

CITY OF HOUGHTON RECREATION AND NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION PLAN 2019-2023

HIGHLIGHTS

- ***The City owns and maintains approximately 150 acres of parks, waterfront, green space, and recreation facilities***
- ***The City annually budgets \$500,000 for the operation, maintenance and development of parks and recreation facilities***
- ***The City is home to a four-mile paved waterfront trail that connects Kestner Park on the west side of the City to the Nara Nature Park on the east***
- ***City-owned Dee Stadium is one of the oldest operating ice rinks in the world and is The Birthplace of Professional Hockey***
- ***The City is home to a waterfront RV Park, swimming beach, picnic area, covered pavilion, band shell, and Chutes and Ladders play area for children.***
- ***The continued operation, maintenance, improvement and enhancement of the City's Parks and Recreation system is an important component of the quality of life enjoyed by residents and plays a critical role in the ongoing success of Houghton's business community given the downtown core's proximity to parks and recreation resources***
- ***The City is collaborating with the Pure Michigan Trail and Trail Town Designation Program to become a "Trail Town"***

This chapter is required by the State and serves as the City's Recreation Plan and its plan for the Pure Michigan Trail Town designation. Certain elements in this chapter are required by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources when applying for recreational grant funding or when seeking the Pure Michigan Trail Town designation.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Information related to the City's demographics, social, and physical characteristics are found in Chapters 3 and 4 of the Master Plan. The following provides a summary of the community's natural and recreational landscape, particularly as it relates to individuals who utilize our existing facilities.

The City owns and maintains approximately 150 acres of parks and green space. In addition to these well-defined areas, there are many acres of undeveloped land within the community, whether it be undeveloped rights-of-way or unbuildable land that interconnects the neighborhoods and adjacent communities. These natural areas are an environment encouraging the movement of wildlife, plants, and biota while preserving natural drainage ways throughout the City. The potential for residential or commercial development encroaching on these designated areas is limited, primarily due to the topography of the City, but also due to the attributes of our citizens who typically embrace the natural beauty of their surroundings.

The abundance of City green space, waterfront, and other recreation outlets as well as its proximity to numerous regional recreation activities establish Houghton as a recreation hub in the region. With limited resources available to operate and maintain these areas, input from the end users is critical to ensuring the City allocates the appropriate resources to care and maintain facilities available to those utilizing them. The following provides a brief description of input from community members gathered during public open houses regarding facilities operated and maintained by the City:

- Improvements to the Waterfront Trail including aesthetics and shared trail usage;
- Improved maintenance and accessibility for outdoor summer recreation opportunities including basketball courts, dog parks, and playgrounds;
- Improved community outreach regarding recreation opportunities, specifically as it relates to website information and resources for new community members.

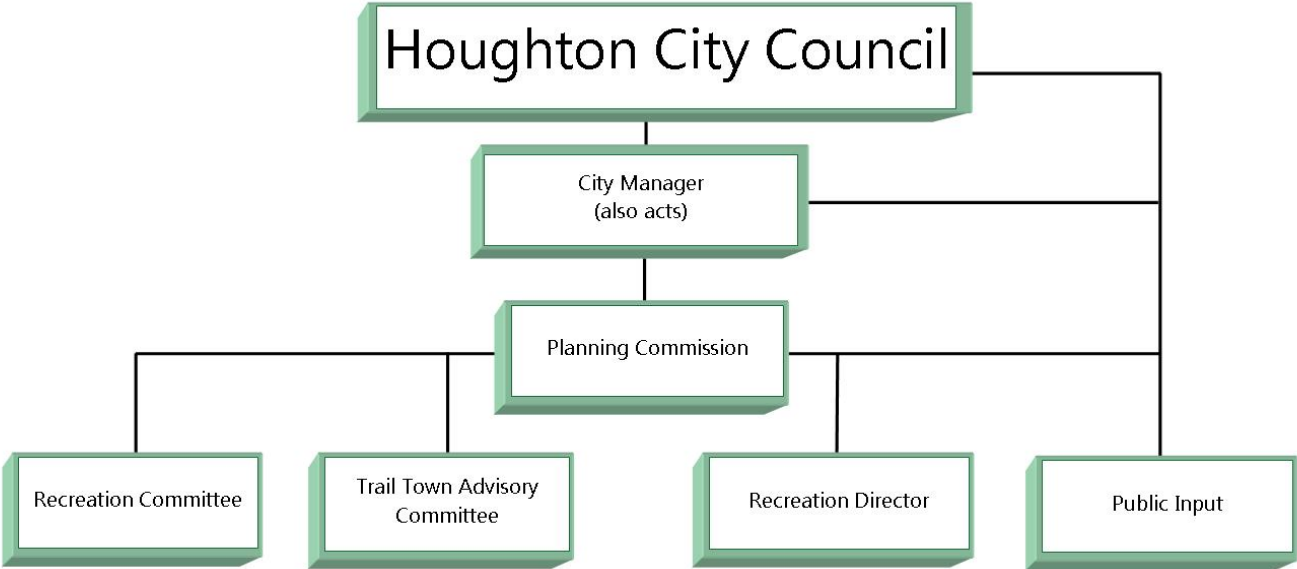
In addition to its residents, the City also has the unique distinction of being a hub to tourists and the traveling public providing a variety of public recreational opportunities. The City's geographic location has established it as a destination and home base to travelers visiting the Upper Peninsula, especially the Keweenaw Peninsula, whether it is a stop along the Lake Superior Circle Tour, a shore stop for Lake Superior cruises, or an overnight stay prior to an excursion to Isle Royale National Park.

