

MICHIGAN TALENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM PROPOSAL

NORTH LANDING: A WATERFRONT TALENT DISTRICT

CITY OF HOUGHTON



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2.LOCATION - NORTH LANDING AS HOUGHTON'S TALENT MAGNET

A Place Where Talent and Opportunity Converge

Strategically located between Kestner Park, Houghton Avenue, Michigan Technological University (MTU), and the Portage Canal's four-mile waterfront trail, North Landing is more than a neighborhood—it's a convergence point for talent, opportunity, and culture (Figure 1). Its proximity to MTU, an R1 research university and the region's largest employer, makes it a natural hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. Students and professionals from around the world come to Houghton for MTU's renowned programs in engineering, business, and technology, and they stay for the community's welcoming culture and access to Lake Superior's stunning natural beauty.

North Landing's walkable layout, overlapping housing, business, and recreational spaces have long lead talent attraction—even before the concept had a name. We've aimed to build on this success over the past decade through systematic improvements that align with Houghton's community Master Plan (Appendix A) priorities to enhance neighborhoods, recreational assets, downtown vibrancy, walkability, and multi-modal transit. These efforts have reinforced North Landing's role as a regional economic development anchor and cultural asset while remaining a small town that residents can love.

Building upon a legacy

Houghton's enduring character is the product of generations of community members who have thoughtfully invested in the preservation of its unique identity—long after its days as the central hub of copper mining in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula. Once the industrial heart of the region, Houghton has evolved into a vibrant center of innovation, education, and opportunity. **Today, Houghton stands at the intersection of heritage and progress and nowhere is this transformation more evident than in North Landing—an emerging district where talent, creativity, and community converge.**



North Landing wasn't just chosen—it emerged naturally as the site of Houghton's local talent plan because it embodies the city's legacy of resilience, creativity, and community-driven progress. For generations, Houghton residents have invested their time, labor, money, and art into shaping a place that reflects their values and aspirations. This spirit of contribution has already transformed the Portage waterfront into a people-first destination, with North Landing at its center.

In short, North Landing is not just where people live and work—it's where they thrive. Its history, location, and ongoing transformation make it the ideal site for Houghton's local talent plan.

Figure 1: Talent District Map



Legend

- Project Area
- Talent District
- Mixed Residential and Business
- Mixed Neighborhood of Student/Faculty/Professionals
- Kestner Park
- Kestner Park Trailhead
- Tunnel Under M-26 Linking Western Neighborhoods to The Waterfront Trail
- Orbion Space Technology
- MTEC Smartzone
- Waterfront Trail Through Downtown, Linking Public Spaces with Placemaking
- Waterfront Trail Backbone

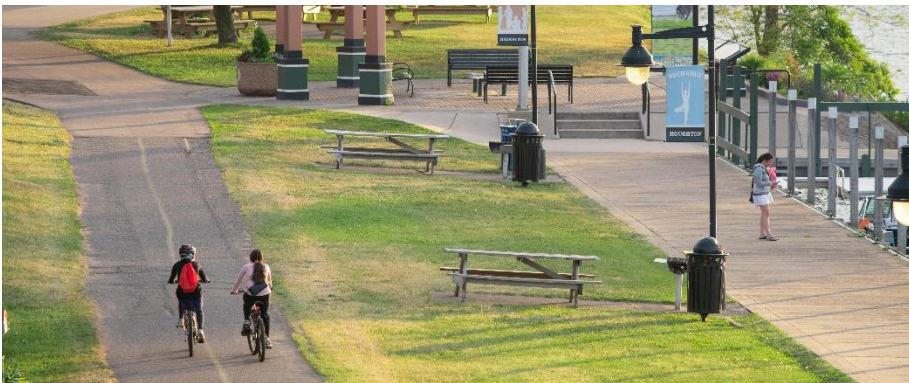
3. NARRATIVE

3(1) CHAMPIONING PURE MICHIGAN TALENT IN NORTH LANDING

A Proven Magnet for Investment and Growth

Houghton's North Landing District provides the perfect stage for Pure Michigan's talent — it's the connective tissue linking our greatest assets and a place to gather, connect, and grow. The district's unique blend of public space, dense development, and seamless access to MTU and downtown amenities has created a talent-rich ecosystem. Recent investments like the 109 Shelden Rehabilitation and the Gateway Project—**bringing nearly \$20 million in new housing and commercial space—demonstrate a strong market and the area's viability as a vibrant mixed-use district.** These projects reflect what today's talent seeks: accessible public amenities, strong connections between home, work, leisure, and a dynamic partnership between a top-tier university and a culturally rich city.

