development.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MSHDA grants
<b>4.2c</b>	<i>Developer Roundtables and Capacity Building</i>		
	Identify local and regional investors, landlords, and builders interested in participating in conversations.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
	Foster a local investor network through initiatives like Livelronwood to encourage reinvestment.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
<b>4.2d</b>	<i>Streamline Development Process and Permitting</i>		
	Identify elements of current regulatory processes that are holding up projects.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
	Implement pre-approved building catalog with ready-to-use designs for small-scale infill projects.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
	Create a simplified development manual with clear zoning approvals, permitting process, and incentives.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund RRC resources
	Provide a visual flowchart to make permitting and approval steps easier to navigate.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund RRC resources

### Goal 4.3: Quality

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
4.3a	<i>Housing Rehabilitation Programs for Homeowners</i>		
	Identify common types of improvements homeowners require (eg. insulation and energy upgrades, exterior/facade improvements, etc.)	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MSHDA grants
	Leverage existing facade improvement programs, energy upgrade rebates, and other state and local programs to provide incentives for homeowners	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MSHDA grants
	Pilot program that organizes batch updates within a neighborhood or for a group of homeowners to encourage efficiencies and offer cost-savings through bulk ordering or sharing contractors during a window of time.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MSHDA grants
4.3b	<i>Code Enforcement to Address Blight</i>		
	Work with Code Enforcement to identify resources needed and any current barriers to enforcing and addressing blight.	City Staff - Community Development, Code Enforcement	General Fund
	Work with inspectors and Code Enforcement to ensure homes are maintained to safe standards for occupants	City Staff - Community Development, Code Enforcement	General Fund
4.3c	<i>Monitor and Address the Impact of Short-Term Rentals</i>		
	Work with inspectors and Code Enforcement to ensure short-term rentals meet code and are maintained to safe standards for occupants	City Staff - Community Development, Code Enforcement	General Fund
	Develop registry of short-term rental properties operating in Ironwood.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Monitor short-term rental trends to understand their effect on housing stock.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Understand renovation models employed by short-term rental owners and identify ways to apply them to long-term housing solutions	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Consider policies that encourage long-term rentals through tax incentives.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Explore programs to convert short-term rentals to longer-term rentals.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Connect local employers to short-term rental landlords to offer longer-term leases.	City Staff - Community Development Local and regional employers	General Fund
4.3d	<i>Rehabilitate and Revitalize Downtown Properties</i>		
	Identify redevelopment opportunities, such as the former Sleight School.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Leverage resources available through Redevelopment Ready Community designation to market available sites to developers.	City Staff - Community Development DIDA	General Fund MEDC grants
	Leverage incentive programs like facade improvement grants, brownfield redevelopment incentives, and OPRA abatements.	City Staff - Community Development DIDA	General Fund MEDC grants
4.3e	<i>Tool Library for Community Maintenance</i>		
	Work with neighborhood organizations and civic groups to establish tool lending libraries and promote neighborhood capacity building for maintenance.	City Staff - Community Development Local organizations	General Fund MSHDA grants



## Housing Action Program

This table provides guidance on improvements for the next 1-3 years in Ironwood. It is based on the ideas and community feedback gathered during the planning process and the feasibility and priority of identified strategies. Additional information and action items are available in the in Ironwood's Housing Action Plan. Focus for the action plan is on:

- Building local and regional capacity amongst the developer community to encourage incremental and infill development.
- Identifying and supporting infill development and redevelopment opportunities.
- Strengthening the rental market.
- Supporting homeowners in reinvesting in and maintaining existing housing stock.
- Identifying and supporting development of diverse housing types.

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

### 2026 (Year 1)

Status	Description	Cost
	Work with building inspector to identify common barriers experienced by developers	\$
	Advocate to State for increases to number of electrical inspectors and improved access to health department forms and procedures	\$
	Identify priorities for MI Neighborhood Program funding and complete LOI based on priorities	\$
	Familiarize City Commission and Staff with local incentives and participate in incentive trainings	\$
	Consider adoption of MML Pattern Book Homes	\$
	Host developer roundtable conversations	\$
	Scattered site infill program phase 1: verify existing property vacancy map, work with local partners to develop a process	\$

### 2027 (Year 2)

Status	Description	Cost
	Research hosting an AmeriCorps Volunteer to work help build local development capacity	\$\$
	Scattered site infill program phase 2: identify funding sources, develop pre-approved housing plans, create developer RFP to utilize City-owned land	\$\$
	Host developer roundtable conversations	\$
	Review local data on building permits issues, types of permits, variances, etc. to understand market	\$
	Market and seek developers interested in developing Ayer Street site	\$\$
	Ensure inspector is trained in rehabilitation code	\$

### 2028 (Year 3)

Status	Description	Cost
	Scattered site infill program phase 3: develop incentive program sources for development community, shepherd development RFP proposals through application and inspection process	\$\$\$
	Review local data on building permits issues, types of permits, variances, etc. to understand market	\$\$
	Review existing housing rehabilitation programs and evaluate effectiveness, identify improvements to program, and seek funding to continue supporting programs	\$\$
	Host developer roundtable conversations	\$

### Cost Key

\$: \$0 - \$15,000

\$\$\$ : \$75,000 - \$300,000

\$\$: \$15,000 - \$75,000

\$\$\$\$: \$300,000+





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Guiding Principles

The Economic Development Chapter focuses on the following themes derived from the vision and guiding principles:

By promoting diverse economic opportunities, encouraging workforce development, and supporting small businesses, the economic development component of the comprehensive plan emphasizes the idea that Ironwood is a place of **opportunity** for those who seek it.

In the cross-sector collaboration and partnerships between governmental and non-governmental entities inherent in economic development, the goals and policies in this chapter highlight the **resilient** nature of Ironwood's economic environment. With initiatives aiming to support and grow all areas of the economy from industrial manufacturing to outdoor recreation tourism to arts and culture, Ironwood embraces the need for a **vibrant** and diverse economy.

Economic development requires strong **leaders** to step up and create a forward path. From workforce training programs at individual companies to creative entrepreneurs and local developers looking to rehabilitate downtown, Ironwood is full of leaders that work to create a robust economic landscape. The framework provided in the economic development chapter recognizes the importance of **welcoming** new ideas, approaches, and entrepreneurs while strengthening the partnerships and businesses that are the backbone of Ironwood's economy today.

“

*A lively and **active** downtown, thriving industrial core, empowered workforce, and business-friendly environment contribute to Ironwood's reputation as a **hub for economic activity**.*

”





## What We've Heard

- Diversifying Ironwood's economy is key to a sustainable future -- this includes attracting small scale manufacturing and industrial uses, restaurants and services, trades, and all types of business.
- A diverse economy will offer more job opportunities, bring in more people, and help support existing and new services, such as restaurants and retail.
- Tourism continues to be a big opportunity, and robust economy will support this by offering more variety in restaurants, accommodations, and other businesses that support tourism.
- There is a need for high-paying jobs with benefits.
- Remote work is an opportunity to attract new residents, but Ironwood needs a quality housing stock and diverse amenities to retain workers.

## Overview

In the context of the Comprehensive Plan, economic development refers to the strategies and policies used to grow the local economy and improve quality of life. It includes areas such as workforce development and job creation, attraction and retention of businesses, and redevelopment of existing structures. The role the City plays in economic development may look different than in other chapters, as there are different jurisdictional elements to consider. As a result, many of the goals, policies, and strategies in the other sections of this plan that fall under the City's purview are directly related to economic development, including housing and neighborhoods, land use, and transportation, among others.

Similarly, economic development is one key area of the comprehensive plan that requires the support of and partnerships with a variety of different local and regional entities, including the Chamber of Commerce, Ironwood Tourism Council, Gogebic Community College, and local business and industry leaders. Economic development is integrated into many other sectors and is impacted by developments and improvements in areas such as Arts & Culture and Parks & Recreation.

Recognizing that economic development is integrated directly and indirectly into other areas of this plan, this chapter will focus on three major concepts to guide public investment in and policy around economic development:

- **Foster a sustainable year-round economy** through a diverse set of industries, businesses, and services. It is important to emphasize growth across a variety of sectors and scales to ensure there are stable, year-round opportunities for employment.
- **Emphasize community-centered growth** that builds on the existing industries and assets present in Ironwood and attracts new businesses that compliment those here today.
- **Market and promote Ironwood** as a viable place to start a business, find employment, and invest.

# Issues and Opportunities

Ironwood's rural location creates some barriers to economic growth. However, whether it is businesses that support Ironwood's industrial park and manufacturing or services that cater to outdoor recreation, there are opportunities to enhance and grow existing industries and support new economic development.

Recent business additions and redevelopment in downtown Ironwood and along Highway 2 suggest opportunities and desire for growth of small businesses. However, closures of some service industry businesses, such as restaurants, and a shortage of employees indicate the barriers that exist for entrepreneurs.

Downtown Ironwood Development Authority (DIDA) and the Downtown TIF District offer opportunities to support creative reuse and redevelopment in Ironwood's downtown district. While rehabilitation of Ironwood's older and historic buildings can be costly, cross-sector collaboration and mixed-use development offer opportunities to bring together Ironwood's arts community, diversify housing stock, and foster community through a vibrant main street.



## Key Issues

- Ironwood's rural character and location can limit growth of existing industries in a variety of ways:
  - Shortage of local workforce and difficulty recruiting qualified employees to relocate
  - Lack of local training opportunities to grow and support the existing workforce
  - Limited proximity to other industry that may use what is manufactured in Ironwood
  - Slow and unpredictable timelines for inspections and licensing add costs and delays
  - Childcare shortages may limit workforce participation
- Older and historic buildings require capital to maintain and upgrade to meet code requirements, creating barriers for reusing and redeveloping existing structures downtown.
- Lack of suitable housing options makes attracting and retaining workers a challenge.



## Key Opportunities

- Support growth of existing industry and businesses by aligning local training programs at the GCC and other workforce development initiatives with the existing industries present in Ironwood.
- Identify gaps in the trades and other in-demand sectors and develop training programs to provide opportunities to local workforce.
- Leverage existing tools such as the efforts of the Downtown Ironwood Development Authority (DIDA) and Downtown TIF District to support creative reuse and redevelopment in Ironwood's downtown.
- Develop incubator programs to help new business ventures get going while removing barriers to entry, such as certified kitchen space or small-scale manufacturing equipment.



*Service-oriented businesses draw foot traffic to downtown.*



*Understanding the barriers businesses face will help the City identify how to better support existing businesses.*

## KEY TERMINOLOGY

Goals and policies in this chapter support the vision and guiding principles of the plan and should be used to inform future decision-making and action. Strategies identify key projects or initiatives that put the policies into action.

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

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

Strategies: are actions, programs, and practices that support one or more of the plan's goals and policies. Strategies address at a high level, the "who, what, when, where, and how" of reaching a goal, and may involve multiple sub-strategies.



## How it Works

**1** Those 21 years and older can order their favorite beverage in a "Social District Container" at a participating establishment.

**2** After purchase, you can then exit the establishment and Ironwood's Social District is an example of increasing flexibility of businesses and creating a supportive business environment downtown.

Please be respectful of our downtown and please properly

## Goals, Policies, and Strategies

### Goal 5.1 Foster a sustainable year-round economy

*Promote Ironwood as a great place for business and industry innovation, growth, and opportunity that provides relevant training and economic opportunity for all residents.*

#### Supporting Policies

**Policy 5.1.1** Provide a strong business culture supporting a diversity of businesses, including those new to business and the seasoned entrepreneurs.

**Policy 5.1.2** Continue evaluating and adapting City policies to ensure they do not create barriers for certain industries while they help regulate for the benefit of the residents of Ironwood as needed (e.g. short term rentals, dispensaries)

**Policy 5.1.3** Maintain and develop relationships with key state agencies to ensure continued technical support is provided for new and existing businesses.

**Policy 5.1.4** Identify and support entrepreneurs, including marginalized populations that are often undiscovered, including social entrepreneurs.

#### Strategies

##### *Industrial Incubator*

An industrial incubator provides affordable space, resources, and mentorship for startups and small manufacturers, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship. The goal is to support Ironwood's industrial park and find ways to strengthen the industrial economy.

##### *Support Existing Business Growth*

Supporting the expansion and success of existing businesses fosters a stable economic base and creates new job opportunities. This initiative encourages reinvestment in the community while building long-term resilience for the local economy.

##### *Attract New Businesses*

The goal is to identify and attract missing business types – from the industrial park to the downtown - to fill gaps in the local economy, enhancing the mix of services and industries available to residents and visitors.



## Goal 5.2 Emphasize community-centered growth

*Promote attraction of businesses that support existing industries and services and/or provide community benefits. Ensure workforce training programs align with existing and potential industries in Ironwood. Understand how targeted workforce development and enterprise recruitment efforts can support cross-sector solutions, such as promoting trade industries in order to support housing development and rehabilitation.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 5.2.1** Encourage development of diverse retail and services that support local and regional needs.

**Policy 5.2.2** Streamline local regulatory processes and licensing to ensure the City is not contributing barriers to business development.

**Policy 5.2.3** Support efforts to preserve and grow essential services in the community, such as childcare, healthcare, workforce housing, etc. to ensure the needs of families, employees, and businesses are met.

**Policy 5.2.4** Identify key partnerships to support and facilitate workforce readiness, training, and employee retention programs

**Policy 5.2.5** Support housing strategies that will help to provide additional workforce housing opportunities to help grow the local workforce.

**Policy 5.2.6** Partner with local businesses, economic development organizations, and potential funding sources to create incubator spaces and/or programs, including commercial kitchens.

### Strategies

#### *Alignment of GCC Classes with Local Business and Industry Needs*

Aligning community college courses and training programs with the needs of local industries ensures both a local workforce for existing industries and ensures graduates have high quality employment opportunities should they choose to remain in the area.

#### *Economic Development Fund*

Establishing an economic development fund provides financial support for initiatives that attract investment, spur development, and enhance community infrastructure. This tool enables the City to strategically invest in projects that drive economic growth and improve quality of life.

#### *Red Tape Reduction Efforts (e.g., for Inspections, Licenses for Restaurants)*

Currently, bureaucratic processes are creating barriers for local business owners. This initiative supports efforts to work with state and other agencies to come up with more efficient systems for processes like licensing and inspection in Ironwood.



*Businesses in the Industrial Park are big employers and could benefit from local training programs that teach the local workforce skills relevant to their industries.*



*Business can help sponsor and support community events, which draw attention to downtown from nearby communities and local residents alike.*



*Attracting businesses that support existing industries, such as outdoor recreation, is another way to promote community-centered growth.*



Marketing elements of Ironwood's cultural heritage, such as its pastry shops, highlights local businesses and Ironwood's unique identity.

## Goal 5.3 Market and promote Ironwood's economy

*Work with partners to enhance the regional and national visibility of Ironwood as a place to do business, grow industry, and participate in the workforce and economy. Highlight the community assets that can attract labor force and new industry to the area.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 5.3.1** Pursue a City marketing strategy to attract new businesses and spur growth.

**Policy 5.3.2** Continue to improve community amenities and activities to create a welcoming environment for new residents.

**Policy 5.3.3** Create identifiable zones/districts for desirable business types and potential growth areas.

**Policy 5.3.4** Identify target markets (businesses, visitors, residents, etc.) and target industries (small-scale manufacturing, services, etc.) to create a unified marketing message for each.

### Strategies

#### *Digital Façade Improvements (Web-Based Marketing for Businesses)*

Enhancing the digital presence of local businesses through web-based marketing tools helps attract customers and boost visibility. This initiative supports economic growth by modernizing business outreach, driving foot traffic, and increasing competitiveness in a digital-first economy.

#### *Support Restaurants and "Third Places" for People to Gather*

Encouraging the development of informal gathering spaces, such as coffee shops and restaurants, also called "third places," fosters social connection, community engagement, and economic activity.

#### *Partnership/Collaboration of the Chamber and ITC*

Strengthening collaboration between the Chamber of Commerce and the Ironwood Tourism Council (ITC) creates regional support and resources for promoting local businesses and tourism.

# Framing Concepts

## Shaping Redevelopment and Reinvestment

While Ironwood's population is not projected to grow, this does not limit Ironwood's opportunity for economic growth.

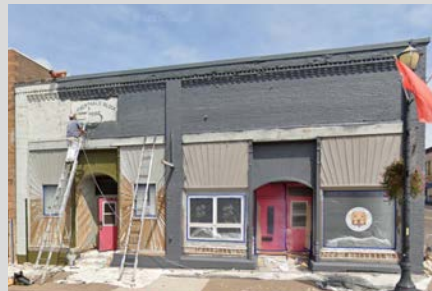
The fiscal growth of a community is reliant upon the investment and reinvestment in land. Public and private investment in properties is what drives the economic sustainability and growth of a community. Private investment comes from entrepreneurs, property owners, and residents who seek to meet the needs of the community through developing and improving land within the City. The City supports private investment through provision of infrastructure and services, such as water, sewer, streets, and other public utilities. The City needs to see a return on its public investments in these services to continue reinvestment and growth in a fiscally sustainable way.

In Ironwood today, there is a big opportunity for redevelopment and infill development on vacant properties that fall along existing infrastructure and services. Reinvestment in these properties uses City services efficiently, increases the tax base in the City, and can meet the needs of the community through development of new housing or businesses to serve residents.

Focusing on reinvesting in properties and neighborhoods through matching historical development patterns promotes efficient growth in alignment with Ironwood's existing character.



*Vacant lots downtown are prime examples of ways to reinvest and promote economic growth without expansion.*



*Reinvesting in existing buildings also promotes economic growth without changing a city's footprint.*

## Room To Grow

### Building around a great downtown

Ironwood's downtown is a key attraction for visitors and residents alike. There is an opportunity to build on downtown through reinvesting in the areas surrounding the downtown core. A number of vacant and underutilized properties make this area ripe for redevelopment and creative re-use of space. This area offers opportunities for lower-impact businesses who may not need the foot traffic of downtown, but can contribute to the vibrancy of the overall district. For more information on the Downtown Business District see Chapter 3: Land Use Character and Development.

### Strengthening the Highway 2 Corridor

The majority of businesses in Ironwood are located along the Highway 2 Corridor and it is the most visible part of the City to visitors who are passing through en route to other destinations. Most of Ironwood's hotels are located in this district and it offers connections to regional destinations including Lake Superior and nearby ski hills. This means visitors staying in Ironwood are likely to pass through and along Highway 2 many times during their stay.

As a result, the Highway 2 Corridor represents an opportunity for continued economic growth in Ironwood. Identifying ways to support the growth of existing businesses and promote redevelopment of underutilized properties fronting Highway 2 are key components of economic development for Ironwood. For more information on the Highway 2 Corridor, see Chapter 3: Land Use Character and Development.

### Expanding Opportunities for Industrial Growth

The strength of Ironwood's industrial sector has been shown through the success of businesses such as Stormy Kromer and Ironwood Plastics. There are opportunities to continue growing this sector at a variety of scales, from small-scale manufacturing to larger facilities.

In order to facilitate further investment and development in industry, Ironwood can support both the human and physical infrastructure needed to create a robust industrial environment. Industrial incubator programs allow smaller manufacturers and entrepreneurs to get on their feet, while using City tools, such as land use planning, provides the physical room for these industries to grow. See Chapter 3: Land Use Character and Development for more information on expanding Industrial District areas.





Local main street businesses create a thriving, inviting downtown district.



The Hive is an example of an existing co-working space in Ironwood.

## Supporting Existing Businesses

### Economic Gardening

The 2014 Comprehensive Plan recommended an “Economic Gardening” approach to growing jobs and businesses in Ironwood. Economic gardening is an approach to economic development that seeks to grow the local economy from within by promoting local entrepreneurship and small and local business development. Today, this strategy of business development and economic growth still applies.

Economic gardening focuses on helping stage 2 companies grow. A stage 2 company is one that is already established with somewhere between 10-100 employees. These companies already have proof of concept and are reaching viable markets.

In Ironwood, many stage 2 businesses are located in the Industrial Park and along Hwy 2, not just downtown. We heard from these companies that their biggest barrier to growth is an inability to hire and retain employees.

In developing economic gardening strategies, identifying the biggest barriers to growth that face current businesses is an important first step. Understanding which of Ironwood’s businesses fall into the stage 2 category and ensuring there are resources and support tailored to their needs is a prime example of when to employ economic gardening.

### Making Space for Entrepreneurs

Economic gardening is a way to grow existing companies within a community that works best for stage 2 businesses. However, almost 80% of companies are stage 1, this means they are start-ups, sole proprietors, or non-scaleable local businesses.

Entrepreneurs and small businesses operate differently. Small communities need entrepreneurs -- people who are willing to take a risk, are driven by a passion or idea, and

will try again if (and when) they fail at getting something off the ground. Entrepreneurs bring excitement and energy, and can inspire others with a passion or idea. They also need different support than an established stage 2 company. An active entrepreneurial ecosystem not only contributes to a vibrant local landscape, but can attract outside investors and capital without requiring City subsidies.

Examples of policies that reduce barriers for entrepreneurs and small businesses include:

- Waiving or reducing home occupation requirements and standards. Zoning restrictions can place unnecessary limits on home occupations, letting entrepreneurs use the space they already have in their home or garage can help get them off the ground.
- Lower the bar for reusing existing buildings. The default is to require business owners wanting to reuse a building to bring it fully up to code. This is a huge barrier to small businesses and entrepreneurs, requiring them to become a developer and/or contractor in addition to a new business owner. Creating a process that allows them to ensure a building is safe then work on bringing it up to code as they grow their business and find success gets people into physical spaces earlier on.
- Shared space and co-working models. Makerspaces, co-working offices, and other shared spaces create opportunities for entrepreneurs to not only share space or equipment resources, but also to learn from each other and assist one another through various processes and stages. Currently, The Hive serves as a co-working space in Ironwood, offering office space, conference rooms, and a podcast studio.

Through combining an economic gardening strategy with policies that reduce barriers for entrepreneurs, Ironwood can support businesses through multiple stages of growth while maintaining an emphasis on a sustainable, community-centered economy.

## Workforce Development & Industry Trends

The City should leverage educational institutions in the community, (including K-12 schools and Gogebic Community College) as strategic partners to help create new educational pathways for Ironwood residents and to foster new businesses, career opportunities, and entrepreneurship in the community. The City should work with educational institutions and economic development entities to address the “skills mismatch,” to ensure that local workers can obtain desirable jobs in high growth and high need employment sectors.

Examples of areas where there are current or projected workforce needs:

- Education and health services: demand for healthcare workers (certified nurse aids, home care workers, nurses, and physicians) will continue to grow as the population ages.
- High-skill manufacturing: the decline of low-skill jobs (from mining and timber) has contributed to a skills gap in the workforce. Additional training and targeting of skill sets is necessary to enable low-skill workers to transition to the higher-paying jobs.
- Trades: demand for trades will continue to grow as Ironwood’s aging housing stock requires repair and rehabilitation and the demand and market for new housing stock increases.

Tourism and Hospitality continues to be an important economic driver for the region. Service and hospitality jobs are necessary to support this industry and can provide desirable employment options for students, retirees, and others seeking part-time/seasonal employment. However, over-reliance on these jobs at the expense of a diversified economy can limit economic opportunity and mobility for residents.

Potential future expansion of mining and lumber operations in the vicinity of Ironwood could support a large number of high paying and relatively low-skill jobs. If such operations re-open in the region, the City should maintain its focus on economic strategies that support local businesses and continue promoting a diversified economy and quality of life improvements to ensure long-term sustainability of economic gains.

### Workforce Attraction and Retention

Many business owners identified worker attraction and retention as a challenge to the sustainability and growth of their business. Beyond the availability of jobs, there are many factors that impact workforce retention and attraction including

quality of life, wages and cost of living, and training, workforce development, and career advancement opportunities.

### Quality of Life

While recreation, arts, and culture opportunities are all very important components of quality of life, considering what people need to be able to live and work reliably is often overlooked. Childcare is hugely important when people are considering where to live and work. Ironwood should continue to support and ensure the sustainability of childcare options in order to attract workers and support those workers already participating in the workforce.

Similarly, access to healthcare and quality schools, also contribute to quality of life and the decision to live in a certain place. Ironwood is home to a regional healthcare center, which is an asset for the community. Supporting the recruitment of healthcare workers will also benefit other employers whose employees access services.

### Wages and Cost of Living

While it is unrealistic to expect wages and salaries in Ironwood to compete with those in large cities, Ironwood has an advantage when it comes to affordability and cost of living. Ensuring diverse housing options at a range of affordability levels will help businesses attract new employees and mean current residents have options for upgrading or downsizing their homes.

Employers that offer competitive wages for the local market and can provide benefits to employees can market Ironwood’s community feel, access to outdoors, and affordable housing as a way to attract new workforce.

### Workforce Development

Opportunities for initial training and continuing education is valuable for employers and employees alike. Working to align GCC programs with local industries, providing hands-on experiences through internship programs, and ensuring there are opportunities for career advancement locally make jobs in Ironwood more attractive.

Many of the themes relating to workforce attraction and retention are directly related to other areas of the Comprehensive Plan, including Housing and Neighborhoods, Parks and Recreation, and Arts and Culture. Implementing the policies and strategies identified throughout the plan will contribute to improving attraction and retention efforts.

## Marketing Ironwood

We heard from community members that there is a shortage of employees needed to sustain service and manufacturing in the area and a desire for more restaurants and third-space businesses. Through a targeted marketing approach, Ironwood can promote itself and its assets to attract entrepreneurs and new residents alike. Many people considering a move to a rural area are doing so as a lifestyle choice, choosing a destination with access to the outdoors, a slower pace of life, being close to family, and other quality of life factors rather than moving primarily for a job.

In recent years, Ironwood has developed a strong, recognizable brand. This unified approach to branding is supported by the City and affiliated entities, including the Ironwood Tourism Council and Travel Ironwood. There is an opportunity to leverage tourism-focused marketing as a way to attract new residents and promote Ironwood as a place to live and work. In connecting tourism and the assets that make Ironwood a regional hub for outdoor recreation with efforts to attract new workers, businesses, and residents, Ironwood can promote the quality of life it offers and build momentum in both tourism and other industries.

Unique characteristics of Ironwood relating to economic development and opportunities for attracting new residents and industries include:

- Supportive environment: the City of Ironwood is a certified Redevelopment Ready Community (see page 28 in the Land Use chapter for more details), has a strong relationship with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and wants to help businesses succeed in Ironwood. As a result, it is an attractive place for entrepreneurs and business owners of all sizes and industries to locate or start their business.
- Affordability: 77% of residents in Ironwood are homeowners and the median value of a house is \$67,700. This indicates that homeownership is an attainable goal. With City and community efforts to improve the quality and diversity of the housing stock, Ironwood is well-positioned to be an attractive place for people looking to buy a home.
- Quality of life: Ironwood is a hub for regional outdoor recreation, boasting numerous ski hills, miles of ski, snowmobile, and bike trails, and access to Lake Superior. Within Ironwood, Miners Park offers hiking, skiing, and mountain biking trails in the heart of the City. Ironwood has a growing arts and culture scene and boasts numerous festivals and community events. All of these factors contribute to high quality of life for residents.

## Case Study: Otter Tail County's Marketing Success

In 2017, Otter Tail County, in northern Minnesota, was projected to experience a decline in labor force and population. As deaths outranked birthrates, in-migration was the most realistic source of growth.

The County decided to develop a marketing strategy to attract new residents. A key component of the strategy is promoting the region as a tourism destination with the goal of increasing awareness of what the region has to offer. The idea is that people who visit the area will learn more about it and some of those visitors may decide to move to Otter Tail County.

Investing in housing, childcare, broadband, and other infrastructure that supports relocation is another key part of Otter Tail County's strategy. Recent population numbers indicate the strategy is working as the county saw net positive in-migration of around 300 in 2021 and 475 in 2022.

In addition to a population increase, more jobs are being created. Many of the new residents are retirees. Rather than looking for jobs, they are looking for services – from restaurants to healthcare – these needs are creating additional jobs in the area, providing more opportunities for the local workforce and potential new residents alike.



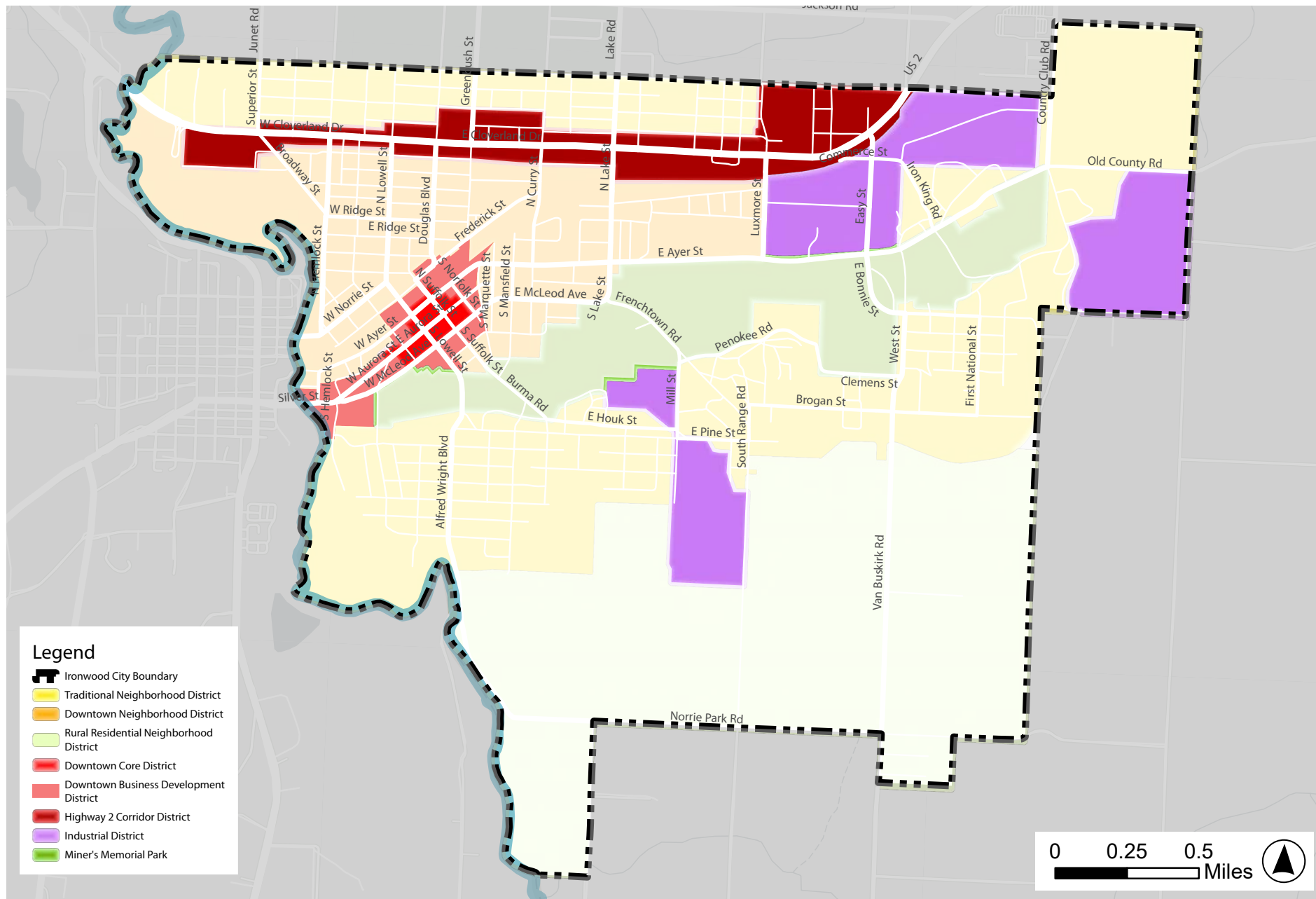


Figure 5.7 Key Business Districts in Ironwood: Highway 2 Corridor, Downtown Core, Downtown Business Development, and Industrial Districts

# Implementation

## Goal 5.1: Foster a Sustainable Year-Round Economy

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>5.1a</b>	<b>Industrial Incubator</b>		
	Gauge community interest in an incubator and talk with interested entrepreneurs to determine the most important elements to include in incubator program.	City Staff - Community Development; Economic Development Corporation; Industrial business community	General Fund
	Work with industrial leaders and business owners to identify key resources and physical space needs for an industrial incubator.	City Staff - Community Development; Economic Development Corporation; Industrial business community	General Fund MEDC grants MDARD grants
	Identify funding sources to support development of program, compensate mentors/ program leaders, and set-up of physical space.	City Staff - Community Development; Economic Development Corporation; Industrial business community	General Fund MEDC grants MDARD grants
	Create and run pilot program for a fixed amount of time with first round of participants.	City Staff - Community Development; Economic Development Corporation; Industrial business community	General Fund MEDC grants MDARD grants
<b>5.1b</b>	<b>Support Existing Business Growth</b>		
	Host a series of conversations with people who currently run, used to run, and are interested in running businesses to learn what barriers they faced or what processes were burdensome. Make sure to include entrepreneurs who have had failed ventures to learn more about ways the City can remove barriers.	City Staff - Community Development; Economic Development Corporation; DIDA; Business community	General Fund MEDC grants
	Evaluate current City policies and ordinances to determine where changes can be made to reduce any barriers that exist.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation	General Fund MEDC grants
	Continue to identify funding sources and resources from state and other agencies to assist with business support programs, such as facade improvements and technical assistance.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation	General Fund MEDC grants
	Promote pop-up and other temporary events downtown and prioritize inclusion of entrepreneurs and makers with home occupations or cottage industries to increase exposure of their work in the community.	City Staff - Community Development; Economic Development Corporation; DIDA; Business community	General Fund MEDC grants
	Develop a business retention program that focuses on maintaining strong working relationships with local businesses through direct outreach to understand their needs and identify opportunities for growth.	City Staff - Community Development; Economic Development Corporation; DIDA; Business community	General Fund MEDC grants
<b>5.1c</b>	<b>Attract New Businesses</b>		
	Continue to implement the Downtown Development Plan and Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Plan.	DIDA	General Fund
	Continue to improve the downtown streetscape, public realm, and gateway areas.	City Staff - Community Development DIDA	General Fund MEDC grants
	Update ordinances to align with Comprehensive Plan policies and support flexible uses and design standards.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund

## Goal 5.2: Emphasize Community-Centered Growth

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
5.2a	<i>Alignment of GCC Classes with Local Business and Industry Needs</i>		
	Connect with major employers in the region to understand what training and qualifications they require.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation Industrial business community	General Fund MEDC grants
	Facilitate conversations between Ironwood Area Schools, GCC, and local employers to develop relevant training pathways and programs.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation Gogebic Community College Ironwood Area Schools	General Fund MEDC grants
	Work with GCC and local contractors to strengthen workforce development programs for the trades and housing development-related skills.	City Staff - Community Development Gogebic Community College	General Fund MEDC grants
	Recruit regionally to training programs to encourage growing the capacity of local contractors and support housing development.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund MEDC grants
	Seek funding to support development of internships and on-the-job training programs to introduce new members of the workforce to job options and industries.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation	General Fund MEDC grants
5.2b	<i>Economic Development Fund</i>		
	Evaluate the potential for a economic development fund so that the City can supplement state and outside funding for the revolving loan fund, facade improvement program, and other initiatives to provide low-cost financing for businesses.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation DIDA	General Fund
	Identify the funding mechanism for the program to ensure its sustainability.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation DIDA	General Fund
5.2c	<i>Red Tape Reduction Efforts</i>		
	Connect with current and former business owners to identify which processes and regulatory agencies they interact with and where the biggest barriers are.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Evaluate any City policies or regulatory processes that may create barriers based on feedback.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Collaborate with nearby municipalities if they are experiencing similar issues with licensing, inspections, and other state services that are required for businesses to identify possible efficiencies or ways to increase frequency of visits from state service providers.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Identify key contacts at State agencies and connect to create clear communication channels to provide feedback and discuss solutions.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund



### Goal 5.3: Market and Promote Ironwood's Economy

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
5.3a	<i>Digital Facade Improvement</i>		
	Collaborate with the Ironwood Tourism Commission to create program offering technical assistance to businesses to improve their websites and online presence.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation DIDA ITC	General Fund ITC Funding
	Identify group of businesses or entrepreneurs to pilot program.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation DIDA ITC	General Fund ITC Funding
	Identify funding source to support the program.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation DIDA ITC	General Fund ITC Funding
5.3b	<i>Support Restaurants and Third Spaces for People to Gather</i>		
	Continue to explore, adopt, and promote policies that encourage public gathering in a variety of ways and increase the ability of businesses to offer social spaces, such as the Downtown Social District.	City Staff - Community Development Economic Development Corporation DIDA	General Fund
5.3c	<i>Partnership/Collaboration of the Chamber and ITC</i>		
	Work with ITC and the Chamber of Commerce to align goals and identify ways to integrate economic development with promotion of tourism.	City Staff - Community Development Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Corporation ITC	General Fund ITC Funding
	Identify ways to market Ironwood to different markets to attract visitors and different types of businesses and industry to the area.	City Staff - Community Development Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Corporation ITC	General Fund ITC Funding
	Create marketing strategy that promotes Ironwood's quality of life and engages tourists and visitors so they may return or consider moving to Ironwood.	City Staff - Community Development Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Corporation ITC	General Fund ITC Funding

## Economic Development Action Program

This table provides guidance on improvements for the next 1-3 years in Ironwood. It is based on the ideas, and community feedback gathered during the planning process and the feasibility and priority of identified strategies.

Focus for the action program is on:

- Identifying key ways to support the sustainability of existing businesses.
- Increasing the flexibility of City ordinances and policies to encourage and promote a variety of business endeavours across Ironwood and attract new businesses.
- Building relationships with local and regional partners to strengthen the Ironwood's economic environment through relevant workforce training programs and facilitating improved regulatory processes.

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

2026 (Year 1)		
Status	Description	Cost
	Update ordinances and policies to align with Comprehensive Plan goals	\$\$
	Develop and pilot business retention program	\$\$
	Build a working relationship with GCC to support programs for workforce training related to industry needs and market demands, such as trades to support housing development	\$
	Develop and pilot digital facade improvement program	\$\$
	Advocate to the State for improved services for inspections and licensing for businesses	\$

2027 (Year 2)		
Status	Description	Cost
	Identify funding sources to support local businesses host on-the-job and internship training programs	\$\$
	Work with industry leaders to identify resources, facilities, and other needs for a industrial incubator program	\$
	Support development of targeted marketing campaign for different types of businesses, industries, and purposes	\$
	Advocate to the State for improved services for inspections and licensing for businesses	\$
	Identify additional funding for building facade improvement program and provide more rehabilitation programs through revolving loan funds as needed	\$\$

2028 (Year 3)		
Status	Description	Cost
	Continue to push for and support workforce development programs that grow local capacity for development	\$
	Partner with community organizations to host pop-up events for local entrepreneurs	\$\$

### Cost Key

\$: \$0 - \$15,000

\$\$\$ : \$75,000 - \$300,000

\$\$: \$15,000 - \$75,000

\$\$\$\$: \$300,000+









# ENVIRONMENT

## Guiding Principles

The Environment Chapter focuses on the following themes derived from the vision and guiding principles:

Ironwood has always been **rooted** in its surroundings – from its historical origins as a mining town to its current reputation as a year-round destination for outdoor recreation – Ironwood’s identity is interwoven with the characteristic forests, waterfalls, and terrain of the Upper Peninsula.