The City is an intersection of multiple local and regional partners including trail systems, water borne navigational tours, and commuter systems. The City regularly collaborates and consults with neighboring municipalities, trail commissions, and Michigan Technological University to align goals and objectives that are mutually beneficial to each entity.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The planning of parks, as well as providing recreational services and open space for a community requires staff, volunteers and funds to purchase recreation land and open space for the development, operation and maintenance of such areas. The city manager serves as recreation director and has the authority, with council consent, to administer funds, accept grants and purchase land on behalf of the community related to recreational improvements. The planning commission functions as a reporting point for the public and provides recommendations to the council on recreational issues. The police department provides security for all parks and recreation centers. In addition to routine patrolling, remote monitoring is done through the use of security cameras.

ORGANIZATION CHART



The Parks and Recreation budget for 2018/19 is \$491,000 within the general fund. This amount is projected to increase five percent annually resulting in the amount doubling in 14 years. The City also budgets funds in the public improvement fund for special projects. Projects in the public improvement fund are funded through the general fund and grants received from other sources.

The prioritization and appropriation of funds are managed throughout the fiscal year with respect to the seasonal operations of the City. Climate and geography contribute significantly to the operation and maintenance of the parks and recreation system. Use of the facilities depends greatly on the department's ability to open and close each area for the season. Each fall, recreational areas are secured and stabilized – picnic tables and planters are moved to storage, snow fencing installed, signage removed, and vegetation protected. These efforts are justified; winterizing simply minimizes costs associated with replacing damaged equipment and facilities caused by snow and ice accumulation and the long and punishing duration of the winter months. A similar effort is put forth in the spring when crews work to repair damage caused by ice, snow, and melt water to rehabilitate damaged turf, and to return equipment to each park and recreation area. The work involved with the opening/closing of each area can be easily overlooked when considering the day-to-day operations of our park system, but it should not be discounted when considering the overall operational costs associated the existence of each facility.

The upkeep and maintenance of the City's parks and recreation facilities are further supported by a significant outlay of resources and a commitment by volunteers to ensure that they are safe, available and desirable to the public. The following provides a summary of some of the committees, advisory boards, commissions, and volunteer groups that take both ownership of their respective facilities and what they do:

- Dee Stadium Improvement Committee – an active group that works with the City to fund improvements to the facility.
- Skateboard Park Committee – a group of area skateboarders that held fundraisers, and worked with the MEDC on a Patronicity Grant to fund the construction of a Skateboard Park at the East Houghton Waterfront Park.
- Houghton Rotary – has a long history of funding recreational projects in the City. The club funded projects in both the Kestner Waterfront Park and the East Houghton Waterfront Park.
- Houghton Beautification Committee – this group of active volunteers designs, plants, and maintains gardens in City parks and along City rights-of-way.
- Nara Nature Park Committee – a group of people interested in the operation and ongoing improvements to the park.

- Bike and Pedestrian Committee – provides input on non-motorized transportation. Many of their recommendations have been incorporated into the master plan.
- Houghton Police Department – coordinates activities at the West Houghton Park Ice Rink.
- Keweenaw Land Trust – assisted with monetary donation for the purchase of the land for the Central Houghton Greenspace Park. Members of the Trust provide maintenance of the park.
- Houghton Portage-Township School District – the school district maintains portions of Bugni Park and provides soccer fields to local clubs.

Competitive athletic programs for school-age children are administered by the Houghton-Portage Township Schools. Other local organizations administer junior hockey, gymnastics, soccer, and other sports; some programs make use of Houghton’s parks and recreation facilities for practice and competition. Michigan Technological University also sponsors community recreational programs including swimming, gymnastics, and many other sports and activities.

RECREATION INVENTORY

CITY RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The City’s park system includes neighborhood parks with basketball courts, an outdoor ice rink, children’s play areas, quiet places to sit and relax along more than four miles of waterfront including a paved non-motorized trail. Most Houghton residents are within a short walk of some form of City park or recreational opportunity.

For the purpose of this document defining a park’s service area, the City was divided into five parts:

- M-26 Neighborhoods (West of M-26)
- West Houghton (M-26 to Bridge Street)
- Central Houghton (Bridge Street to Franklin Street)
- East Houghton (Franklin Street to Michigan Tech campus)
- The Sands (East of Michigan Tech)

The recreation inventory describes the types and location of recreational facilities currently available. Each facility is compared to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design and rankings are provided for each site based on parameters outlined by the DNR:

- 1 = None of the site elements meet 2010 ADA standards
- 2 = Some of the site elements meet 2010 ADA standards
- 3 = Most of the site elements meet 2010 ADA standards
- 4 = The park meets the 2010 ADA standards
- 5 = The facility meets the Principles of Universal Design

A recreational facility/park maintenance requirement is defined as:

- Light – requires very little maintenance
- Regular – requires regular maintenance during the season it is used
- Heavy – popular parks require a lot of maintenance. Parks with this designation require the most maintenance as they are heavily used and often hold special events.

Woodhaven Park

A 0.8 acre neighborhood park that primarily serves the M-26 Neighborhoods. This park is accessible by foot, bike and car. Facilities include playground equipment, a play field and basketball court. Requires regular maintenance during the summer. Accessibility assessment = 2.