This vision directly advances the goals of the Michigan Talent Partnership Program (MTP), which fosters talent attraction and retention through transformational placemaking. North Landing exemplifies this approach by creating a high-density, high-amenity district that blends vibrant street life with opportunities for resident business ownership. Designed as a hub for recreation, entrepreneurship, and neighborhood vitality, the district offers a dynamic mix of cultural experiences, social spaces, and economic pathways—positioning Houghton as a compelling destination for talent, investment, and sustained growth.



CITY OF HOUGHTON MTP PROPOSAL

Houghton—MTU: A Place-Based Partnership for Talent

The City of Houghton and MTU have transformed geographic remoteness into a strategic advantage through a dynamic partnership focused on talent attraction and retention. They are driving forward catalytic investments in campus and city infrastructure—advancing multi-modal connectivity and developing high-density housing within a dedicated talent district to support students and faculty. MTU's campus stands as a global hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, while Houghton's picturesque landscape, infrastructure, and cultural assets offer a rich, welcoming environment for all. This collaboration is cultivating a resilient ecosystem where place-based investment fuels opportunity, fosters ownership, and lays the foundation for long-term prosperity.



Building Houghton's Talent-Driven Future

In alignment with the MTP's vision, the City of Houghton turned its focus inward—examining the assets already thriving within the North Landing District and asking a critical question: *What's missing to make this place truly future-ready for both long-time residents and newcomers?* The answers revealed strategic gaps essential to shaping a resilient, connected regional economy—one whose benefits ripple across the Keweenaw Peninsula. Building on a strong foundation of successful talent recruitment and retention, the City now proposes a suite of public assets that will position **Houghton as the North's innovation hub and a welcoming “base camp” for Michigan's talent**—supporting them before, during, and after the workday. These initiatives aim to:

- Strengthen multimodal connections between Houghton's natural, cultural, and business assets
- Address year-round comfort and accessibility to help newcomers integrate and thrive
- Link the Keweenaw's unique geography and climate to cutting-edge technology and creative industries

- Reduce risk for emerging small businesses by creating safer entry points into the downtown marketplace
- Expand spaces for cultural connection and community engagement
- Build on current investments and partnerships to increase housing access within the district

Together, these efforts will help write the next chapter of Houghton's story—one defined by inclusive growth, vibrant placemaking, and a deep commitment to cultivating Michigan's talent.

“

I can personally attest to Houghton's strong talent attraction. My daughter and son-in-law, both MTU graduates, relocated back here after 9 years out of state. They bought a house on five acres, work from home, raise chickens, and have blessed us with a beautiful granddaughter in the three years since they returned. This is where they wanted to be all along to raise their children.

-Eric Waara, Houghton City Manager

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on the to play
a video



3(2) FUNDING THE FUTURE: HOW SELECTED PROJECTS DELIVER ON MTP'S VISION

As Houghton continues to evolve as a magnet for talent, the City is taking bold steps to ensure its growth is both inclusive and strategic. The proposed projects (Figure 2) outlined here are not just investments in infrastructure—they are investments in people, place, and potential.

Nonmotorized Trail Connection and Waterfront Walkway Enhancements

With 92% of North Landing's two-mile waterfront publicly owned and accessible, the area is already a valued community asset. **The proposed Nonmotorized Trail Connection (NTC) builds on this strength, linking the city's waterfront trail directly to Michigan Tech University (MTU).** This new corridor offers a safe, scenic alternative to College Avenue, encouraging walking and biking between campus and downtown. It's not just a route—it's a destination.

This project advances the goals of the MTP by creating a more connected, livable, and economically vibrant Houghton. By investing in the public realm and enhancing access between key destinations, it strengthens the City's ability to attract and retain talent through thoughtful placemaking.

Elements of the proposed enhancements are woven together throughout the waterfront trail that connects the district. With the NTC increasing access, the combined improvements elevate the potential for both mobility and user experience.