Residents of Ironwood forge **connections** to one another and their surroundings in this rugged setting. The environment brings together outdoor enthusiasts who pursue passions in skiing, snowmobiling, biking, and other activities. It inspires artists who create and in turn connect residents, visitors, and patrons of the arts with one another and their surroundings.

Looking forward, as Ironwood’s climate shifts and changes, fostering healthy ecosystems and adaptable infrastructure will be pivotal in creating a **resilient** community. The framework provided in the environment chapter of the comprehensive plan will set Ironwood on a path that can adapt to and grow with changes in the surrounding natural systems that are a pillar of Ironwood’s identity.



“Ironwood **protects and preserves** its surrounding natural environment through careful **stewardship** of ecosystems and efficient use of resources, ensuring a quality environment for **current and future generations**.”



## Overview

In the context of the Comprehensive Plan, the environment chapter refers to the natural environment surrounding Ironwood, as well as the ways in which Ironwood's built environment and systems impact the surrounding natural environment.

Ironwood's climate can be harsh and takes a toll on the built environment. Similarly, land use, transportation networks, and parks and open space are all examples of ways in which the City of Ironwood and its residents shape and impact the natural environment.

Examples of elements that can provide benefits to the City's built environment and the natural environment are green infrastructure, native plantings, and habitat restoration. Green infrastructure refers to interventions, such as bioswales, that help with stormwater infiltration and can reduce the impact of runoff on the stormwater sewer system. Similarly, habitat restoration and native plantings can create a more resilient natural environment to weather climate change and increase biodiversity while providing recreational amenities for Ironwood's residents and visitors.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify goals, policies, and strategies that are beneficial to both Ironwood's residents and the natural environment to ensure a sustainable, resilient future for Ironwood. With that in mind, this chapter focuses on two main areas:

- **Healthy, multi-functional green spaces** that serve dual purposes as recreational amenities and green infrastructure elements.
- **Resilient built infrastructure** ensures buildings can last and provide safe, comfortable spaces for Ironwood's residents and visitors while reducing inefficient use of resources and costs of heating and cooling. It also includes ensuring built systems, such as water and sewer infrastructure, is well-maintained and equipped to handle variations in usage due to shifting climate patterns.

### What We've Heard

- Ironwood's surrounding environment is a critical community asset and its scenic beauty was cited as one of the top reasons people choose to live in Ironwood.
- The natural environment is an economic driver for tourism and a key reason residents cite when asked why they choose to live in Ironwood.
- Climate is a driver for bringing people to the area – both tourists who come for winter recreation and residents who are moving from places with more immediate climate risks.



# Issues and Opportunities

As climate and weather patterns continue to become more unpredictable, there will be different strains on Ironwood's physical, natural, and human systems. Taking action today can help reduce stressors and ensure a more resilient future for Ironwood.



## Key Issues

- Changes in weather patterns, seasonal shifts, and severe weather events strain elements of Ironwood's built environment, such as buildings, roads, and infrastructure systems.
- Invasive species and pests such as the emerald ash borer weaken natural ecosystems and habitats, making them less biodiverse and less resilient in the face of climate shifts.
- Older infrastructure and buildings are less efficient, which means maintaining them through heating and cooling can be expensive and contribute to climate change.



## Key Opportunities

- Improving energy and building efficiency can prolong building life and reduce heating and cooling costs, making buildings more resilient, comfortable, and safe to use.
- Strengthening ecosystems through native planting programs, preparing for emerald ash borer, and managing invasive species means natural areas can serve as green infrastructure, benefiting natural and human systems.
- Ironwood has a Forestry Management Plan, implementing recommendations from this plan can foster healthy ecosystems.



*Miners Park is a key green corridor in Ironwood.*



*Maintaining healthy forests is good for the environment and Ironwood's residents*



*Ironwood's surroundings are part of its community identity.*

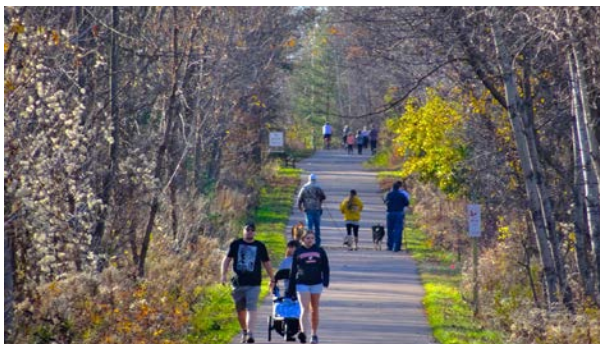




Aurora Pond in Miners Park



Riverside Trail follows the Montreal River



Iron Belle Trail

*Ironwood has many examples of natural areas that double as recreational amenities. Maintaining these areas to ensure healthy ecosystems will benefit the Ironwood community.*

## Goals, Policies, and Strategies

### Goal 6.1 Healthy, multi-functional green spaces

*Smart stewardship of local ecosystems and natural areas fosters resilient and biodiverse systems. The City's green spaces, such as urban forests and parkland, can serve a dual purpose as City infrastructure and recreational amenities. Incorporating green infrastructure into City systems fosters more resilient systems across the community.*

#### Supporting Policies

**Policy 6.1.1** Review current ordinances relating to non-traditional ground cover and native species plantings in yard areas and tree preservation.

**Policy 6.1.2** Encourage community support for vegetation management, including brush removal of invasive plants in parks and open spaces to maintain natural landscape.

**Policy 6.1.3** Encourage public and private property owners to use diverse, indigenous, drought tolerant flora and trees to harmonize with nature and be adaptable to climate change as needed.

**Policy 6.1.4** Maximize stormwater infiltration and surface filtration to minimize need for underground stormwater infrastructure.

**Policy 6.1.5** When upgrading parks, maintaining natural resource areas, and performing maintenance on City-owned green space, prioritize measures to increase and restore natural ecosystems.

**Policy 6.1.6** Promote management of wildlife and invasive species through local partners, such as outdoor recreation organizations, neighborhood associations, and the schools.

**Policy 6.1.7** Identify strategies that reduce regular City maintenance needs while retaining important characteristics of recreation and natural resource areas, e.g. increased native vegetation areas and decreased mowed areas.

#### Strategies

##### *Implement Forestry Management Plan*

Implementing the City's current forest management plan will help ensure a balance between managing healthy urban forests and maintaining enjoyable recreation spaces. This initiative supports biodiversity, mitigates environmental impacts, and enhances public enjoyment of outdoor spaces.

##### *Invasive Species Management*

Developing a plan to manage invasive species in areas like Miner's Park, Norrie Park, and the cemetery protects native ecosystems and ensures the health of City-owned forests. This initiative safeguards biodiversity and maintains the recreational and aesthetic value of these spaces. This initiative comes from the City's existing Forest Management Plan.

### **Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan**

*City would be responsible for leading implementation*

While not currently a major threat in Ironwood, the emerald ash borer (EAB) is decimating populations of ash trees in Wisconsin, Lower Michigan and cases have been documented in the UP. Creating a plan to address the threat of the emerald ash borer including identifying and treating any affected trees, noting existing ash tree stands, and planting resistant species going forward will help Ironwood's forests. This proactive approach preserves the urban canopy and prevents widespread damage to ash tree populations. Forested City properties are not heavily ash, but private properties and some parks may be more impacted by EAB.

### **Native Planting Program**

Promoting the use of native plants in public and private spaces supports local ecosystems, conserves water, and reduces the need for fertilizers and pesticides. This program enhances the City's natural beauty while contributing to environmental sustainability. Native plantings can be used in bioswales and other green infrastructure to manage stormwater and runoff.

## **Goal 6.2 Resilient built infrastructure**

*Ensuring built infrastructure, including homes, businesses, and municipal buildings, are efficient and updated to meet the challenges of the changing climate ensures that Ironwood's residents have comfortable and safe places to live, work, and play. Identifying and implementing efficiency measures cuts costs and prolongs the life of buildings and structures.*

### **Supporting Policies**

**Policy 6.2.1** Promote green building standards, building science principles, and low-impact development technologies to minimize storm water runoff and improve energy efficiency.

**Policy 6.2.2** Lead by example as a City by reducing energy consumption, making our municipal buildings energy efficient, and subscribing to renewable energy options where possible.

**Policy 6.2.3** Encourage households to have home energy audits performed.

**Policy 6.2.4** Connect energy burdened community members with assistance programs intended to lower energy bills.

**Policy 6.2.5** Engage the community around available programs and grants that will assist energy conservation, efficiency, and renewable energy adoption.

**Policy 6.2.6** Continue to update and install resilient infrastructure in the form of stormwater and sanitary sewer. Continue efforts to reduce inflow & infiltration (I&I).

### **Strategies**

#### **City-owned Building Efficiency**

Improving the energy efficiency of City buildings reduces operational costs by lowering utility bills and lessens the environmental footprint of buildings. There are often state and federal programs to assist with/cover the costs of energy-related upgrades, such as the Community Energy Management Program through the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

#### **Residential and Community Building Efficiency**

Encouraging energy efficiency in homes, through initiatives including upgraded insulation, heat pump installation, and window treatments, lowers utility costs for residents and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The City could facilitate residents applying for funding to cover the costs of energy upgrades through programs such as the federally funded Home Efficiency Rebates (HOMES) and Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR) programs, which are being piloted in the UP.

## **KEY TERMINOLOGY**

Goals and policies in this chapter support the vision and guiding principles of the plan and should be used to inform future decision-making and action. Strategies identify key projects or initiatives that put the policies into action.

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

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

Strategies: are actions, programs, and practices that support one or more of the plan's goals and policies. Strategies address at a high level, the "who, what, when, where, and how" of reaching a goal, and may involve multiple sub-strategies.

# Framing Concepts

## Green Infrastructure

Even though infrastructure is usually thought of as something built (“grey infrastructure”), the word can also describe natural and unbuilt landscapes and systems that harness ecological functions to reduce flooding and pollution. Known as “green infrastructure,” these features can take many forms, including waterways, drainage channels, rural and urban forests, greenway corridors, parks and open spaces, stormwater areas, and green roofs.

Like grey infrastructure, green infrastructure has limited value unless it is networked to form a system. Similar to a disconnected pipe or a dead-end street, a disconnected patch of open space is not living up to its full potential. However, when properly arranged and linked, green infrastructure offers a myriad of benefits, especially when it comes to stormwater and runoff management.

Green infrastructure helps naturally filter water, slow down runoff (which reduces erosion), and provide areas for pooling and reabsorption of water during rain events, snow melt, and other weather events. This can help reduce strain on stormwater sewer systems, mitigate flooding during extreme rain events, and improve water quality and ecosystem health.

Ironwood contains many natural resources that count as the City’s green infrastructure, including its rivers, creeks, wetlands, woodlands, native plant communities, groundwater aquifers, and stormwater areas. In addition, the City has many outdoor recreation areas (parks and open space), trail corridors, a cemetery, and scattered historic sites that can contribute to a system of green infrastructure.

Miners Park offers a unique opportunity to foster a well-connected network of green infrastructure as its location, size, and ecosystems create a green backbone through the urban core of Ironwood. Ensuring the health of ecosystems within the park and finding ways to connect other elements of green infrastructure into the network will contribute to a resilient system for Ironwood. Utilizing trail networks, creeks, and other existing corridors can create greenways and buffer areas to contribute to Ironwood’s green infrastructure network.

In addition to naturally occurring green infrastructure, the City and residents can create additional green infrastructure through things like bioretention areas, rain gardens, and vegetated buffer strips.

## Green Infrastructure & Water Resources



### Bioretention Basins & Rain Gardens

Raingardens capture and temporarily store runoff, using plants and soil to filter or infiltrate stormwater. They can be strategically located to collect runoff from impervious surfaces like parking lots and prevent sediment, chemicals, and other pollutants from contaminating surface water bodies. They are an attractive and effective method of preventing nonpoint source pollution and help manage stormwater close to its source rather than downstream.



### Vegetated Buffer Strips

Vegetated buffer strips are densely vegetated swaths of land that filter sheet flow from adjacent surfaces before it can reach a water body. Water flowing through a buffer strip slows down and drops out sediment and other pollutants. The vegetation in the buffer may also absorb some of the runoff. While turf is common, planting perennial native vegetation is typically more effective at removing sediment and nutrients, can help landscapes resist drought and remain healthy in the face of climate change, and also provides valuable habitat.



### Turf Reduction

Reducing turf in parks and other City-managed lands has a multitude of benefits. Turf grass is a maintenance-intensive groundcover, requiring irrigation, fertilizer, and frequent mowing. It also provides few benefits, other than offering an easy walking surface. Targeting underutilized turf areas (spaces not used for active recreation, picnicking, circulation, or gathering) and converting them to low-irrigation or low-maintenance landscapes, native meadows, shrub beds, flowering lawns, or no-mow fescue lawns will make those areas more resilient to drought, better at reducing stormwater runoff, provide beneficial habitat, and increase biodiversity. These lawn alternatives also require less fertilizer, oil, gasoline, and time to maintain.



## Energy Efficiency

Efforts to improve energy efficiency not only reduces carbon emissions, but offers significant opportunities to reduce costs associated with building upkeep, such as heating and cooling. The age of Ironwood's housing stock and many historic buildings means that many structures are likely due for efficiency upgrades. The City of Ironwood is responsible for a number of community facilities including:

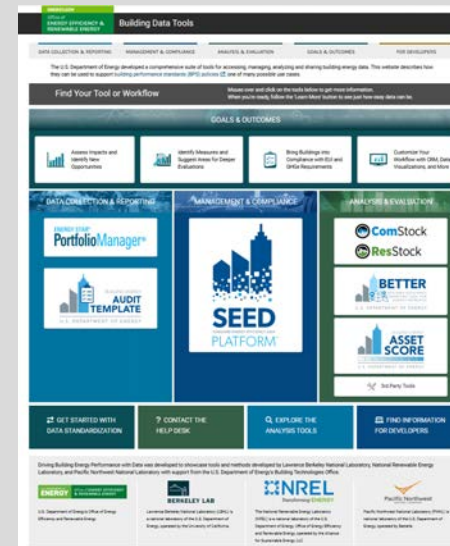
- Memorial Building
- Carnegie Library
- The Historic Depot
- Public Safety Building
- Historic Ironwood Theatre
- Seaman Building (home to Downtown Art Place)
- Pat O'Donnell Civic Center

Finding ways to increase energy efficiency across all the City-owned or City-maintained properties will add up to noticeable cost savings.

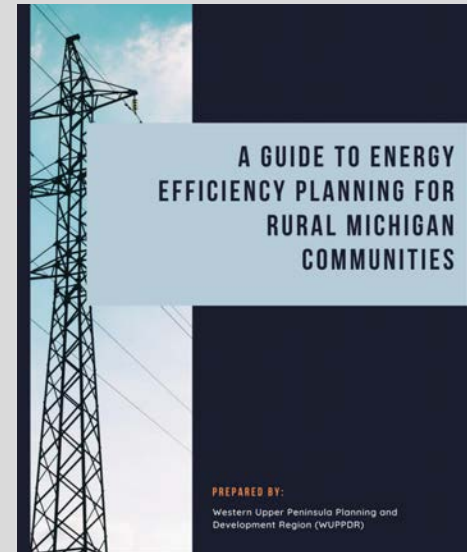
The Comprehensive Plan recommends that first the City lead by example by reducing energy consumption and improve building energy efficiency. Then, building on its successes and lessons learned, the City should directly engage businesses, and the broader community, around energy efficiency and conservation, through facilitating access to state funding sources and other forms of technical assistance. The Comprehensive Plan also notes the importance of connecting energy burdened community members with assistance programs.

Municipal or business energy efficiency strategies

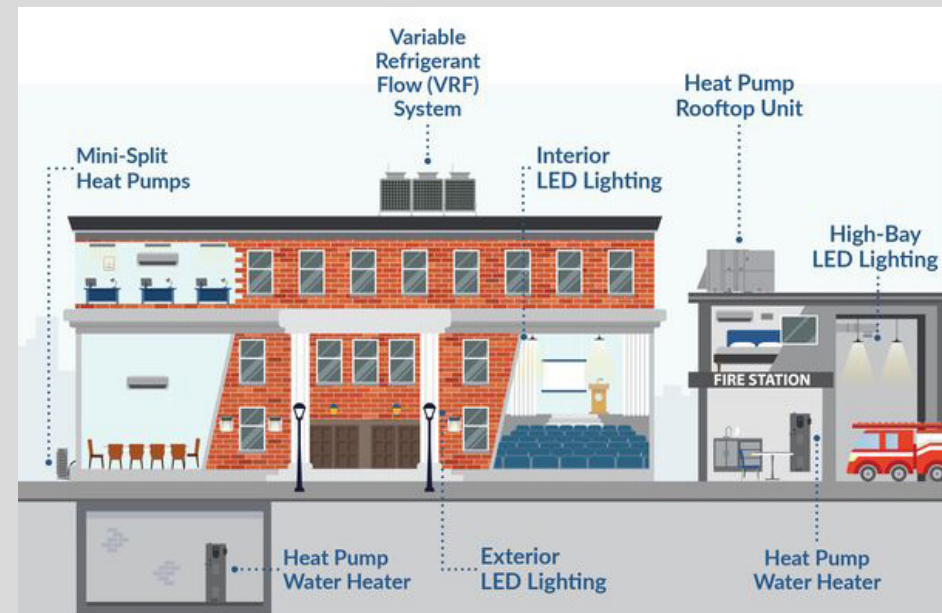
- Updating insulation and windows to reduce heat loss
- Ensuring building heating and cooling settings match use
- Setting auto-off for applicable equipment (computer monitors, printers, etc.)
- Turning off lights when leaving a room or for the day
- Pursuing energy audits in buildings. Consideration of performance contracting as it is a low/no risk way to finance energy improvements
- Updating and expanding energy efficient buying guide. Energy star preference, or at least evaluation, in equipment purchases.
- Electrifying equipment when possible, such as heating and handheld equipment



*The Department of Energy provides audit tools and other resources for tracking energy efficiency through the Better Buildings program*



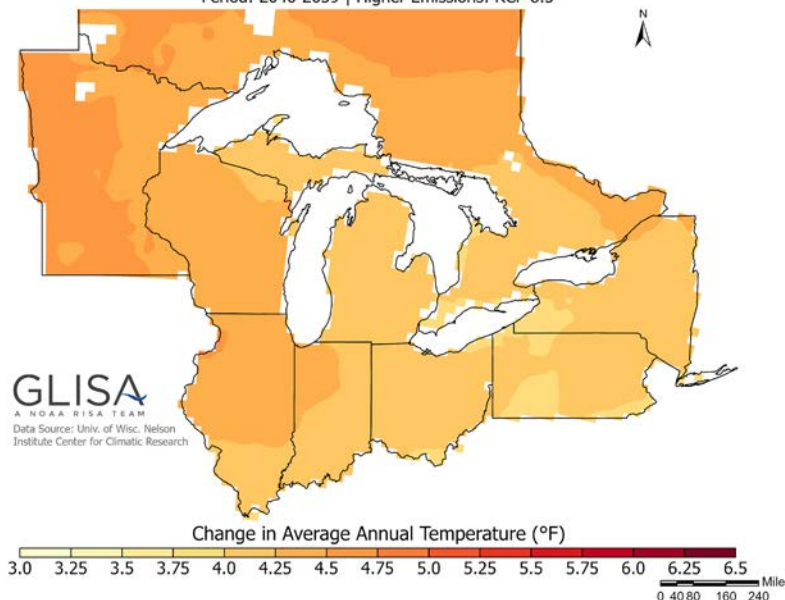
*Michigan's Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy offers a variety of resource guides, case studies, and funding opportunities relating to energy efficiency and renewable energy.*



*Examples of energy upgrades in municipal facilities. (Image source: Efficiency Maine)*

### Projected Change in Average Annual Temperature by Mid-Century

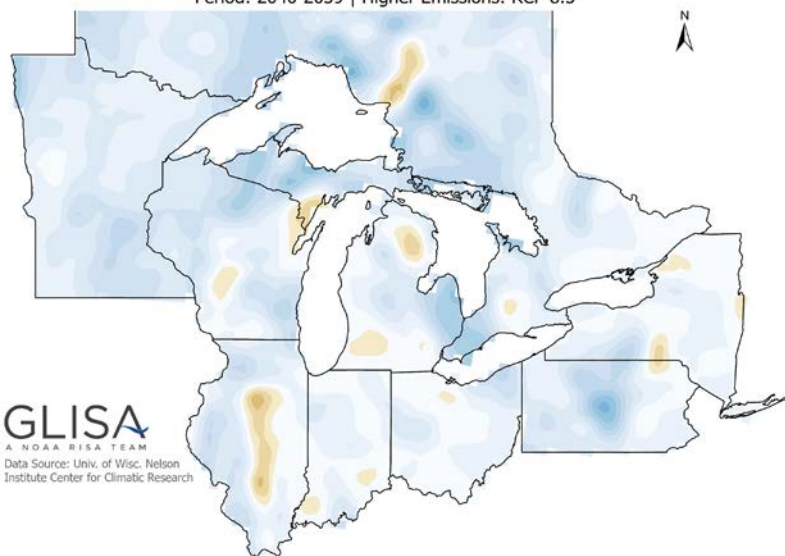
Period: 2040-2059 | Higher Emissions: RCP 8.5



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



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

## Climate Planning

Ironwood has long been known as "Big Snow Country" due to the lake effect snows that can fall here. A significant part of the community's economy is built around snow-based recreation such as snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and the ski/snowboard hills. The past few years have seen less reliable snowfall and these economic drivers have been challenged.

Larger precipitation events are expected to increase. This can stress the City's stormwater and water treatment infrastructure, and result in more localized flooding. The City has been proactive about replacing sewer lines, which will improve the levels of infiltration and inflow after rain events, lowering the impacts of rain events on the waste water system. Continued attention to replacements will further reduce those impacts.

The Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments (GLISA), with data from the University of Wisconsin Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research, suggests Ironwood could see a significant rise (12.5-17.5) in the number of days over 90 degrees, an uncommon occurrence in Ironwood today.

When average low temperatures rise, this can impact plant survivability. Some invasive species and pests may be able to spread when they are not killed back by colder temperatures. At the same time, new tree and plant species may become viable in Ironwood that were not previously. This could change the makeup of the local forests and natural areas.

While these changes are specific to Ironwood, other communities will see different impacts. Communities around Lake Superior have been identified as climate havens that may ultimately attract new residents from places that are more challenged by heat, storms, and lack of water.

Anticipating and planning for these changes, whether they are economic, infrastructure, or natural resource focused will help Ironwood be a more resilient community.



## Open Space, Greenways, & Habitat

The natural landscape is made up of patches and corridors. Patches are the habitat areas that flora and fauna use as their homes. Typically, the larger the patch, the better the home for wildlife and fostering biodiverse ecosystems. Corridors are natural areas that connect patches. The more connections there are between patches, the stronger and more resilient ecosystems are. Corridors are important as many animals also migrate to eat, mate, and adapt to changing seasons. Plants also rely on connections between patches for pollination and seeding. Figure 6.3 shows the current land cover in Ironwood and shows the areas where corridors provide ideal connections between patches of habitat. Figure 6.4 depicts the concept of patches and corridors.

Topography, mining, and wetlands have shaped the development pattern of the City and have preserved significant swaths of habitat. Miners Park and the Iron Belle trail corridor offer unique natural environments within the urban setting of downtown and provide critical east-west connections through the City. To the extent possible, efforts should be made to strengthen north-south connections along the Montreal River, into Miners Park, and south of downtown where there is little development.

More information on how parks can serve as multi-functional, resilient spaces that promote recreation and ecosystem health is included in Chapter 6: Environment

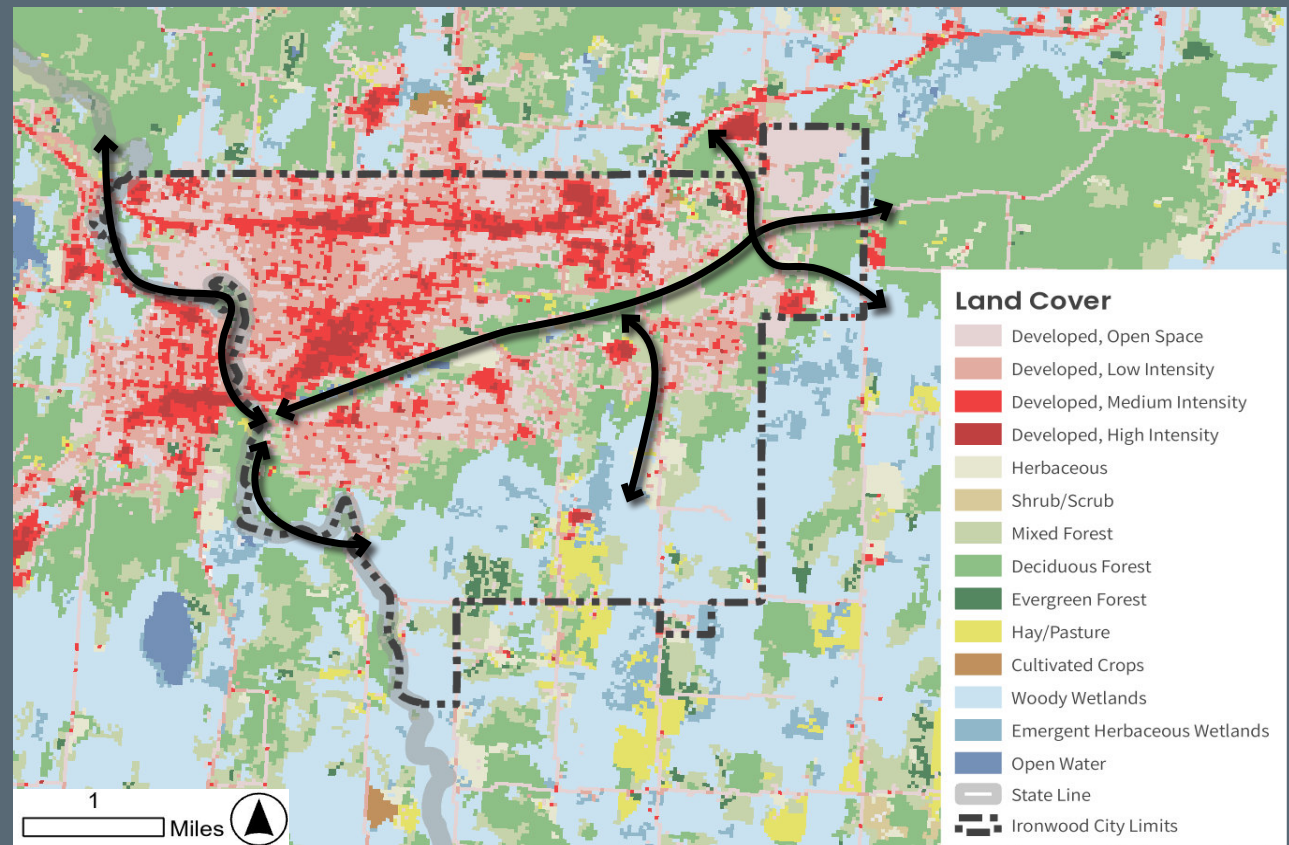


Figure 6.3 Land cover in Ironwood with preferred habitat corridors indicated.

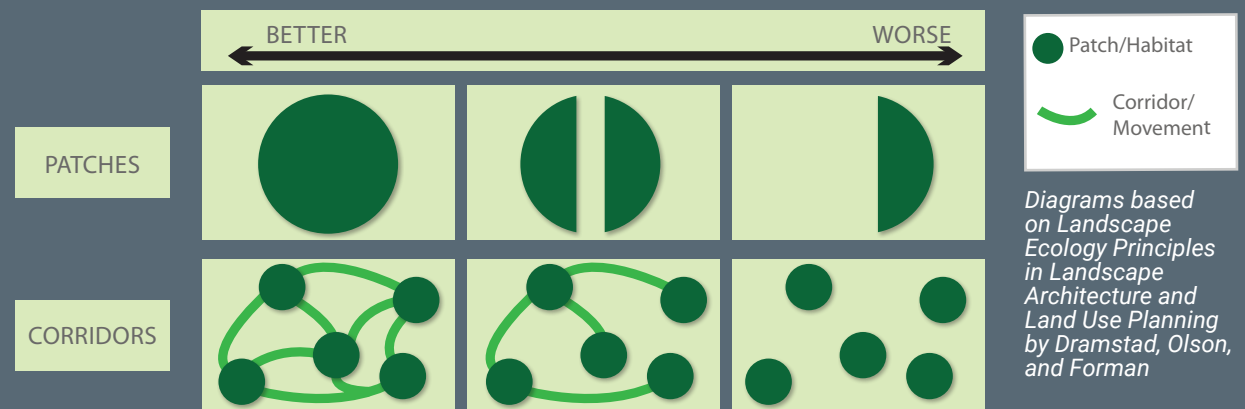


Figure 6.4 Patches and corridors make up habitats. The more connections between large patches, the stronger an ecosystem will be.



# Implementation

## Goal 6.1: Healthy, Multi-functional Green Spaces

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>6.1a</b>	<i>Implement Forestry Management Plan</i>		
	Review Forestry Management Plan recommendations and identify key actions to incorporate into Environment Action Program.	City Staff - Public Works Parks and Recreation Committee	General Fund
	Expand Forestry Management Plan to include urban settings (street trees, neighborhood parks, etc.).	City Staff - Public Works	DNR Community Forest Grants
	Consider timeline for Forestry Management Plan update to re-evaluate forest health and conditions to ensure action items remain relevant.	City Staff - Public Works	General Fund
<b>6.1b</b>	<i>Invasive Species Management</i>		
	Use Forestry Management Plan to identify priority management areas.	City Staff - Public Works Parks and Recreation Committee Volunteers	DNR Invasive Species Grant Program MISGP
	Create approach for managing and removing invasive and unwanted species.	City Staff - Public Works Volunteers	DNR Invasive Species Grant Program MISGP
<b>6.1c</b>	<i>Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan</i>		
	Inventory local ash tree populations.	City Staff - Public Works Volunteers	DNR Invasive Species Grant Program MISGP
	Review Emerald Ash Borer policies and plans of nearby municipalities or jurisdictions .	City Staff - Public Works	DNR Invasive Species Grant Program MISGP
	Collaborate with nearby municipalities and the county to develop coordinated policy for management of emerald ash borer.	City Staff - Public Works	DNR Invasive Species Grant Program MISGP
<b>6.1d</b>	<i>Native Planting Program</i>		
	Review City policies and landscaping standards to ensure they allow and encourage planting of native species and landscapes.	City Staff - Community Development Planning Commission	General Fund
	Inventory City-managed open space and review maintenance policies and budgets to identify areas where native plantings and other treatments can reduce maintenance costs while supporting habitat restoration.	City Staff - Public Works Parks and Recreation Committee	General Fund

## Goal 6.2: Resilient Built Infrastructure

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>6.2a</b>	<i>City-owned Building Efficiency</i>		
	Conduct an energy audit of City-owned facilities.	City Staff - Public Works	Xcel Energy Grants
	Create a plan for updating facilities based on the energy audit.	City Staff - Admin, Finance	General Fund, EGLE Grants
	Identify and seek funding from state and federal sources to implement efficiency improvements.	City Staff - Finance	General Fund, EGLE Grants
<b>6.2b</b>	<i>Residential and Community Building Efficiency</i>		
	Conduct community energy audit to identify inefficient energy use.	City Staff - Community Development	Xcel Energy Grants
	Identify state and federal funding sources to assist home and business owners in completing efficiency upgrades.	City Staff - Community Development	EGLE Home Energy Incentives Calculator
	Develop program or mechanism to provide technical assistance to residents to assist in applying for funding opportunities.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund, EGLE Grants
<b>6.2c</b>	<i>Infrastructure Resiliency</i>		
	Continue to integrate stormwater management into infrastructure planning through storm sewer, stormwater retention, and reduction of inflow and infiltration into the sanitary system.	City Staff - Public Works	General Fund, EGLE Grants
	Work to understand the potential impacts of climate on the City through issues like flooding, energy usage, and infrastructure capacity.	City Staff - Community Development	EGLE Grants

# Environment Action Program

This table provides guidance on improvements for the next 1-3 years in Ironwood. It is based on the ideas, and community feedback gathered during the planning process and the feasibility and priority of identified strategies.

Focus for the action plan is on:

- Continue to seek funding for system upgrades.
- Continue to perform regular maintenance throughout the system.
- Prioritize development along existing networks and using outside funding to limit additional costs for system users.

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

## Cost Key

**\$:** \$0 - \$15,000      **\$\$\$:** \$75,000 - \$300,000  
**\$\$:** \$15,000 - \$75,000      **\$\$\$\$:** \$300,000+

## 2026 (Year 1)

Status	Description	Cost
	Develop buckthorn and honeysuckle removal program with volunteers	\$
	Energy Audit of City Facilities	\$
	Identify funding sources for residential/commercial energy upgrades and promote to the community	\$
	Continue sewer replacements	\$\$\$

## 2027 (Year 2)

Status	Description	Cost
	Urban Forestry Plan	Grant
	Develop plan for efficiency upgrades at City Facilities and seek funding	\$
	Seek additional funding for sewer infrastructure and I&I reduction	\$\$
	Continue sewer replacements	\$\$\$

## 2028 (Year 3)

Status	Description	Cost
	Community Energy Audit	\$
	Conduct Climate Vulnerability Assessment	\$
	Continue sewer replacements	\$\$\$



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# PARKS & RECREATION

## Guiding Principles

Ironwood's recreational offerings are a key component to retaining current residents and attracting new neighbors. Ensuring there are a diverse offering of parks, recreation facilities, and programming that appeal to all ages and abilities of users contributes to Ironwood's **welcoming** nature.

Ironwood has a reputation as the gateway to the western upper peninsula and all its outdoor and adventure-based recreation opportunities. These offerings are **rooted** in Ironwood's rich natural setting and the grass-roots efforts of local outdoor enthusiasts who build community and facilities to support such recreation.

**Connecting** Ironwood's local offerings – from ballfields and playgrounds to walking and biking trails – to a broader regional network of trails and facilities only strengthens Ironwood's own offerings. Local connections are equally as important, connecting front doors to neighborhood parks and trail networks ensures all residents are able to enjoy Ironwood's parks and recreation offerings.

The framework provided in the Parks and Recreation chapter builds on the idea that Ironwood can be a **leader** in parks and recreation, facilitating broader regional connections as Ironwood's offerings draw in visitors and residents from neighboring communities.

“Ironwood residents take advantage of incredible **access to recreation** -- from mountain biking to snowmobiling, skiing to bird watching, and playgrounds to skate parks -- **quality recreation opportunities are available to all of Ironwood's residents, all year long.**”





## What We've Heard

- Outdoor recreation is one of the most commonly cited reasons by residents for why they like living in Ironwood.
- There has been a lot of investment in new recreation facilities since the last Comprehensive Plan, now the City should focus on maintaining existing facilities.
- An indoor pool and indoor recreation center/ opportunities are missing and greatly needed in the community.
- Continue to balance motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities.

## Overview

The Parks and Recreation chapter focuses on City-owned parks and recreation assets including the upkeep and maintenance of neighborhood and community parks, prioritization of new park improvements, and the maintenance and expansion of trail networks.

While much of the tourism that relies on Ironwood's recreation scene emphasizes trail-based or winter recreation, such as mountain biking, Nordic and downhill skiing, and snowmobiling, this chapter also encompasses planning for local recreation needs such as ballfields and playgrounds in neighborhood parks. Ensuring opportunities exist for all residents to access and participate in a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities is central to the Parks and Recreation chapter.

In addition to the City-owned parks facilities, there are many local and regional partners that work to maintain and expand facilities or provide recreation programming. From the school to local outdoor clubs to regional trail networks, opportunities to expand regional collaboration and identify outside funding sources allow this plan to include a wide array of goals and strategies with the understanding that the City may be partnering on or supporting the efforts of other entities leading the charge.

This chapter focuses on three main goals:

- **High standard of quality** across parks and recreation facilities means that all residents live within comfortable walking distance of well-maintained, updated parks facilities that provide a diversity of recreation opportunities for all ages – from playgrounds to athletic fields to trails.
- **Accessible, year-round recreation** ensures that all residents, regardless of age, ability, or economic status have access to the recreation facilities available in Ironwood all year long. This includes providing programming that introduces new users to activities such as skiing and mountain biking.
- **Regional coordination** of recreation facilities will expand recreation opportunities to residents and visitors through a coordinated approach to managing, maintaining, and funding a variety of recreation programming and amenities.

# Issues and Opportunities

Ironwood's reputation as an outdoor recreation destination is growing, with residents and visitors alike identifying recreation opportunities as a key factor in their choice to visit, move to, or remain in Ironwood. From mountain biking to Nordic skiing to snowmobiling, a host of motorized and non-motorized activities allow community members to explore the natural resources and landscapes that characterize Ironwood and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

In the last decade, the City of Ironwood and various volunteer groups and organizations have grown and maintained Ironwood's parks and trail system and recreation in the surrounding areas. As a result of these efforts, there are a variety of new and improved facilities, including mountain biking trails in and around Miners Park, a new plaza and splash pad in downtown Ironwood, additional signage and wayfinding along trails, and more trail connections locally and regionally, such as the Iron Belle trail.



## Key Issues

- Maintaining existing recreation facilities is expensive and is a trade-off that must be considered when deciding to expand or add new facilities and amenities.
- Grant funding is often available for new assets, but finding funding to maintain existing facilities is difficult.
- Growth in non-traditional recreational activities, such as mountain biking, creates a need to assess access to these activities and identify ways to ensure all residents can access equipment and programming.
- An emphasis on non-traditional recreation has resulted in irregular maintenance of existing facilities, such as some athletic fields.
- There are limited opportunities for indoor recreation.



## Key Opportunities

- Coordinating with regional partners can offer additional recreation amenities and provide more funding and users for facilities that draw interest from surrounding communities, such as an indoor pool or recreation center.
- Partnerships with the school, organizations, and volunteer groups can help connect community members with the equipment, skills, and information needed to take advantage of all that Ironwood's parks and recreation system has to offer.
- With recent growth in the park system, now Ironwood can turn towards maintaining existing facilities, such as athletic fields and playgrounds, to ensure a high quality experience and prolong the life of existing amenities.



*Trails offer passive recreation opportunities.*



*Mountain biking is a growing sport in Ironwood.*



*Ironwood's skate park is an example of a specialty park.*

## KEY TERMINOLOGY

Goals and policies in this chapter support the vision and guiding principles of the plan and should be used to inform future decision-making and action. Strategies identify key projects or initiatives that put the policies into action.

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

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A new playground at Hiawatha Park

## Goals, Policies, & Strategies

### Goal 7.1 High standard of quality across parks and recreation facilities

*Ensure Ironwood's facilities are well-maintained and can continue to offer high-quality recreational opportunities for all users. Planning for replacements of facilities and assets and taking care of what we've got and keeping the system safe is the top priority. Maintenance of facilities occurs evenly and equally across Ironwood's park system.*

#### Supporting Policies

**Policy 7.1.1** Continue to invest in existing parks, trails, and recreation facilities to meet the community's range of recreation needs and desires.

**Policy 7.1.2** Continue to solicit grants and other funding sources for the design and development of new parks, park features and trails.

**Policy 7.1.3** Identify and manage sustainable funding sources, partnership and efficiencies.

**Policy 7.1.4** Coordinate and partner with the School District on planning, designing, and maintaining facilities in order to prevent duplicating efforts by either part.

**Policy 7.1.5** Incorporate life cycle/maintenance/replacement costs into investment decisions for parks.

**Policy 7.1.6** Support the development of revenue generating sources within the parks.

**Policy 7.1.7** Design and maintain parks to be safe, incorporating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design best practices and repairing or upgrading broken or hazardous features.