West Houghton Park

A 0.7 acre neighborhood park that primarily serves West Houghton. This park is accessible by foot, bike and car. Facilities include an outdoor hockey and skating rink, basketball nets, warming house and tot-lot playground. The West Houghton Neighborhood Association built the rink and warming facility with volunteers. With assistance from a DNR Passport Grant, the City is in the process of constructing accessible restroom facilities as well as an accessibility ramp at the park. Requires regular maintenance year-round. Accessibility assessment = 2.

Kestner Park and Chutes and Ladders

A 5+ acre park that serves residents of Houghton and the region. This park is accessible by foot, bike, car and boat. Residents of West Houghton can access the park through a tunnel under M-26. The Raymond C. Kestner Park honors a retired city manager who led waterfront redevelopment from 1972 to 1997. Construction of the park started in 1986. Facilities include an RV Park, swimming beach, picnic area and the Chutes and Ladders play area for children. With the help of DNR grants, there is also a concession room, restrooms, and a band shell for community and private events. With help from Houghton Rotary there is a covered pavilion for community and private events. Requires high maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment for Chutes and Ladders = 1. Accessibility assessment for Kestner Waterfront Park = 4.

Verna Mize Park

A 0.1 acre park that serves residents of Houghton and the region. This small roadside park located on M-26 next to the MDOT commuter lot is accessible by foot, bike and car. It was dedicated in 1981 to Houghton native Verna Grahek Mize (1913-2013) for her “Save Lake Superior” campaign, begun in 1967 to end the dumping of asbestos-like iron mining waste into Lake Superior. Her lobbying of government officials for six years inspired others to action that led to the landmark United States of America v. Reserve Mining Company case. As a result, the United States Environmental Protection Agency gained broader powers to regulate corporate pollution, and dumping of mining waste into Lake Superior ending in 1980. Facilities include a plaque and benches. The City is looking for other areas to relocate this park for better accessibility and visibility. Requires light maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 1.

Waterfront Trail

A 4.5 mile paved waterfront trail that serves residents of Houghton and the region. The trail is accessible by foot, bike, car and boat. A very popular recreation venue in Houghton, this trail was constructed in the 1980s along the abandoned railroad grade. It connects the waterfront parks and also connects to the state-owned Houghton-Chassell rail trail. When snow covered, it serves as a snowmobile trail. During the snow-free months, it is a non-motorized trail. The police department patrols the trail by bicycle in the summer months and by snowmobile in the winter months. The Beautification Committee put forth significant effort over the past several years to plant the downtown portions with perennial gardens. Requires heavy maintenance year-round. Accessibility assessment = 4.

Lakeshore Drive Boardwalk

A ½ mile boardwalk and other features start east of Kestner Park and go to the Lift Bridge that serves residents of Houghton and the region. This facility is accessible by foot, bike, car and boat and includes fishing piers, picnic facilities, a large boardwalk, boat slips, deep water mooring for larger vessels and two boat launches, and a smaller ramp for canoes, kayaks, and small craft and the other a paved ramp for trailable boats. This area is located along the waterfront trail and the aforementioned elements are oriented along the waterfront in a linear fashion. Requires regular maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 4.

Veterans Park

A 0.9 acre park that serves residents of Houghton and the region. This facility is accessible by foot, bike and car. This park was constructed to honor local veterans. It contains a seating area, gardens, and monuments. Requires regular maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 1.

Bridgeview Park

A 1 acre linear park along the waterfront trail that serves residents of Houghton and the region. Accessible by foot, bike, car, and boat. Facilities include a broadside mooring facility for transient boaters, kayak launch, picnic area, gardens, pavilion with fire pit, viewing area and interpretive information. Requires regular maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 4.

Bridge Street Basketball Courts

A 60' x 200' park that serves residents of West and Central Houghton. Accessible by foot, bike and car. Facilities include fenced basketball courts, gardens, and a picnic area. Requires light maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 2.

Central Houghton Greenspace Park

A 4.5 acre park that serves residents of Houghton and the region. Accessible by foot, bike and car. Acquired in 2015 with assistance from a DNR Trust Fund Grant and Keweenaw Land Trust, facilities include a pedestrian trail providing a natural area in the central part of Houghton. This park remains relatively undeveloped providing a natural setting within the relatively developed central part of the City. Requires light maintenance in the summer mostly provided by the Keweenaw Land Trust. Accessibility assessment = 1.

Bugni Park

A 12.5 acre complex that serves residents of Houghton and the region. Accessible by foot, bike and car. The complex includes little league and softball fields plus restrooms. The improvements for this park were made possible by a DNR grant in 1997. Bugni Park is located adjacent to the Houghton High School. Maintenance provided by Houghton-Portage Township Schools. Accessibility assessment = 1.

Huron Street Fishing Piers

A 300 foot waterfront park that serves downtown and the region. Accessible by foot and bike along the waterfront trail, as well as by car and boat. Facilities include fishing piers, shoreline improvements, picnic tables and parking. Requires light maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 4.

Dee Stadium

A 34,000 square foot arena houses a regulation ice rink and a ballroom that serves residents of Houghton and the region. Accessible by foot, bike, car, and boat. Dee Stadium was built in 1928 and is one of the oldest operating ice rinks in the world. The stadium has ice surface from October to mid-April. The ice rink is home to the Copper Country Junior Hockey Association, Houghton High School hockey teams, adult hockey leagues, and the Portage Lake Pioneers. It also offers open skating and open hockey sessions. Its lobby houses the Kenner Ruohonen History Museum which tells the story of how Houghton became the Birthplace of Professional Hockey. The Dee also has a 6,000 square foot ballroom available for fundraising receptions and private parties. The ballroom is accessible with a chair lift. Requires heavy maintenance year-round. Accessibility assessment = 3.