To ensure the waterfront remains active and inviting throughout the year, the proposed project includes the Waterfront Walkway following components in addition to the NTC:

- **Pier Enhancement:** Canopy shades, picnic tables with umbrellas, gas fireplaces, and restrooms create comfort and convenience.
- **Dark Sky Compliant Lighting:** Balances safety with environmental stewardship.
- **Lift Bridge Restroom Conversion:** Enables year-round access, supporting winter recreation and events.

Together, these improvements create a multi-modal and high-amenity environment that prioritizes non-motorized connectivity between the MTU campus and the waterfront, downtown, and neighborhoods.



Figure 2: MTP Projects Map



PRPOSED NTC CONCEPTUAL RENDERING



Houghton Business and Creative Incubator (HB+CI)

Built in the 1980s, the building at 326 Shelden Avenue was once a transportation center. It has since had multiple owners but now sits vacant. This space can meet critical downtown needs, and the owners are willing to sell. **The City plans to acquire the building and launch the Houghton Business and Creative Incubator (HB+CI) to offer attainable space for local small businesses.** Through support from MTP, Houghton aims to transform this underused property into a gateway for new small businesses and fill an accessibility need in the downtown (Figure 3).

The interior will be divided into workspaces ranging from 150 to 300 square feet, connected by public areas accessible via elevator and stairs that bridge the elevation difference between Shelden Avenue and Lakeshore Drive. These spaces will be leased to creatives and emerging small businesses, providing a safe, affordable way to establish themselves and test the market—with the goal of eventually growing into their own downtown locations. With support from consortium members like the Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance (KEDA) and the Michigan Small Business Development Center (SBDC), HB+CI will assist inventors, sellers, artists, and makers in refining their business models and scaling up.

This project aligns with the goals of the MTP by transforming a vacant and underutilized downtown property into an incubator space that fosters and supports locally owned businesses and vibrant street life.

Shelden Avenue Pocket Park

In the heart of downtown, on Houghton’s main street, 509 Shelden Avenue—currently a vacant lot—offers a unique opportunity to transform an underutilized space into a vibrant community spot. Nestled between a beloved bookstore and a lively music store, this location is primed to become a new focal point for talent in the city. The vision for the Shelden Avenue Pocket Park is simple yet impactful (Figure 4). It fills a long-standing need for a welcoming public space—an open area adorned with plantings, comfortable seating, a raised platform, subtle lighting, and accessible restrooms. **This project continues Houghton’s tradition of placemaking and improves quality of life by fostering everyday moments of connection and creativity.**



Figure 3: Houghton Business and Creative Incubator Concept



Figure 4: Shelden Avenue Pocket Park Concept

Phase 2 Pier Expansion

The Phase 2 Pier Extension will fill a key gap along Houghton’s waterfront, connecting the existing Pier to a smaller adjacent structure and creating a seamless public corridor. Designed with multi-level access to the water’s edge, the extension will offer a unique destination for gathering and engagement. Building on the success of the original Pier, this project enhances placemaking by expanding vibrant, accessible public space that strengthens Houghton’s appeal to talent and supports year-round activation of the waterfront.

3.a.i. INCREASED WALKABILITY AND THE CREATION OF TRANSIT-RICH AREAS.

Houghton is intentionally prioritizing walkability, multimodal mobility, and public spaces as core drivers of social and economic vitality. We have what many might consider the added challenge of snow, but we choose to embrace it as an asset and plan for it. By linking trails, improving seasonal accessibility, and investing in people-centered infrastructure we are building seamless connections between neighborhoods, downtown, and our largest institutions – making it easier for everyone to move, gather, and thrive year-round.

Walkability and nonmotorized transit are highly prized by residents. Along the southern limit of the Talent District is Houghton's nonmotorized corridor on Houghton Avenue. Designated as a shared route with pavement markings, intentional signage, and wayfinding, the Bike Boulevard is shared by pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles who use it as a crosstown route connecting Michigan Tech at the east end to the tunnel crossing of M-26 on the west end to the waterfront walkway. This provides another route across town. **With the MTU campus connected to both the Bike Boulevard and the NTC, users can choose routes depending on whether they are headed home or to the waterfront – or both – with the loop that will be created.**

The proposed NTC project also strengthens Houghton's role as a hub for outdoor activity and regional tourism by connecting into a 24-mile trail network stretching from Chassell to Calumet. More than a recreational asset, this project represents a critical step in transitioning Houghton's transportation system from auto-dominated corridors to a more balanced, multimodal network. By prioritizing walking and biking, the project improves safety, reduces reliance on cars for short trips, and increases downtown foot traffic that directly supports local businesses.