#### Strategies

##### *Address Outdoor Facility Needs*

This initiative focuses on fixing and filling gaps in outdoor recreational amenities such as little league fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, lighted ski trails, and bandshell maintenance in order to better support active lifestyles and community events. Asset management planning for parks infrastructure will be vital to ensuring the system stays up to date and safe.

##### *Coordination with School District Regarding Sports Facilities*

Partnering with the school district to share and improve sports facilities maximizes resources, enhances access for students and the community, and supports broader athletic programming.



## Goal 7.2 Accessible, year-round recreation

*Expand year-round recreational opportunities and programming so Ironwood residents and visitors can play and move all year. Ensure City parks and recreation facilities and programming are accessible to all community members.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 7.2.1** Identify and implement improvements in selected destinations to make them inclusive and accessible. Collaborate with community organizations to support the development and implementation of programming.

**Policy 7.2.2** Incorporate American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards into park design when feasible.

**Policy 7.2.3** Evaluate the potential for the development of indoor recreation facilities, such as a community center or indoor pool.

**Policy 7.2.4** Identify existing spaces that can support indoor recreation and pursue opportunities to reinvest in these facilities.

**Policy 7.2.5** Provide parks with playgrounds that are within walking distance of residential neighborhoods.

**Policy 7.2.6** Design parks to serve residents of all ages.

**Policy 7.2.8** Provide facilities that support year-round outdoor recreation.

### Strategies

#### *Explore Possibility of Indoor Recreation Facility*

Investigating the development of an indoor recreation facility is a high priority for the community. An indoor playground and activities like baseball, soccer, pickleball, basketball, and agility/conditioning addresses year-round fitness and recreational needs. This initiative enhances community health, provides opportunities for youth and adults, and attracts tournaments and events.

#### *Exploration of a Community Pool*

One thing we heard from every listening session and in many of the surveys is that the community needs an indoor pool. The City will need partners to help investigate the feasibility of a community pool.

#### *Local Trail Connections to Neighborhood (Underway)*

Expanding trail connections to neighborhoods improves access to recreational opportunities and promotes walkability and cycling by ensuring residents can easily and safely access city-wide and regional trail networks.

#### *Outdoor Hockey Rink*

Creating an outdoor hockey rink expands winter recreational options, encourages winter sports participation, and provides a space for community events.

#### *Miners Park Amenities*

##### **Warming House**

Adding a warming house for winter park users at Miners Park enhances the experience of park users, provides a community space, and increases the usability of the park by providing a warm gathering place. It could support programming for skiing, mountain biking, and other uses at the park.

##### **Headframe Project**

Restoring a headframe at Miners Park would create a destination within the park and showcase the area's mining history, enhancing cultural heritage and tourism.

#### *Project Connect*

Project Connect is an existing effort led by community partners to expand and connect regional trails and loops to create destination cycling, snowmobiling, and skiing. Creating long distance trails strengthens connectivity and supports the local economy by bringing visitors through town on a variety of trails and modes of transit.



*Winter trails provide year-round access to exploring Ironwood's parks.*



There are a number of ski hills surrounding Ironwood.



Superior Falls and the many other waterfalls around Ironwood are a regional tourism draw.

## Goal 7.3 Regional coordination of recreation facilities

*Enhance recreational opportunities through regional partnerships and coordination to create, provide access to, and maintain facilities and programming.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 7.3.1** Establish, collaborate, and expand partnerships with state and federal agencies, local associations, non-profits, businesses, and individuals to accomplish the Parks and Recreation vision.

**Policy 7.3.2** Work with regional and state entities such as Ironwood Tourism Council and Pure Michigan to develop coordinated promotional materials and mapping of destinations.

**Policy 7.3.3** Coordinate cross-border projects with Iron County, Wisconsin, such as dedicated motorized recreation vehicle access.

**Policy 7.3.4** Support the promotion of regional destinations such as the ski hills and jumps, Lake Superior, and cross country ski facilities.

**Policy 7.3.5** Continue to promote events such as SISU that bring people to Ironwood and celebrate the area's natural beauty.

### Strategies

#### *Regional Recreation Authority*

Many of the recreation destinations in the area are outside the city limits of Ironwood. As the regional hub, many people think of Ironwood when considering snowmobile/ATV trails, the ski hills, The NCT, Black River waterfalls, ABR & Wolverine, Iron Belle & Project Connect, and Copper Peak. In reality, these all make up a unique recreational region, and that would benefit from collaboration.

Establishing a Regional Recreation Authority to coordinate and manage shared recreational resources can maximize funding, streamline maintenance, and expand access to facilities. Ironwood is well-positioned to lead the initial coordination of regional efforts, with the goal of acting as a partner once the authority is established.

# Framing Concepts

## City Parks & Recreation

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

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

### Park Types

#### Neighborhood

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

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

side that fronts on a public road. This improves safety, use, and maintenance.

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

#### Community

Where neighborhood parks are intended to serve people who live nearby, the focus of community parks is to serve all residents of Ironwood. These parks may have natural features that are unique to one location (such as the river), community history (such as Norrie Park), or a special use (such as the skate park). These parks may be "drive-to" parks, but efforts should be made to connect them by trail as well.

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

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



*Playground at Longyear Park*



*Norrie Park is a community park.*



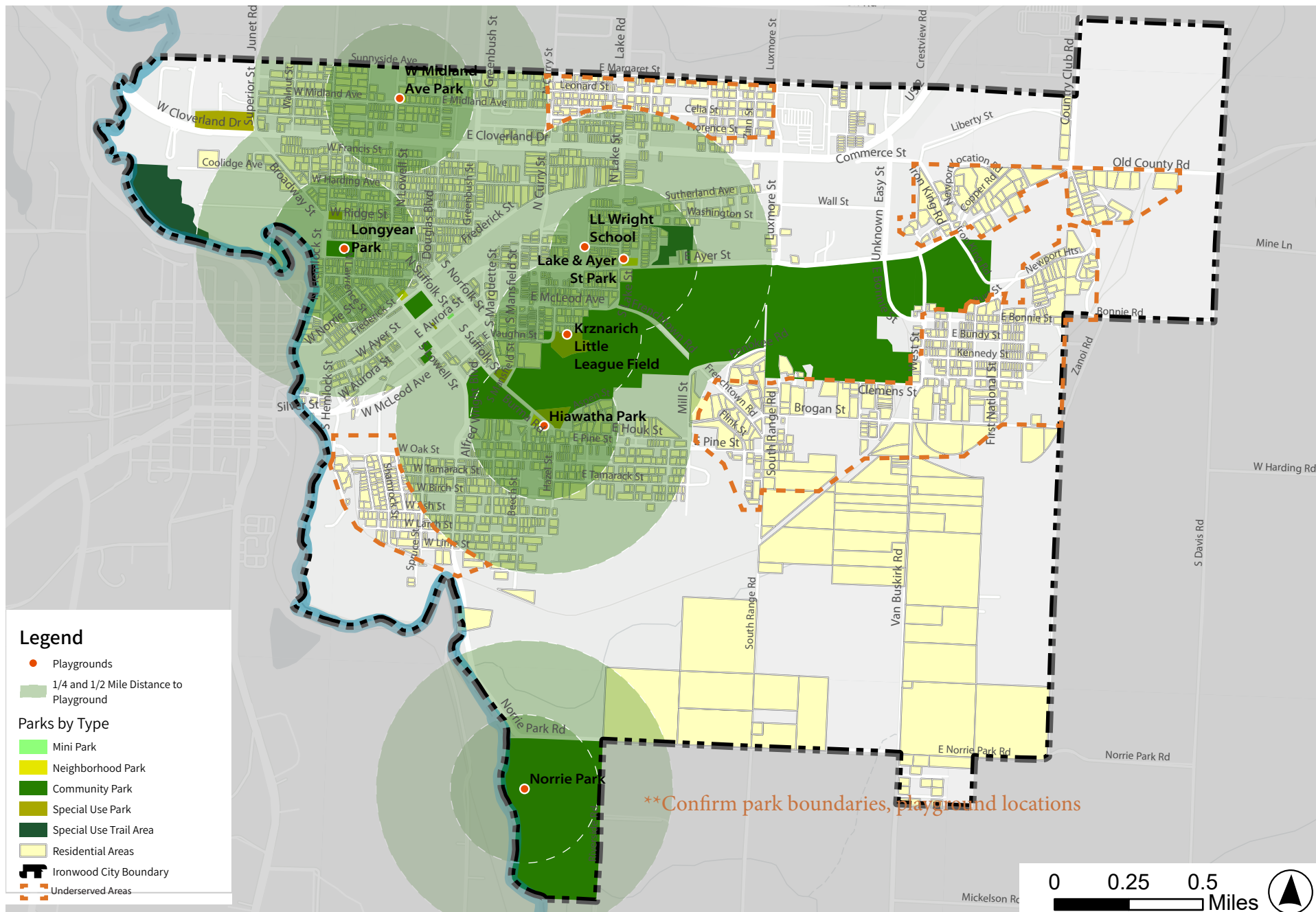


Figure 7.1 1/4 and 1/2 mile playground service areas and underserved residential neighborhoods.

### Regional

The Miners Park, Ironwood's regional park, is a park drawing from a wider user group than just Ironwood residents. The Miners Park is a tourism connection and a destination for people who are traveling through the Upper Peninsula. The historic interpretation, recreational opportunities, and natural features create a place that is known before visitors even arrive. The Miners Park meets this description, but there is more work to be done to improve this "regional park in the city" as the park continues to move forward.

### System Maintenance and Sustainability

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

Since it adopted the previous Comprehensive Plan in 2014, the City has added new facilities and amenities to its park system. With these improvements and additions, attention should now shift to emphasize the maintenance and preservation of Ironwood's existing facilities. Using a tool, such as an asset management tool, can help track the age and condition of different features in order to help the City set aside funds and create a schedule for updates. Playgrounds are a key feature in many neighborhood parks, determining a schedule for updates to and replacement of these assets is an example of ongoing maintenance that helps ensure a quality experience for residents.

There are ways to provide new opportunities throughout the system without expanding parks. Prioritizing under-invested in parks and identifying unique features that will differentiate parks from others in the community is one way to do this. For example, when a playground needs updating, consider incorporating inclusive play features or nature play elements. These upgrades will offer diverse play experiences for the community. Similarly, at parks with ballfields or other athletic facilities, updating shade elements, play features, and seating options will create amenities for spectators or those not actively participating in athletic programming.

Maintenance is mainly provided by the public works department. In addition to public works, volunteers and special interest groups provide maintenance and repairs as well. Maintenance of right-of-way along trails and passive recreation areas, such as open fields, wooded areas, and other natural areas should be reviewed through an environmental lens, as highlighted in Chapter 6: Environment. There are likely opportunities to reduce maintenance through incorporation of native plants, ecosystem restoration, and other strategies that require different types of maintenance and investment.



*Example of nature play.*



*Maintaining athletics facilities is important for providing high quality recreation programs.*





*Example of an inclusive play feature*



*All community members should be able to try out mountain biking*



*Mt. Zion is an example of a recreation amenity supported through collaboration with GCC.*

## Access for All

As Ironwood updates its parks, adds trail connections, and considers new programming, it is important to consider accessibility for all of Ironwood's residents. Access for all incorporates both the physical access to recreation amenities and financial accessibility. Many outdoor recreation activities such as skiing or mountain biking have high barriers of entry when it comes to cost of gear, finding ways to ensure all residents have opportunities to try out new sports and activities regardless of their ability to own gear is one way to promote access for all.

Examples of accessible recreation include:

- Adding inclusive play features and surfacing during playground updates.
- Ensuring trail connections to parks and trail loops within parks have ADA-accessible options.
- Providing adequate and accessible shade structures, seating, picnic tables, and other site furnishings.
- Working with organizations offering recreation programming to provide transportation to/from programming for youth.
- Creating gear rental or giveaway programs to ensure kids and new participants have access to the gear needed to participate in activities.

## Regional Recreation Collaboration

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

Similarly, Ironwood is home to assets, such as Miners Park, that have regional draw. Community interest in amenities such as an indoor pool and indoor recreation facility are examples of recreation assets that would also provide services to the wider region.

Through collaboration with other municipalities, counties, recreation organizations, school districts, and interest groups, the region's recreation assets can continue to provide quality opportunities for a wider range of people and activities.

## Indoor Recreation

The need for indoor recreation opportunities was reiterated throughout the Comprehensive Plan process, specifically, the need for an indoor pool. Additionally, there was wide support for an indoor recreation amenity, such as a multi-purpose turf field, that offers training opportunities throughout the winter for a variety of activities.

Indoor recreation facilities expand opportunities and increase access for all residents to participate in active recreation throughout the year. Ironwood does not have a recreation center or similar indoor facility, and though



there have been several publicly accessible indoor pools in the past, none are currently in operation.

Because indoor facilities are expensive and have the potential to draw users from the wider region, there are a variety of opportunities for partnerships and regional collaboration to support the development of such a facility.

## Trail Connections

Recreational trails are a big part of Ironwood culture, and an important aspect of the City's recreation system. Over the last 10 years, Ironwood has worked to expand its trail network, through collaboration on regional projects, such as the Iron Belle Trail, and local work to increase walking, biking, and skiing trails in Miners Park.

Looking to the future, the next phase of trail improvements should emphasize local connections that link neighborhoods into the existing trail network and ensure all residents can easily walk, bike, or roll to their neighborhood parks and completing loops through key investments in paved trail segments. While the following discussion focuses on recreational trail use, trails are also discussed as part of multi-modal transportation in Chapter 8: Transportation. Sidewalks can play a critical role in last mile linkages between neighborhoods and their parks. For more information on sidewalks in Ironwood, see Chapter 8: Transportation.

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

- Motorized Trail Users:
  - All-terrain vehicles
  - Snowmobiles
- Non-motorized Trail Users:
  - Walkers & Runners
  - Road, e-bikes, & Mountain Bikers
  - Cross Country Skiers
  - Snowshoers
  - In-line skaters

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

Figure 7.2 outlines a system of existing and proposed trails that accommodates a wide variety of user types, fills gaps in the existing network, and creates recreational loops. Proposed trails largely align with City-owned and vacant parcels, utility right-of-ways, existing informal trails and footpaths, and stream corridor buffer zones.



*Miners Park offers recreational trails for a variety of users*



*The Iron Belle trail is an option for both recreation and transportation.*



*Natural surface trails let people explore Miners Park.*

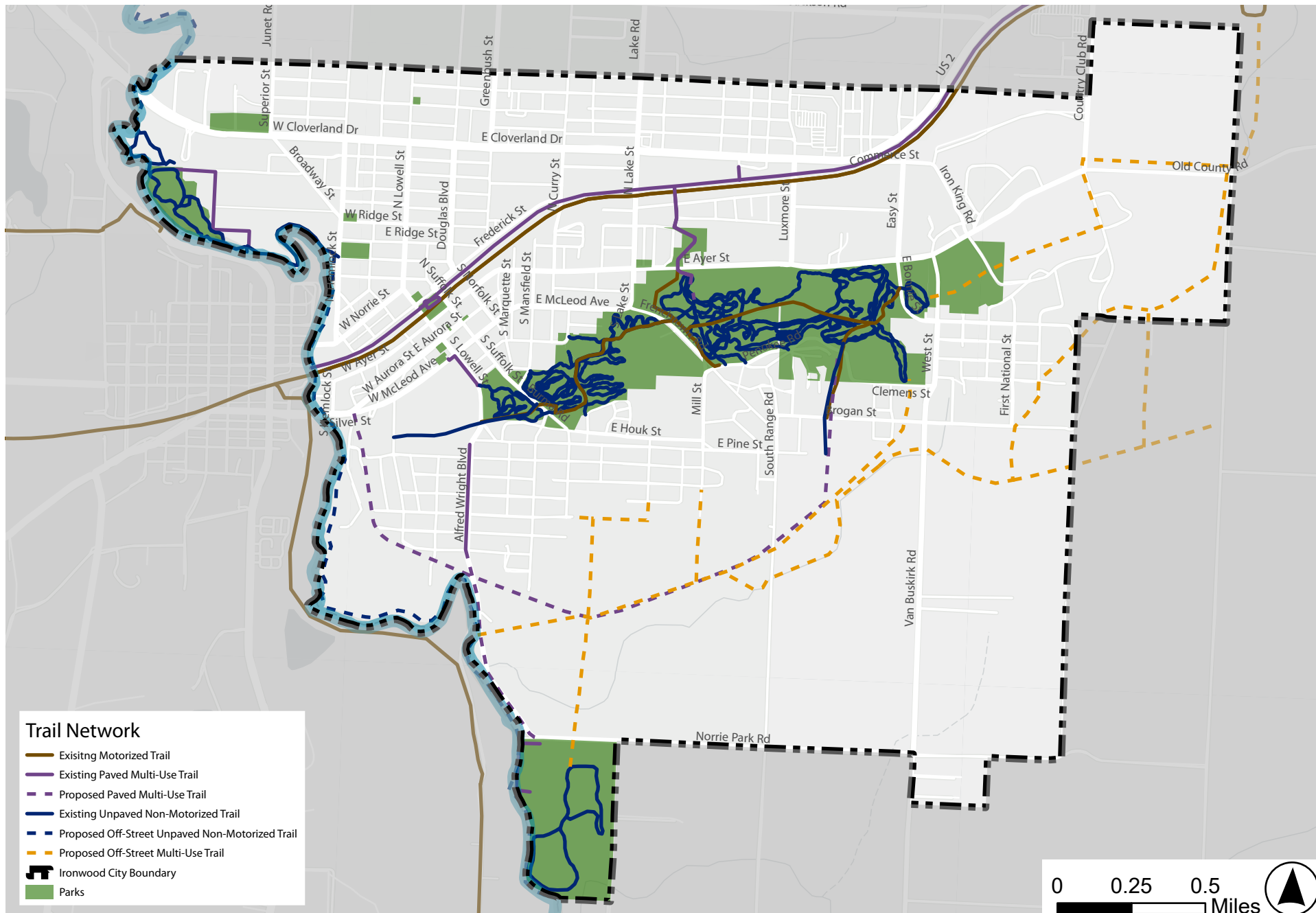


Figure 7.2 Existing and proposed recreational trails. For a map that includes the sidewalk network, view Chapter 8: Transportation

# Implementation

## Goal 7.1: High Standard of Quality Across Parks and Recreation Facilities

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>7.1a</b>	<i>Address Outdoor Facility Needs</i>		
	Conduct inventory of current assets including age, date of last update, maintenance costs, etc.	City Staff - Public Works, Community Development	General Fund
	Create asset management tool to help prioritize investments and create a schedule of maintenance and replacement for assets.	City Staff - Public Works, Community Development	General Fund
	Set aside funding on an annual basis to be used for maintenance of facilities based on the asset management tool.	City Staff - Public Works, Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	General Fund
	Work with schools, local athletic groups to identify areas where maintenance can be shared across interested parties.	Parks and Recreation Committee; Ironwood Area Schools; User Groups	General Fund User groups
	Identify opportunities for play features, especially on the east side of the City.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Review accomplishments, reevaluate priorities, and update asset management tool on an annual basis.	City Staff - Public Works, Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	
<b>7.1b</b>	<i>Coordinate with School District Regarding Sports Facilities</i>		
	Conduct inventory of facilities shared by the City and School.	City Staff - Public Works, Community Development; Ironwood Area Schools	General Fund
	Discuss current needs of school athletics programs and update any existing agreements between the City and School to reflect current needs of students.	City Staff - Public Works, Community Development; Ironwood Area Schools	
	Review strategy, priorities, and maintenance roles on an annual basis.	City Staff - Public Works, Community Development; Ironwood Area Schools	

## Goal 7.2: Accessible Year-Round Recreation

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>7.2a</b>	<i>Explore Possibility of Indoor Recreation Facility</i>		
	Research public-private partnerships, community-run facilities, and other examples of indoor recreation facilities using different ownership models.	City Staff - Community Development Parks and Recreation Committee; Gogebic Range Health Foundation	Gogebic Range Health Foundation General Fund
	Conduct feasibility assessment for indoor recreation facility and inventory potential locations.	City Staff - Community Development Parks and Recreation Committee; Gogebic Range Health Foundation	General Fund Grants through DNR
	Determine best next steps based on feasibility assessment.	City Staff - Community Development Parks and Recreation Committee; Gogebic Range Health Foundation	



## Goal 7.2: Accessible Year-Round Recreation (Continued)

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>7.2b</b>	<i>Exploration of a Community Pool</i>		
	Host conversations with people involved in previous pool efforts to understand the barriers they faced, the models used, what worked, and why they stopped running the pool.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee; Gogebic Range Health Foundation	General Fund
	Create inventory of potential spaces and identify partners that would be willing to help manage, fund, and support an indoor pool.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	General Fund Grants through DNR
	Conduct a feasibility assessment for an indoor pool.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	General Fund Grants through DNR
	Identify potential grants and funding sources.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	General Fund Grants through DNR
<b>7.2c</b>	<i>Local Trail Connections to Neighborhoods (Underway)</i>		
	Continue to update map of priority trails and sidewalk connections. Reevaluate priority list on an annual basis.	City Staff - Public Works, Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee; Gogebic Range Health Foundation	General Fund Grants through DNR User groups
	Identify grants and set aside City funding on a regular basis to construct improvements.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee; Gogebic Range Health Foundation	General Fund Grants through DNR User groups
<b>7.2d</b>	<i>Outdoor Hockey Rink</i>		
	Conduct community engagement to understand interest in a hockey rink and identify potential locations.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	
	Identify potential funding sources and grants to support development of rink.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	General Fund Grants through DNR User Groups
<b>7.2e</b>	<i>Miners Park Amenities</i>		
	Work with Friends of the Miners Memorial Heritage Park to identify priority projects, such as a warming house or headframe project, and potential funding sources.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee; Friends of the Miners Memorial Heritage Park	General Fund Grants through DNR
	Use the annual park survey and other community engagement to understand which projects have the most community support.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee; Friends of the Miners Memorial Heritage Park	
	Mountain bike trail maintenance in partnership with the SISU Dirt Crew	City Staff - Community Development; SISU Dirt Crew	General Fund User Groups
<b>7.2f</b>	<i>Project Connect</i>		
	Support the efforts of Project Connect through identifying shared goals and providing opportunities for information sharing and collaboration as needed.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee; Project Connect; ABR Foundation	Grants through DNR

### Goal 7.3: Regional Coordination of Recreation Facilities

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
7.3a	<i>Regional Recreation Authority</i>		
	Identify the City's priorities and goals for recreation amenities that would benefit from regional collaboration.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	General Fund
	Identify the key partners and collaborators, including GCC, Gogebic County, City of Hurley, City of Bessemer, ABR Foundation, Gogebic Range Health Foundation, and other players that are specific to certain recreation goals.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	General Fund
	Outline goals and objectives for what regional collaboration looks like.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee; Regional Partners; User Groups	
	Set out timeline and meeting schedule for a set time frame to try out approach.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	
	Create review process / metrics to evaluate benefits and effectiveness of collaboration efforts.	City Staff - Community Development; Parks and Recreation Committee	

### Parks and Recreation Action Program

This table provides guidance on improvements for the next 1-5 years in Ironwood. It is based on the ideas, and community feedback gathered during the planning process and the feasibility and priority of identified strategies.

Focus for the action program is on:

- Recognizing and planning for the costs associated with maintenance of facilities
- Ensuring a high quality is maintained throughout the parks system
- Investigating the feasibility of indoor an recreation facility
- Connecting neighborhoods to parks via trails and completing trail loops

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

2026 (Year 1)		
Status	Description	Cost
	Indoor pool and indoor recreation facility feasibility study	\$\$
	Assemble regional recreation authority partners	
	Create/update asset management tool	\$
	Improvements to Randa Field	\$\$\$
	Land acquisition for trails	\$\$
	Land acquisition for River Walk trail	\$\$\$
	Invasive species removal and tree planting	\$
	Civic Center ice making system replacement	\$\$\$
	Shared park & trail maintenance equipment	\$\$
	Parks User Survey and Volunteer Summit	
	Annual review of Parks Action Program	

### 2027 (Year 2)

Status	Description	Cost
	Determine next steps for indoor pool or recreation facility based on feasibility study (e.g. identify funding sources and partners)	\$
	Review purview and goals for Regional Recreation Authority	
	Update asset management tool	
	Shoreline restoration along Montreal River	\$\$\$
	Curry Park upgrades and expansion	\$\$
	Land acquisition for trails	\$\$
	Work with Friends of the Miners Memorial Heritage Park to identify priority amenity improvements (lighted ski trails, warming house, etc.)	\$
	Mt. Zion Bike Trails Phase 1	\$\$\$
	Maintenance and operations	\$\$
	Parks User Survey and Volunteer Summit	
	Annual review of Parks Action Program	

### 2028 (Year 3)

Status	Description	Cost
	Community pool/indoor recreation center (Phase 1)	\$\$\$\$
	Construct Beltline Trail (Multi-use)	\$\$\$
	Norrie Park Improvements	\$\$
	Review purview and goals for Regional Recreation Authority	
	Update asset management tool	
	Land Acquisition for trails	\$\$
	Mt. Zion Bike Trails Phase 2	\$\$\$
	Maintenance and operations	\$\$
	Parks User Survey and Volunteer Summit	
	Annual review of Parks Action Program	

### 2029 (Year 4)

Status	Description	Cost
	Community pool/indoor recreation center (cont.)	\$\$\$\$
	Continue construction Beltline Trail (Multi-use)	\$\$\$
	Downtown River Park	\$\$\$
	Land acquisition for trails	\$\$
	Update asset management tool	
	Review purview and goals for Regional Recreation Authority	
	Maintenance and operations	\$\$
	Parks User Survey and Volunteer Summit	
	Annual review of Parks Action Program	

### 2030 (Year 5)

Status	Description	Cost
	Community pool/indoor recreation center (cont.)	\$\$\$\$
	Construct River Walk	\$\$\$
	Land acquisition for trails	\$\$
	Update asset management tool	
	Review purview and goals for Regional Recreation Authority	
	Maintenance and operations	\$\$
	Parks User Survey and Volunteer Summit	\$\$\$
	Addition of playground features at eastern end of Miners Park to serve Newport, Jesseville, and Aurora neighborhoods	
	Annual review of Parks Action Program	

### Cost Key

\$: \$0 - \$15,000

\$\$\$ : \$75,000 - \$300,000

\$\$: \$15,000 - \$75,000

\$\$\$\$: \$300,000+



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# TRANSPORTATION

## Guiding Principles

The Transportation Chapter focuses on the following themes derived from the vision and guiding principles:

The transportation system plays an integral role in creating a **connected** community. Through well-maintained infrastructure that is designed to accommodate all residents, regardless of age or ability, Ironwood is accessible to all, whether walking, rolling, or motoring around.

Of equal importance is the ability for goods to move through the community, whether they are produced, sold, or otherwise connected to Ironwood. The transportation network must ensure Ironwood's businesses and industries can stay connected to regional and national networks, contributing to a **vibrant** economic landscape.

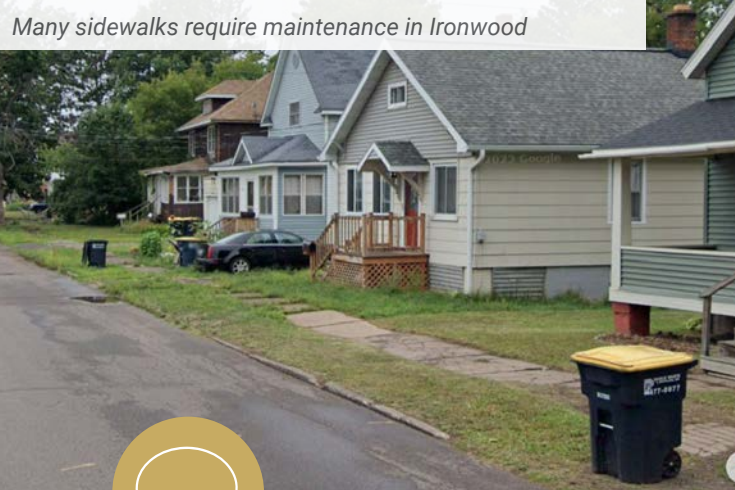
High quality sidewalks throughout the City; trail connections between neighborhoods and parks; and safe pedestrian, bicycle, and snowmobile crossings at trail intersections and along Hwy 2 are all examples of the ways a transportation network contributes to creating a **welcoming** community that is comfortable for residents and visitors to move around.

“

*Whether it is on a snowmobile, bike, car, skis, or their own two feet, Ironwood's **multi-modal** transportation system means its **residents can move safely and easily** through and around the entire community.*

”





## What We've Heard

- ADA accessibility is an issue, sidewalks are not accessible.
- Sidewalks need to be improved to offer walkable options. Ironwood could be a great walkable community if there was better connectivity and maintenance.
- Better regional connectivity through roads, air, and rail would benefit the economy and residents.
- Crossings along Highway 2 are dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists.

## Overview

The transportation section of the comprehensive plan focuses on safe, efficient movement of people and good around the community and to the broader region. Maintenance of transportation infrastructure makes up a significant portion of Ironwood's budget, so careful planning to ensure thoughtful network expansion balances maintenance requirements is critical. The transportation system in Ironwood consists of three main components:

1. **Roadway network.** This network supports mobility within and through the community for all modes of transport. It is comprised of locally-owned and state-owned facilities, which means different authorities have jurisdiction over the design, maintenance, and function of the roadway.
2. **Sidewalk and trail network.** This network supports the transportation and recreational needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and recreational vehicles (snowmobiler, ATVs). Similar to the road network, there are different jurisdictions for different trails and sidewalks. This means there are different funding sources available for maintenance and different authorities in charge of things like preservation, enforcement, and snow removal.
3. **Regional transportation assets.** These assets include the Gogebic-Iron County Airport and Gogebic County Transit Authority. They provide critical connections to the region and beyond. Although they are not managed by the City of Ironwood, it is important to note the role they play in the region to better understand and plan for an efficient and effective transportation network.

The transportation chapter focuses on three major concepts to guide public investment in and policy about the transportation network:

- **Preservation and maintenance** of the existing infrastructure is essential to ensuring a cohesive, quality transportation network. Prioritizing maintenance and identifying ways to continue covering the cost of improvements to existing roadway, sidewalk, and trail infrastructure will be paramount to building a strong transportation network over the next 20 years.
- **Access and mobility** for residents created by the network is a critical goal for the transportation network. Upgrading sidewalks, trails, and roadways so they are accessible for all residents, regardless of age or ability is important for creating an equitable and functional transit network. Mobility throughout the system to access all local destinations is similarly important.
- **Multi-modal safety** refers to the ability for all network users – from pedestrians to cyclists to snowmobile users to motorists – to safely and comfortably move around the community. A successful transportation network allows all users to access the same destinations and move simultaneously through the system without concern for their comfort or safety.

# Issues and Opportunities

The focus areas of the transportation chapter are derived in part from an analysis of current issues and opportunities relating to development in Ironwood.

Due to Ironwood's rural character and small population, maintaining a connected and reliable transportation network is a challenge. Despite this, Ironwood has a growing network of local and regional trails that provide motorized and non-motorized connectivity. In order to increase use of these trails and connectivity to destinations, the City can focus on neighborhood connections to parks and trails and on accessibility of existing infrastructure to provide safe options for walking, biking, and rolling from front doors to destinations.



## Key Issues

- Harsh winters and the toll of snow removal wears down roads, sidewalks, and trails, making maintenance an important and ongoing expense for the City.
- An older transportation network combined with seasonal conditions and wear and tear limit the accessibility of many areas within the network.
- Maintenance and new investments in the transportation network are expensive, the City must balance priorities between extending infrastructure, such as sidewalks, and maintaining existing facilities.
- Highway 2 poses a major barrier to pedestrians and cyclists.



## Key Opportunities

- The City can focus on providing neighborhood connections to the existing trail network as a localized way to expand walking and biking facilities.
- Improving pedestrian and bicycle crossings of Highway 2 will expand the walkable area of downtown and connect residents to Miner's Park and the school.
- The City can identify areas where there are accessibility issues and prioritize maintenance in these areas to ensure the network serves all users safely and efficiently.



*Yearly upgrades to Ironwood's transportation network are critical to maintain a functioning system*

# Goals, Policies, & Strategies

## Goal 8.1 Preservation and Maintenance

*Invest in existing transportation infrastructure to effectively provide safety, mobility, access, connectivity, and support of community development initiatives.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 8.1.1** Invest in street maintenance and replacement on an annual basis through the capital improvement planning process.

**Policy 8.1.2** Invest in sidewalk and trail maintenance on an annual basis through the capital improvement planning process.

**Policy 8.1.3** Seek grant funding (federal, state, county) and private partnerships and proactively program street improvements to be paired with grant funding cycles.

**Policy 8.1.4** Prioritize investment in projects that fill gaps in the existing transportation networks.

**Policy 8.1.5** When reconstructing streets, consider street design that optimizes pavement width (no more than what is necessary) while being cognizant of “Big Snow Country” context.

**Policy 8.1.6** Plan for safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle options when reconstructing the existing roadways.

**Policy 8.1.7** Coordinate public investments where sharing ROW and upgrading systems simultaneously can realize efficiencies.

**Policy 8.1.8** Collaborate with MDOT on improvements to regional highways.

### Initiatives

#### *Ongoing Rehab/Replacement of Local Roads (Underway)*

The City continues to rehab or replace local roads as they reach the end of their lifespan or require repair. This is necessary to ensure safe and maintainable roads. The City works to obtain grants and other outside funding to supplement as much of the cost as possible.

## Goal 8.2 Access and Mobility

*Provide safe, effective, efficient, and economical access for residents of all ages and abilities to housing, jobs, arts and cultural attractions, educational opportunities, and essential services.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 8.2.1** Invest in behind the curb improvements along key streets and gateways (landscaping, trails/sidewalks, gateway signage, wayfinding, street furniture, corridor appropriate lighting.)

**Policy 8.2.2** Design streets that account for four season use by all modes of travel, including strategies for snow storage and removal

**Policy 8.2.3** Provide safe and convenient pedestrian crossings at appropriate intersections

**Policy 8.2.4** Prioritize compliance for disabilities- and dementia-friendly facilities citywide.

**Policy 8.2.5** Expand, maintain, and fill in the gaps in the network of sidewalks and crosswalks in order to provide safe, convenient, and comfortable pedestrian access throughout Ironwood.

**Policy 8.2.6** Promote shorter crossing distances at intersections

**Policy 8.2.7** Develop an infrastructure design manual that improves accessibility in downtown

**Policy 8.2.8** Work with the downtown stakeholders to address low-cost strategies to make curbs and sidewalks more accessible.

**Policy 8.2.9** Ensure street designs respond to the types of land use that are being served.

**Policy 8.2.10** Collaborate with the Gogebic Transit Authority to ensure efficient and effective access to transit services within Ironwood and the Ironwood Community.

### Initiatives

#### *Bicycle and Pedestrian Framework and Prioritization*

With the amount of sidewalks and roads in the City, maintaining sidewalks is becoming a challenge. The City will develop a prioritization for sidewalk investments to ensure a safe pedestrian environment in a financially responsible manner. Prioritization may emphasize busier roads, downtown, and routes to/from school.



## Goal 8.3 Multi-modal Safety

*Ensure that movement by all forms of transportation is safe and equitable across the community. Enhance infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists to provide safe movement through and across the City, including comfortable crossings of Highway 2.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 8.3.1** Expand, maintain, and fill-in the sidewalk and trail network in neighborhoods and commercial corridors to provide connections to parks, trails, business areas, and other community destinations.

**Policy 8.3.2** Evaluate the existing street network's connectivity for balancing access to businesses and ease of movement for users of all transportation modes within existing pavement widths and existing rights of way.

**Policy 8.3.3** Expand and improve the on-street bicycle/micromobility network in order to safely connect bicycle commuters and recreational riders with trails and destinations.

**Policy 8.3.4** Create safe, convenient, and comfortable connections for children on foot, bicycling, or using other Ironwood Public Schools transportation options to attend school.

**Policy 8.3.5** Facilitate on-going dialogues between various modal user groups (snowmobiles, ATVs, cross country skiers or silent sport enthusiasts, bikers, etc.)

**Policy 8.3.6** Ensure routes for various modes of travel are aligned with land use and street design limitations.

**Policy 8.3.7** Evaluate intersections and trail crossings to ensure visibility of and safety for all users, regardless of transportation mode -- including automobiles, snowmobiles/ATVs, bicycles, and pedestrians.

### Initiatives

#### *Improve Walking and Biking Routes to School*

We heard from students that they did not feel comfortable walking or biking to school. With the school district, the City would support improvement of infrastructure to make biking and walking to school, safe, easy, and accessible for students.

#### *Improve Pedestrian Crossings of Highway 2*

Creating safer pedestrian crossing opportunities along Highway 2 will better connect residents in the northern part of Ironwood to the downtown, school, and park amenities. Improving crossings could include both infrastructure adjustments and educational components such as signage.

## KEY TERMINOLOGY

Goals and policies in this chapter support the vision and guiding principles of the plan and should be used to inform future decision-making and action. Strategies identify key projects or initiatives that put the policies into action.

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

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

Strategies: are actions, programs, and practices that support one or more of the plan's goals and policies. Strategies address at a high level, the "who, what, when, where, and how" of reaching a goal, and may involve multiple sub-strategies.

## Roadways Functional Class

## Functional Class

## Public Realm

Roadways do more than support mobility and transportation purposes; they also contribute to the community image and character and are a dominant component of the overall public realm. The City should invest in the long-term management and maintenance of its public street system, including streetscape quality and durability.

## Complete Streets

Complete Streets are streets that are designed to be safe for people of all ages. This includes pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders.

Complete streets:

- Are easy to cross and travel along
- Increase opportunities for physical activity
- Safely accommodate multiple modes of transportation
- Result in increased walkability, a characteristic of a livable, desirable community

Given the challenges of road maintenance and practicalities of snow clearing in the Upper Peninsula winters, it is not realistic to expect an entire network of complete streets. However, Ironwood can integrate elements of complete streets into the design of roads and adopt policies that align with the goals of complete streets in order to make Ironwood's road network safer and more comfortable for all users. Based on community feedback, pedestrian and bicycle routes that cross Highway 2 are high-stress areas. Ironwood should incorporate complete street design elements into key Highway 2 intersections whenever possible.

Key complete street elements that can be added to Ironwood's road network include:

- Wayfinding systems directing users to key civic destinations along the route: parks, schools, trail heads, historic sites/buildings
- On-street bike lanes or off-street multi-use trails, depending on roadway configuration and property impacts
- Landscape and streetscape amenities that are sensitive to adjacent land uses and climate sensitive (i.e. accommodate snow removal)
- Aesthetically designed and functional stormwater systems
- Intersection improvements to facilitate safe traffic turning and safe pedestrian crossings
- Traffic calming strategies that direct through traffic to primary streets and manage neighborhood traffic
- A maintenance and operations plan to account for upkeep of the street



*Streetscapes contribute to a community's image.*



*Ironwood's downtown streetscape makes it more walkable.*



*Complete street principles can make trail crossings safer.*



## Pedestrian Network

Ironwood has a walkable downtown and parks scattered throughout, however, these destinations are only walkable if the infrastructure exists for people to move around safely.

Many of Ironwood's traditional older streets have sidewalks on both sides of the street. Where gaps in the sidewalk system exist, priority should be placed on completing sidewalks. Given Ironwood's aging population, it is particularly important to ensure there are accessible routes maintained year-round so community members are able to reach their destinations comfortably and safely.