Franklin Square and Mott's Park

A small park that serves Houghton residents and the region. Accessible by foot, bike and car. Facilities include planters, a statue and a welcome sign. Requires regular maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 1.

Houghton Skatepark

Construction is underway for a skatepark on a section of land within the East Houghton Waterfront Park to serve Houghton residents and the region. This park will be accessible by foot and bike on the waterfront trail as well as car and boat. Facilities currently planned are Phase 1 of the skatepark which is under construction as of the preparation of this document. This park will require regular maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 3.

East Houghton Waterfront Park

A 2 acre park that serves Houghton residents and the region. This park is accessible by foot, bike, car, and boat. The land for this park was purchased in 2002 with assistance from the DNR Trust Fund. A subsequent grant provided funding for a pavilion with restrooms, showers, picnic area, and a boardwalk that links to the waterfront trail. A strip of public waterfront east of the park includes public boat slips, fishing piers, and picnic tables. Requires regular maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 4.

College Avenue Park

A 50' x 100' park that serves residents of Houghton and the region. This pocket park is accessible by foot and bike. A DNR grant in 2000 assisted with the construction of a deck and seating area to view the Portage Waterway and relax while traveling on College Avenue between downtown and the Michigan Tech campus. Requires regular maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 3.

East Houghton Greenspace Park

A 0.77 acre park that serves residents of East Houghton and the region. Accessible by foot, bike and car. The City purchased this land in 2010 with the assistance of a DNR Trust Fund grant to preserve a natural setting in East Houghton. This park provides habitat for local wildlife and a walking trail for residents to enjoy the variety of flora and fauna. This park requires light maintenance in the summer. Accessibility assessment = 1.

Garnet Street Park

A 1.25 acre park that serves residents of East Houghton and the region. This park is accessible by foot, bike and car. Facilities include a tennis court, playground, picnic area, and horseshoe pits. This park requires regular maintenance during the summer. Accessible assessment = 1.

Nara Nature Park

A 115-acre park that serves residents of Houghton and the region. Accessible by foot, bike, and car. It features a chalet complete with a fireplace, concession room, bathrooms, and shower facilities. The park trails connect to the Michigan Tech Trail system for biking, hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. A six-foot-wide, 4,500-foot-long elevated boardwalk runs on both sides of the Pilgrim River, providing wildlife viewing, fishing sites, benches and access for launching kayaks and canoes. Requires heavy maintenance year-round. Accessibility assessment for the Nara Park Chalet = 3.

On June 17, 2018 a record storm event occurred which created flood conditions on the Pilgrim River and its tributaries within Nara Nature Park as well as throughout Houghton County. As a result, several sections of the park trail system were washed out or severely damaged and the elevated wetland boardwalk system was all but destroyed. The City is working with FEMA and MDEQ on rebuilding of these elements to restore the park features. Going forward in rebuilding, the design of the replacement facilities will include increased accessibility.

Recreational Boating Facilities

Much of the waterfront development since the 1970's has been constructed to be used by the boating public. Facilities serve residents of Houghton and the region. Facilities are accessible by foot, bike, car and boat along the waterfront trail and Keweenaw Waterway. Facilities include a boat launch on the Lakeshore Drive boardwalk west of the Portage Lake Lift Bridge, a kayak launch at Bridgeview Park, and a small craft boat launch at the East Houghton Waterfront Park. Requires light maintenance during the summer. Accessibility assessment = 2.

LOCAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Michigan Tech Trails

The Michigan Tech trails consist of 35 kilometers (21 miles) of trails for biking, hiking, snowshoeing and cross country skiing. The system includes seven kilometers (4 miles) of lighted trails. The trails are nationally recognized for the quality of skiing, consistency of grooming, and variety of terrain. The trails, which link to the Nara Nature Park trails, occasionally hosts the Junior National Championships, and the U.S. Championships. The ski season runs from December to April.

Mont Ripley Alpine Ski Area

The ski hill across the Keweenaw Waterway is owned and operated by Michigan Tech. It has two chair lifts and one T-bar lift. A total of 24 runs range from beginner to expert and include a tubing hill. Mt. Ripley is open from December to April. The hill supplements natural snow with man-made snow and is lighted at night. The hill is open to the public and provides lessons and league racing to children and adults.

Portage Lake Golf Course

The Portage Lake Golf Course is owned and operated by Michigan Tech. Open to the public from May to October. It has 18 holes, golf cart rentals, and large tee boxes with four tee-off areas on each hole. The course, which has a fully appointed pro shop with a bar and grill, sponsors men, women, and youth leagues. Lockers, showers, and storage space for privately owned carts are available.

Prince's Point Park

The Prince's Point Park consists of a small natural area primarily used by Michigan Tech students for access to the Keweenaw Waterway because of its proximity to campus. The park includes a beach area with picnic tables, fire pits and volleyball net. The park is located north east of the Rozsa Center and is accessible from the waterfront trail or a hillside trail.

Michigan Tech Ball Fields Complex

These ball fields at the intersection of Sharon Avenue and Garnet Street are used by the university and local softball leagues. A Frisbee golf course is located along the Michigan Tech trails adjacent to these fields.