The project also aligns with Michigan Tech's Campus Master Plan (Appendix B), which emphasizes enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access along Phoenix Drive. This stronger physical and social connectivity not only benefits students and residents but also fosters the kind of vibrant, walkable environment that is essential to long-term talent retention in Houghton.



Advancing Walkability and Accessibility Throughout All Seasons

Houghton is located on a hill above the Keweenaw Waterway. Most of the city's downtown blocks have an elevation differential of 15 feet and the shopping, dining, and services along Sheldon Avenue-Houghton's "main street" are nearly 25 feet above the waterfront area itself. **The slope presents difficulties for cars, cyclists, and mobility-challenged individuals, especially between November and April when sidewalks tend to be snow-covered.**

The City rehabilitated Lakeshore Drive in 2023 to become a contributing downtown street. The largest part of the project was to remove a parking deck that covered much of the street and to create the first handicap-accessible connection between the lower elevations along Lakeshore Drive to Sheldon Avenue's main street businesses, **but the challenge of access returns with the snow and ice in the winter.** From our Master Planning surveys, walkability audits, and social media interactions the community has made it well known that it should be a top priority for the City to find ways to overcome the challenges presented by our steep grades connecting our downtown streets.

The proposed two-story HB+CI building connects Sheldon Avenue and Lakeshore Drive, with entrances at both elevations connected by both stairs and an elevator, will promote a fully accessible, safe way for people to overcome the challenges presented by the steep inclines in winter and connect the waterfront and Lakeshore Drive to those Sheldon Avenue main street destination.



3.a.ii. CREATION OF A HIGH-DENSITY DISTRICT

Several sections of Houghton's Master Plan (Appendix A), developed through extensive community surveys and open house events, support creating higher density development in the district. One of our Master Plan's Downtown section's goals states ***"[l]iving options for residents are [to be] expanded to include apartments and condos for a full spectrum of residents..."*** to bring people closer to the assets in the downtown and by extension, the Talent District. The downtown has an overlay zoning district which promotes high-density mixed-use development which creates that synergy of living and working in the same location. Citizens have indicated preference for living near transit assets and walking/bike routes and support increased density.

The Master Plan acknowledges the unique character and density of the City's neighborhoods. The Talent District spans parts of the Central and East Houghton neighborhoods, where commercial development, public amenities, and diverse housing options converge to create a walkable and bikeable environment. Residents can live, shop, work, and recreate all within proximity to their homes. **Within the Talent District, residents have a range of housing choices—from apartments in mixed-use downtown buildings to traditional single-family homes (owned or rented), as well as purpose-built apartments integrated with the district's placemaking, mobility, and cultural assets.**

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We are increasingly seeing MTU students from out of the area graduate, find a job locally and stay. Justin M. is a great example. He found a job in Houghton after graduating from Tech, and with his buddies, bought the house they were renting from their former landlord, fully renovated it, and are now living there.”

- Eric Waara, Houghton City Manager

Investments by Private Sector Partners

Houghton's North Landing Talent District is seeing current investment from our private sector partners (Appendix C). Two of those current key investments are highlighted below:



Figure 5: The Gateway Project Rendering

- The **Gateway Project (Figure 5)**, started in September 2025, plans to develop an underutilized site at the entrance to downtown. The mixed-use development when completed, 32 two-bedroom units between downtown and the Michigan Tech campus. These units will be a mix of condominium, market rate lease, and income-driven products. The developers are investing more than \$17 million into the project and construction has commenced.
- The rehabilitation project at **109 Shelden Avenue** began construction in July of 2025. This project will invest more than \$3.5 million in a four-story downtown building to create a mixed-use development which will include retail/restaurant space on the main floor and nine new apartments on the floors above. The owner/developer will relocate their successful downtown sushi restaurant to some of that first-floor space when the project is completed in the spring of 2026.
- These are only a few of the private investments capitalizing on the District's success in creating the places where talent wants to be. Their investments in denser-scale housing complement the individual investments made in the housing stock within the district, too numerous to list.