Priority should be further placed on projects that:

- Are connect to Ironwood's L. L. Wright School
- Are more prominently travelled sidewalks that connect popular pedestrian destinations: parks, outdoor recreation places, commercial services
- Provide separation between pedestrian and heavier vehicular traffic operations

Figure 8.2 illustrates priority routes and neighborhood zones for pedestrian connectivity based on the above principles. The City has two priority zones and primary pedestrian routes highlighted, and priority in completing and filling existing gaps the sidewalk system should be given in the following order:

- Primary Pedestrian Routes: should have sidewalks on both sides of the street, with the exception of streets with adjacent multi-use paved trails, such as the existing multi-use trail along Alfred Wright
- Secondary Pedestrian Routes: should have sidewalks on one side
- Primary Pedestrian Zone: streets should have sidewalks on both sides
- Secondary Pedestrian Zone: streets should have sidewalks on both sides

The City of Ironwood has successfully pursued funding for improvements to the pedestrian system near and around schools through the Federal Highway Administration's Safe Routes to School Program, and should continue with these efforts.

Snow removal is a major challenge for the sidewalk system. Property owners should be responsible for keeping sidewalks clear. In times of major snow fall, storage of snow can be challenging to nearly impossible. Snow removal from sidewalks should be explored in key areas around schools where walking most likely occurs year-round.

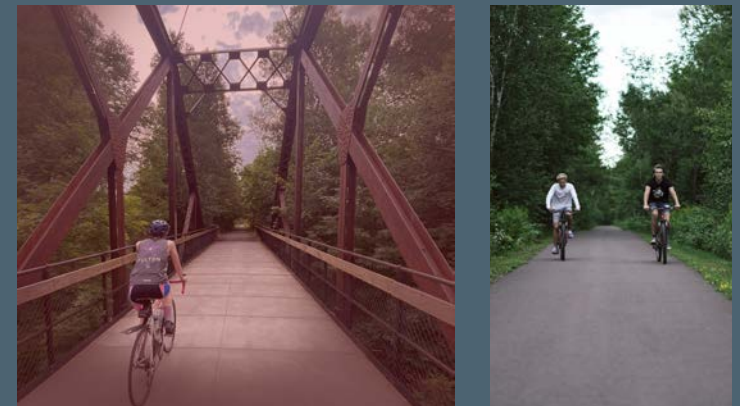
## Sidewalks vs. Multi-Use Trails

### Sidewalks



**Sidewalks** are traditional paved, off-street pedestrian paths within the public right-of-way. Property owners are typically responsible for snow clearing.

### Multi-Use Trails



**Multi-use trails** are wider, off-street paved paths designed to be shared by pedestrians and bicycles. If trails aren't cleared in the winter, they can be used for snowshoeing and cross country skiing. The Iron Belle Trail is a multi-use trail.

It is important to include signage indicating that multi-use trails are for non-motorized use for the safety of all users. Motorized trails for ATVs and snowmobiles are separate from multi-use trails.

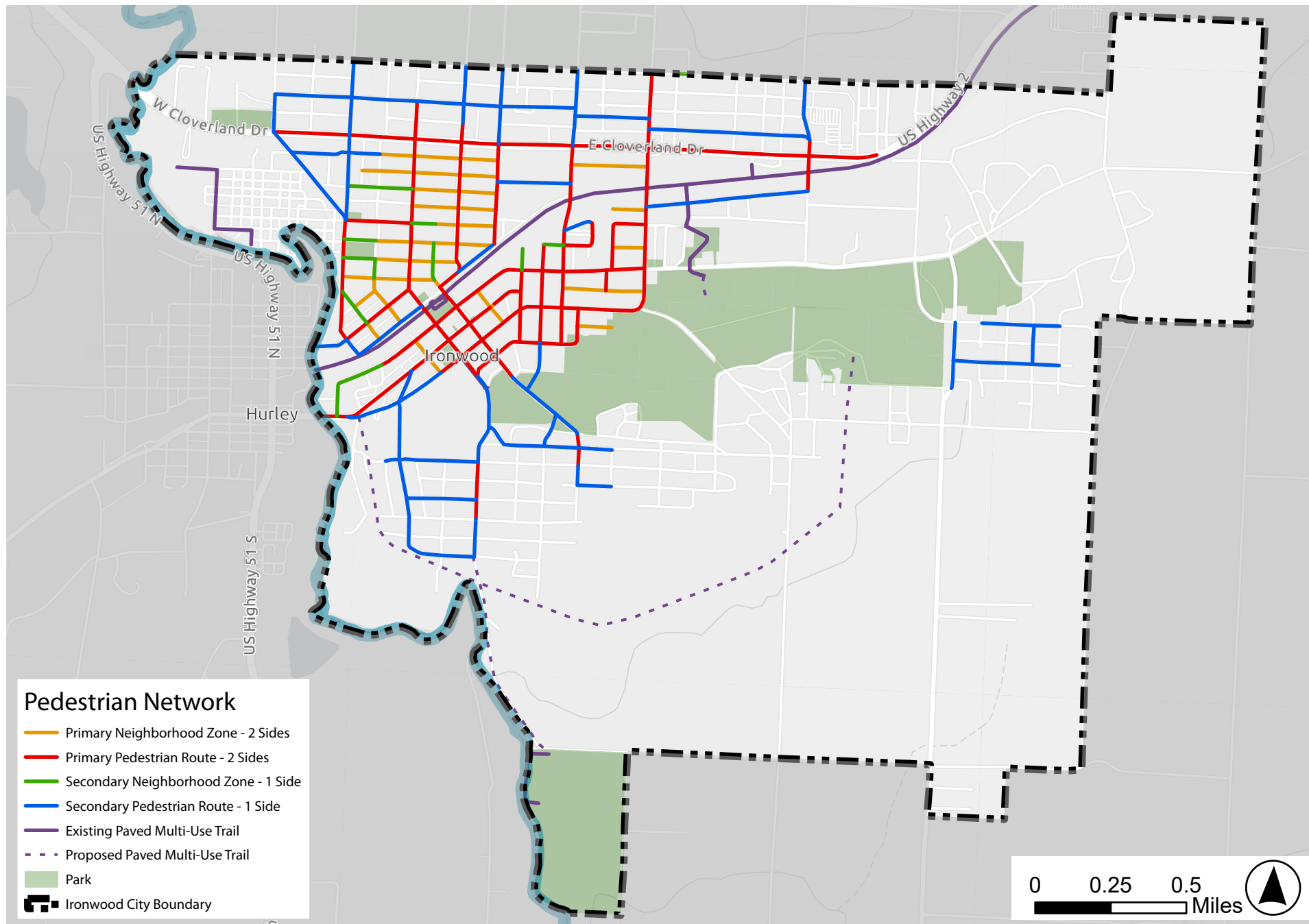
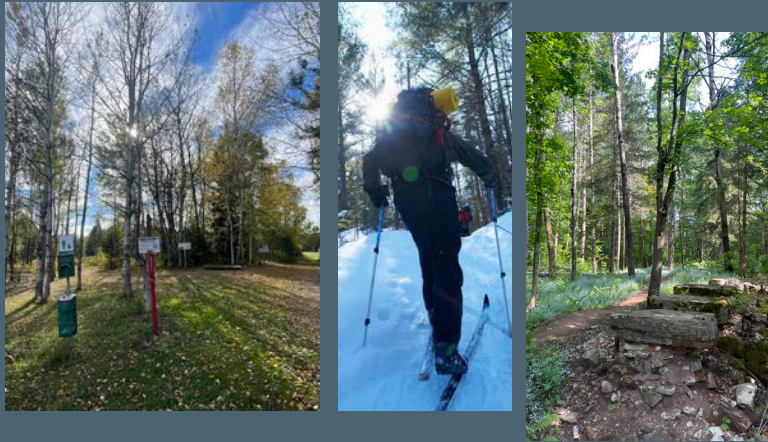


Figure 8.2 Sidewalk and paved pedestrian network in Ironwood

## Trail Types

### Unpaved Trails



**Unpaved trails** are those dedicated for walking, biking, skiing, snowshoeing, etc. where motorized vehicles are prohibited. Trail surfaces include gravel, compacted soil, and mown grass. In winter, these trails may also be used as cross-country ski and snowshoe trails.

### On-street Bicycle Facilities



**Bicycle lanes** are dedicated, marked lanes located next to traffic lanes on roadways. They must be a minimum of four-feet wide.

**Bicycle Routes** are those that are designated using signage and/or painted road markings, such as “sharrows” (pictured above).

## Trails Network

Trails function as part of both the recreation and transportation systems of a city, facilitating sustainable and active modes of transportation for commuters, shoppers, students, and outdoor enthusiasts. This chapter focuses on the function of Ironwood’s trail networks as part of the broader transportation system, getting people to destinations across the community by various non-car modes. Chapter 7 Parks and Recreation focuses more on recreational function of trails and the recreational trail network.

### Non-Motorized Trail Network

The non-motorized trail network (Figure 8.3) accommodates a number of user types, including:

- Pedestrians
- Bicyclists and e-bicyclist
- Skiers
- In-line skaters

Trail systems should be designed with specific user groups in mind, as well as shared, multi-use capacities. The existing and proposed non-motorized trail system can be seen in Figure 8.3. Proposed trail alignments are suggested starting points, and largely follow and align with:

- Existing informal footpaths and trails
- Utility/infrastructure corridor right-of-ways
- City-owned parcels
- Vacant parcels (where easements are granted)
- Stream corridor buffer areas

These proposed routes aim to provide connections to commercial areas, job centers, a grade-separated crossing of Highway 2, community assets and parks, and other existing and proposed trails, including the Iron Belle Trail.

### Bicycle Network

Ironwood currently has a limited system of on-street bike lanes and off-street multi-use trails, with plans to add bicycle infrastructure concurrently with street reconstruction projects as funding becomes available. Figure 8.3 shows how proposed bicycle lanes, routes, and multi-use trails can be integrated with the existing bicycle facilities, and existing and proposed trails. Proposed on-street bicycle facilities can be accommodated in different ways. Bicycle lanes are dedicated, on-street, marked lanes for one-way travel going in the same direction (usually) as vehicles in the adjacent traffic lane. Bicycle Routes are an alternative when bicycle lanes are not feasible due to right-of-way constrictions. Bicycle Routes are road segments identified by directional and informational markers including pavement markings, but do not include delineated lanes for bikes only. This may include Shared Lane Marking or “Sharrow”, or wide shoulders that can accommodate bicyclists.



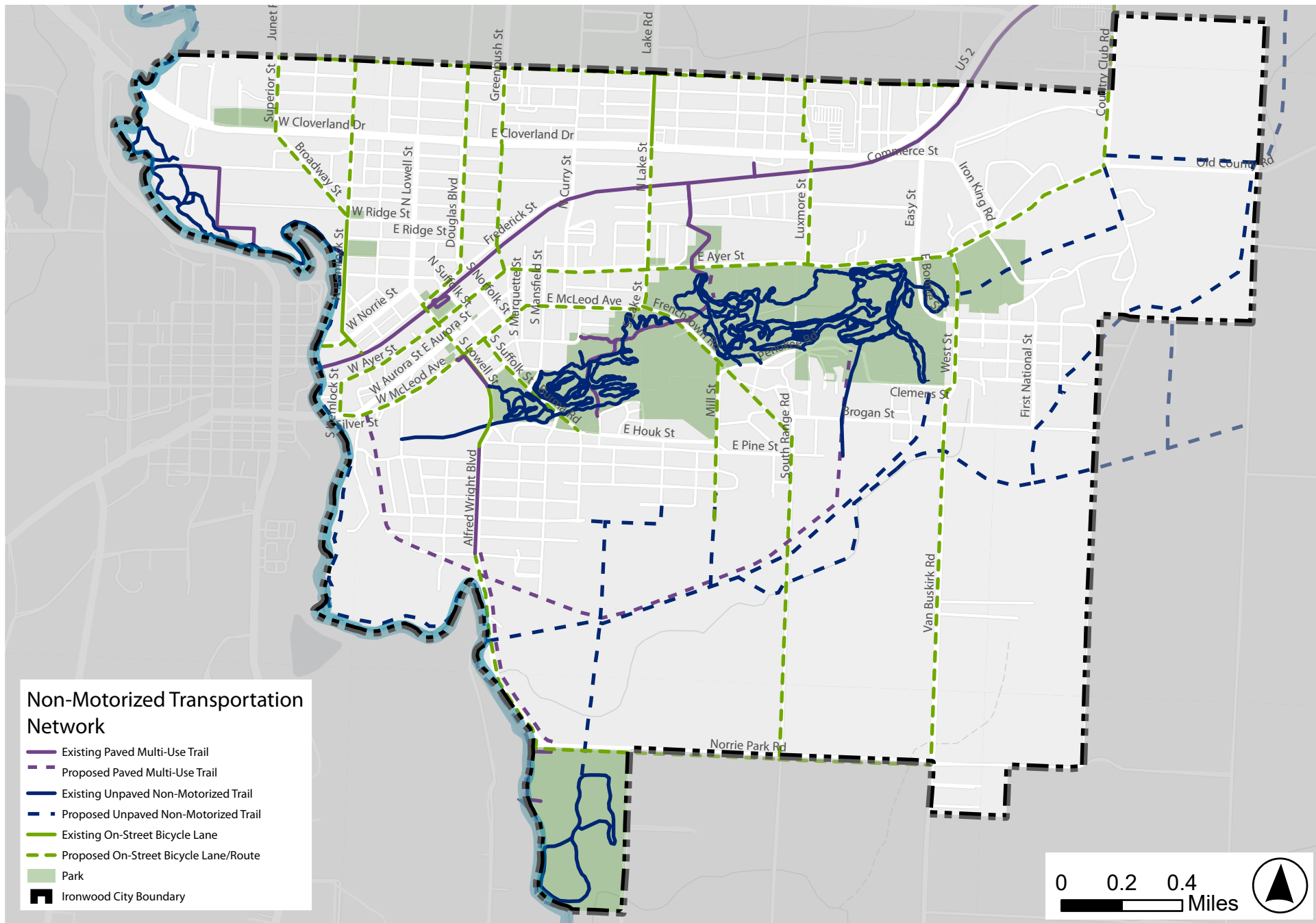


Figure 8.3 Non-motorized trail network in Ironwood

# Motorized Trail Types



**Motorized trails** are off-street routes dedicated for use by snowmobiles and ORVs.



Snowmobile and ORV users are allowed to use roads within Ironwood to access motorized vehicle trails.

## Motorized Trail Network

Snowmobiling and the use of off-road vehicles (ORVs) is a beloved pastime for many Ironwood residents, and a large component of local tourism. Via the Trail 2 snowmobile route, which is the southern railway grade running through Ironwood, riders have access to hundreds of miles of trail in Gogebic County and beyond, as well as designated parking facilities within the downtown core. The City has also authorized the use of this railbed within city limits for ORV use.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has established snowmobile and ORV regulations for the operation of motorized vehicles on public right-of-ways, and these work in tandem with City Ordinances that allow the use of both snowmobiles and ORVs on roads within city limits for trail access. Previously, the City had designated certain roads as trail access routes and restricted riding on other roads. Now, motorized recreational vehicle users are allowed on all roadways except for Hwy 2 when using roads to access trails.

See the trail network map in Chapter 7 Parks and Recreation for a full map of motorized vehicle trails.

# Implementation

## Goal 8.1: Preservation and Maintenance

Initiatives & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>8.1a</b>	<i>Ongoing Rehab/Replacement of Local Roadways</i>		
	Continue to set aside funding and seek additional funds to complete roadway maintenance.	City Staff - Public Works	Street Fund, General Fund, DOT, Grants
	Provide updates to the community on status of road projects through regular communication updates.	City Staff - Public Works, Community Development	General Fund

## Goal 8.2: Access and Mobility

Initiatives & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>8.2a</b>	<i>Bicycle and Pedestrian Framework and Prioritization</i>		
	Identify funding sources to support development of a strategic plan.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund, DOT grants
	Form a steering committee to guide planning process.	City Staff - Community Development	
<b>8.2b</b>	<i>Accessibility Audit of Downtown Streetscape</i>		
	Identify funding sources to support development of a strategic plan.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund, DOT grants
	Form a steering committee to guide planning process.	City Staff - Community Development	

## Goal 6.3: Multi-modal Safety

Initiatives & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>8.3a</b>	<i>Improve Walking and Biking Routes to School</i>		
	Create advisory committee with students and parents who walk/bike to school.	City Staff - Community Development	
	Use the bicycle and pedestrian framework and prioritization to determine priority focus areas.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Identify short-term interventions, such as signage, to implement and longer -term interventions to incorporate into pedestrian framework.	City Staff - Community Development, Public Works	General Fund, DOT grants
<b>8.3b</b>	<i>Improve Pedestrian Crossings at Highway 2 Intersections</i>		
	Use the bicycle and pedestrian framework and prioritization and school routes to determine priority intersections.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund, DOT grants
	Conduct design and feasibility study to determine safety improvements for intersections.	City Staff - Community Development, Public Works	General Fund, DOT grants



## Transportation Action Program

This table provides guidance on improvements for the next 1-3 years in Ironwood. It is based on the ideas, and community feedback gathered during the planning process and the feasibility and priority of identified strategies.

Focus for the action plan is on:

- Prioritizing improvements to sidewalks and trail networks
- Maintenance of existing roads, sidewalks, and trails to preserve function and ensure accessibility
- Filling in gaps in sidewalk and trail networks to complete connections to destinations including parks, downtown, and other existing routes

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

### Cost Key

**\$:** \$0 - \$15,000      **\$\$\$:** \$75,000 - \$300,000

**\$\$:** \$15,000 - \$75,000      **\$\$\$\$:** \$300,000+

### 2026 (Year 1)

Status	Description	Cost
	Conduct accessibility audit of downtown sidewalks	\$
	Create bicycle and pedestrian route prioritization framework	\$
	Ongoing maintenance of existing roadways	\$\$

### 2027 (Year 2)

Status	Description	Cost
	Implement priority recommendations from the accessibility audit	\$\$
	Implement phase 1 sidewalk improvements based on route prioritization	\$\$
	Design concepts for intersection improvements	\$
	Ongoing maintenance of existing roadways	\$\$

### 2028 (Year 3)

Status	Description	Cost
	Implement next phase of recommendations from the accessibility audit	\$\$
	Implement phase 2 sidewalk improvements based on route prioritization	\$\$
	Ongoing maintenance of existing roadways	\$\$

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# INFRASTRUCTURE

## Guiding Principles

The Infrastructure Chapter focuses on the following themes derived from the vision and guiding principles:

Infrastructure provides the backbone for a community's activities – it provides the services that support daily life and are essential to running a business -- it also goes largely unnoticed until there are service interruptions or problems. A key component to ensuring a **resilient** future for Ironwood is maintaining infrastructure systems that are updated and adapted to changing demands and pressures.

While not thought of as a typical element of a **connected** community, infrastructure plays a key role here too. The provision of services such as water and sewer help dictate development patterns and result in concentrations of businesses and neighborhoods in close proximity to one another. By providing essential services to the community, City infrastructure shapes the character and density of areas.

The infrastructure chapter emphasizes the importance of preserving Ironwood's systems so that the community can stay connected and resilient without adding needless costs due to expansion of services or emergency maintenance due to damage.



*Ironwood's well-maintained and efficient infrastructure networks provide **quality service** for all residents while timely updates ensure systems are **financially sustainable and resilient** in the face of new stresses to the system.*





*Regular updates to infrastructure increases resilience.*



*Ongoing improvements to replace aging pipes*

## Overview

The infrastructure section of the comprehensive plan helps guide investment in and prioritize long-term projects relating to the City's infrastructure, such as water and sewer systems. This section focuses on ways the City can invest in infrastructure to maintain and modernize current systems. This includes stormwater, sanitary sewers, and drinking water. It may also include energy and telecommunications, although these are typically run by outside companies.

The infrastructure chapter focuses on three main areas:

- **Maintenance and provision of quality systems** to offer reliable and affordable services to Ironwood's residents and businesses, ensuring that daily life in Ironwood is not impacted by interruptions in service provision.
- **Resilient** infrastructure means making sure that Ironwood's systems are maintained and equipped to handle heavy rainfall, seasonal flooding, and other severe weather or impacts related to changing climate or environmental conditions.
- **Financial sustainability** relating to infrastructure emphasizes the importance of limiting cost increases and fees for system users. Utilizing available funding sources to assist with infrastructure costs and prioritizing development patterns that tap into existing infrastructure to minimize extension of new services are ways to promote financial sustainability.

# Issues and Opportunities

As Ironwood's population continues to decline from its peak in the early 1900s, there is also declining demand for and use of Ironwood's infrastructure. Maintaining systems designed for a larger population can result in increased costs of water and sewer utilities for current residents. Despite this challenge, the City of Ironwood has secured funding to upgrade both the water treatment plant and sanitary sewer plant.



## Key Issues

- Lots of Ironwood's infrastructure is 100+ years old and was designed to serve a much larger population. The City has been working to replace and right size its facilities, but it is an ongoing challenge.
- Ironwood has a declining population, which means there is decreased demand for infrastructure systems designed for large populations. This increases costs for users across the system.
- Most infrastructure will have the same costs no matter the cost of the homes it serves. This means that places like Ironwood with lower cost housing will need a higher "rate" than other communities.
- Ironwood has a harsh climate that takes a toll on infrastructure. Maintenance of systems under these conditions is expensive and an ongoing need.
- Shifting climate patterns are producing less predictable weather events, such as more extreme rainfall events and changing temperature trends, which strain infrastructure in different ways.



## Key Opportunities

- The City of Ironwood has applied for funding for updates to its water and sewer systems to conduct upgrades and maintenance on its systems.
- As Ironwood continues with ongoing maintenance, the City can identify ways to improve function and resilience of its infrastructure systems.
- It is worth exploring ways to bring other users onto the infrastructure network to use existing capacity and further distribute costs.
- Infill development can take advantage of the existing infrastructure network, rather than requiring expensive extensions.



## What We've Heard

- The cost of City services (water/sewer) is one of things people like least about Ironwood and an area of concern for many residents.
- Maintenance of infrastructure was identified as one of the biggest challenges facing Ironwood in the next 10-20 years.



## KEY TERMINOLOGY

Goals and policies in this chapter support the vision and guiding principles of the plan and should be used to inform future decision-making and action. Strategies identify key projects or initiatives that put the policies into action.

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

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

Strategies: are actions, programs, and practices that support one or more of the plan's goals and policies. Strategies address at a high level, the "who, what, when, where, and how" of reaching a goal, and may involve multiple sub-strategies.



Ongoing maintenance ensures quality service provision.

# Goals, Policies, and Strategies

## Goal 9.1 Maintenance and Provision of Quality Systems

*Continue investing in existing infrastructure systems to offer reliable and affordable services to the community, ensuring Ironwood remains a place with a high quality of life.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 9.1.1** Invest in water and sewer maintenance and replacement on an annual basis through the capital improvement planning process.

**Policy 9.1.2** Bolster the resilience of physical infrastructure and awareness about how to prepare and act in the event of shocks or stressors.

### Strategies

#### *Ongoing Maintenance of City-Owned Facilities*

Regular maintenance of City-owned facilities ensures they remain safe, functional, and efficient for public use. This initiative protects the City's investments, supports service delivery, and recognizes the importance of continued maintenance to preserve infrastructure for future residents.

#### *Water Distribution Systems and Sanitary Sewer Collection System Projects (Underway)*

The City has already updated 60% of water infrastructure and is in the process of plant upgrades for both water and sewer systems. Continuing upgrades to the water treatment plant and sanitary sewer systems addresses critical infrastructure needs, ensuring clean water and effective waste management. Continue efforts to reduce inflow & infiltration.

## Goal 9.2 Resilience

*Ensure infrastructure systems are updated and equipped to handle heavy rainfall and other severe weather events related to the changing climate.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 9.2.1** Maximize storm water infiltration and surface filtration to minimize need for underground storm water infrastructure.

**Policy 9.2.2** Proactively pursue projects to promote infrastructure resiliency through incorporating new methods of stormwater management, pursuing grant funding for resilient infrastructure projects, and considering resilience when upgrading system components.

## Goal 9.3 Financial Sustainability

*Strive to utilize available funding sources to assist with costs related to infrastructure. Emphasize development patterns that utilize existing infrastructure and minimize extension of new City services.*

## Supporting Policies

**Policy 9.3.2** Evaluate goals of supporting plan documents for consistency with available funding sources and priorities.

**Policy 9.3.3** Coordinate improvements to the existing system with redevelopment (land use and street reconstruction) projects.



# Framing Concepts

## Infill Development & Infrastructure Costs

Ironwood's population has declined since its peak in the early 1900s without an equal shrinking of the infrastructure imprint. The resulting impact has been higher costs for water and sewer utilities.

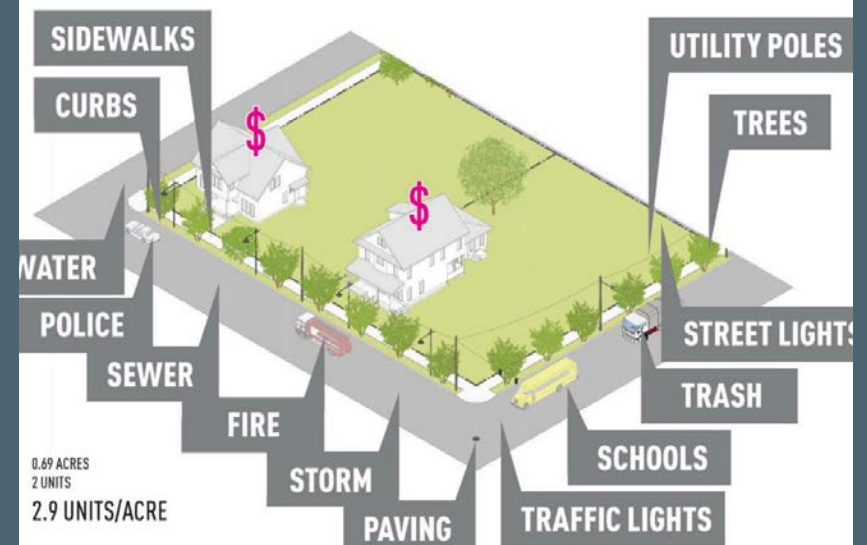
Finding financial resources in Ironwood to pay for infrastructure improvement is a significant challenge. As the physical elements of Ironwood's community ages, improvements and upgrades of facilities need to be carefully evaluated and prioritized relative to available financial resources. One way to distribute costs associated with infrastructure is to bring more users onto the network. Because Ironwood's infrastructure was designed to accommodate a higher population, there is capacity within the existing system to add users without expanding infrastructure.

As explored in the Land Use and Development chapter and the Housing and Neighborhoods chapter, infill and redevelopment are a top priority in Ironwood. These types of development fill gaps in Ironwood's existing neighborhoods and downtown, creating additional demand for utility services without having to expand the infrastructure network. A few specific policies and strategies identified elsewhere in the plan directly relate to these efforts including:

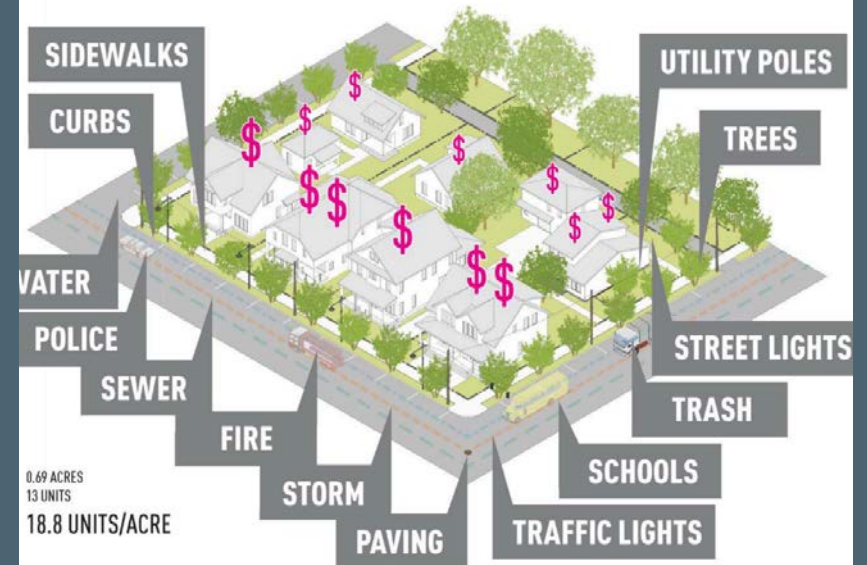
- Prioritizing infill development of vacant parcels and redevelopment of underutilized parcels.
- Promoting additional housing density in appropriate areas.
- Identifying areas for additional industrial uses that are within the existing infrastructure network.

These priorities will help bring new users into the existing infrastructure network, distributing costs across a larger number of users.

## HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE + SERVICE NEEDS



## HOUSING CHOICE & INFRASTRUCTURE + SERVICE NEEDS



Higher density and infill development on vacant sites can distribute infrastructure costs across more users. (Image source: Congress for the New Urbanism)



## Current Infrastructure Services

A key component of a sustainable and resilient infrastructure network is regular maintenance. Key projects incorporated into the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to ensure adequate funding and resources are set aside for system upgrades and general maintenance.

For more detailed descriptions of the City's infrastructure, see Appendix A.

### Water Supply

Current water supply (well fields) and treatment plant capacities are sufficient to meet current and expected future demands. System improvements are more directly linked to maintaining and upgrading existing infrastructure and providing improved levels of service.

The City should support and encourage sustainable water usage practices. Such practices include conservation oriented fixtures and use or practice as well as stormwater or grey water reuse for activities that need water but not necessarily clean drinkable water. Such practices preserve the long term availability of the water supply and can contribute to managing the affordability of public water.

The City is in the final phase of updating the water treatment plant. The project involved constructing a new pump station facility and updating water treatment. The capacity of the new plant is 2 million gallons per day, while average usage is less than 0.5 million gallons per day. In addition to treatment plant upgrades, the City is working to inventory and replace lead service pipes and update connections throughout the system. The lead service lines will be 98% replaced with copper by the end of 2026.

### Sanitary and Storm Sewer

Since the adoption of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, the City completed a Comprehensive Wastewater and Stormwater Asset Management Plan for the City. The plan is still used as a basis for identifying and implementing system improvements. More recently, in 2024, the City completed a Sanitary Sewer System Study and Preliminary Engineering Report to assess existing infrastructure and outline needed improvements.

Large inflow & infiltration (I&I) flows still exist across Ironwood's systems. The City added capacity to the Wastewater Treatment Plant to handle I&I flows. Efforts to reduce I&I throughout the system should continue.

The City's wastewater collection system is comprised of approximately 257,000 feet of pipe, as well as the City's approximate 109,000 feet of storm sewer pipe. The sanitary sewer and storm sewer infrastructure are separate conveyance systems.

### Private Utilities

Electric and gas utilities are adequate to meet current and foreseeable needs. Internet technology and the availability of high-speed internet and broadband has increased in recent years. However, household rates of internet access still lag behind the rest of the state, though they are comparable to other Upper Peninsula counties.

Upgrades to private utilities should be coordinated with public improvement projects. Upgrades should focus on technological advancements as well as opportunities to enhance the community's image, especially along key corridors such as the Highway 2 corridor or key approach corridors to the downtown area. Relocating overhead utility infrastructure underground should be pursued where feasible.

### Solid Waste

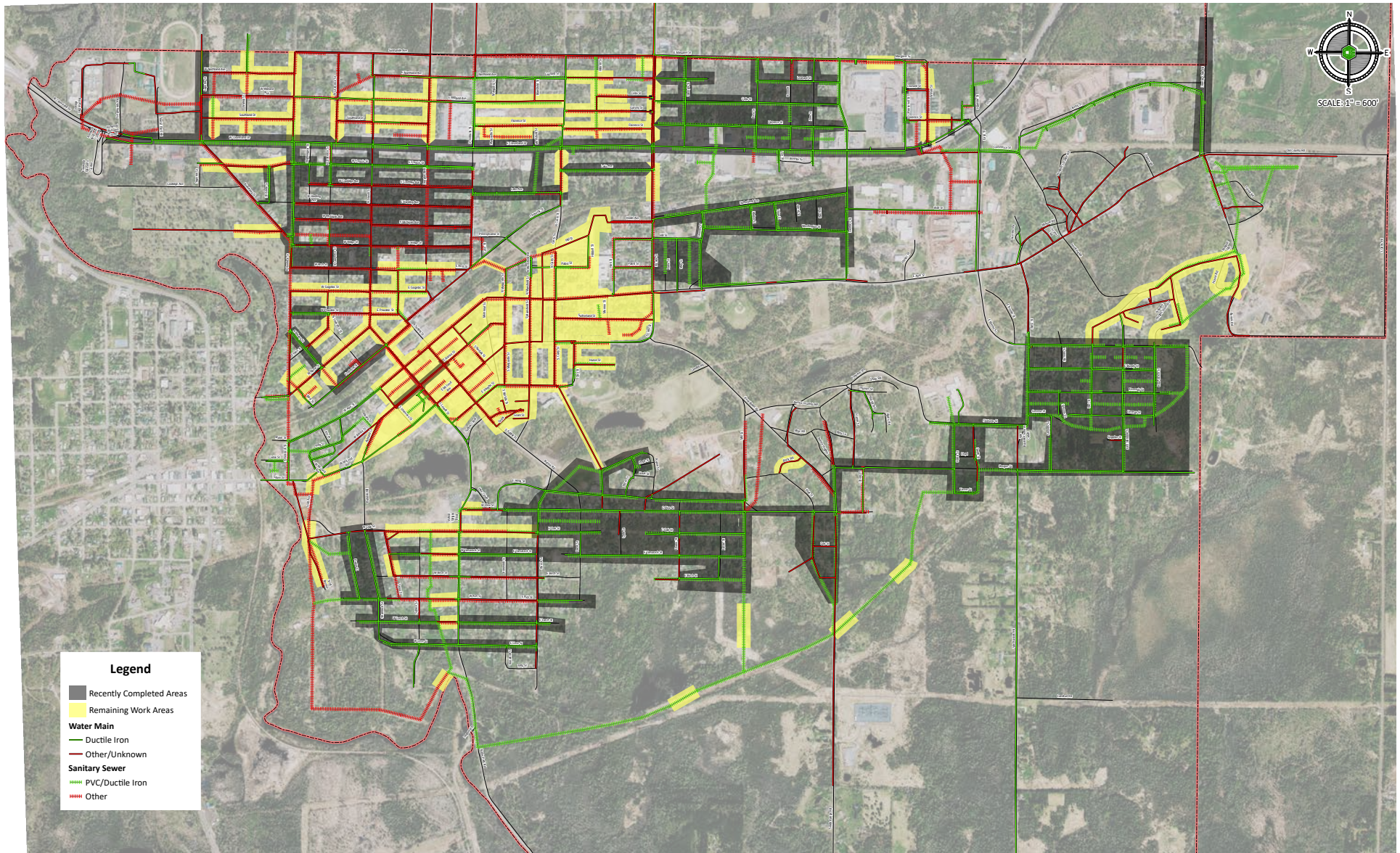
The City of Ironwood is part of the Gogebic Range Solid Waste Management Authority, a collaboration of six area communities. Garbage collection is provided curbside to residential and business customers. Ultimately the garbage is hauled to the Ontonagon County Landfill.

The City should monitor garbage hauling patterns and report tonnages on a per household basis with the intent of reducing the overall tonnage of solid waste per household that is being transported to the landfill. Opportunities to reduce tonnage include recycling and composting food waste. In 2024, Ironwood signed a 5-year curbside refuse and recycling contract with Republic Services.

The City of Ironwood also operates a compost site. Residents are able to drop off lawn clippings, garden vegetation, leaves, brush, and other organic yard waste.

The City should continue to collaborate with the Gogebic Range Solid Waste Management Authority and Ontonagon County to explore strategies to reduce the tonnage of solid waste that gets landfilled.





PROPOSED AND COMPLETED PROJECT AREAS  
WATER & SEWER IMPROVEMENTS  
CITY OF IRONWOOD  
GOGEBIC COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Figure 9.2 Proposed and completed project areas for Water and Sewer Improvements, 2025



## Source Water Protection Program

The City of Ironwood relies exclusively on groundwater for its drinking water source. In response to the concern over safety of public water supplies, the city has instituted a Source Water Protection Program (SWPP), also referred to as a Wellhead Protection Program (WHPP). WHPPs develop long-term strategies aimed at protecting community drinking water supplies. The purpose of developing a WHPP is to identify the Wellhead Protection Area (WHPA) and implement long-term strategies aimed at safeguarding the area from contamination. A WHPA is defined as the surface and subsurface areas surrounding a water well or well field, which supplies a public water system, and through which contaminants are reasonably likely to move toward and reach the water well or well field within a 10-year time-of-travel. Please see Figure 9.3, which identifies the City of Ironwood Wellhead Protection Areas. The State of Michigan requires communities to identify seven elements to be included in the WHPP. These elements along with a brief description are below.

- Roles and Responsibilities – Identify individuals responsible for the development, implementation, and long-term maintenance of the local WHPP.
- WHPA Delineation – Determine that area which contributes groundwater to the public water supply wells.
- Contaminant Source Inventory – Identify known and potential sites of contamination within the WHPA and include in a contaminant source inventory list and map.
- Management Strategies – Provide mechanisms which will reduce the risk of existing and potential sources of contamination from reaching the public water supply wells or well field.
- Contingency Planning – Develop an effective contingency plan in case of a water supply emergency.
- Siting of New Wells – Provide information on existing groundwater availability, the ability of the PWSS to meet present and future demands and the vulnerability of the existing wells to contamination.
- Public Education and Outreach – Generate community awareness in the WHPP by focusing on public education and the dissemination of WHPP information.

The most significant sources of water supply contamination are landfills, surface impoundment areas, subsurface percolation from septic tanks and cesspools, open dumps, uncapped or improperly capped abandoned wells, injection wells and underground storage tanks. These uses represent both point and non-point contamination sources. Point source is the term used to describe contaminants, which originate in the immediate area of the well or tap. All the above, if located near the water supply source, are examples of potential point source polluters. Contaminants from these uses may seep directly down through the soil to the water source.

Non-point source contamination is much more difficult to control because the cause of the problem may be located a considerable distance from the well. This type of contamination is caused by pollutants that filter into an underground aquifer and then migrate slowly through the groundwater aquifer to off-site wells and water sources. Prevention of this type of contamination must involve a collective effort on the part of property owners and local officials from a large geographic area. It is the recommendation of this Plan that all existing and future wells be protected from both point and non-point source contamination to the greatest degree possible. It is also the intent of this Plan to recognize the importance of groundwater protection within the City of Ironwood.