Michigan Tech Student Development Complex and Gates Tennis Center

A 235,000-square-foot complex that provides a wide range of recreation and fitness options for the community including an ice rink, gyms, pools, tennis, and a fitness center.

Houghton-Portage Township Schools

Houghton residents also have access to recreational activities and facilities owned by the Houghton Portage-Township School District including a pool, gyms, ballfields, track, and the Houghton Elementary School playground and gym.

The Houghton School Forest includes approximately 23 acres bounded by Sharon Avenue, Gundlach Road, the Michigan Tech Ski Trails, with the ball fields located next to the school. Established in 1993, the forest is used by school classes and community members. It features Isle Royale Pond at the corner of Sharon Avenue and Gundlach Road, the source of a stream that parallels Sharon Avenue and eventually enters the Pilgrim River, plus a 900-foot barrier-free nature trail and bike/ski trails that merge seamlessly into the Michigan Tech ski and bike trails.

Pilgrim River Forest

1,600 acres of forest land in neighboring Portage Township that includes four miles of the Pilgrim River and six miles of trails. This natural area provides opportunities for non-motorized public recreation including hiking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, hunting, fishing, berry picking, and mushroom gathering. The Pilgrim River is an excellent trout stream.

REGIONAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The Keweenaw Peninsula offers an outstanding variety of recreational facilities for residents and visitors. In 2002, the City was noted by *National Geographic Explorer* magazine and the *Men's Journal* as being one of the best communities in America for outdoor recreational opportunities. Since then Houghton and our area overall have been featured in numerous "best of" articles and websites due to our quality of life; much of which is due to the immense number of recreational opportunities. A number of regional parks are easily accessible for residents and summarized as follows:

Snowmobile/ORV Trail System

An extensive trail system exists in the Keweenaw Peninsula that connects to trails throughout the Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin. This trail system attracts ORV's in the summer months and the area's abundant snowfall attracts thousands of snowmobilers in the winter.

Maasto Hiihto/Churning Rapids Trails in Hancock

26 km of groomed cross country ski trails in the winter that provide biking and hiking in the summer months.

Swedetown Trails in Calumet

Features a four season chalet, sledding, 35 km of groomed cross country ski trails in the winter that provide single-track mountain bike trails and hiking trails in the summer.

Chassell Classic Ski Trails

Nearly 10 km of groomed classic ski trails in the winter months that serve as hiking and biking trails in the summer months.

McLain State Park

Located on Lake Superior the park offers 98 campsites, 6 cabins, 4 miles of hiking/skiing trails, 2 miles of sand beach, picnicking, and playgrounds.

Isle Royale National Park

Located in Lake Superior, the park offers hiking, boating, kayaking, fishing, and scuba diving. Park headquarters are located in Downtown Houghton.

Fort Wilkins State Park

A restored 1844 army military outpost with camping, boating and fishing on Lake Fanny Hooe.

Copper Harbor Trails

Four seasons of adventure on 35 miles of single-track mountain bike trails, hiking, cross country skiing, snow biking. These nationally renowned trails have grown in popularity and bring in significant numbers of bikers during the season.

Mount Bohemia

585 back-country skiable acres with a vertical drop of 900 feet. In the summer months, the trails offer hiking and biking. Resort also offers swimming, kayaking, boating and fishing.

Keweenaw Waterway Trail

A network of camping and public access parks on the Keweenaw Waterway and around the Keweenaw Peninsula along Lake Superior for kayaking and canoeing.

Twin Lakes State Park

A 175 acre campground on the southwest shore of Lake Roland with a beach, boat launch, playground, fishing, and a nature trail with scenic overlooks to Lake Superior.

Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park

60,000 acres of hiking, mountain biking, camping, alpine skiing, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling along the shores of Lake Superior.

Baraga State Park

Overlooks scenic Keweenaw Bay on Lake Superior. There are 115 grassy sites available for summer camping.

STATUS REPORT OF ALL GRANT-ASSISTED PARKS

For each City park improved with grant funds, City staff has prepared the required form (PR1944). Forms are submitted to the Michigan DNR along with the Recreation Plan for approval.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC INPUT

The City is including a Recreation Plan as a separate chapter in its 2018 Master Plan. Recreation is an important part of the quality of life in the City, as evidenced by the public input received during the planning process. The Master Plan and Recreation Plan process employed several methodologies to gather public input over the last several years. As a result, the City has a better understanding of citizen satisfaction with park and recreational facilities in Houghton. This overall planning process is described in detail in Chapter 5.

Public involvement for the recreational portion of this plan included a community survey and public meetings/open house events.

Survey

The City distributed a survey to all its residents. Results indicated that overall residents are very satisfied with the quality of the park and recreational facilities. The summary of the survey results for parks and recreation can be found on the City's website. Results show that over 50% of residents are satisfied with parks and recreation with the most satisfaction for the waterfront parks at 84.5% satisfaction.

Master Plan/Recreation Plan Open House Events

On April 9, 2018, April 17, 2018, and May 15, 2018, the City Planning Commission conducted open house events regarding master plan topics including recreational planning. Residents indicated they would like to see an elevator at Dee Stadium, increased maintenance of the waterfront trail, and a dog park. Advance notice for these open house events was published in the *Daily Mining Gazette*, posted on the City's website and Facebook, and notification was mailed to all residents of the City.

Public Meetings

In addition to the survey and open house events, the City held public meetings during the planning process for the new Skatepark to solicit public input into the location of the Skatepark. After receiving public input along with discussion and recommendation from the City's Planning Commission, the City Council chose the East Houghton Waterfront Park as the location of the new Skatepark due to its topography, accessibility, and proximity to downtown. The overall park design was vetted through a charrette process where the community chose the park's overall shape and features.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The City's parks and recreation facilities provide a wide range of opportunities for the public to experience nature, gather with family, exercise, and convene with other residents. It's widely recognized that parks and recreation facilities benefit a community in a variety of ways and contribute to the overall health of the city and its residents. The City's coordination of the care, maintenance, and continued development of these properties requires a thoughtful and intentional plan as well as financial forecasting that often extends 3-5 years into the future. Beyond the financial and physical resources committed to these facilities, a conceptual understanding of the service area, including but not limited to users, operational periods, and similar factors must also be a consideration.

In general, the goals for the parks and recreation in our city are defined by its natural landscape and neighborhoods. There is the hillside extending north from Sharon Avenue to the Downtown Business District, the waterfront defined by miles of the Portage Waterway, and the natural/undeveloped areas intertwined throughout. These areas are largely defined by the residents and visitors who share in the use of each area. Statistics related to the demographics and population concentrations within each area are certainly a consideration when prioritizing city resources, but the placement and shape of these facilities is built upon decades of planning and understanding the value of having desirable areas set aside for the public. Each area summarized in the following subsections is built upon this foundation, both organically and economically.

The following outlines the City's goals for developing and maintaining our existing parks and recreation infrastructure.

SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1 - Facility Maintenance and Improvement

Maintain parks to provide clean, safe, attractive, and functional environments.

Objectives:

1. Replace/upgrade aging park facilities and equipment;
2. Remove barriers to universal access;
3. Refurbish athletic fields and parking/pavement surfaces;
4. Provide training and education for personnel to ensure regulatory compliance and improve employee productivity;
5. Provide signage in each park with a consistent message to assist the public in understanding the purpose and use of the park;
6. Enhance park maintenance through increased weeding, tree pruning, and general park upkeep; and
7. Plant trees and shrubs to create shade and supplement landscaped areas.

Goal 2 - Property and Land Management

Respond to community recreational needs by evaluating property transactions, community service areas, usage of future and existing parks and recreational facilities.

Objectives:

1. Evaluate and consider opportunities for the development of new and expansion of existing recreation facilities;
2. Pursue grants, fundraising, and other funding opportunities that benefit and enhance our existing recreation properties;
3. Maximize the utilization of properties and their respective square footage to ensure that community recreation needs are being appropriately managed;
4. Evaluate and assess current recreation properties to ensure that the services that are provided continue to be appropriate based on local and regional developments; and,

5. Integrate recreation facility considerations into city infrastructure projects to ensure that long-term cost savings are captured through economy of scale.
6. Consider collaborating with other local units of government to provide improved recreational opportunities for citizens.

Goal 3 - Natural Resource Management and Sustainability

Utilize best practices and planning considerations when developing and maintaining parks while specifically addressing soil erosion, watershed management, and wetland/wildlife protection.

Objectives:

1. Incorporate sustainable design considerations into existing recreation properties and future park development opportunities;
2. Ensure that native vegetation is planted and maintained within the park system with eye towards pollutant reduction and wildlife sustenance;
3. Create natural storm water management systems and other green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and swales with native grasses;
4. Minimize non-porous surfaces like roads, parking lots and paved trails;
5. Minimize land disturbance during construction activities to ensure that native soils and vegetation remain intact and reduce susceptibility to erosion; and
6. Plant trees and shrubs to create shade and supplement landscaped areas.

Goal 4 - Accessibility and Connectivity

Improve existing infrastructure to ensure that existing parks and recreation opportunities are accessible and compliant, but also interconnected to make it safe and convenient for the community to walk and bike.

Objectives:

1. Prioritize and implement accessibility improvements based on community input and documented shortfalls;
2. Ensure that accessibility is incorporated into park improvements and development, including but not limited to landscaping, equipment, and signage;

3. While considering seasonal availability, incorporate stops within the parks and recreation system into public transportation routes;
4. Incorporate “Complete Street” philosophies and best practices into planned infrastructure improvements and community development;
5. Continue to partner and pilot enhancements related to pedestrian, bicycle, and waterborne accessibility to the community parks and recreation system;
6. Connect recreational opportunities in the City to each other and to recreational opportunities in neighboring communities, and
7. Provide more recreational opportunities for all residents, especially between the ages of 18 and 24 which is the largest demographic in the City.

Goal 5 - Community Programming and Wellness

Continue to partner and build relationships that foster community and recreation programming, while also maintaining existing programs and events developed around social engagement.

Objectives:

1. Enhance availability of recreational facilities to accommodate external recreational programs;
2. Continue to sponsor and host public events that foster community and personal well-being;
3. Continue to sponsor and host community education and youth events;
4. Incorporate fitness and advocate for active lifestyles;
5. Continue to sponsor and support local and regional sporting events.

ACTION PROGRAM

The action program further details the manner in which the goals and objectives will be met. It includes a list of desired improvements which can be considered as long-term projects to be accomplished for each park or facility. In addition to the facility-specific improvements, there are also several over-arching concepts that will be instrumental in driving the changes proposed in the following subsections.