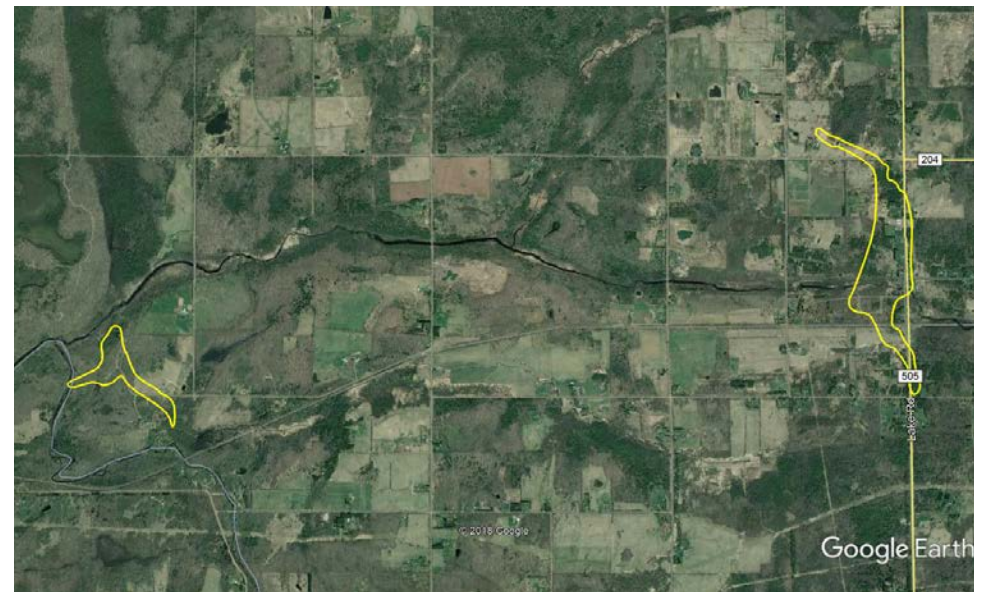


Figure 9.3 City of Ironwood Wellhead Protection Areas



# Implementation

## Goal 9.1: Maintenance of quality systems

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
9.1a	<i>Ongoing Maintenance of City-Owned Facilities</i>		
	Continue to identify priority projects and track needed maintenance and upgrades for City infrastructure facilities.	City staff - City Manager, Engineering, Public Works, Water & Sewer	General Fund
	Continue to incorporate identified priorities into the Capital Improvement Plan to ensure adequate funding and realistic replacement/update time lines are followed.	City staff - City Manager, Engineering, Public Works, Water & Sewer, Finance	General Fund
9.1b	<i>Water Treatment Plan and Sanitary Sewer Projects (Underway)</i>		
	Continue to identify and pursue state, federal, and other funding sources to update and carry out improvements to the City's water and sewer infrastructure.	City staff - City Manager, Finance, Engineering, Public Works, Water & Sewer	DEQ Grants; EPA Grants; General Fund

## Infrastructure Action Program

This table provides guidance on improvements for the next 1-3 years in Ironwood. It is based on the ideas, and community feedback gathered during the planning process and the feasibility and priority of identified strategies.

Focus for the action plan is on:

- Continue to seek funding for system upgrades.
- Continue to perform regular maintenance throughout the system.
- Prioritize development along existing networks and using outside funding to limit additional costs for system users.

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

### Cost Key

**\$:** \$0 - \$15,000      **\$\$\$:** \$75,000 - \$300,000

**\$\$:** \$15,000 - \$75,000      **\$\$\$\$:** \$300,000+

### 2026 (Year 1)

Status	Description	Cost
	Update list of priority road and sidewalk projects to include in CIP	\$
	Update list of priority water system projects to include in CIP	\$
	Update list of priority sanitary sewer and storm sewer system projects to include in CIP	\$
	Continue to identify and pursue grant funding for infrastructure projects	\$

### 2027 (Year 2)

Status	Description	Cost
	Continue to implement road and sidewalk improvements based on projects in CIP	\$\$\$
	Continue to implement water improvements based on projects in CIP	\$\$\$
	Continue to implement sanitary sewer and storm sewer improvements based on projects in CIP	\$\$\$

### 2028 (Year 3)

Status	Description	Cost
	Review project priority list and update as needed	\$
	Continue to implement road and sidewalk improvements based on projects in CIP	\$\$\$
	Continue to implement water improvements based on projects in CIP	\$\$\$
	Continue to implement sanitary sewer and storm sewer improvements based on projects in CIP	\$\$\$





# ARTS & CULTURE

## Guiding Principles

The Arts & Culture Chapter focuses on the following themes derived from the vision and guiding principles:

Ironwood's arts and culture scene contributes to a **vibrant** and active community, with organizations like Downtown Arts Place and Theatre North, events like the Emberlight Festival and First Friday, and historical institutions like the Ironwood Theater and Carnegie Library serving as a backbone for Ironwood's downtown core and beyond.

Arts initiatives and programming for school-aged kids provides additional **opportunities** for the community's youth to grow, learn, and engage with the community and environment around them. **Connecting** community members through theater programming, public art, and community-wide events strengthens interpersonal connections and the local economy.

With growing emphasis on providing spaces for arts and arts programming, Ironwood continues to grow as a **welcoming** community, prizing creativity, entrepreneurial spirit, and new ideas.

“

*Ironwood's surroundings provide inspiration and nourishes a **creative spark** embodied throughout the community. Whether its attending a show, participating in a workshop, or creating in a studio, **Ironwood's arts and culture scene offers opportunities for all community members to engage with and make art.***

”



*Incorporating public art into streetscapes makes downtown a pedestrian friendly place.*



## What We've Heard

- Building out Ironwood's creative economy will enhance tourism and connect with existing draws to the area, like outdoor recreation.
- Support for expanding arts and cultural offerings in Ironwood will create more options for youth activities and foster community throughout Ironwood.
- Ensuring arts are accessible -- both in the physical sense (transportation, ADA accessible spaces), and for all residents regardless of age or income level, is key to growing the creative economy.

## Overview

The Arts and Culture chapter of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on adopting policies and goals to support the growth of arts and cultural initiatives in the community. Including arts and culture in the City's long-term planning efforts ensures access to the arts for all of Ironwood's residents and recognizes the important role arts and cultural activities play in strengthening the community of Ironwood, promoting tourism, and contributing to the local economy.

While not traditionally thought of as a component of City planning, arts and culture are integral to a strong, vibrant community. Like parks and recreation, incorporating arts and culture into City initiatives and priorities supports economic growth and improves quality of life. This chapter of the plan overlaps with several others as it pertains to improving public spaces, preserving the historical and architectural character of Ironwood's downtown, and strengthening the creative economy.

There are three main focus areas of the arts and culture chapter in this plan:

- **Physical infrastructure to support the arts** seeks to address the current lack of spaces suitable for housing a variety of arts endeavors, the barrier to accessibility that many of Ironwood's older buildings create, and the availability of vacant or underutilized spaces that can be adapted to serve multiple purposes.
- **Social infrastructure to support the arts** refers to the human capacity and community resources that currently sustain the creative economy and arts culture in Ironwood. Supporting the social infrastructure that underlies the arts and culture scene in Ironwood will sustain and promote growth across a variety of sectors and creative efforts.
- **Cross-sector incorporation of the arts** recognizes the important role arts can play in creating a welcoming community, diverse economy, and unique recreation experience.

# Issues and Opportunities

Ironwood's art scene garners regional and national attention through signature events, such as the Emberlight Festival, and an ongoing presence in the community through initiatives like the Downtown Art Place. Artist networks and local organizations foster collaboration within the arts sector and anchor the Ironwood arts scene.



## Key Issues

- There are a lack of accessible spaces for making and enjoying art. Spaces are inadequate from a technical perspective and from a safety and ADA accessibility perspective.
- The current arts ecosystem in Ironwood is maintained largely by volunteers and organizations. Losing an organization and the aging-out or moving-on of volunteers could cause a significant loss to the arts environment.
- Funding is limited, resulting in multiple organizations looking to the same sources.
- Arts programming has been cut from the schools, meaning an increased reliance on private providers.
- There is a robust and engaged arts community, but growing interest in and access to the arts in Ironwood is difficult.
- At times different venues can be at odds, or in competition with each other.
- There can be a perception that arts are not accessible to some segments of the population.



## Key Opportunities

- Creating a strategic plan for the arts can:
  - Provide a framework for organizations, artists, and the City to align goals, facilitate collaboration and cross-sector opportunities
  - Identify specific policies to promote and support the arts.
  - Position Ironwood to apply for funding opportunities and unify efforts across organizations, artists, and supporters of the arts.
- Ironwood has many historic and vacant buildings, some of which have hosted the arts in the past. Identifying realistic ways to reuse and adapt existing infrastructure for use as a home for arts and arts programming also helps revitalize downtown and vacant buildings.
- Engaged artists and supporters are eager to expand participation and opportunities for ALL residents
- The area has a strong tourism infrastructure, which could better incorporate arts to bring visitors and spending to Ironwood.



Community theater at Theater North



Live music at Downtown City Square



Depot Park is home of the Ironwood Area Historical Society.



## KEY TERMINOLOGY

Goals and policies in this chapter support the vision and guiding principles of the plan and should be used to inform future decision-making and action. Strategies identify key projects or initiatives that put the policies into action.

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

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

**Strategies:** are actions, programs, and practices that support one or more of the plan's goals and policies. Strategies address at a high level, the "who, what, when, where, and how" of reaching a goal, and may involve multiple sub-strategies.



Murals are an example of public art.

## Goals, Policies and Strategies

### Goal 10.1 Physical infrastructure to support the arts

*Identify and support the development of physical spaces and infrastructure, such as buildings, transportation, and equipment, that facilitate arts and cultural opportunities for Ironwood's residents.*

#### Supporting Policies

**Policy 10.1.1** Identify ways to expand physical and financial access to creative sector facilities and spaces.

**Policy 10.1.2** Inventory and make available existing public spaces for creative activities.

**Policy 10.1.3** Develop a creative space program to incentivize new facilities, spaces, and places.

**Policy 10.1.4** Identify opportunities to incorporate live/work spaces for artists as part of other redevelopment and housing development initiatives.

**Policy 10.1.5** When renovating and redesigning existing spaces, incorporate ADA-accessibility into all designs.

**Policy 10.1.6** Incentivize cross-over activities for creative and outdoor recreation and identify opportunities to incorporate art into existing outdoor and public spaces.

**Policy 10.1.7** Incorporate incentives or requirements for development to incorporate public art.

#### Strategies

##### *Support the Use of Physical Spaces for the Arts*

Given the historic nature of many of Ironwood's buildings, maintaining, preserving, and improving existing spaces for the arts, along with acquiring new ones, ensures venues are accessible to all community members and support a variety of artistic pursuits.

##### *Incorporate Public Art into Parks and Open Space*

Identified as a strategy in Ironwood's 5-year Parks and Recreation Plan, this initiative will promote local artists, increase access to viewing art for the community, and create destinations within Ironwood's parks.

##### *Public Art Initiatives*

Public art has been incorporated into Miners Heritage Park and there are a number of examples of public art on private developments such as the murals downtown. Incentives or zoning requirements could be used to expand the number of instances of public art.

## Goal 10.2 Social infrastructure to support the arts

*Provide a strategic framework and resources to ensure arts opportunities are accessible to all residents. A vision for arts and culture in Ironwood will support funding efforts, organizations, and volunteers as they promote the growth of the arts and provide structure for regional and cross-sector collaboration.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 10.2.1** Develop a long-term public art master plan.

**Policy 10.2.2** Develop funding streams for Arts & Culture and for implementation of the Arts and Culture Strategic Plan.

**Policy 10.2.3** Identify and work to eliminate or alleviate barriers to creative endeavors in the City.

**Policy 10.2.4** Increase Ironwood's capacity to attract and retain diverse creative talent.

**Policy 10.2.5** Develop an arts and culture strategy to position Ironwood to attract all age groups, from college students through to retirees, to live and work in Ironwood.

**Policy 10.2.6** Work with partners to expand arts education and lifelong learning opportunities.

**Policy 10.2.7** Partner with the community to develop and implement year-round arts and cultural programming.

### Strategies

#### *Strategic Plan for the Arts*

Creating a comprehensive strategic plan for the arts ensures alignment among stakeholders, encourages collaboration, and integrates the arts into the community's long-term goals. Building on the Comprehensive Plan, and similar to the 5-year Parks and Rec plan, the arts plan would support funding applications, provide a framework for coordination and prioritization of initiatives, and assist in the promotion of the arts in Ironwood.

#### *Regional Arts Collaborative/Organization*

Many arts organizations with limited capacity are understandably focused on their own to-do lists. A more centralized organization could help groups dealing with similar challenges, provide coordinated marketing, and pursue grants together.

#### *Coordination with the School*

Opportunities for arts at the school have been declining as budgets get tighter and local organizations have tried to fill that gap. Coordination between these organizations could improve arts offerings for community youth. Examples include use of school space, field trips to arts organizations, and bussing coordination to get kids to arts programs.



Highlighting history in different settings helps share Ironwood's culture with residents and visitors alike.



Community organizations step up to offer youth-centered arts programming in Ironwood.



## Goal 10.3 Cross-sector incorporation of the arts

*Arts are valued as drivers of economic growth, important components of community and recreation events, and incorporated across sectors, including in elements of government, education, and tourism.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 10.3.1** Continue to promote arts and culture as an important asset for Ironwood.

**Policy 10.3.2** Intentionally incorporate arts and the creative economy in marketing Ironwood to new residents, entrepreneurs, and businesses.

**Policy 10.3.3** Enhance user experience throughout parks and the public realm through improved placemaking and the addition of amenities that incorporate art such as benches, kiosks/signage, etc.

### Strategies

#### *Incorporation of the Arts into City and Chamber Programming*

The City partners with artists and arts providers at City events. This initiative continues and strengthens the incorporation of arts into events ranging from Festival Ironwood to First Friday and would review the potential for other programming that could incorporate the arts.

#### *Promotion of the Arts*

Given Ironwood's existing arts landscape, a coordinated approach to promoting the arts would bring regional and national recognition to Ironwood's art scene. Actively promoting the arts highlights local talent, cultural events, and artistic initiatives; fosters community pride and engagement; attracts visitors; and boosts the local economy.



# Framing Concepts

## Role of the City in Art

The City of Ironwood already supports arts and culture in Ironwood through a variety of initiatives. The construction of the Downtown Art Park created space for public art and events. A public-private partnership with the Downtown Art Place (DAP) results in the leasing of a City-owned building to DAP to host studios, gallery space, and programming. Collaboration with local businesses and organizations supports community events, such as First Fridays.

The City of Ironwood can continue to elevate arts and culture activities in Ironwood through supporting the efforts of and collaborating with community organizations. With a growing number of arts-oriented programs, spaces, and opportunities in Ironwood, the City can play a role in fostering the growth of the creative economy. An example of this is forming additional public-private partnerships with community organizations and developers to provide access to funding for larger projects through grants that support building updates or other physical improvements for spaces that support the arts.

As Ironwood continues to support the growth of this sector and promote access to arts and culture for all, it will become increasingly important that the City, organizations, and partners are working towards a shared vision and understand the different roles they each can play in making the vision a reality.

A guiding document, such as a strategic plan for arts and culture, can further define the City of Ironwood's role in supporting the arts and culture sector and facilitate growth of the creative economy.



## What is the Creative Economy?

The creative economy refers to an ecosystem of for-profit and nonprofit industries, artists, educators, entrepreneurs, and policy makers who generate economic and cultural value by producing and distributing creativity-based goods and services that drive jobs, revenue, and community engagement.

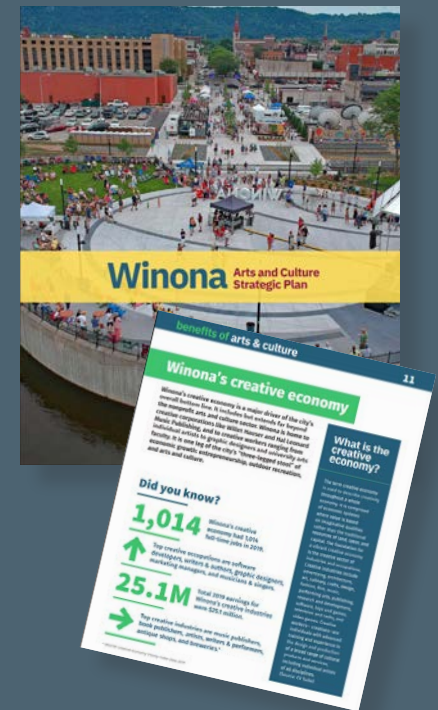
Examples of industries that are considered part of the creative economy include: advertising, architecture, art, culinary, crafts, design, fashion, film, music, performing arts, publishing, research and development, software, toys and games, television and radio, and video games.

## Strategic Plan for Arts and Culture

A strategic plan for arts and culture can take many forms, but the goal is usually the same: develop a vision, goals, and recommendations to support the growth of the arts and culture sector in a community. Similar to the Parks and Recreation Plan, having a strategic plan for arts and culture in Ironwood can foster coordination between existing entities and unlock funding opportunities.

An arts and culture plan provides a city with policy guidance and can help define the role of city government in strengthening and investing in the creative economy. Through policy guidance, identifying public-private partnership opportunities for key projects, and recommendations, a strategic plan helps define the roles of key entities and players in order to grow arts and culture in a collaborative, coordinated way.

Recognizing that there are many existing individuals, organizations, and partners supporting arts and culture today, implementation of the strategic plan would heavily involve these players to make the recommendations of the strategic plan a success. Partners including schools, entrepreneurs, and participants in arts programs are all examples of additional collaborators in the implementation of a strategic plan.



An Arts and Culture Strategic Plan can help quantify the arts and creative economy, which can help secure grant funding for future initiatives.

## Physical Infrastructure

A central component to maintaining and growing the presence of arts and culture in Ironwood is creating the physical infrastructure to support access to arts for everyone. Similarly to how the City invests in parks and trails that go on to support a variety of recreation programming, the arts and culture sector also needs physical spaces and infrastructure to support its growth and development.

From studio space and galleries to classrooms and theaters, there are many spaces that already do this. However, there is already a lack of suitable spaces for

the various groups, programs, and artists that work in Ironwood. The Ironwood Area Schools have limited offerings when it comes to the arts, so ensuring there are adequate spaces and opportunities for Ironwood's young residents to get involved in the arts is very important. Identifying physical spaces and transportation options to ensure everyone has access to arts programming is a key goal of this chapter.

Suitable spaces such as those that are ADA accessible and have appropriate acoustics, lighting, and other elements that impact how art and culture is seen and shared are examples of how physical infrastructure is a critical piece of ensuring arts access for all community members.

## Inventory of Existing Spaces



### Carnegie Library

Ironwood's Historic Carnegie Library hosts many programs and offers classes for kids and adults. Library facilities also host many clubs and community events.



### Downtown Art Park

The Downtown Art Park is Ironwood's newest park. Starting off as just a wished-for idea, it came to reality through community support (using a crowdfunding campaign from Patronicity) and funding from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. This park serves to compliment the downtown art district by providing space art exhibitions as well as for outdoor musical performance.



### Downtown Art Place

The Downtown Art Place (DAP) is located in an historic Aurora Street building and features both a street level retail shop and over 20 individual artist studios on the second floor. The DAP was established as a creative center where people can come together, collaborate in their endeavors, and offer their creations for viewing and sale. In addition to studio spaces and a gallery, DAP offers classes, workshops, and other programming for the community.



### Historic Ironwood Theatre

The Historic Ironwood Theatre is the "jewel of downtown" with its beautiful gleaming marquee, restored hand-painted murals, historic Barton theater pipe organ, and outstanding acoustics. The theatre stage is home to many concerts and events year-round. Tours of the theatre and its rich performing arts history are available.



### Theatre North

Theatre North is a non-profit organization and the third-oldest continuously operating community theatre in the country. In their 61-year history, they have produced over 175 shows (plays and musicals). In addition to exposing audiences to the arts, they provide performance and volunteer experiences that make people feel like they belong.



## Inventory of Potential Spaces

### Memorial Building

Ironwood's Memorial Building was built in 1921 as a memorial to veterans. It is home to a large auditorium with stained glass windows, numerous murals throughout the building, and houses an extensive Ironwood area history exhibit. Additional spaces in the building include a gymnasium and numerous offices and meeting rooms that house the City government. Though the auditorium is used for community events, its design limits its functionality for hosting staged performances, gallery shows, and other events. Updating the space would greatly increase the usefulness of the Memorial Building in supporting the arts and culture sector.

Key updates to improve the functionality of this space include:

- Identify and implement improvements to acoustics to reduce echoing and improve sound quality
- Update lighting, particularly underneath the mezzanine, in order to increase usability of wall space for gallery shows and other displays
- Ensuring adequate electrical access for sound equipment and other needs for hosting productions.



*The Memorial Building auditorium set up for a private event*



*Stained glass windows in the auditorium*



*A history exhibit in the Memorial Building*

### Masonic Temple

The Ironwood Masonic Temple is an example of a project the City could partner on with organizations and developers to rehabilitate and preserve a historic downtown building while creating additional physical spaces to support the arts and culture sector. Located next to the Historic Ironwood Theater, the Masonic Temple is one of downtown's iconic buildings and its proximity to existing arts and culture spaces makes it an ideal candidate for updating and evaluating its potential to add to Ironwood's creative economy.

Spaces that support arts and culture do not all have to be gallery or performing spaces -- they also include housing, office spaces suitable for artists and designers, and other uses that support creative endeavours.

The Masonic Temple is a large project and would need significant investment to update the building and ensure it is ADA accessible, meets modern building code, and can function as a usable space for a variety of needs. By partnering with other organizations, the City could provide access to funding sources through grants and state programs while partners could take on the work of renovating and operating the space.



*A postcard of the historic Masonic Temple*



*A view down E Aurora Street of the Masonic Temple in downtown Ironwood*





*Empty storefronts can be transformed into public galleries*



*Vacant lots can be used for temporary recreation amenities*



*Adding seasonal seating can provide gathering spaces and opportunities to host events*



*Tactical urbanism, or creating temporary infrastructure through paint, planters, and other materials lets community members experience spaces in new ways.*

## Creative Placemaking and Space Activation

While Ironwood needs long-term physical infrastructure to support the arts, projects that accomplish that can have longer timelines and big budgets. In the short-term, using strategies that activate existing spaces and emphasize placemaking in the community can provide short-term opportunities to bring more art into the community and inspire community through demonstrating how underutilized spaces can be put to work for everyone's benefit.

Ironwood already has many examples of creative placemaking, including the Downtown Art Park and Pocket Park, both of which create a sense of place and destinations downtown. Pop-up events like First Fridays and art fairs are examples of temporary ways to activate public spaces and Art in the Park events transform recreation spaces into sculpture gardens.

Continuing to activate underutilized spaces through arts programming and cultural events can provide temporary or short-term options for increasing physical infrastructure that supports the creative economy. Looking for cross-sector opportunities expands the ways in which spaces can be activated.

Examples include:

- Using vacant storefronts for pop-up gallery shows and hanging art in storefront windows. (This works in the winter too!).
- Painting lines and installing a temporary basketball hoop, four square area, and other activities in an empty lot to provide new attractions downtown, recreation opportunities, and color to an underutilized area.
- Adding seating to a vacant lot can be used to host food trucks and other one-off events.
- Better Block events provide temporary streetscape improvements including outdoor seating, planters, and even makeshift bike lanes or sidewalks, allowing people to experience spaces in a new way.

# Implementation

## Goal 10.1: Support the Use of Physical Space for the Arts

Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>10.1a</b>	<i>Support the Use of Physical Spaces for the Arts</i>		
	Identify types of spaces and supporting physical infrastructure (eg. sound and lighting systems) that are lacking in the current arts and culture landscape.	City Staff - Community Development; Arts Community	General Fund
	Evaluate City-owned property and other underutilized spaces to determine suitability for rehabilitation of space.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
	Collaborate with local organizations and partners to identify ways to share and adapt existing spaces for multiple uses supporting the arts and culture sectors.	Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
	Identify ways arts and culture spaces can be incorporated into other development projects.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC, Dedication
	Identify and partner with organizations in order to leverage state and other funding sources to improve existing or create new spaces (eg. funding to increase accessibility of the arts, creative economic/community development).	City Staff - Community Development; Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
<b>10.1b</b>	<i>Incorporate Public Art into Parks and Open Space</i>		
	Identify funding sources to commission and install local artwork in existing parks and public spaces.	Parks and Recreation Committee; City Staff - Community Development; Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
	Continue to work with organizations and events to support temporary art installations in public spaces (eg. Emberlight Festival).	City Staff - Community Development; Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
	Prioritize placement of art in ADA accessible spaces to ensure all community members have access to viewing public art.	City Staff - Community Development; Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
<b>10.1c</b>	<i>Public Art Initiatives</i>		
	Explore adjustments to financial incentives, zoning requirements, or fee schedule to promote the inclusion of public art in conjunction with private development.	City Staff - Community Development	General Fund

## Goal 10.2: Social Infrastructure to Support the Arts

Action Items	Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>10.2a</b> <i>Strategic Plan for the Arts</i>		
Identify funding sources to support development of a strategic plan.	City Staff - Community Development; Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
Form a steering committee to guide planning process.	Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
<b>10.2b</b> <i>Regional Arts Collaborative/Organization</i>		
Identify partners and organizations in nearby communities and regional entities (arts organizations, school districts, economic development groups) that have a stake in supporting and growing the creative economy.	Arts Community	MACC Grants through MEDC
Outline goals and objectives for what regional collaboration looks like.	Arts Community	
Set out timeline and meeting schedule for a set time frame to try out approach.	Arts Community	
Create review process / metrics to evaluate benefits and effectiveness of collaboration efforts.	Arts Community	

## Goal 10.3: Cross-sector Incorporation of the Arts

Action Items	Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>10.3a</b> <i>Incorporation of the Arts into City and Chamber Programming</i>		
Outline goals for types of events and ways in which arts and culture can be included in City programming and processes.	City Staff - Community Development; Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
Create City policy for including the arts in City programming and processes, including ways to use the arts in community engagement and planning.	City Staff - Community Development; Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
Seek funding sources to provide compensation for artist involvement in City events.	City Staff - Community Development; Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
Identify and formalize an equitable process for inviting artists to collaborate with the City.	City Staff - Community Development; Arts Community	General Fund, MACC Grants through MEDC
<b>10.3b</b> <i>Promotion of the Arts</i>		
Partner with organizations to broaden reach of marketing efforts for all industries in the creative economy. For example, find ways to distribute the Art Guide to new audiences.	Arts Community, ITC	ITC Funding, MACC Grants through MEDC
Continue to promote cross-sector arts/outdoor recreation activities to build on visibility of Ironwood's recreation industry.	Arts Community, ITC	ITC Funding, MACC Grants through MEDC
Ensure emphasis on arts and culture activities in promotion of other community event.	Arts Community, ITC	ITC Funding, MACC Grants through MEDC



## Arts Action Program

This table provides guidance on improvements for the next 1-3 years in Ironwood. It is based on the ideas, and community feedback gathered during the planning process and the feasibility and priority of identified strategies.

Focus for the action plan is on:

- Identifying a community-wide vision and shared goals for arts and culture
- Aligning arts-related goals and initiatives across organizations and the City
- Increasing physical space to support expanded arts and culture programming
- Recognizing the need to ensure arts are accessible to all community members

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

### Cost Key

**\$:** \$0 - \$15,000      **\$\$\$:** \$75,000 - \$300,000

**\$\$:** \$15,000 - \$75,000      **\$\$\$\$:** \$300,000+

### 2026 (Year 1)

Status	Description	Cost
	Secure Funding for a Strategic Arts Plan	\$
	Assemble Regional Arts Collaboration Partners	\$
	Coordinate with ITC to develop arts and tourism approach	\$

### 2027 (Year 2)

Status	Description	Cost
	Complete a Strategic Arts Plan	\$\$
	Explore incentive/requirements for public art/ dedication for development	\$
	Develop Art in Parks Policy	\$

### 2028 (Year 3)

Status	Description	Cost
	Masonic Temple Feasibility Study	\$\$
	Implementation of the Strategic Arts Plan	\$\$







# ACCESSIBLE GOVERNMENT

## Guiding Principles

The Accessible Government Chapter focuses on the following themes derived from the vision and guiding principles:

A vibrant community requires forward-thinking leaders who reflect the people, energy, and ideas of the residents they serve. Through transparency and clear pathways for communication and public participation, Ironwood's municipal government can foster a **welcoming** environment that encourages all residents to engage with and participate in multiple facets of civic life.

A small community offers ample opportunities for **leadership**, which takes many shapes and forms. Prioritizing and centering open communication fosters connections between leaders and the community, resulting in a stronger, more trusting environment for all residents to pursue ideas, contribute to the community, and see themselves represented in City leadership and direction.



*All residents feel **empowered to participate** in the processes and projects that **shape** the community, **share** their ideas, and **step-up** to be on boards and commissions. Residents know where they can go for **answers** and feel **informed** about what and how the City is working to achieve its goals.*







Focus group participants discuss arts and culture in Ironwood during the Comprehensive Plan process



## What We've Heard

- Transparent communication is important.
- Opportunities for public input are important and should be advertised well.
- Filling board and commission positions is difficult, recruiting residents to participate in different roles is important and should be accessible to all residents.

## Overview

The Accessible Government Chapter focuses on ways the City administration can improve transparency, communication, and responsiveness to ensure residents can easily access information and contact City officials. It is important for the City to continuously evaluate, plan for, and improve how it shares and receives information so that it can better serve residents now and into the future.

With limited financial and staff capacity available, incorporating goals, policies, and strategies for accessible government into the planning process ensures it is built into other aspects of the Comprehensive Plan.

It is important to recognize that this chapter extends beyond the City of Ironwood to other local and regional jurisdictions and entities as well. For the City to operate at its most efficient and transparent, clear and constructive collaboration with other partners is essential. These partners include the school district, Gogebic Community College, Gogebic County, and state services provided on a regional basis.

Similarly, engaged residents are key to ensuring the City is accountable to its plans and priorities. A city the size of Ironwood relies on community members to play a role in managing City affairs through boards and commissions and in guiding City priorities through planning efforts and decision-making opportunities.

This chapter focuses on three main areas of accessible governance:

- **Easy access to information** for residents about City projects, priorities, and progress towards different goals and initiatives.
- **Regional coordination** between the City and its partners is essential in facilitating high-quality service provision for Ironwood residents and residents of surrounding communities.
- **Increased resident involvement** is imperative for Ironwood to be able to continue providing programming and making decisions for the community's future.

# Issues and Opportunities

As is evident by the level of civic participation, volunteerism, and support for community organizations, Ironwood residents actively engage with their community to support and improve their city. The City of Ironwood can continue to foster an engaged community through accessibility and transparency.



## Key Issues

- Board and committee positions remain unfilled. Existing committee members and volunteers are often tapped for numerous positions or roles, leading to burn-out.
- There are no clear channels or regular communication between different jurisdictions or regional agencies and organizations, such as the county, Chamber of Commerce, Gogebic Community College, and other potential City partners.
- Lack of awareness within the community about the roles of the City staff, City Committees and Commissions, and how or who to engage with about different issues.
- Many residents lack an understanding of how municipal government works and what taxes go towards.
- A transition away from traditional media sources, especially newspapers, has limited communication channels.
- The rise of multiple sources of information through social media networks means that information needs to be put out on a number of different platforms to reach a wide audience.



## Key Opportunities

- Foster wider interest in City projects, positions, and ways to participate on boards or committees through frequent and open communication about City projects and opportunities.
- Evaluate the current ways information about committee openings and participation is distributed. Identify how to reach more residents and clearly explain roles and expectations so more community members have opportunities to participate.
- Ensure there are clear and consistent ways for community members to contact City staff about a range of topics, issues, and ideas.
- Facilitate regular conversations and establish frequent and open communication channels with local and regional partners.
- Inform residents of the ways that the City is a good steward of tax dollars and works to secure as much outside funding as possible.



*Ironwood has a consistent and recognizable brand. Continuing to share branded information and materials will build confidence in the City.*



*Community members attended open houses to provide input during the Comprehensive Plan process*

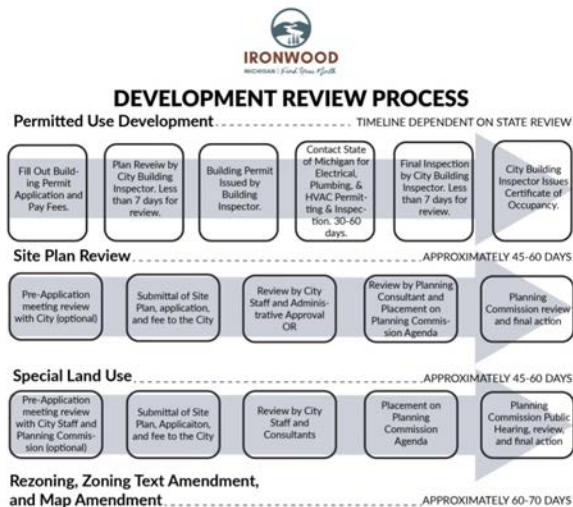
## KEY TERMINOLOGY

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Strategies: are actions, programs, and practices that support one or more of the plan's goals and policies. Strategies address at a high level, the "who, what, when, where, and how" of reaching a goal, and may involve multiple sub-strategies.



*Continuing to build out guides and FAQ documents about City Processes is one way to increase access to information*

## Goals, Policies, & Strategies

### Goal 11.1 Easy access to information

*The City of Ironwood strives to provide clear and transparent access to information regarding City initiatives, projects, and progress towards goals.*

#### Supporting Policies

**Policy 11.1.1** Improve communication from City to residents - especially for large projects and/or projects likely to impact a large number of people.

**Policy 11.1.2** Clearly communicate project rationale through various communication methods when being presented to the public. Also communicate rationale prior to public presentation if possible.

**Policy 11.1.3** Develop City-wide standards for use of current technology (such as video and website) to communicate news, meeting, and projects.

**Policy 11.1.4** Consider technological solutions to allow asynchronous participation at public hearings.

**Policy 11.1.5** Develop standards to expand viewing access to public meetings and increase user accessibility.

**Policy 11.1.6** Continually assess the need for additional technology to improve.

**Policy 11.1.7** Increase user-friendly FAQ documents and other materials and post to the City's website. For example permit FAQs and "how tos" for public meeting participation that includes information about procedures used by the City of Ironwood in official Commission and Committee meetings.

**Policy 11.1.8** Identify effective digital and non-digital communication channels with residents, such as existing City-wide communications (eg. utility bills) to connect with residents.

**Policy 11.1.9** Clearly outline the budget and tax sources on an annual basis to help residents understand where funds are coming from and how they are being used.

#### Strategies

##### *Communications Strategy*

Developing a robust communications strategy ensures clear, consistent messaging to community members and local and regional partners about City projects, progress, and changes.

##### *Virtual Dashboard to Measure Success*

Implementing a virtual dashboard provides a centralized platform to track and share progress on key initiatives. This tool would provide up to date information to residents about what projects the City has completed and status updates on ongoing projects.



## Goal 11.2 Regional coordination

*The City of Ironwood coordinates with regional partners to facilitate collaboration and regional opportunities across a variety of sectors to achieve local and regional goals.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 11.2.1** Continue to build relationships with regional and nearby municipal governments to create opportunities for resource sharing, problem solving, and other collaboration.

**Policy 11.2.2** Identify and communicate shared goals with other local and regional partners including the Chamber of Commerce, Ironwood Tourism Council, Gogebic Community College, and Ironwood Area School District.

**Policy 11.2.3** Identify and maintain clear communication channels with local and regional partners to facilitate information sharing and alignment of funding opportunities.

**Policy 11.2.4** Support improved service provision from state agencies through fostering relationships with state service departments and communicating barriers Ironwood residents and business owners experience.

### Strategies

#### *Regular Check-in/Coordination with Other Entities*

Establishing regular communication with the county, school district, and GCC fosters collaboration, streamlines resource allocation, and ensures alignment on mutual goals. These partnerships enhance efficiency and strengthen the community's overall impact.

#### *Regional Roundtable Discussions*

Hosting regional roundtable discussions brings together stakeholders from across the region, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Ironwood Tourism Council, City leadership from Hurley, Bessemer, and other nearby communities, and county representation to collaborate on shared challenges and opportunities. Strengthening regional ties will provide more funding opportunities and move forward other regional efforts.

#### *Ongoing Improvement of Services by Regional and State Government*

As a city at the edge of the state and in a lower population area, residents and businesses have reported challenges getting some services on a timely basis. This includes things like health inspectors to permit opening a restaurant or building inspectors to sign-off on construction. The City would work with elected representatives at the state and regional levels to develop solutions for this shortage. The City could also work with similar communities to lobby for additional resources in the Western UP.



Topic areas that span jurisdictional boundaries



Figure 4. State Government Partners Contributing to the Development of the Accelerator Plan

Examples of State entities that provide a variety of services or funding opportunities for Michigan's communities

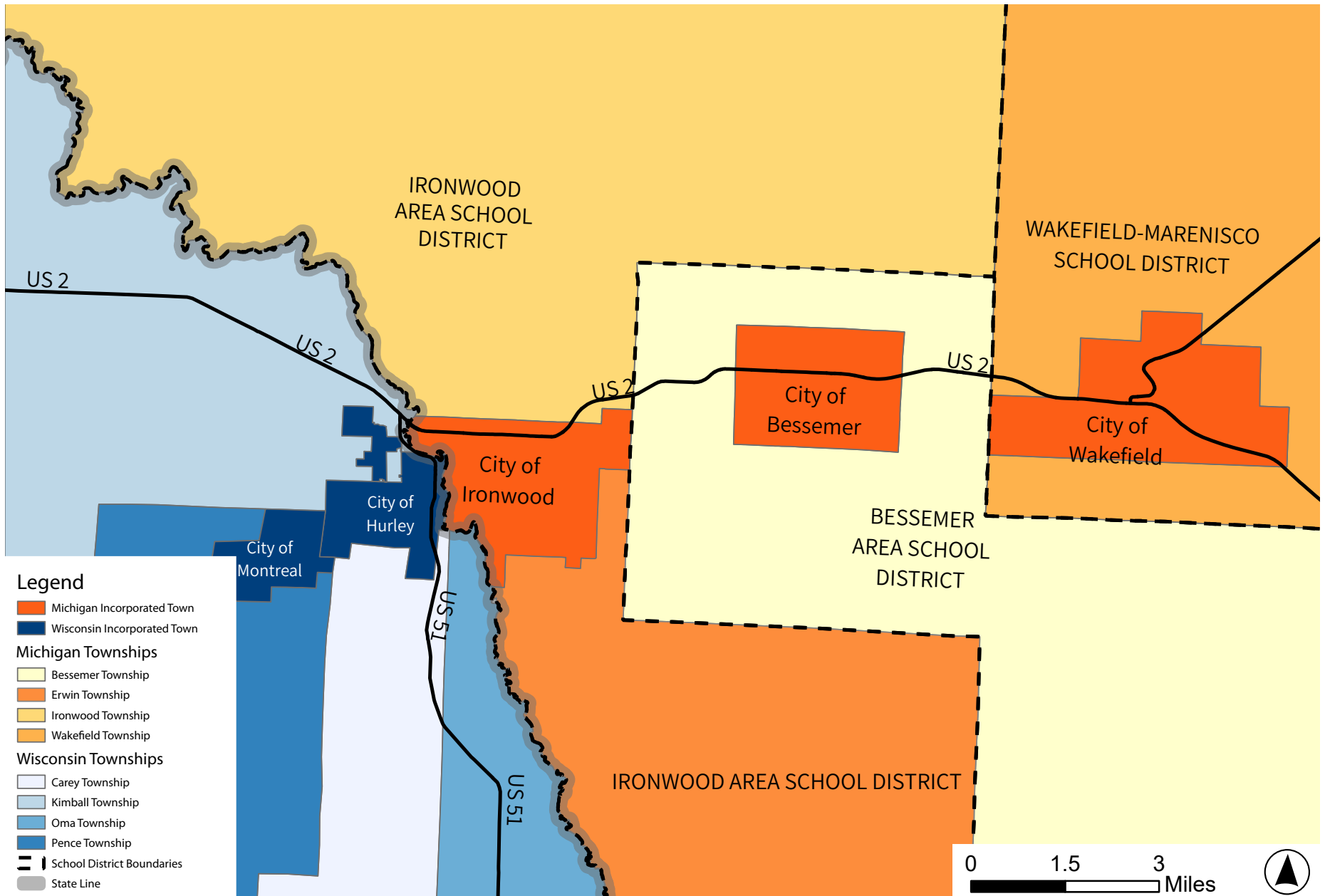


Figure 11.1 Regional Jurisdictions in and around Ironwood.

## Goal 11.3 Increased resident involvement

*The City of Ironwood would like additional participation in boards and commissions that make decisions about the community.*

### Supporting Policies

**Policy 11.3.1** Partner with institutions, organizations, and local governments to promote and encourage civic involvement.

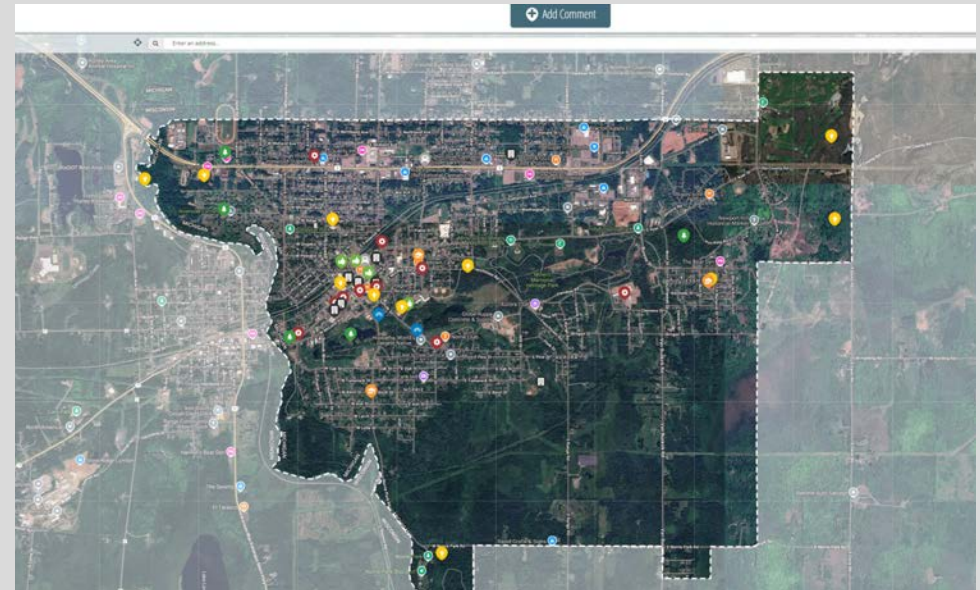
**Policy 11.3.2** Consider a co-design process based on best practices for appropriate City projects such as street projects, infrastructure projects and public development proposals.

**Policy 11.3.3** Work with local organizations to connect and build relationships with a variety of population groups to encourage wider participation in City committees and elected positions.

### Strategies

#### *Recruitment to City Boards and Commissions*

The City has struggled to get participation in commissions that affect the day-to-day lives of residents. The City and other board/commission members may need to increase recruitment efforts to ensure healthy governance and diverse perspectives.



*Using online engagement tools can help reach more residents*



*Presentations and open houses offer opportunities for in-person engagement.*



# Framing Concepts

## Access to Information

Ironwood, like many small towns, struggles to recruit residents to run for elected positions, fill boards and commission positions, and find staff. Increased knowledge and awareness of the roles, processes, and function of various City boards, positions, and staff members can result in more interest in participating in and providing input for City-related projects and roles.

Accessible government begins with the basics of making city government information easily available. This information includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- City permits, applications, code requirements;
- City meetings and events;
- City services (e.g. emergency response, utilities, snow plowing);
- City financial/budget data
- City projects (e.g. infrastructure, development);
- Resident assistance programs (e.g. blight remediation, other programs); and
- Housing assistance.

The next level of accessible government relates to user-friendly options for community members to report or submit information, such as:

- Street/trail/park maintenance issues;

- Nuisance/property maintenance issues;
- Real-time reporting and mapping of issues; and
- Automated online application/permitting programs.

Timely, convenient, and ease of use opportunities for community members to provide input on city government planning, initiatives, operations, and meetings is a key component of accessible government. It is important for the city to be transparent with its operations and initiatives, to proactively reach out to make people aware of what's happening, and provide ample and easy-to-use opportunities for people to provide input to the city.

Communication methods to increase access might include hybrid meetings, online meeting presentations in addition to in-person presentations, asynchronous input tools, conducting meetings outside of city hall and outside of traditional meeting times, and access to recordings of meetings. At the highest level, it is important for the city to emphasize that city leadership and advisory commission roles are open and available to all, with a focus on increasing the diversity of these groups, including gender, age, race, neighborhoods, income, and both homeowners and renters.

**10 Best Practices for Newly Elected Officials**

- Learn.** Get to know all you can about your community, municipal structure and charter (if any). This includes municipal departments, staff, the local school system and quasi-municipal organizations, such as regional water and sewer districts and solid-waste authorities.
- Cooperate.** You may have run for office as an individual. You may have advocated for municipal change. But you are part of a larger board now, part of a well-established organization. To get the best results, cooperation is essential.
- Prepare.** It is common for new officials to underestimate how long it takes to prepare for meetings and workshops, and even to get ready for conversations with groups of citizens or business owners. Advance preparation will make you more confident and effective.
- Be ethical and open.** You may be the "do that!" But, circumstances may arise where conflicts of interest that you did not see may surface that you or your board may need to gloss over. Being 100% ethical, prevents larger problems from arising.
- Follow the money.** You will quickly see how money and finances will become your focus. You will need to weigh the pros and cons of expanding, municipal or to keep fees and taxes as low as possible.
- Promise little.** Sometimes, elected officials make promises or series of promises. Or, they make promises about what they can do in their office. This may include promises to friends and relatives. Be careful.

**7. Meetings matter.** You will be judged by your actions at public and community meetings. Practice vigilant self-awareness. How did you look? What did you say? Did you listen as well as speak? Even your closest friends will view you differently now that you are on the "other side" of the municipal dais.

**8. Be judicious.** Some of your duties include acting in a judicial capacity – as a hearing examiner or as a judge on matters such as business license applications and building requests. Maintaining impartiality is crucial in this role.

**9. Honor the organization.** Work through the system. If your town or city employs a manager, respect that role. Do the same with department heads. This is especially true with personnel matters. Your major areas of focus should be setting municipal policy and budget priorities, not managing people or details.

**10. Be resourceful.** Use the considerable resources at your disposal. Encourage your staff to do the same. Of course, the Maine Municipal Association tops this list! Other valuable sources of information include:

**The City of Vancouver's structure**

**Elected positions**

- Waste Management Board
- Library Board
- Police Board
- Board of Public Works
- Mayor
- City Council
- Office of the City Manager
- Arts, Culture, and Community Services
- Development, Planning, and Licensing
- Public Engagement and Communications
- Engineering Services

**JACKSON**

**Planning Commission Responsibilities**

**Zoning Ordinance Amendments**

**District Change Amendments**

**Text Amendments**

**Planned Unit Developments**

Examples of informational resources and communication tools from different municipalities

## Development & Access

Easily accessible and updated information about city processes, projects, and staff contacts is not only important for residents, but also makes it easier for developers to pursue projects in Ironwood.

Clear information about requirements reduces confusion and questions around what is allowed, what permits and applications are needed, and the timeline for pursuing a project. This makes working in Ironwood more appealing and reduces the barriers for first-time and small-scale developers looking to invest in projects in the community.

## Technology & Information Sharing

Technology is a critical component for exploring and developing new methods for improving access to city government.

For cities, the continuing rapid pace of technological innovations includes the digitization and automation of information and processes. For example, digitizing permit application processes, providing live updates on projects through automated systems, and live-streaming and posting committee and board meetings, presentations, and minutes.

Civic tech is a term used to describe the use of technology to increase public engagement, participation, and co-creation between government entities and residents with the goal of making government more accessible to residents and vice versa. Similarly, gov tech is the term used to describe the use of technology to increase the efficiency of municipal operations and services.

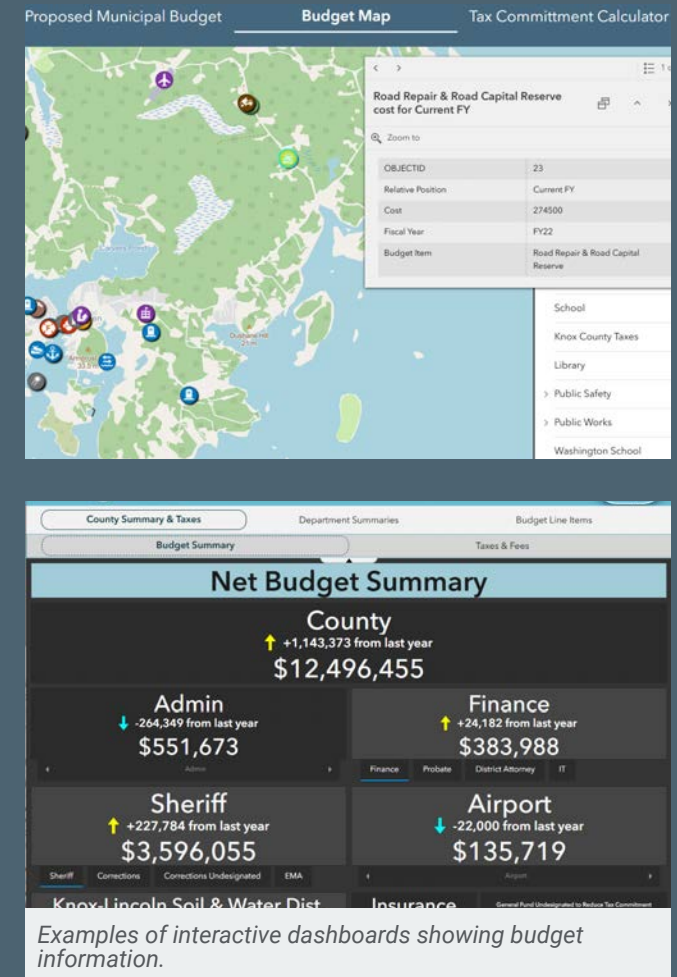
The mention of new technology often brings to mind expensive software and complicated behind-the-scenes setup. In reality, integrating technology and digitization measures can be as simple as maintaining a well-organized website with commitments to update and post information according to a schedule and set of standards. The bottom line is that consistent, clear communication that residents know they can rely on is key. The evolving tools of gov and civic tech are mechanisms to make this goal a reality.

## Digital Dashboards

A dashboard is an example of a digital tool that provides digestible, up-to-date information about different city functions or projects. Examples of how dashboards may be used include displaying city budget information, tracking progress on infrastructure projects, or learning about the responsibilities, assets, and functions of a specific department.

Dashboards are typically hosted by a website or app platform that reads data from spreadsheets, maps, or other existing data sources to provide summarized information and data visualizations. Dashboards also allow for the integration of maps, images, or other information types to create ways to make obscure or complex processes easier to understand.

Because dashboards are based on underlying data sources, they are easy to keep updated in real-time as editing information in the base data will update all linked information on the dashboard. For example, making changes to a project's timeline or budget in a spreadsheet would automatically update the dashboard.



Examples of interactive dashboards showing budget information.

## Technology is not a silver bullet

While technology may make information more accessible for many people, full reliance on digital communication tools and pathways for participation could decrease accessibility for others.

It is important to think about the different audiences within the community and barriers to accessing digital channels and connectivity. This may be internet or computer access in homes, digital literacy amongst different aged populations, or preferences for in-person opportunities for meetings, questions, or other issues.

## Increasing Civic Participation

Civic participation can take many forms and looks different for different people. Voting is often what comes to mind when someone says civic engagement, but there are a variety of ways to continually engage with and seek input and involvement from residents. The jump from voting to participating on a board or commission is a big ask of most people, so identifying one-off opportunities or short-term committees that have specific tasks offers ways to invite more residents and voices into decision-making roles.

Co-creation refers to a style of community engagement and involvement that asks for more direct input on the design and structure of a process as well as the outcomes. Co-creation takes many forms and looks different for every project. It might mean working closely with a community-based organization to identify meeting times, locations, and key questions to ask when doing broader engagement or connecting with stakeholders early on in order to understand during which project phases it makes sense for them to be most involved. Regardless of the project, whether it is a strategic plan or design of a new city facility, the main goal of community co-creation is to facilitate an approach to participation that is adaptive and inclusive, reflecting community needs and interests.

Offering consistent ways for residents to engage in City processes and projects can foster a culture of participation that builds into more involvement in longer term roles, such as on the Planning Commission or City Commission, and help build trust between community members and City officials. Below are some examples of opportunities for community participation that can build a broader foundation for and expectation around civic participation.

### One-off Participation Opportunities:

- In-person open house events or presentations to introduce or provide updates on City projects.
- Online comment periods to weigh-in on a draft City policy or ordinance.
- Recurring drop-in time or “office hours” with City staff to answer questions.
- Call for submission of ideas at the start of certain City projects or online polls to get input at the onset of a project.

Best practices for ad hoc committees, steering committees, and other medium-term participation opportunities:

- Identify the types voices needed to create an effective and representative committee and use targeted communication to reach a variety of residents.
  - *Send information via the schools if you want parent input, ask realtors to join conversations about housing development, or partner with organizations to pass information through their listservs.*
- Provide clear expectations around the time commitment required.
  - *Communicate frequency of meetings or hours per month, duration of the committee/term length, and meeting schedule.*
- Work with committee members to set a schedule and identify a convenient meeting time and place instead of deciding on the schedule without group input.
- Ensure there are specific goals and outcomes for the committee.
  - *Is the group drafting a policy? Making recommendations to the Planning Commission or City Commission? Writing a vision and set of goals for a specific topic area? Providing feedback and input on a draft plan or concept design?*
- Offer alternative participation methods.
  - *Instead of in-person meetings, can there be a virtual or asynchronous option? Participation doesn't have to mean meetings, a committee can work through providing feedback on existing plans or drafting documents through shared online platforms.*
- Respect the timeline and purpose of the group.
  - *Situations change and new information comes to light, which can alter the original goals set out for a given committee or event. If this occurs, acknowledge that the time commitment or outcomes may need to be revised and offer participants an opportunity to re-evaluate their participation at the same time.*



# Implementation

## Goal 11.1: Easy Access to Information

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>11.1a</b>	<i>Develop comprehensive communications Strategy</i>		
	Evaluate the City's website and other communication channels to identify how people are getting their information and which current channels are underutilized.	City staff - Clerk	General Fund
	Identify opportunities for improved and updated communication policies, such as public meetings and update schedules for website information.	City staff - Clerk	General Fund
	Develop standards for use of current technology (such as streaming and website) to communicate news, meetings, project info, and participation opportunities.	City staff - Clerk	General Fund
	Identify what information is most frequently sought and create FAQ documents and user guides (e.g. for permits and other application processes).	City staff - Community Development, Clerk	General Fund
	Identify and evaluate new tools and channels to increase communication and opportunities for participation.	City staff - Clerk	General Fund
	Consider funding a portion of a position as an engagement and communications specialist.	City staff - Clerk, City Manager, Finance	General Fund
	Develop policy for AI integration and use of AI for City tasks		
	Integrate AI into website to assist in communications and other tasks.		
<b>11.1b</b>	<i>Virtual Dashboard to Measure Success</i>		
	Identify a suitable project, process, or position to create a dashboard for (e.g. development project, parks and recreation assets, or City budget).	City staff - City Manager, Finance, Clerk	General Fund
	Determine type of information to be displayed and most useful format.	City staff - Clerk	General Fund
	Build out dashboard or interactive site on City website or other platform.	City staff - Clerk	General Fund
	Create system for easily updating information and ensuring regular tracking and monitoring of data/project to ensure up-to-date information.	City staff - Clerk	General Fund
	Incorporate City budget and tax sources into the dashboard to help residents understand where money is coming from, and where it is being used.	City staff - Finance, Assessor	General Fund

## Goal 11.2: Regional Coordination

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>11.2a</b>	<i>Regular Check-in / Coordination with Other Entities</i>		
	Identify goals and objectives from Ironwood's Comprehensive Plan, CIP, and other guiding documents that benefit from coordination with other jurisdictions.	City staff - City Manager, Community Development	General Fund
	Identify key contacts at other organizations and entities, such as at GCC, the School District, and Gogebic County.	City staff - Community Development	General Fund, WUPPDR
	Set-up defined meeting schedule with other entities.	City staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Outline shared goals or opportunities for resource sharing and pursuing shared funding sources.	City staff - City Manager, Finance	General Fund
	Evaluate effectiveness of meetings, meeting schedule, and outcomes on an annual basis.	City staff - City Manager	General Fund, WUPPDR
<b>11.2b</b>	<i>Regional Roundtable Discussions</i>		
	Identify key topics (e.g. economic development, schools, etc.) that would be useful to discuss, learn from, and collaborate on with other municipalities and regional jurisdictions.	City staff - Community Development	General Fund, WUPPDR
	Share topics with nearby municipalities and Gogebic and Iron Counties for feedback and prioritization.	City staff - City Manager, Community Development	General Fund, WUPPDR
	Set up meeting schedule and system for evaluating frequency and effectiveness of meetings.	City staff - City Manager	General Fund, WUPPDR
<b>11.2c</b>	<i>Ongoing Improvement of Services by Regional and State Government</i>		
	Identify key contacts at State agencies to build relationships with.	City staff - All Departments	General Fund, WUPPDR
	Coordinate with other nearby municipalities to identify common issues and/or ways to improve service provision from state agencies.	City staff - All Departments	General Fund, WUPPDR
	Provide regular feedback to State agencies to highlight ongoing issues and push for them to offer solutions or collaborate with them on solutions.	City staff - City Manager	General Fund, WUPPDR

## Goal 11.3: Increased Resident Involvement

Strategies & Action Items		Responsible Party	Cost/Funding Sources
<b>11.3a</b>	<i>Recruitment to City Boards and Commissions</i>		
	Develop FAQ guides for the City's boards and commissions to explain roles, responsibilities, and time commitment for each position.	City staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Identify proper communication channels to market board vacancies and encourage participation from residents who have never held a board position.	City staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Evaluate current board tasks and policies to identify any potential barriers or responsibilities that are reducing interest in participation.	City staff - Community Development	General Fund
	Evaluate viability, charter implications, and financial impact of providing stipends for commission and board participation.	City staff - City Manager, Finance, Community Development	General Fund

## Accessible Government Action Program

This table provides guidance on improvements for the next 1-3 years in Ironwood. It is based on the ideas, and community feedback gathered during the planning process and the feasibility and priority of identified strategies.

Focus for the action program is on:

- Expanding communication channels and frequency about ongoing City projects and initiatives
- Ensuring clear information about the role of City staff, boards, and commissions is readily available
- Increasing the number of people involved in boards and commissions, especially community members who have not been involved previously
- Collaboration between different local and regional entities to align goals and share resources when possible

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

### Cost Key

**\$:** \$0 - \$15,000      **\$\$\$:** \$75,000 - \$300,000

**\$\$:** \$15,000 - \$75,000      **\$\$\$\$:** \$300,000+

### 2026 (Year 1)

Status	Description	Cost
	Set up recurring regional coordination meeting with County, townships, and other municipalities	\$
	Develop lobbying approach for advocating for the Western UP at the State	\$
	Actively market board and commission openings to the public	\$
	Develop a clear diagram to explain the municipal budget and taxes	\$

### 2027 (Year 2)

Status	Description	Cost
	Develop civic communications and engagement strategy	\$ - \$\$
	Updates to the City website to enhance communications	\$\$
	Evaluate a stipend system for commission and board participation	\$

### 2028 (Year 3)

Status	Description	Cost
	Creation of a municipal dashboard	\$
	Incorporate budget/tax diagram into an interactive, online resource in coordination with the dashboard	\$
	Evaluate board/commission recruitment efforts and adjust as needed	\$







# IMPLEMENTATION

## Overview

The Ironwood Comprehensive Plan provides the policy framework to guide physical change in the community over the next 20 years. The effectiveness of the plan depends on identifying actions and initiatives that help carry out the ideas, concepts, principles, and vision outlined in the plan. To this end, Chapters 3 through 11 each include strategies that outline actions, programs, and practices to support the goals of each chapter and the broader plan. The strategies are organized by the goals that they support, and identify who should lead implementation of each strategy.

In addition, each chapter includes an Action Program, which outlines direct action steps for the first three years after the plan is adopted in order to move strategies forward. This helps prioritize the strategies and provide a road map for the City Staff, organizations, and community members to move from plan to action.

The following chapter provides direction on how to use these various implementation tools, as well as best practices that will help to ensure that this plan is and continues to be a useful, living document that results in concrete outcomes.

“

*With a 20 year scope, Ironwood’s Comprehensive Plan is **visionary yet attainable**, guiding Ironwood towards long-term goals while providing **concrete steps, policies, and strategies** to facilitate short-term action.*

”



## Implementation Tools

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

### Strategies & Priority Action Steps

Chapters 3 through 7 each include a section on “Implementation” that outlines a number of general actions, programs, and practices that support the goals and policies of the plan. Also included in each chapter is a section titled “Action Program” which organizes strategies into steps for implementing high priority strategies over the first three years after plan adoption.

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

### Regulatory Tools

While the plan strives to provide clear steps towards action, the City will need to rely on regulatory tools and best practices to help implement the strategies and uphold the policies outlined in this plan.

#### City Ordinances and Regulations

The City has the authority to enforce and create ordinances, including zoning, subdivision, other regulations, and administrative approval processes to maintain health safety, and welfare in the community. These controls should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, as the Comprehensive Plan provides a broad policy framework.

#### *Zoning Ordinance*

A key step after adopting a comprehensive plan is updating the City zoning ordinance to align with the land use guidance outlined in the new Comprehensive Plan. While the Comprehensive Plan provides a long-term strategy for how a city will develop, the Zoning Ordinance provides on-the-ground standards and requirements to ensure land is developed and redeveloped in alignment with the goals and priorities of the City.



## Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

A CIP is a plan which outlines the timing of and funding for capital improvement projects such as roadway improvements or construction of public buildings over several years. Creating and updating a CIP on a regular basis ensures the budget and funding priorities of the city are in alignment with the priorities in the Comprehensive Plan and allows the city to plan strategically for community growth and transformation.

## Best Practices

### Partnerships

Creating and maintaining partnerships within and outside the community will strengthen opportunities to accomplish projects and ease understanding of complex situations. Many strategies in this plan rely on developing and maintaining relationships and partnerships with other entities including neighboring jurisdictions, different governmental agencies and entities, and community-based organizations.

### Communication and Transparency

Providing user-friendly and accessible information to the community so they can be informed, aware of opportunities to be involved, and understand the City's goals and objectives will help build trust and further collective goals. Continuing to include opportunities for residents to weigh-in, provide feedback, and understand decision-making processes within the City will foster a positive and transparent environment. This plan is a guidebook for City decision making, sharing the vision, goals, and policies back with the community who helped create them is a key first step in continuing to build buy-in and engagement during the implementation phase.

### Management of Existing and New Planning Documents

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

Michigan state law requires that Comprehensive Plans be updated every 5 years; however, more frequent updates may be warranted. Key indicators for major plan updates include:

- Significant economic or physical change occurs in the community

- Frequent requests for variances from policies and laws are received and granted
- Completion of several action items
- Four years have passed and little progress has been made

The Comprehensive Plan is not a city's only planning document. Cities develop additional plans for specific topics, like a downtown plan, and different time scales, such as annual goal setting documents. Planning processes should build upon each other in order to effectively move the City toward its desired future. Monitoring the initiatives in related planning documents and continuing to build off those identified in this plan will be necessary for cohesive implementation of all City plans.

### Enhancement of Volunteerism, Philanthropy, and Leadership

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

## Rely on the Guiding Principles

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



## Putting the Plan to Use

Even the most inspirational plan can lead nowhere if the plan just sits on the shelf. Successful implementation requires that the comprehensive plan be used and referenced on a regular basis by various groups in the community. All members of the community have a potential role to play in ensuring the plan is kept off the shelf and put into action. The following are examples of how different groups can use and implement the plan:

### The plan as a guide to decision making

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

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

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

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

**Community Organizations** use the plan to identify opportunities for collaboration, implementation of their programs in alignment with broader City goals, and ways they can supplement, develop, and grow the City's ability to provide a broad range of programming, support, and opportunity for residents.

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

### The plan as a marketing tool

As an adopted policy plan developed through a participatory public process, the Comprehensive Plan can help solidify the support, commitment, and collaboration needed to mobilize the community. The plan should be referenced, celebrated, and promoted to the Ironwood community, the region, and

the state seeking to invest or re-invest in the city. In essence, the plan becomes the document that is provided to prospective businesses, residents, visitors, tourists, or investors. Lastly the plan's policy directives are important when applying for grant funding from government or non-government entities.

## The plan as a “to do list”

The Comprehensive Plan informs the City of Ironwood's to do list and should be a resource for city departments, boards, and commissions as they establish annual goals and work programs. Successful implementation of the comprehensive plan results in checking off some of the projects on the list. As items get checked off the list, it is an indicator that the plan be revisited and refreshed.

In the implementation section of each chapter, a table identifies responsible parties who have the expertise, jurisdiction, and/or resources to lead the implementation of specific strategies and actions. While the Community Development department at the City is often the lead for implementing the Comprehensive Plan, it is worth noting that there are over 25 different parties identified in the plan to lead initiatives.

### A Community To-Do List:

The following departments, boards and commissions, and community entities are all identified as responsible parties for at least one strategy or initiative in the Comprehensive Plan.

#### City Staff/Departments:

- Community Development
- Code Enforcement
- Public Works
- Administration/Clerk
- Finance
- City Manager
- Engineering
- Assessor
- Water & Sewer

#### Boards & Commissions:

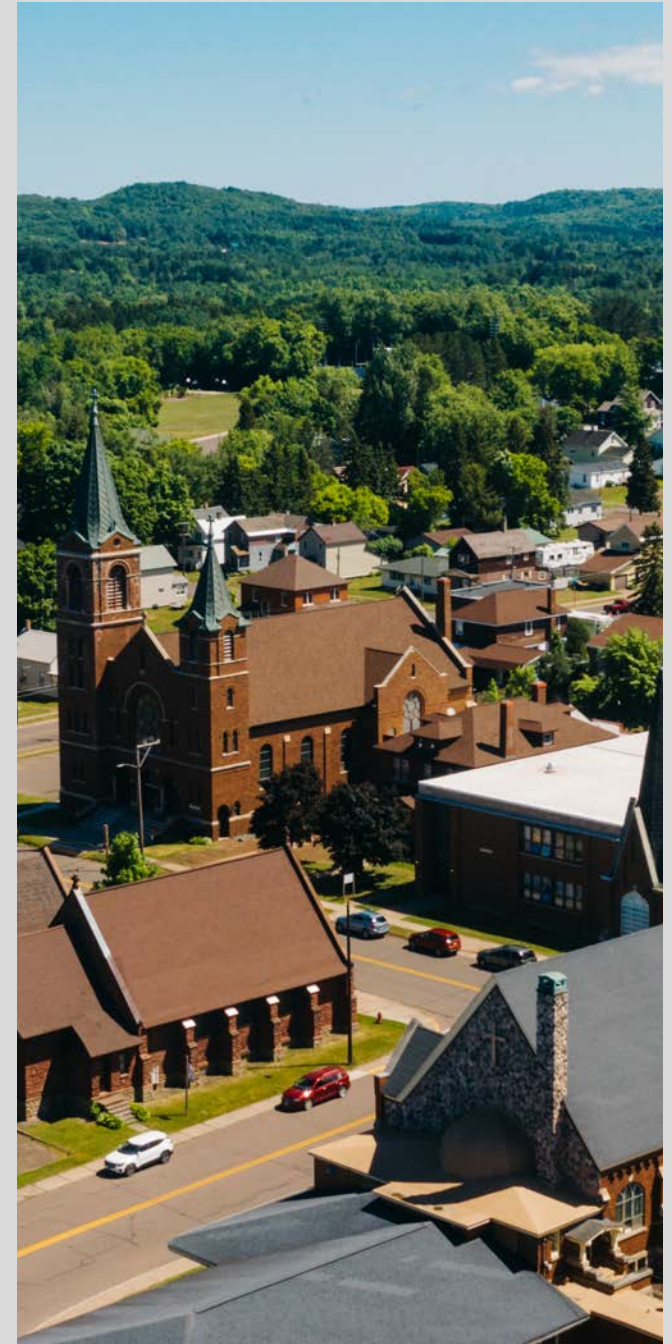
- Planning Commission
- City Council
- Parks and Recreation Committee
- DIDA
- Ironwood Housing Commission
- Economic Development Corporation
- Ironwood Tourism Council

#### Community Entities:

- Gogebic Community College
- Ironwood Area Schools
- Chamber of Commerce
- Friends of the Miners Park
- Project Connect
- ABR Foundation
- Gogebic Range Health Foundation

#### Community At-Large:

- Local employers
- Business community
- Industrial business community
- User Groups (e.g. mountain bike trail users)
- Volunteers
- Arts community/organizations





# Achieving the Plan's Vision

Each chapter of the plan identifies specific goals, policies, and strategies that address how the different chapter topics connect to and move Ironwood towards realizing the community vision and implementing the guiding principles. Below are tables summarizing these goals and strategies. Clicking on any of the goals or strategies identified in the table will redirect to more information on that topic provided in the specific chapter.

## Chapter 3 Land Use Character & Development

<u>Goal 3.1 Rehabilitation and Reuse</u>	
3.1a	<a href="#"><u>Downtown Building Rehabilitation and Infill Development</u></a>
<u>Goal 3.2 Strategic Land Use Guidance and Growth</u>	
3.2a	<a href="#"><u>Industrial Park Expansion</u></a>
<u>Goal 3.3 Balancing Flexibility and Ironwood's Character</u>	
3.3a	<a href="#"><u>Creation of New Downtown Districts</u></a>

## Chapter 4 Housing & Neighborhoods

<u>Goal 4.1 Accessibility</u>	
4.1a	<a href="#"><u>Scattered Site Infill Development Pilot Program</u></a>
4.1b	<a href="#"><u>Strengthen the Rental Market</u></a>
4.1c	<a href="#"><u>Support Employee Housing through Public-Private Partnerships</u></a>
4.1d	<a href="#"><u>Increase Awareness and Utilization of Financial Incentives</u></a>
<u>Goal 4.2 Diversification</u>	
4.2a	<a href="#"><u>Development of City-Owned Property</u></a>
4.2b	<a href="#"><u>Creation of a Housing TIF</u></a>
4.2c	<a href="#"><u>Developer Roundtables and Capacity Building</u></a>
4.2d	<a href="#"><u>Streamline Development Process and Permitting</u></a>
<u>Goal 4.3 Quality</u>	
4.3a	<a href="#"><u>Housing Rehabilitation Programs for Homeowners</u></a>
4.3b	<a href="#"><u>Code Enforcement to Address Blight</u></a>
4.3c	<a href="#"><u>Monitor and Address the Impact of Short-Term Rentals</u></a>
4.3d	<a href="#"><u>Rehabilitate and Revitalize Downtown Properties</u></a>
4.3e	<a href="#"><u>Tool Library for Community Maintenance</u></a>

## Chapter 5 Economic Development

<u>Goal 5.1 Foster a Sustainable Year-Round Economy</u>	
5.1a	<a href="#"><u>Industrial Incubator</u></a>
5.1b	<a href="#"><u>Support Existing Business Growth</u></a>
5.1c	<a href="#"><u>Attract New Businesses</u></a>
<u>Goal 5.2 Emphasize Community-Centered Growth</u>	
5.2a	<a href="#"><u>Alignment of GCC Classes with Local Business and Industry Needs</u></a>
5.2b	<a href="#"><u>Economic Development Fund</u></a>
5.2c	<a href="#"><u>Red Tape Reduction Efforts</u></a>
<u>Goal 5.3 Market and Promote Ironwood's Economy</u>	
5.3a	<a href="#"><u>Digital Facade Improvement</u></a>
5.3b	<a href="#"><u>Support Restaurants and Third Spaces for People to Gather</u></a>
5.3c	<a href="#"><u>Partnership/Collaboration of the Chamber and ITC</u></a>

## Chapter 6 Environment

<u>Goal 6.1 Healthy, Multi-functional Green Spaces</u>	
6.1a	<a href="#"><u>Implement Forestry Management Plan</u></a>
6.1b	<a href="#"><u>Invasive Species Management</u></a>
6.1c	<a href="#"><u>Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan</u></a>
6.1d	<a href="#"><u>Native Planting Program</u></a>
<u>Goal 6.2 Resilient Built Infrastructure</u>	
6.2a	<a href="#"><u>City-owned Building Efficiency</u></a>
6.2b	<a href="#"><u>Residential and Community Building Efficiency</u></a>
6.2c	<a href="#"><u>Infrastructure Resiliency</u></a>

## Chapter 7 Parks & Recreation

<u>Goal 7.1 High Standard of Quality Across Parks and Recreation Facilities</u>	
7.1a	<u>Address Outdoor Facility Needs</u>
7.1b	<u>Coordinate with School District Regarding Sports Facilities</u>
<u>Goal 7.2 Accessible Year-Round Recreation</u>	
7.2a	<u>Explore Possibility of Indoor Recreation Facility</u>
7.2b	<u>Exploration of a Community Pool</u>
7.2c	<u>Local Trail Connections to Neighborhoods (Underway)</u>
7.2d	<u>Outdoor Hockey Rink</u>
7.2e	<u>Miners Park Amenities</u>
7.2f	<u>Project Connect</u>
<u>Goal 7.3 Regional Coordination of Recreation Facilities</u>	
7.3a	<u>Regional Recreation Authority</u>

## Chapter 8 Transportation

<u>Goal 8.1 Preservation and Maintenance</u>	
8.1a	<u>Ongoing Rehab/Replacement of Local Roadways</u>
<u>Goal 8.2 Access and Mobility</u>	
8.2a	<u>Bicycle and Pedestrian Framework and Prioritization</u>
8.2b	<u>Accessibility Audit of Downtown Streetscape</u>
<u>Goal 8.3 Multi-modal Safety</u>	
8.3a	<u>Improve Walking and Biking Routes to School</u>
8.3b	<u>Improve Pedestrian Crossings at Highway 2 Intersections</u>

## Chapter 9 Infrastructure

<u>Goal 9.1 Maintenance of Quality Systems</u>	
9.1a	<u>Ongoing Maintenance of City-Owned Facilities</u>
9.1b	<u>Water Distribution Systems and Sanitary Sewer Collection System Projects (Underway)</u>
<u>Goal 9.2 Resilience</u>	
<u>Goal 9.3 Financial Sustainability</u>	

## Chapter 10 Arts & Culture

<u>Goal 10.1 Support the Use of Physical Space for the Arts</u>	
10.1a	<u>Support the Use of Physical Spaces for the Arts</u>
10.1b	<u>Incorporate Public Art into Parks and Open Space</u>
10.1c	<u>Public Art Initiatives</u>
<u>Goal 10.2 Social Infrastructure to Support the Arts</u>	
10.2a	<u>Strategic Plan for the Arts</u>
10.2b	<u>Regional Arts Collaborative/Organization</u>
<u>Goal 10.3 Cross-sector Incorporation of the Arts</u>	
10.3a	<u>Incorporation of the Arts into City and Chamber Programming</u>
10.3b	<u>Promotion of the Arts</u>

## Chapter 11 Accessible Government

<u>Goal 11.1 Easy Access to Information</u>	
11.1a	<u>Develop comprehensive communications Strategy</u>
11.1b	<u>Virtual Dashboard to Measure Success</u>
<u>Goal 11.2 Regional Coordination</u>	
11.2a	<u>Regular Check-in / Coordination with Other Entities</u>
11.2b	<u>Regional Roundtable Discussions</u>
11.2c	<u>Ongoing Improvement of Services by Regional and State Government</u>
<u>Goal 11.3 Increased Resident Involvement</u>	
11.3a	<u>Recruitment to City Boards and Commissions</u>









IRONWOOD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
APPENDIX A  
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.

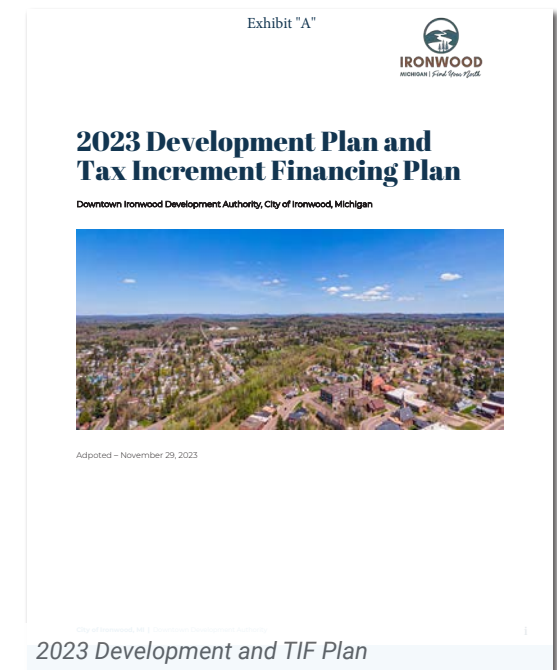
#### Key Recommendations:

- 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







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.

## 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.

## Gogebic County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020-2025)

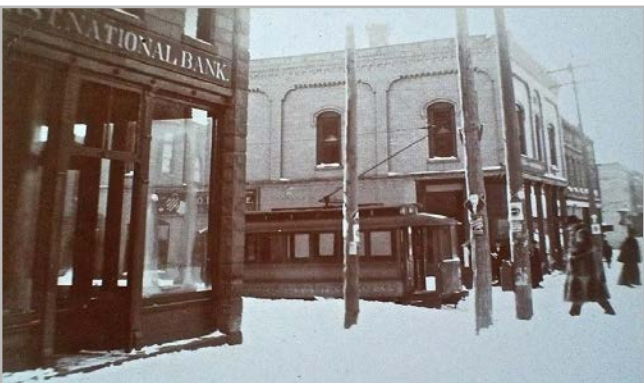
Ironwood is included in the Gogebic County Hazard Mitigation Plan, which provides an analysis of hazards effecting the county, including Ironwood, along with risk assessments and hazard mitigation strategies. The Plan was completed in 2020 and details which local planning mechanisms and programs should 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

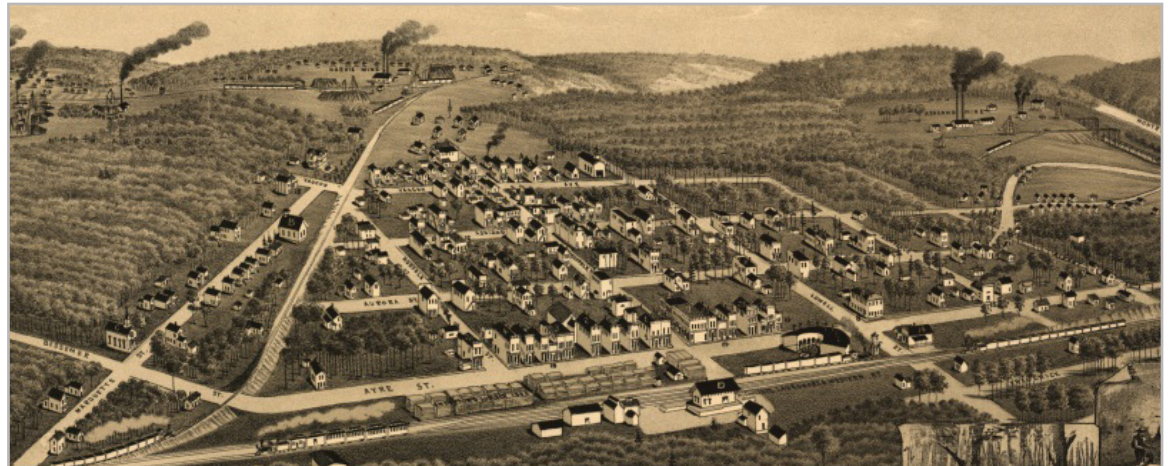
Nearly 2 billion years ago, Ironwood was covered by a shallow sea that deposited iron rich sediments in the area. About 1 billion years later, the North American continent began separating in what is known as the Midcontinent Rift System. The rift created both the basin that became Lake Superior, as 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 A.1 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](http://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.