- **Community Trail Network** – The objectives defined under *Goal 4 – Accessibility and Connectivity* will be partially achieved through the development of a continuous trail system around the City limits. The proposed trail system will be established by connecting existing individual trail sections and park components. The future trail network will provide users with multiple access points where the entire trail system across several different topographies can be accessed.
- **Prioritization Strategy and Facilities Maintenance Plan** – *Goal 1 – Facility Maintenance and Improvements* is a relatively straight-forward concept; however, Parks and Recreation staff routinely have to make decisions related to funding and resource allocations to ensure that the facilities are safe and well-maintained. The development of a planning document will assist City personnel in the decision making process by prioritizing improvement efforts and standardizing maintenance activities.
- **Sustainable Development and Biodiversity** – Area-wide flooding in the spring of 2018 and blight caused by pests such as the emerald ash borer have created a renewed awareness of our environment and natural surroundings. Reactive maintenance can be costly to our community, diverting funds away from potential improvements and development. *Goal 3 – Natural Resource Management and Sustainability* will be incorporated into planning considerations while developing and maintaining parks in an effort to minimize long-term economic and aesthetic impacts to the community.

With the aforementioned strategies in place, each park-specific improvement will benefit by being developed under similar guidance and uniform decision making. The intention is to create a more cohesive park system that is linked and integrated into the community it serves.

DESIRED IMPROVEMENTS

The improvements summarized below incorporate changes that have been proposed or requested by the community as well as facility and/or infrastructure improvements recommended by the City and their consultants. These proposed improvements are

representative of the long- term vision for each park/facility, but also satisfy the overall goals and objectives established for the Parks and Recreation Department.

The following subsections outline the desired improvements for each facility based on the goals and objectives defined in the preceding section. Proposed improvements for each facility are summarized in a tabular format that includes the targeted goals, a potential project development schedule, costs and funding source scenarios to implement the suggested enhancement. Ultimately, the projects and the desired implementation schedule will be dependent upon available funding and resources.

Woodhaven Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
<i>Goal 1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of a basketball court 	2019	\$ 8,000	General
<i>Goal 3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved storm water management 	2019	\$ 15,000	General, DNR, NRCS
<i>Goal 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an outdoor ice rink 	2022	\$ 25,000	General

West Houghton Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1 Goal 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor rink improvements including but not limited to boards and facility accessibility 	2020	\$ 10,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a roof over the ice rink. 	2021	\$ 200,000	General, DNR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add pickleball courts to the rink area in the summer months 	2019	\$ 2,000	General, Fundraiser
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repair/replace fencing 	2019	\$ 10,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repair/replace lighting 	2021	\$ 20,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repair/replace signage 	2019	\$ 2,000	General

Kestner Park and Chutes and Ladders:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
<i>Goal 1</i> <i>Goal 3</i> <i>Goal 4</i> <i>Goal 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut and fill to re-establish grades to Chutes and Ladders to reduce erosion and improve access 	2019	\$ 25,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design/build Huron Creek outfall to mitigate flooding and accommodate storm-related surges 	2020	\$ 250,000	General, DEQ, FWS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate existing facilities and provide improvement recommendations based on public demand 	Ongoing	Varies	General, DNR, DEQ, Rotary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create shade and natural buffers at the beach 	2019	\$ 15,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate a seasonal “splash park” into the park infrastructure 	2021	\$ 100,000	General, Rotary, DNR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace more picnic tables with tables featuring a barrier free end to accommodate wheelchairs 	Ongoing	\$ 5,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Chutes and Ladders to provide an accessible area using Universal Design principles 	2022	\$ 125,000	General, DNR

Verna Mize Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 2 Goal 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocate the park features to a location that has better visibility and accessibility 	2019	\$ 10,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve accessibility for visitors 	2020	\$ 25,000	General, DNR, NRCS

Waterfront Trail:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1 Goal 2 Goal 3 Goal 4 Goal 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repave, widen, add lighting where lacking and improve conditions 	2019-2022	\$ 120,000	General, DNR, MDOT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erect a series of exercise stations 	2019	\$ 15,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term shoreline stabilization, including placement of rip rap and native vegetation 	Ongoing	\$ 50,000	General, DNR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocation of snowmobile trail to establish a four-season trail 	2021	\$ 1,000,000	General, DNR, MDOT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider route changes to improve safety and accessibility 	2019	\$ 250,000	General, MDOT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly mark through shared-use areas. 	2019	\$ 5,000	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect to the Sharon Avenue bike lane with a trail along Huron Creek 	2022	\$ 1,000,000	General, DNR, MDOT

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect the Nara Nature Park with a bridge over, or tunnel under, U.S. 41 	2022	\$ 1,500,000	General, DNR, MDOT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Michigan Tech to establish improved connectivity to campus 	2020	\$ 100,000	General, MTU
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide well-established connection between the RV Park and trailhead 	2020	\$ 25,000	General

Lakeshore Drive Boardwalk:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform a detailed study of future maintenance requirements 	2019	\$ 15,000	General
Goal 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boat launch and mooring area require resurfacing 	2021	\$ 50,000	General

Veterans Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of trees, including an increase in species diversity 	2020	\$ 25,000	General, Grants
Goal 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to coordinate with veteran organizations to create enhancements 	Ongoing	\$ 25,000	General, Veteran Orgs