## 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 A.1 Ironwood location in Michigan

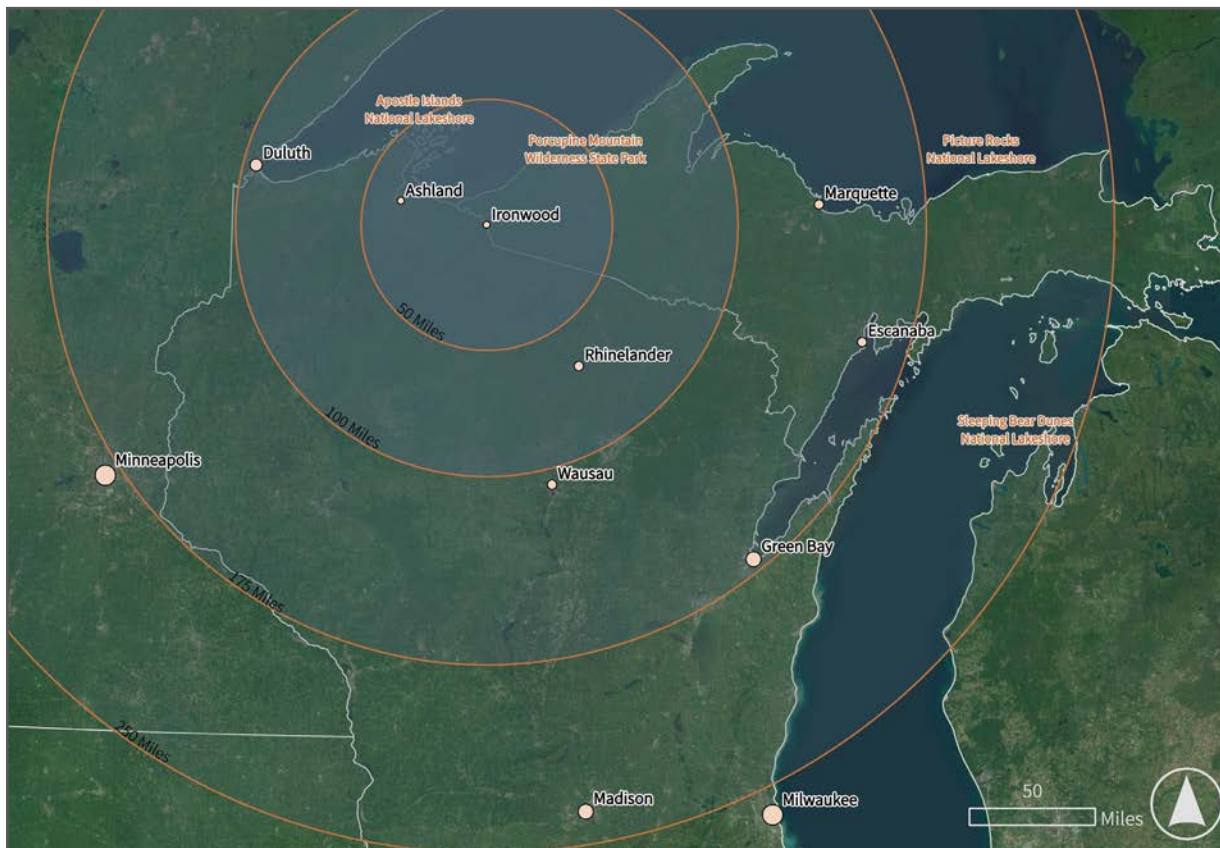
## Community Context and Jurisdictional Boundaries

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 A.2 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 A.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 A.3.

#### **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.

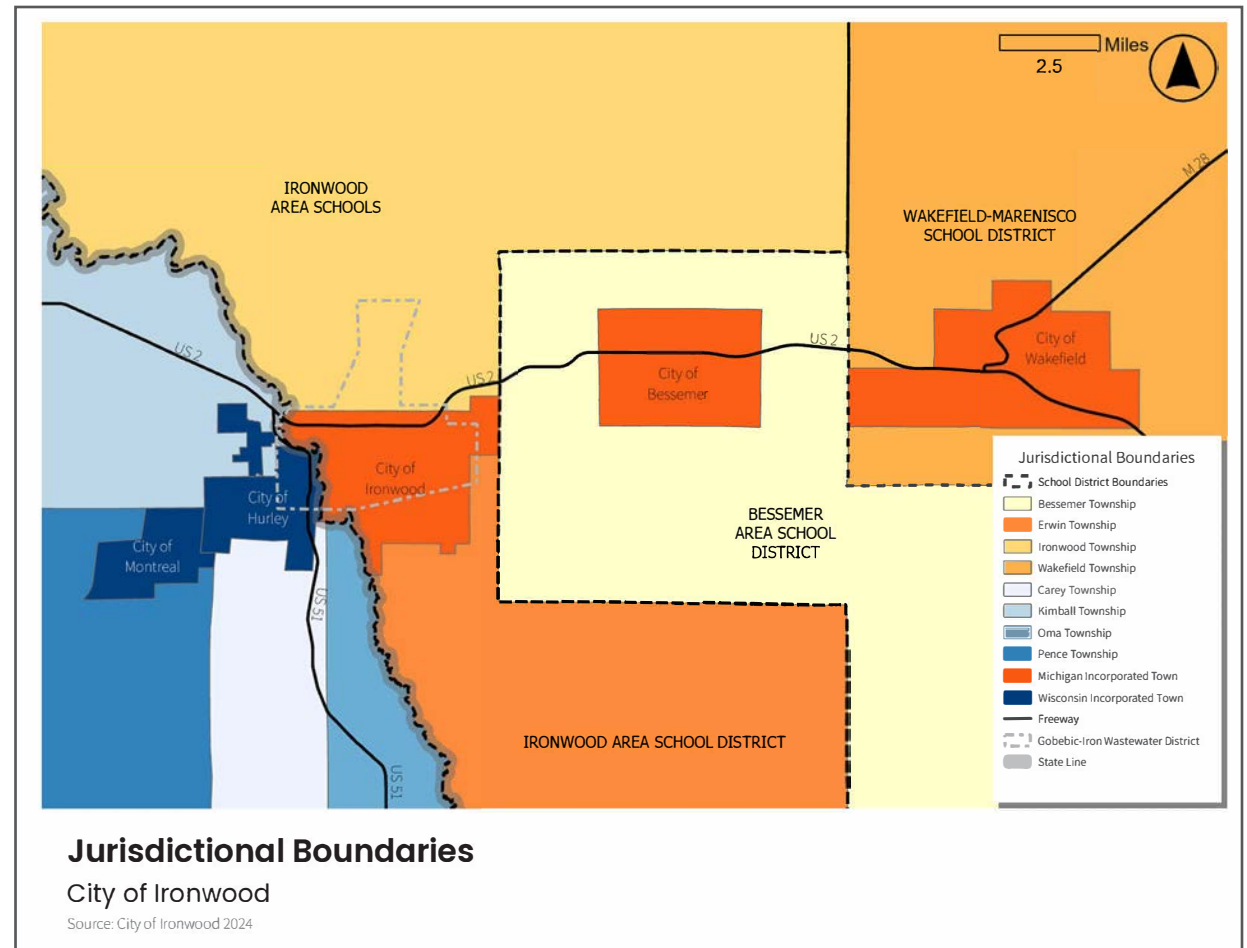


Figure A.3 Jurisdictional boundaries in and around Ironwood

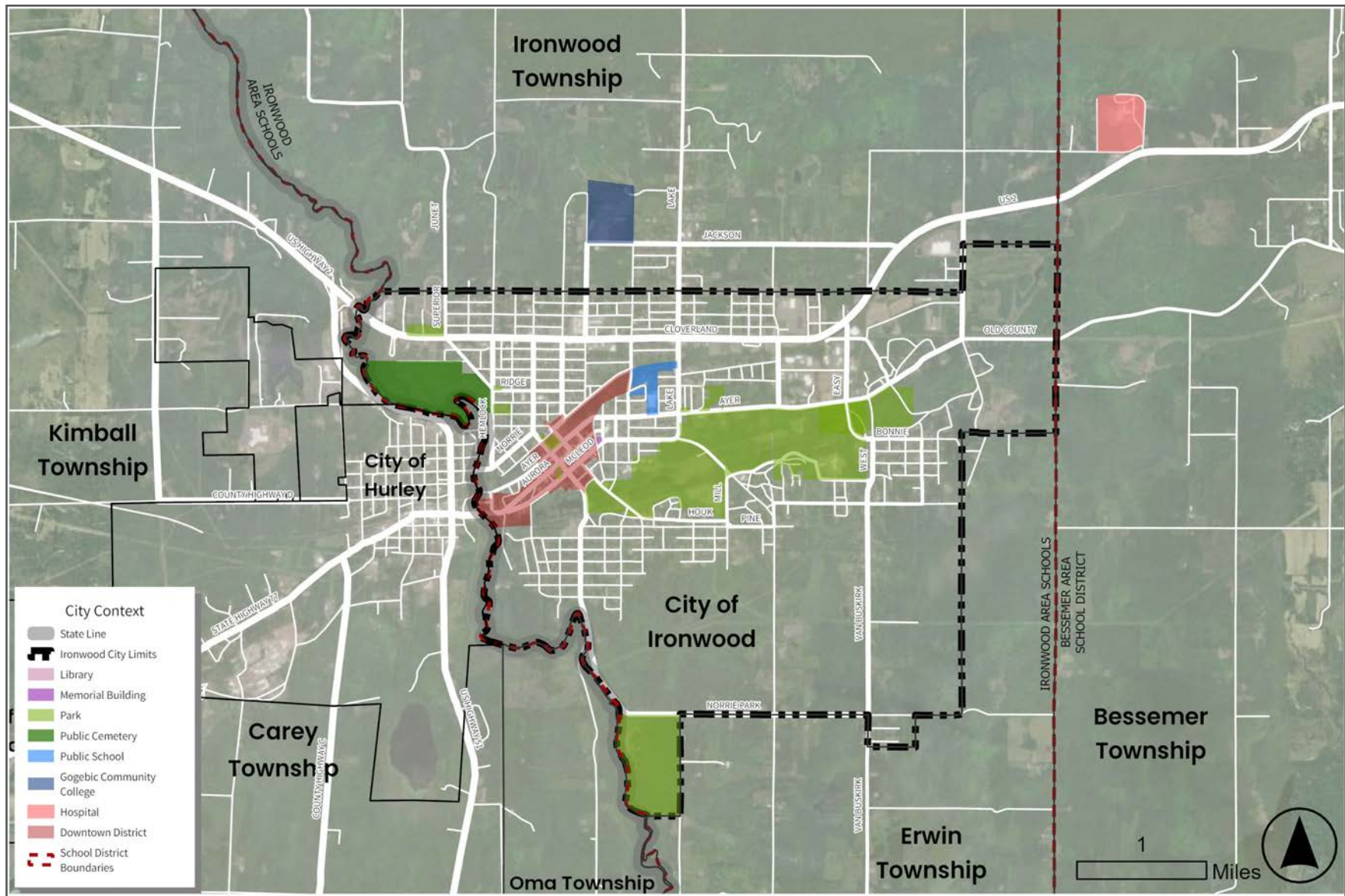
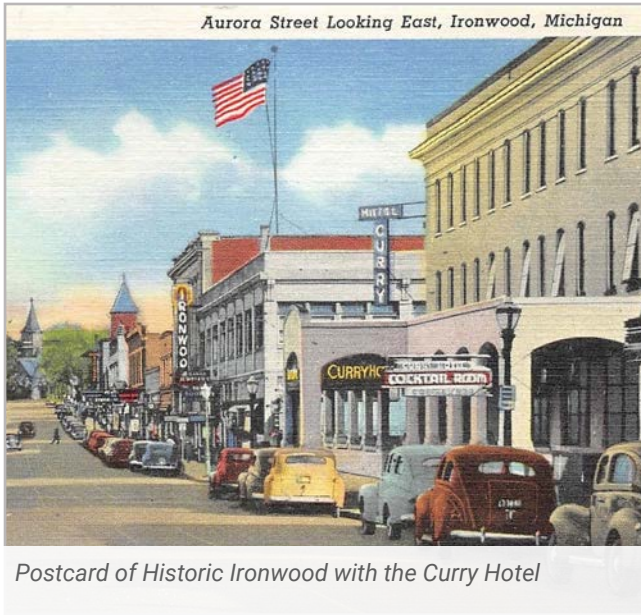


Figure A.4 Ironwood community context



## 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.

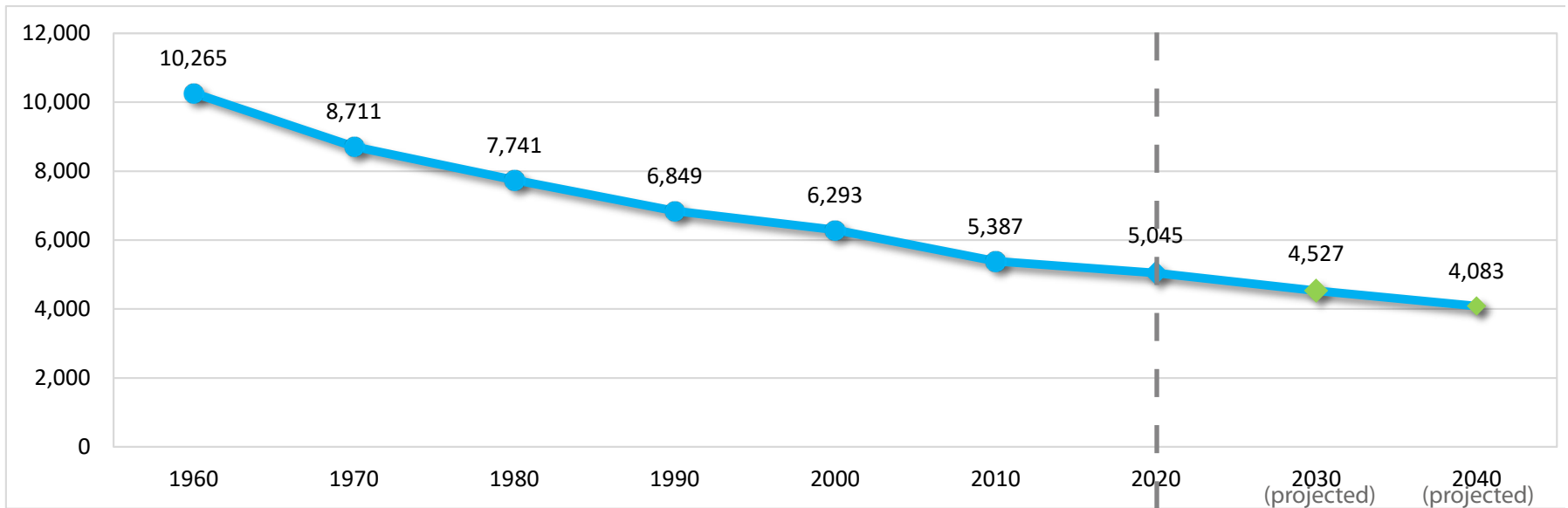
Population projections from MCDA show similar trends, with an 11% decrease in population between 2020 and 2035 for both Ironwood and Gogebic County.

Table A.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 A.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).

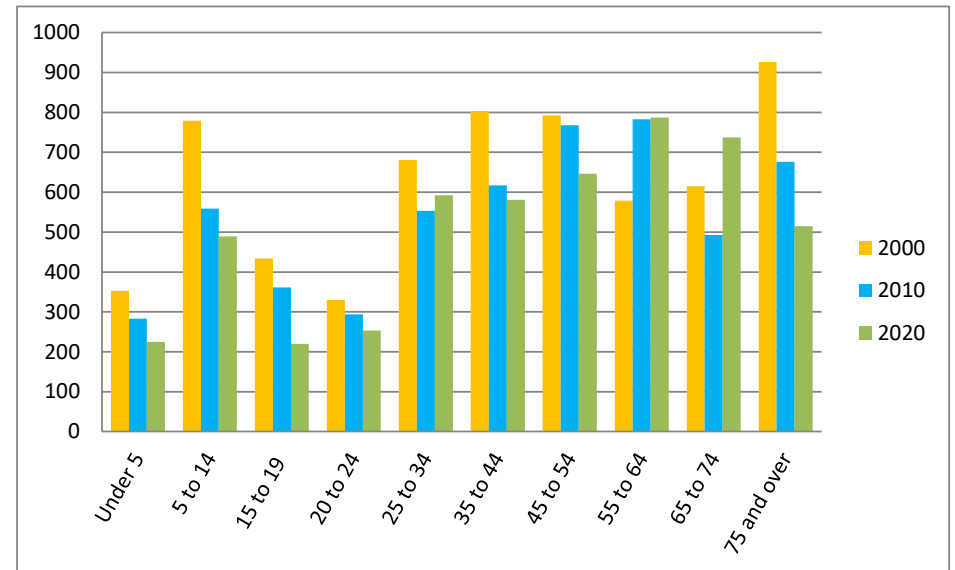


Table A.7 Ironwood population by age cohort 2000-2020

# Population Age and Planning

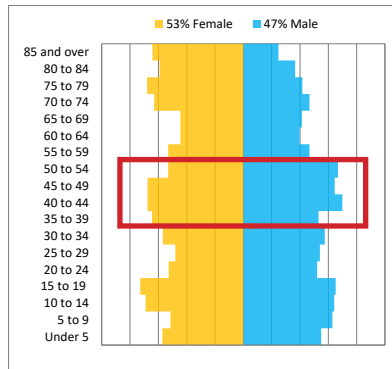


Figure A.8 Ironwood population 2000

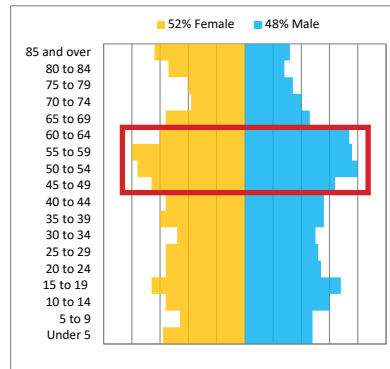


Figure A.9 Ironwood population, 2010

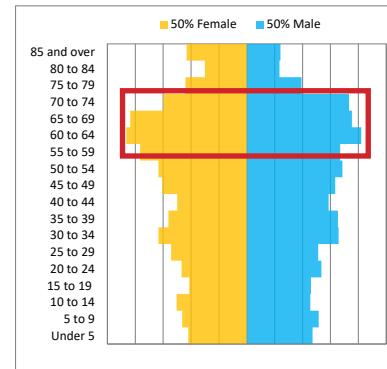


Figure A.10 Ironwood population, 2020

## 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.

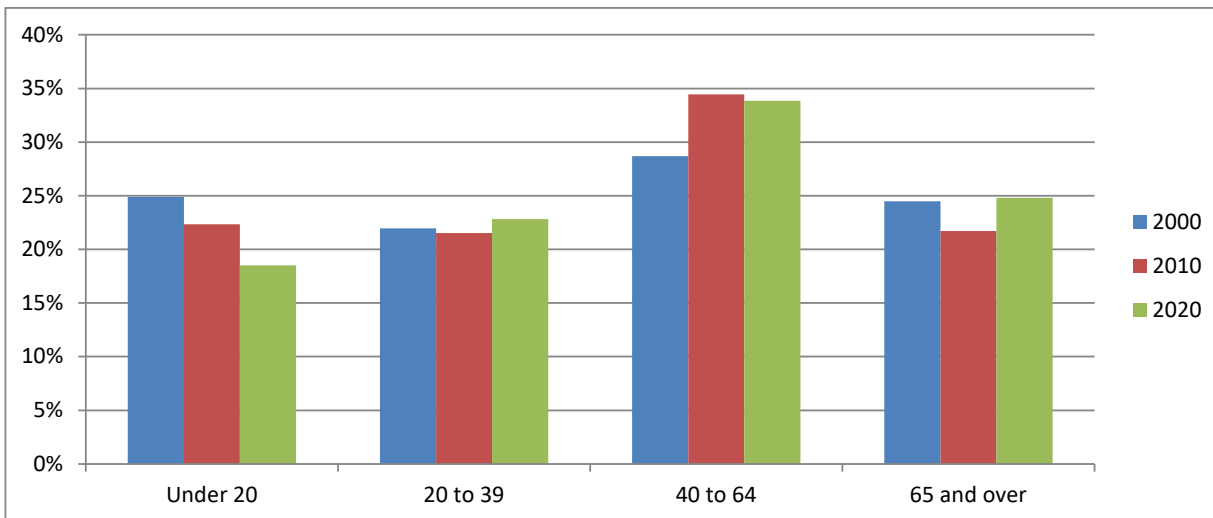


Figure A.11 Ironwood population by age categories, 2000-2020

## 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 A.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 A.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

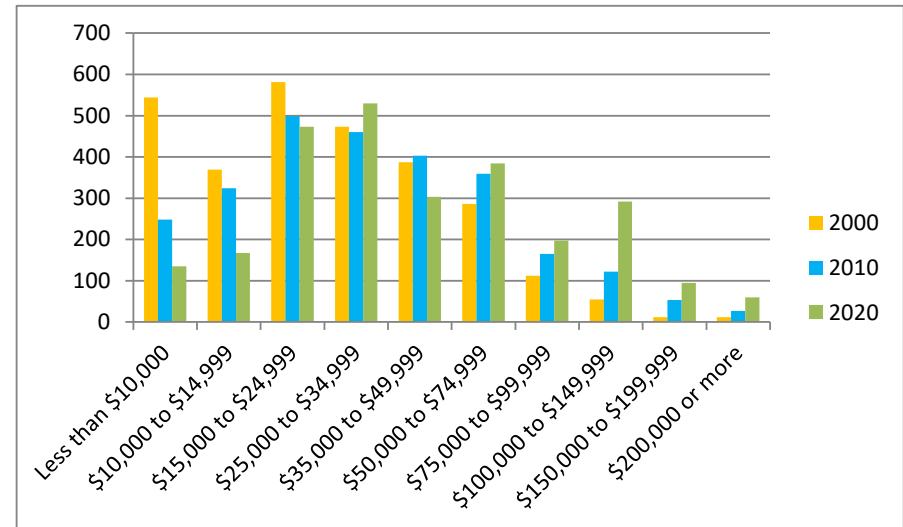


Figure A.13 Household incomes in Ironwood, 2000-2020

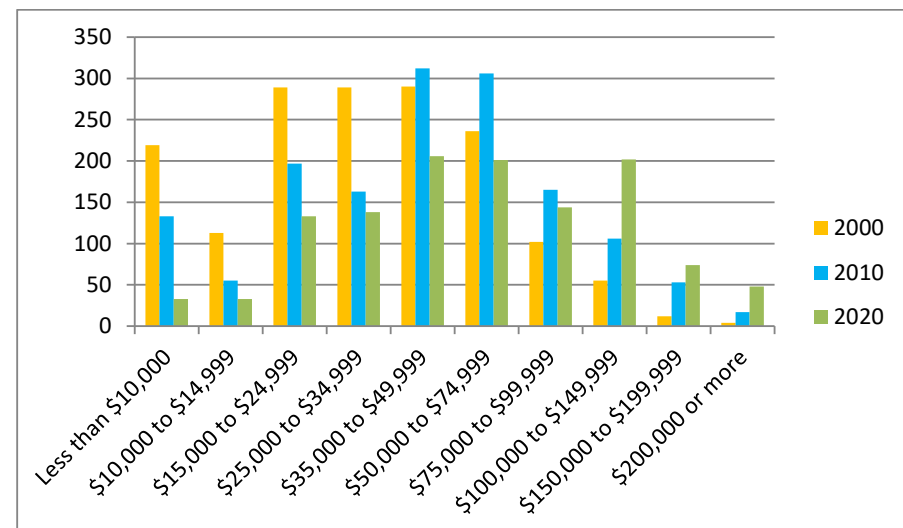


Figure A.14 Family incomes in Ironwood, 2000-2020



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

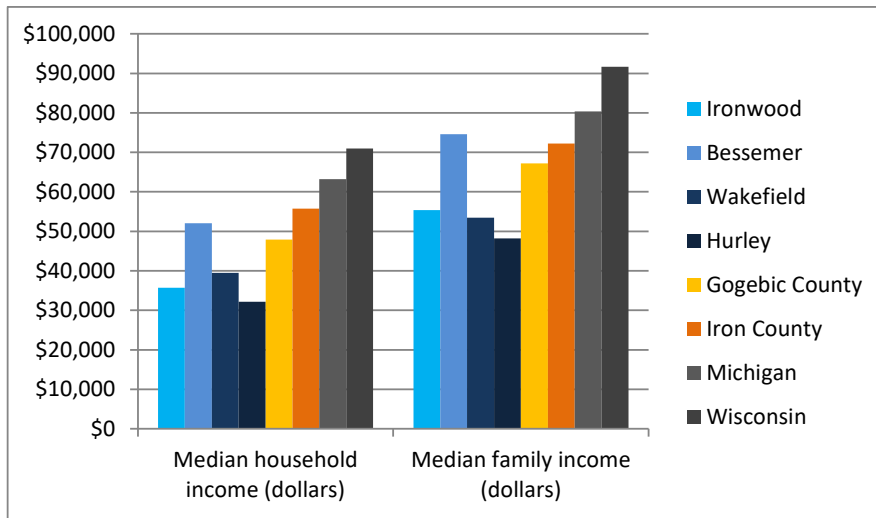


Figure A.16 Median household incomes in Ironwood and surrounding areas, 2020

## 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

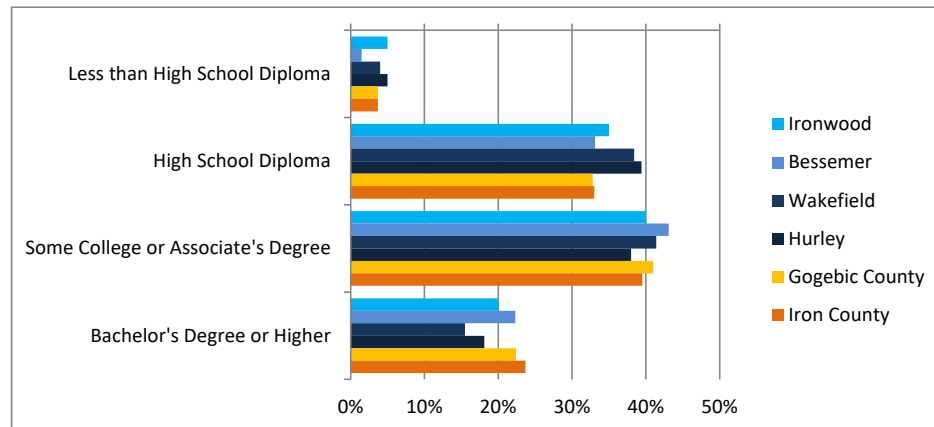


Figure A.18 Educational attainment in Ironwood and surrounding areas, 2020

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 schools.

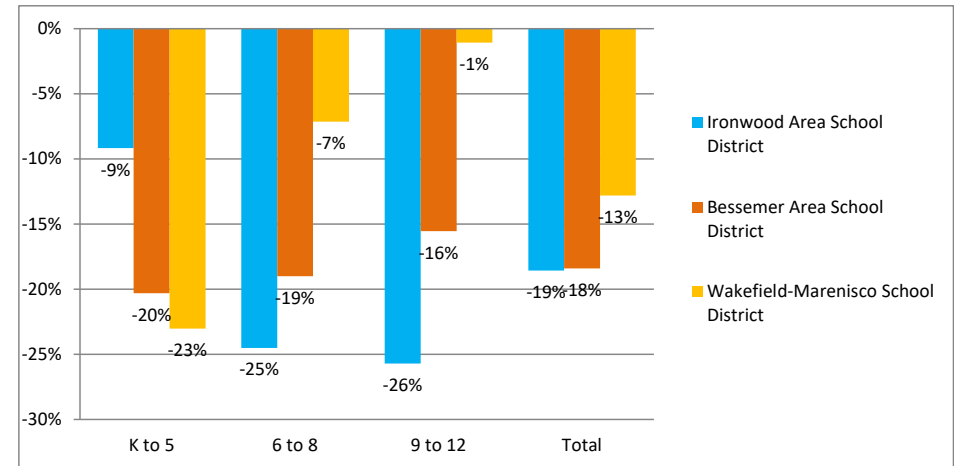


Figure A.17 Change in school enrollment in Ironwood and nearby districts, 2012-2022

## 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.

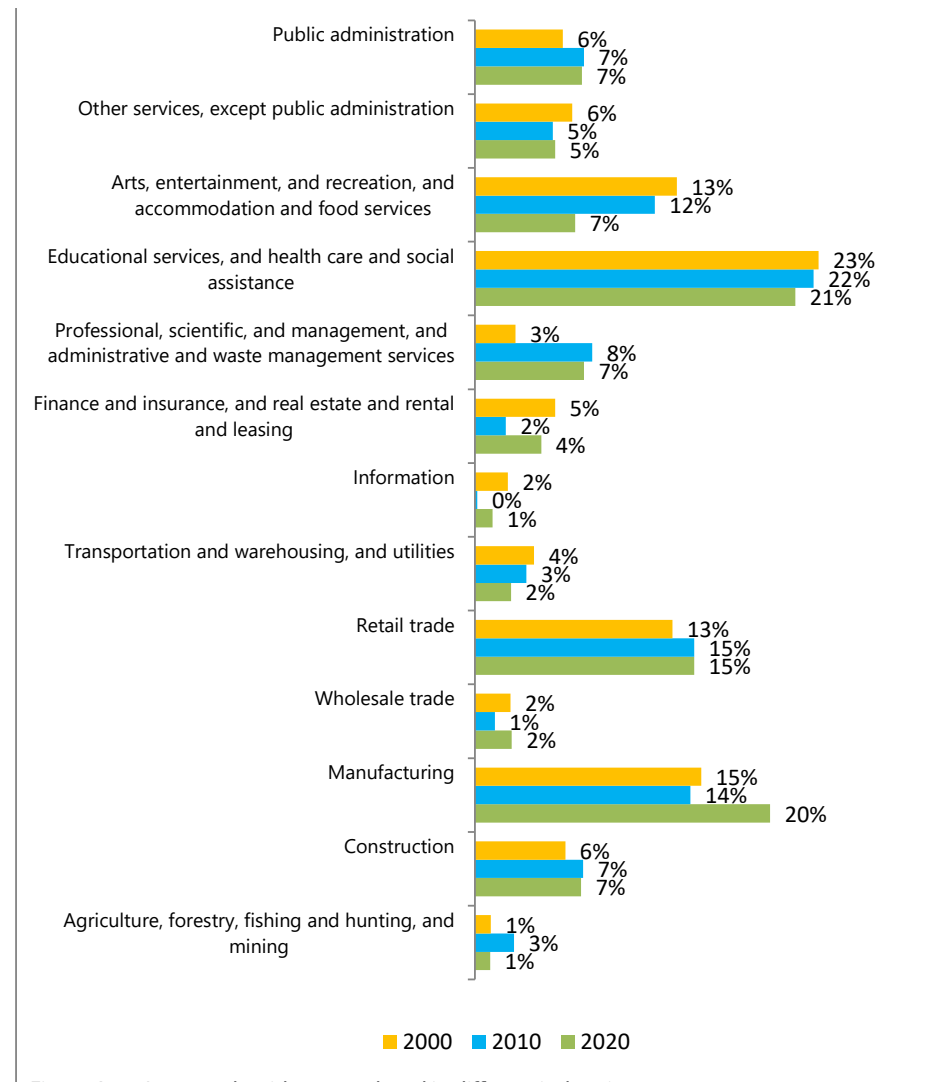


Figure A.19 Ironwood residents employed in different industries, 2000-2020

## 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.

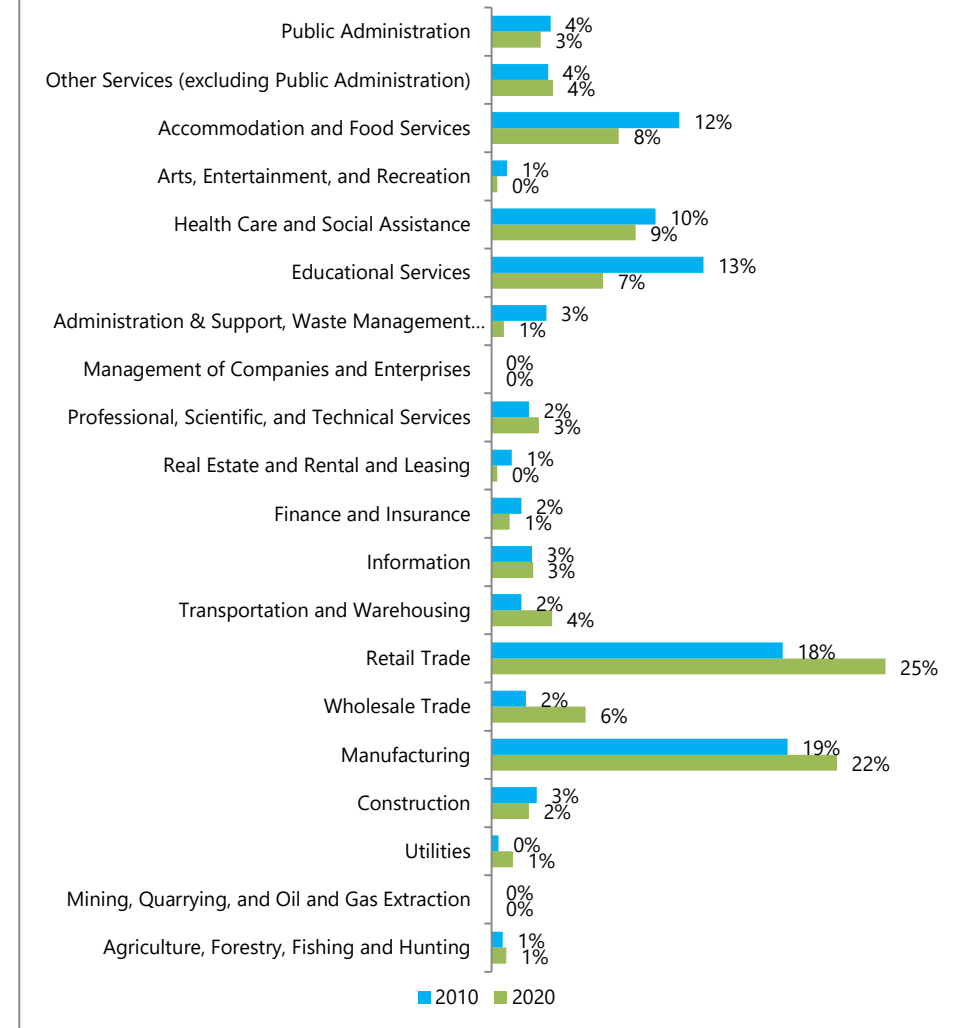
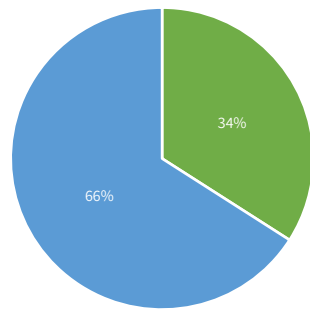
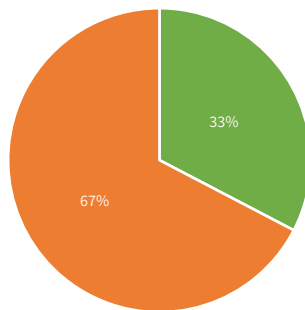


Figure A.20 Employment types available in Ironwood by industry, 2010-2020



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

Figure A.21 Ironwood resident workforce and outflow



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

Figure A.22 Ironwood employment and inflow

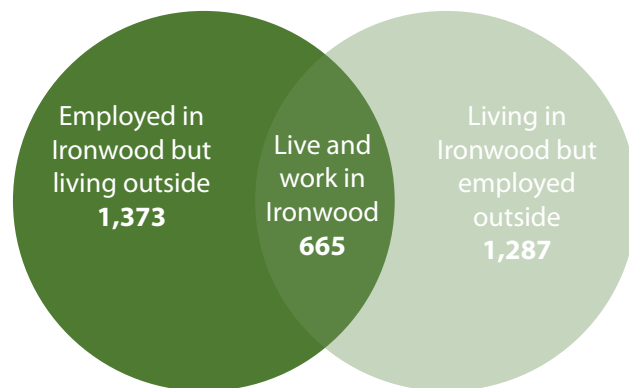


Figure A.23 Inflow/outflow numbers for Ironwood

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



SISU Ski Fest



Plaidurday



Mountain Biking at Miner's Park



Farmers Market

Table A.24 Economic development organizations in Western UP region

P = Primary Function   S = Secondary Function	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
Economic Development Group																								
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
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
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*



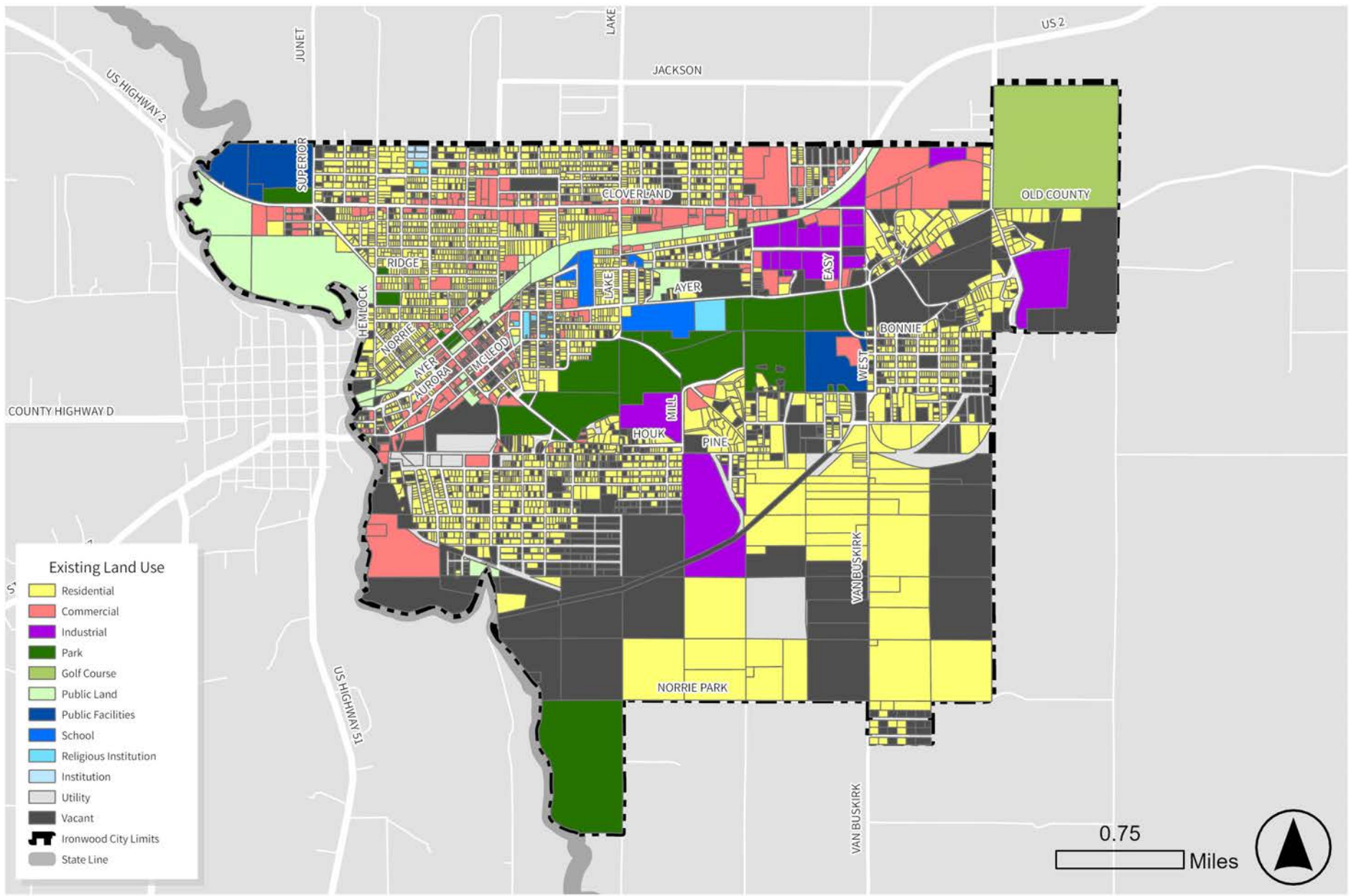
*Public Facility - Library*



*Single Family Housing*



Figure A.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.