Bridgeview Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
<i>Goal 1 Goal 3 Goal 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and maintain the shoreline 	Ongoing	\$ 20,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a series of finger piers 	2021	\$ 200,000	General, DNR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate art installations and similar features that facilitate community involvement and interaction 	Ongoing	\$ 25,000	General, Fundraising, MEDC, Rotary, Mi Arts Council
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a dock on the north side of the Portage Lake District Library 	2020	\$ 50,000	DDA/DEQ

Bridge Street Basketball Courts:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
<i>Goal 1 Goal 3 Goal 4 Goal 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate restroom facilities and a drinking fountain into the park 	2021	\$ 75,000	General, DNR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resurface the existing basketball courts 	2020	\$ 25,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add seating and natural features adjacent to the basketball courts 	2019	\$ 5,000	General

Central Houghton Greenspace Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1 Goal 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect from erosion 	Ongoing	Varies	General, DNR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add seating and interpretive signage 	2020	\$ 5,000	General

East Houghton Greenspace Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1 Goal 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect from erosion 	Ongoing	Varies	General, DNR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add seating and interpretive signage 	2022	\$ 5,000	General

Central Houghton Dog Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a dog park in Central Houghton 	2019	\$ 15,000	City

Bugni Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1 Goal 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve baseball facilities 	2020	\$150,000	City, MDNR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand soccer facilities 	2022	\$200,000	City, Local Assoc., MDNR

Huron Street Fishing Piers:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 3 Goal 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a gathering place for community events 	2020	\$ 2,000,000	City, MEDC, DNR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and maintain shoreline 	Ongoing	Varies	General, DNR

Dee Stadium:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
<i>Goal 1</i> <i>Goal 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install elevator 	2022	\$ 200,000	General, DNR, Fundraising
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remodel entrance and lobby 	2021	\$ 150,000	General, DNR, Fundraising
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve seating area 	2020	\$ 100,000	General, DNR, Fundraising
<i>Goal 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide pickleball courts in ballroom 	2019	\$ 2,000	General, Fundraising

Franklin Square and Mott's Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
<i>Goal 1</i> <i>Goal 3</i> <i>Goal 4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the usability of Mott's Park with accessibility improvements 	2021	\$ 20,000	General, MDOT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase plantings of flowers and trees 	2020	\$ 20,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate benches and tables 	2019	\$ 5,000	General

Houghton Skate Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor initial operations to develop recommended improvements 	2019		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct next phase(s) 	2021	\$ 150,000	DNR, Fundraising
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate seating 	2019	\$ 15,000	General, Fundraising

East Houghton Waterfront Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve docks 	2020	\$ 50,000	General, DNR
Goal 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and maintain shoreline 	Ongoing	Varies	General, DNR

College Avenue Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide trash receptacles, a dog waste station, and equitable sitting areas 	2019	\$ 5,000	General

Garnet Street Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1 Goal 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resurface tennis courts and fix fencing along Seventh Avenue 	2020	\$ 30,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add pickleball court to the tennis court 	2020	\$ 2,000	General, Fundraising
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define sidewalk from parking area to playground 	2019	\$ 15,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase accessibility along the hillside between the tennis courts and playground 	2021	\$ 50,000	General, DNR

Nara Nature Park:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1 Goal 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide exterior lighting on the sledding hill and trails at the Nara Nature Park 	2020	\$ 15,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build bridge over Peepsock Creek 	2020	\$ 75,000	General, DNR

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect Nara Nature Park to the Portage Lake Golf Course with a bridge over the Pilgrim River 	2023	\$ 1,200,000	General, MDOT, DNR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebuild elements of the boardwalk that were damaged by storm event 	2019	\$ 1,000,000	FEMA, State
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Portage and Chassell townships & DNR to improve old railway trail between Houghton and Chassell 	Ongoing		

Recreational Boating Facilities:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
Goal 1 Goal 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct convenient transient docking stations that provide electricity, etc. 	2020	\$ 50,000	General/ DNR

PURE MICHIGAN TRAIL AND TRAIL TOWN DESIGNATION PROGRAM

On October 24, 2018, the City of Houghton Council passed Resolution No. 2018-1655 requesting the City be named a “Trail Town” under the criteria of the Pure Michigan Trail Town Designation Program. An application was submitted to Michigan Department of Natural Resources on November, 1, 2018, seeking formal designation.

As part of the Pure Michigan Trail Town application process, the City must adopt a plan that includes the following specific elements. These elements are found throughout the City’s Five-Year Recreation Plan on the pages as denoted:

Existing and planned amenities: This information is found in the Recreation Inventory on pages 4-14 and in the Action Plan on pages 19-29.

Maintenance plan: this information is found in Goal 1 on page 16.

Programming and educational plan: this information is in Goal 5 on page 18.

Marketing plan: see the attached document titled *Pure Michigan Trail Town Marketing Plan*.

In regard to the City’s hope to become a Pure Michigan Trail Town, the program calls for a baseline economic plan and a schedule for creating an economic impact plan every five years after designation: The City has hired an intern from Michigan Tech University’s School of Business and Economics to work with City staff to create the baseline plan. The plan is expected to be completed by June 2020. The City will begin updating the baseline plan beginning in June 2024 and complete the update by June 2025. The City of Houghton and Michigan Tech University’s School of Business and Economics will collaborate on all aspects of this plan and future plans.

Post-Completion Self-Certification Reports: As required by the DNR, included in this Recreation Plan are completed self-certification reports on all recreation facilities that the DNR has encumbered as part of the past recreation grants that the city has received.