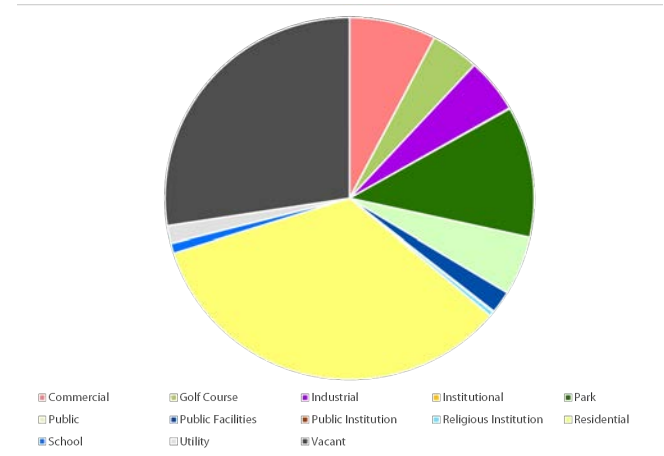


Table A.26 Acreage of existing land use categories

Land Use	Acreage
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 Acreage	3826.02

Figure A.27 Existing land use by land use category

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 A.28 Housing units by type

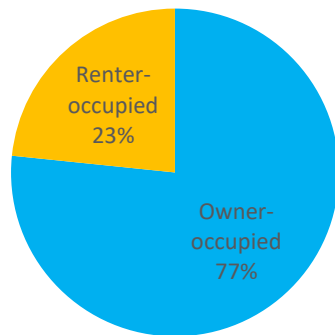


Figure A.29 Ironwood housing occupancy rates

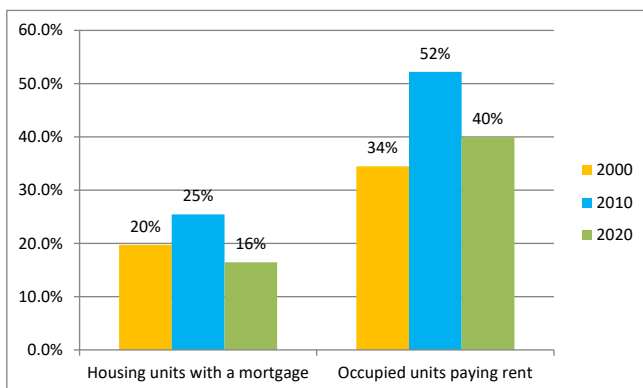


Figure A.30 Housing cost-burdened rates in Ironwood

## 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.

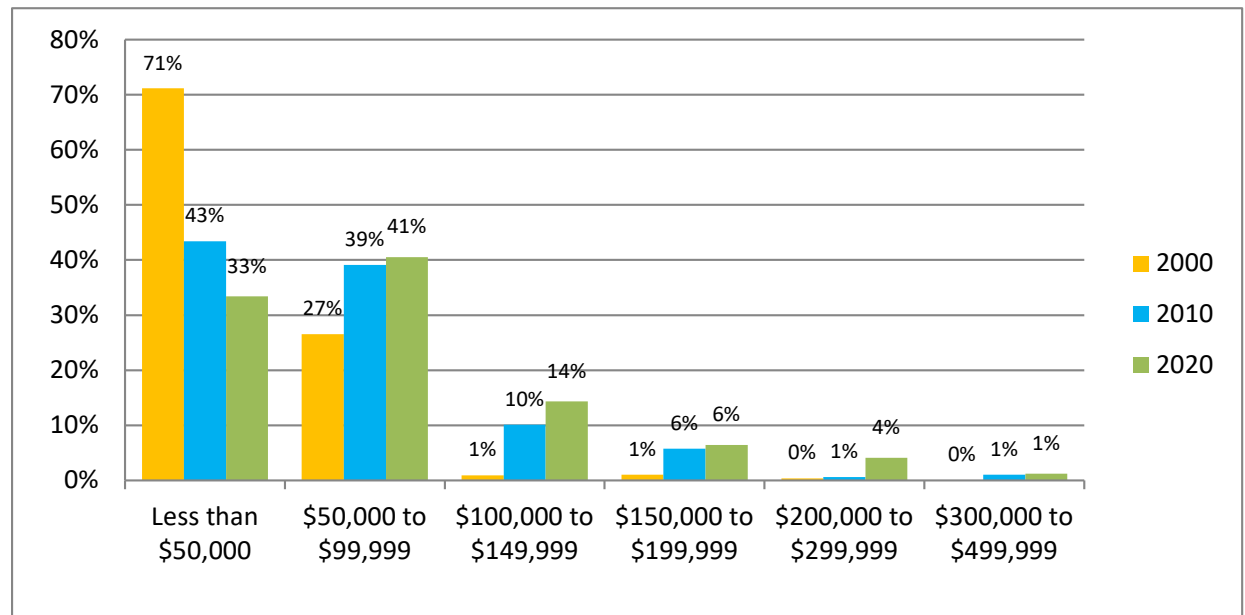


Figure A.31 Ironwood home values, 2000-2020

## 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.

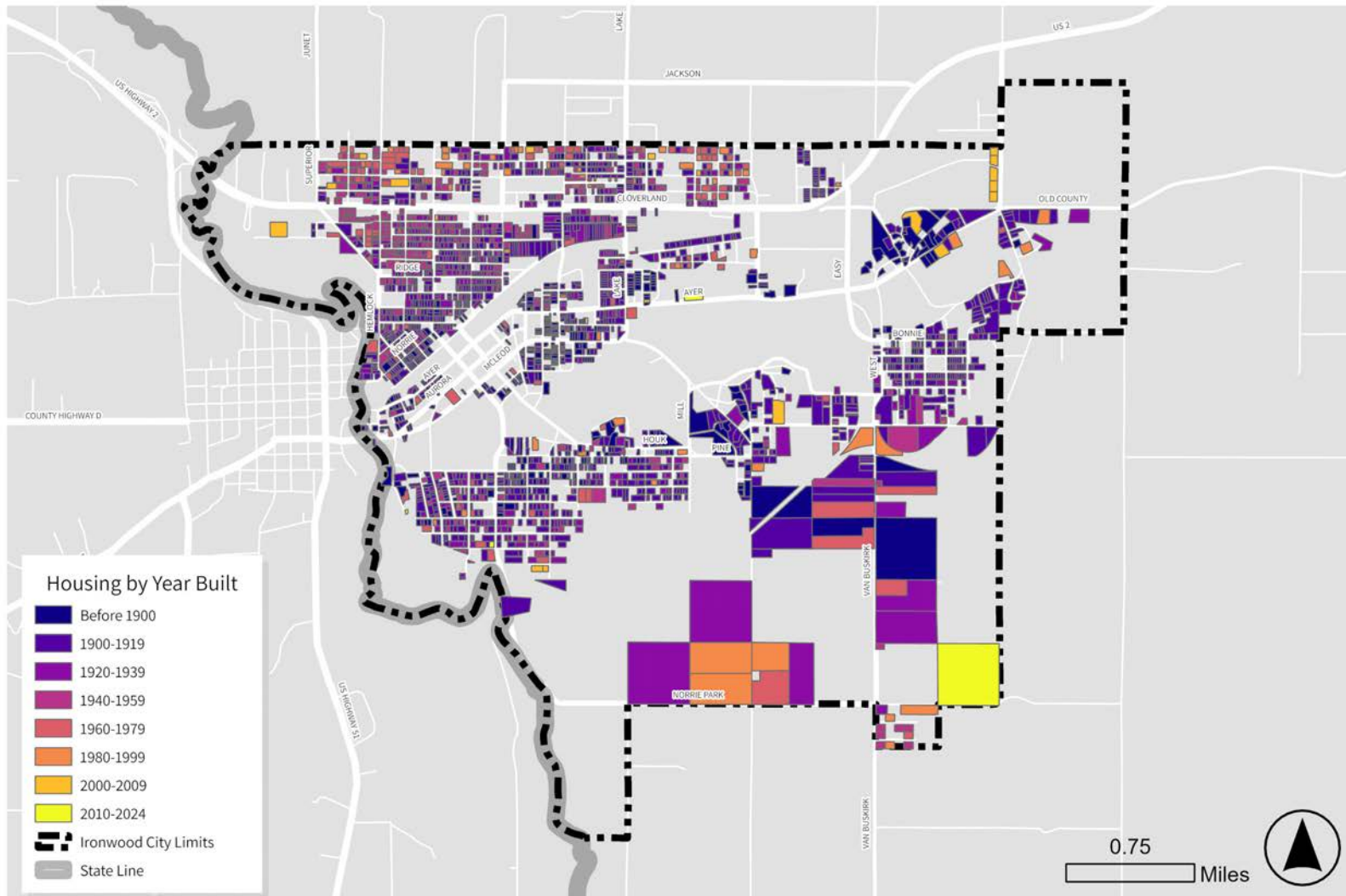


Figure A.32 Ironwood housing by year built

# 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%.

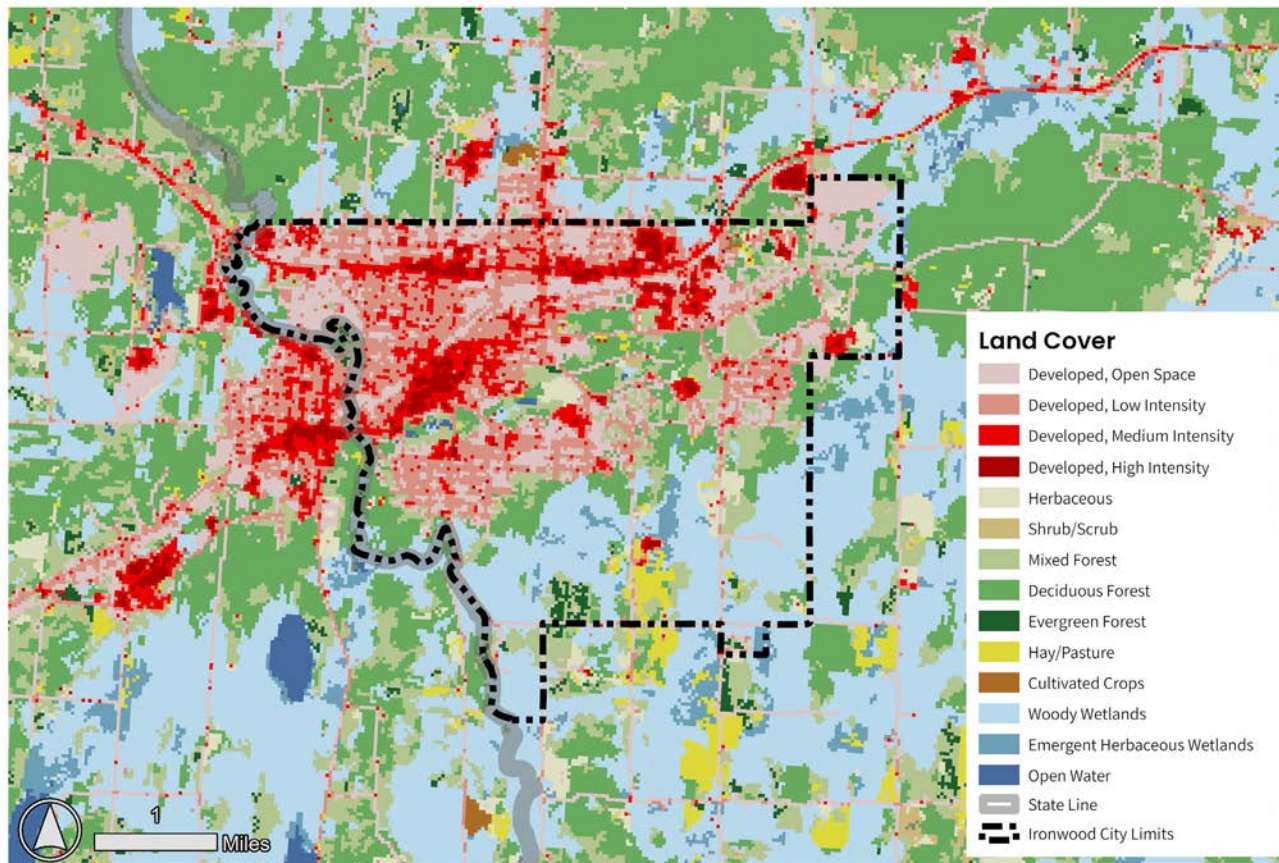


Figure A.33 Land use classification in and around Ironwood, 2021



## 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 .

## 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.

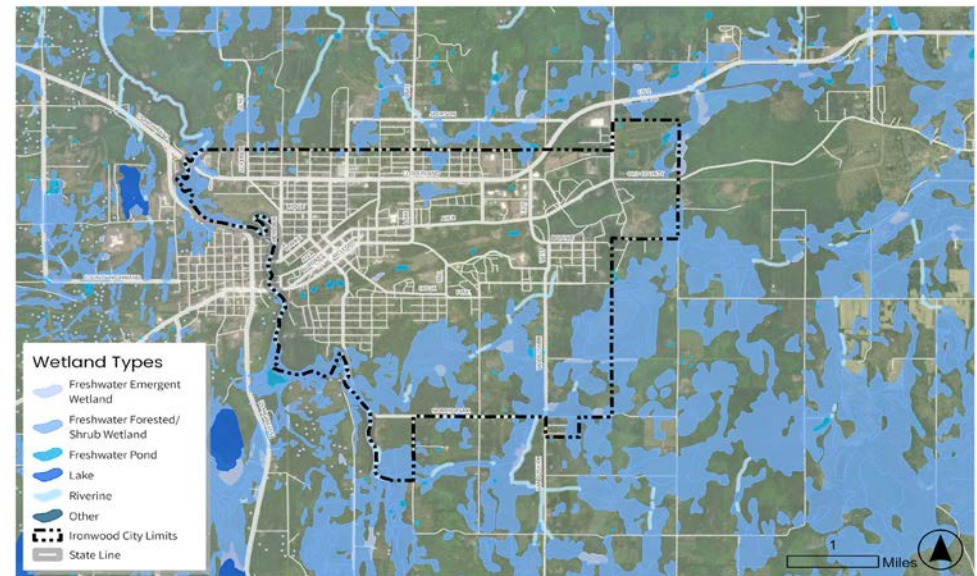


Figure A.34 Wetlands in and around Ironwood

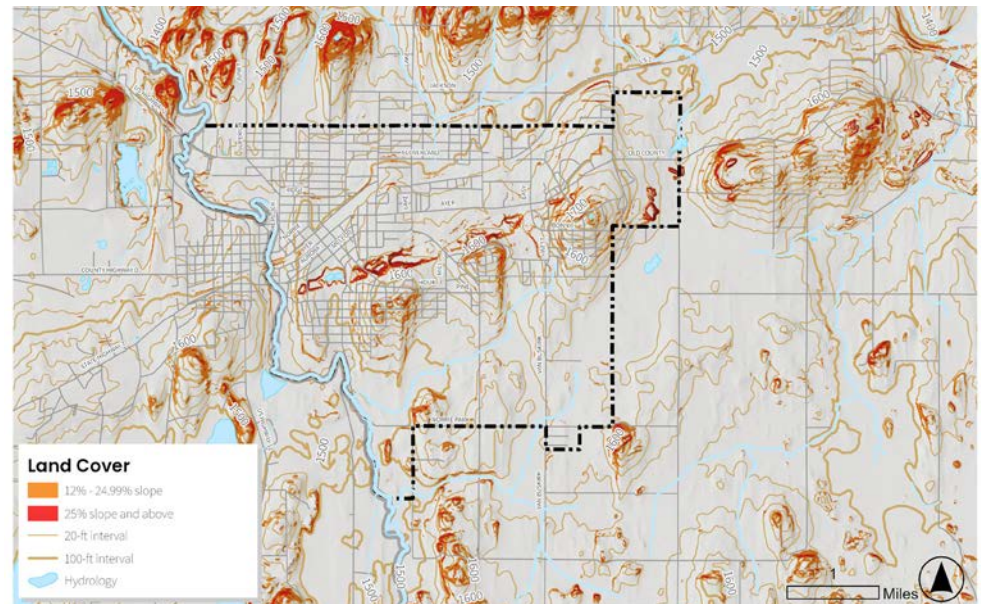


Figure A.35 Topography in and around Ironwood



## 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

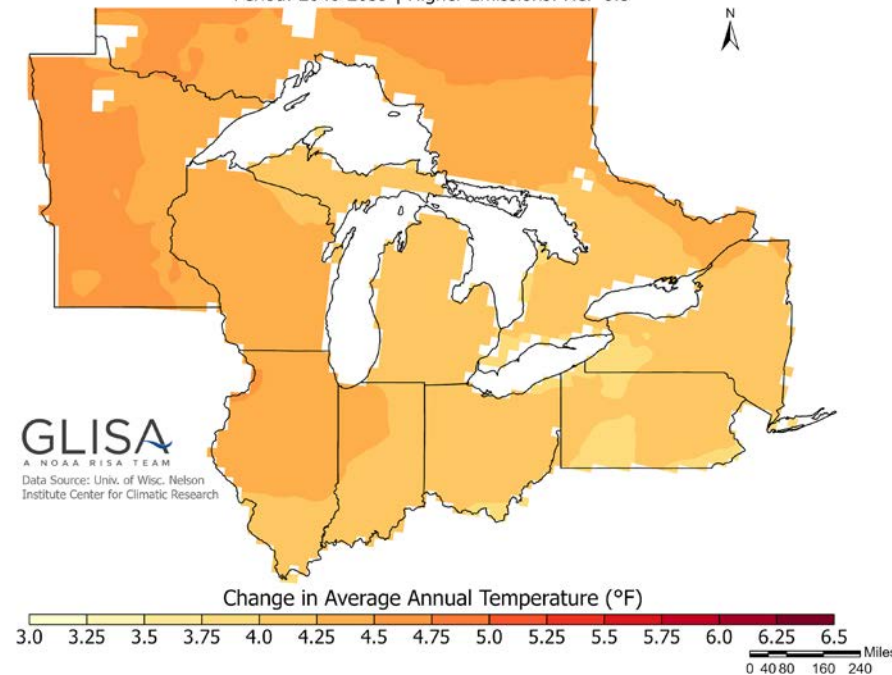


Figure A.36 Projected change in average annual temperature. Source GLISA

### Projected Change in Days with over 1" Precipitation by Mid-Century

Period: 2040-2059 | Higher Emissions: RCP 8.5

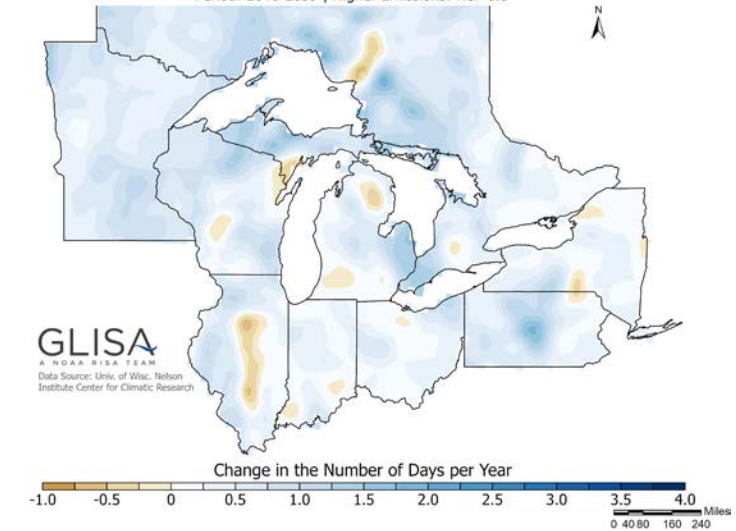


Figure A.37 Projected change in days with over 1" precipitation. Source GLISA

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 A.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	pavillion	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 A.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 A.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 A.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 A.39 Existing parks and trails in Ironwood

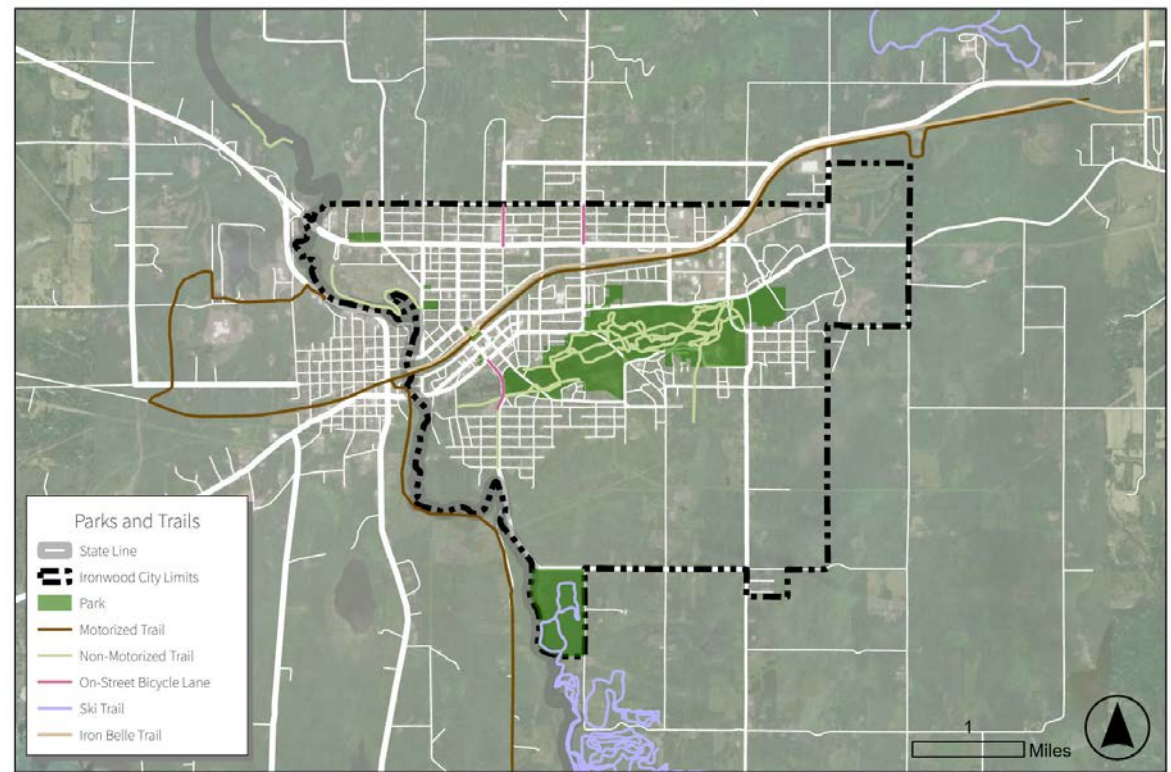


Table A.40 Ironwood trails and trail characteristics

Trail & Classification	General Description	Uses						Surface
		Walk/ Hike	Bike	ATV	Snowmobile	Cross country ski	Snowshoe	
<b>Regional Trail/Tour Route</b>								
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)
<b>Park Trail</b>								
Miners Memorial Heritage Park Trails	Non-motorized system in Miners Memorial Heritage Park	•	•			•	•	Unpaved
Riverside Cemetery	Non-motorized network in Riverside Cemetery	•	•				•	Unpaved
<b>On-street Bikeway</b>								
NA	Bike lanes on portions of Greenbush Street, Lake Street, and Alfred Wright Boulevard		•					Paved (On-street)
<b>Private Trail Facilities</b>								
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



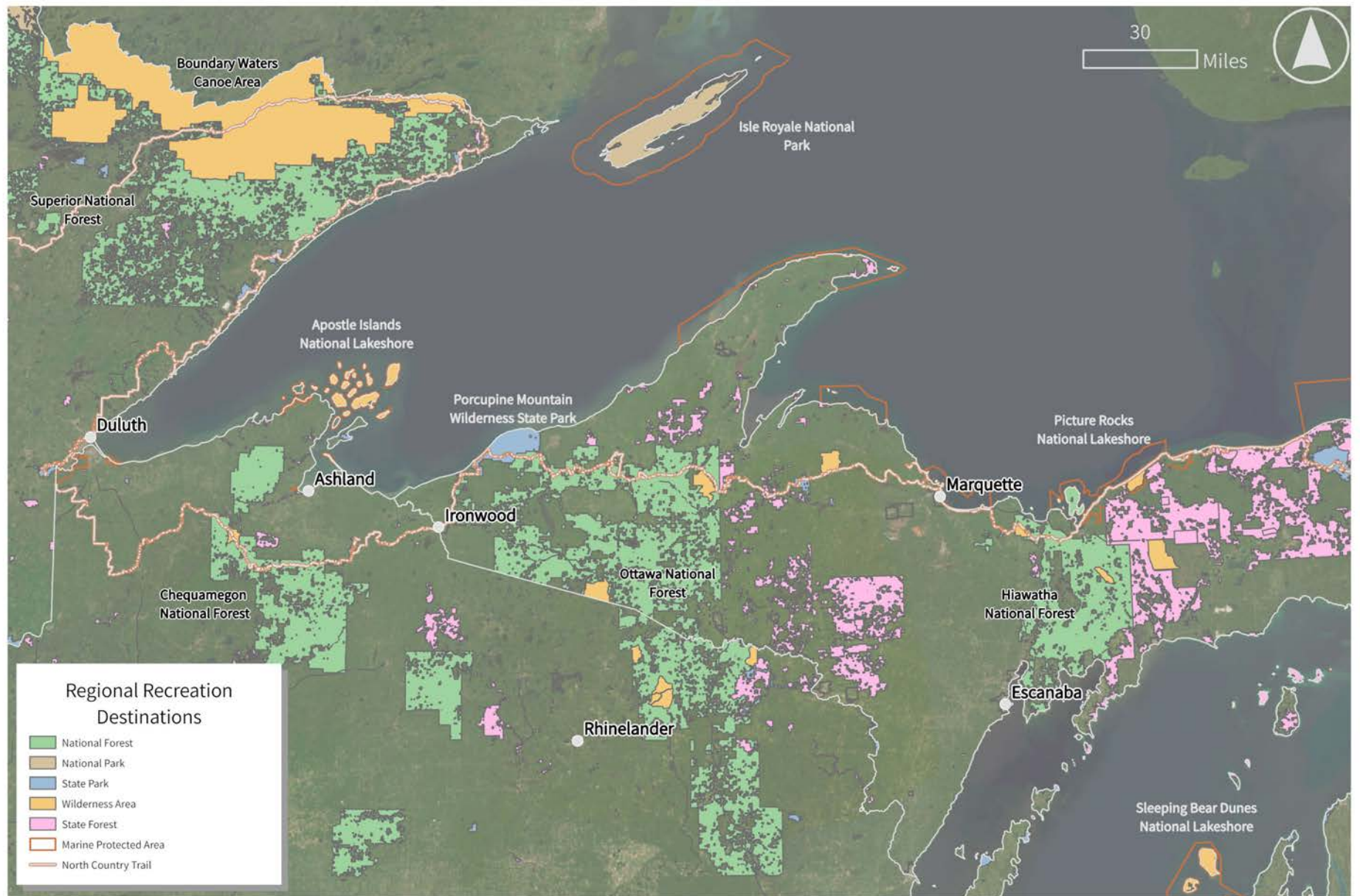


Figure A.41 Regional recreation destinations and assets



# 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

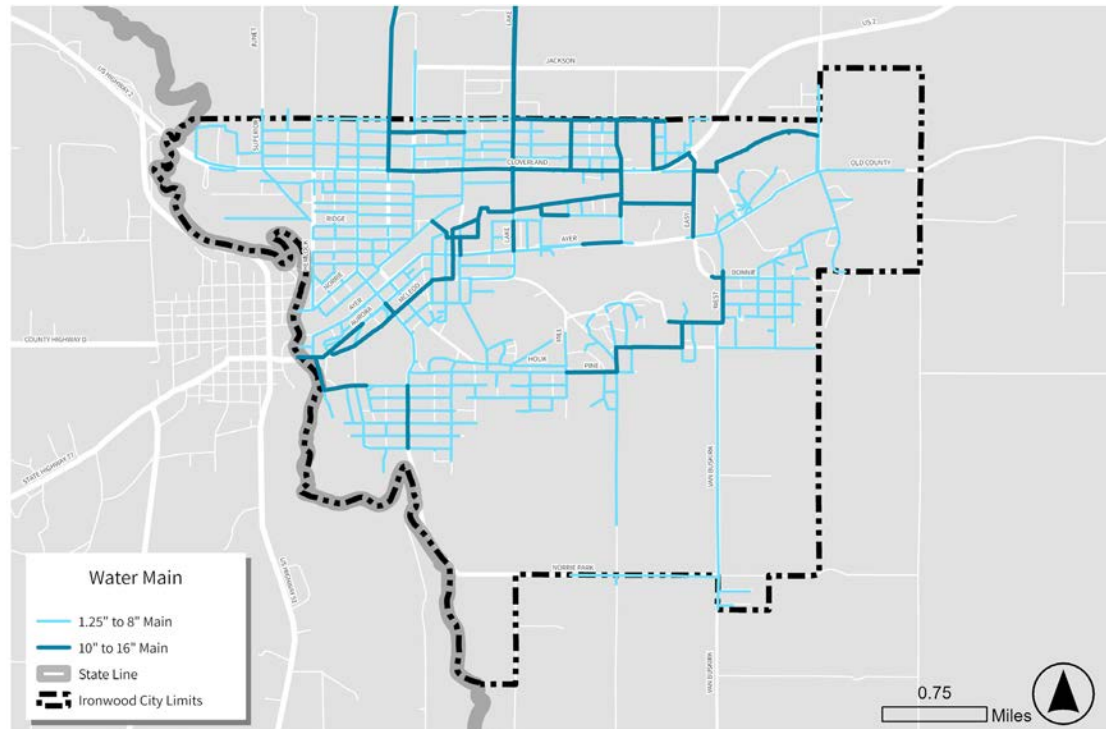


Figure A.42 Existing water mains in Ironwood

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 has fallen below 0.5 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 in Ironwood, 98% of the lead service lines will be replaced with copper by the end of 2026. 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.

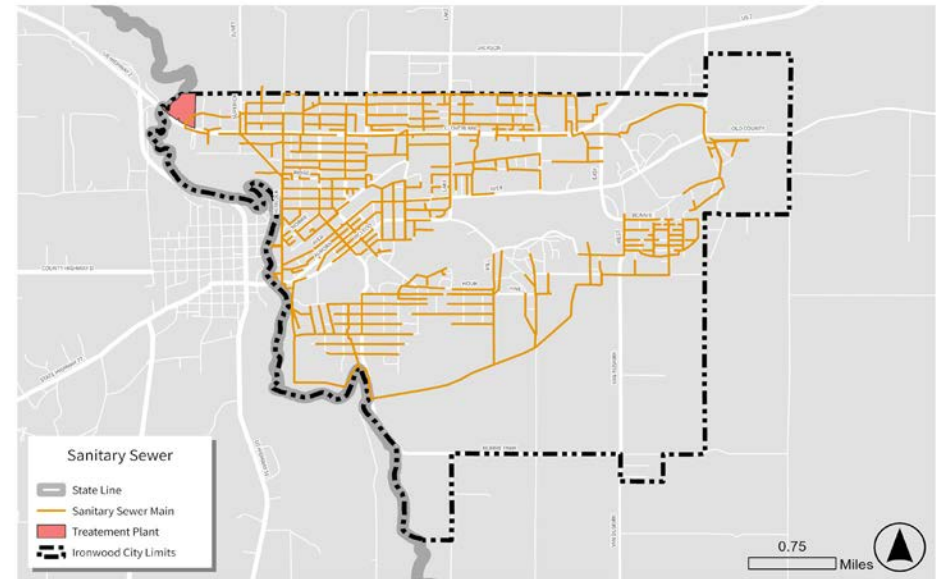


Figure A.43 Existing sanitary sewer system in Ironwood

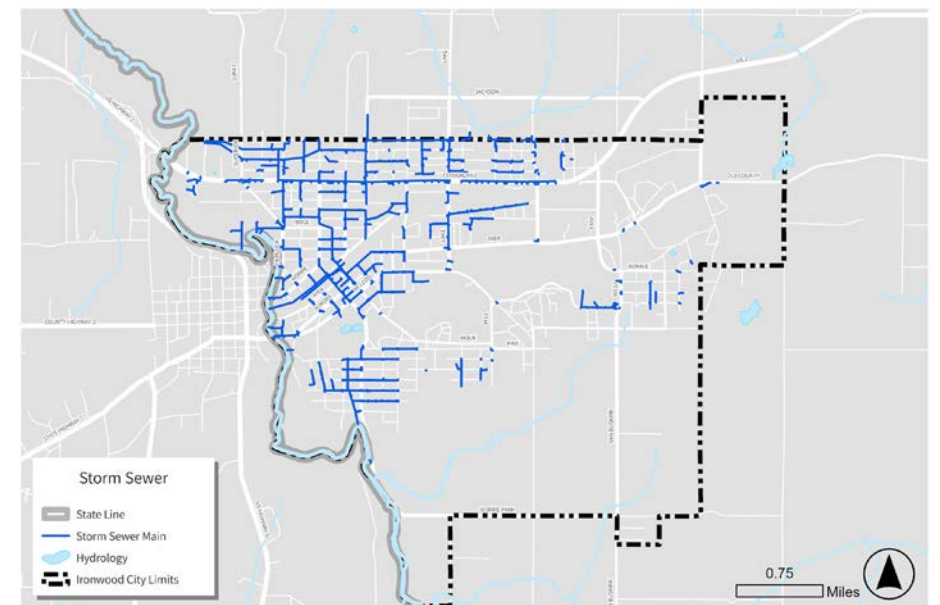


Figure A.44 Existing storm sewer system in Ironwood

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 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.



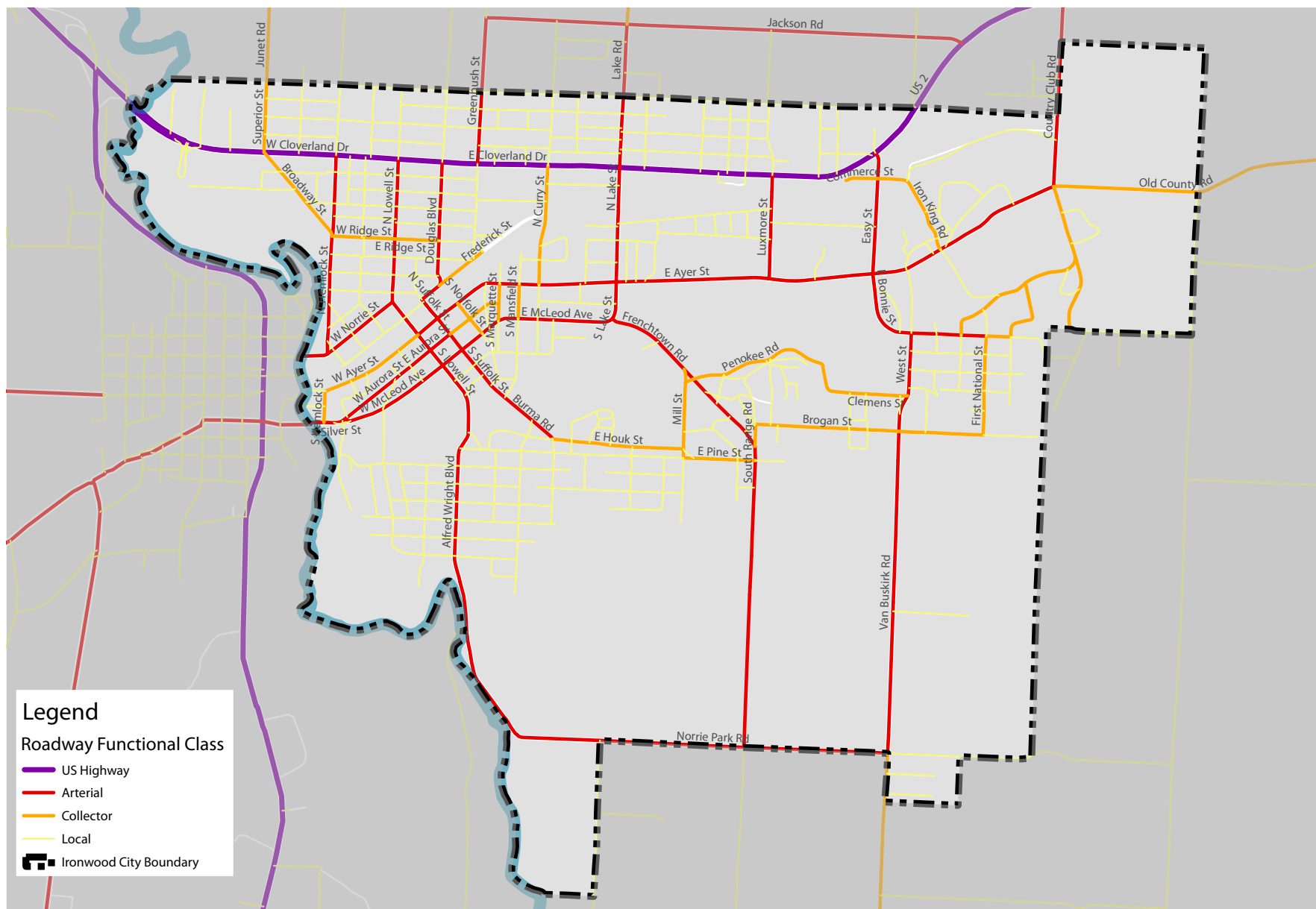


Figure A.45 Functional roadway classes for roads in Ironwood