3.a.iii. IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

Over the past decade, Houghton's waterfront has transformed from a sterile, underused space into a vibrant community hub, thanks to incremental placemaking efforts. In 2015, the area held promise but lacked character. The addition of the first garden sparked a movement—now over 90 gardens line the waterfront and downtown, created largely by volunteers using donated plants.

Murals followed, painted mostly by volunteers with support from the City. These efforts inspired school art projects and community events, fostering a strong sense of belonging. Simple additions like umbrellas on picnic tables encouraged outdoor gatherings, accompanied by music from local children or weekly concerts.

This grassroots development turned the waterfront into a place people want to be—a melting pot of cultures shaped by Michigan Tech's global community. Faculty and students from around the world have become residents, enriching Houghton's waterfront culture and celebrating diversity through events like the Parade of Nations and the international food and culture festival.



As the main street of a busy downtown, Shelden Avenue has fewer opportunities to create public space or amenities. However, one opportunity exists at 509 Shelden, an empty lot where a building was lost to fire. **By redeveloping this lot into a pocket park with restroom facilities we can fill a gap on main street; creating a smaller, more intimate place where talent can stop and sit, read a book, enjoy a cup of coffee, or listen to a musician work on their act.**

Another byproduct of that successful main street is that new small businesses or artists cannot afford private downtown space, leaving that baker or painter unable to enter the market. The HB+CI will remove some of barriers by providing small, affordable space on a flexible basis to artists, craftsmen, cottage law food vendors, and other small and startup retail businesses. Having space on both Shelden Avenue and Lakeshore Drive enables the expansion of the main street commercial presence into the newly accessible Lakeshore area. **The HB+CI will also serve as a year-round hub for artists and creatives—offering indoor gallery space and preserving the community atmosphere of summer markets during winter.**

The Phase 2 Pier Extension will create more of that special space where our community connects with the water in shared experiences. Building on the success of phase one as a year-round hub, expanding the concept will create flexible spaces for events and personal gathering, strengthen infrastructure connections, and deliver a cohesive, all-season experience greater than the sum of its parts.

Since 2006, more than \$40 million has been invested in the downtown area, including \$18 million in public grants for façade improvements, marketing, placemaking, utilities, and building acquisition and rehabilitation. The City invested \$7 million, with private investment of \$15 million.”

-2024-2028 City of Houghton Master Plan, page 50

3.b. SUPPORT LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESSES

The City of Houghton’s Master Plan prioritizes activating key commercial corridors—particularly Lakeshore Drive—by filling vacant retail spaces with locally owned businesses and creating opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs to grow. This focus is designed to strengthen both the local economy and the community fabric. **Of the roughly 100 businesses in the downtown district, more than 90% are locally owned,** with the few recognizable brands also owned by local entrepreneurs.

Houghton benefits from a strong small business and entrepreneurial support network anchored by KEDA and the MTEC SmartZone and reinforced by regional and state partners such as Northern Initiatives, SBDC, MEDC, and Michigan Works! The City itself has long invested in this ecosystem, operating a revolving loan fund to help downtown businesses with renovations and working capital, as well as a façade grant program that has often served as local match for larger MEDC awards. Together, these efforts have maintained high downtown occupancy rates while increasing the diversity and vibrancy of local businesses.

Recent successes illustrate the power of this approach. Beviamo Vino, a new downtown venue offering wine, craft cocktails, and small plates, invested over \$245,000 into its space with support from the SBDC and an MEDC Match on Main grant administered through the City. Similarly, the 109 Shelden redevelopment project expanded a local restaurant through a coordinated effort involving business planning (SBDC), financial packaging (KEDA), and funding support from the City of Houghton, Houghton County Brownfield Authority, MEDC, and Build U.P., a regional nonprofit. These examples highlight how **collaboration between the City, partners, and entrepreneurs translates into new investment, stronger businesses, and a more resilient downtown.**

North Landing as a Hub for Small Business

Houghton's historic investments downtown and along the waterfront have helped Main Street thrive through eras of malls and urban sprawl, with businesses and residents filling mixed-use buildings. **The proposed HB+CI builds on Houghton's strengths while filling a long-standing gap in its small business ecosystem.** HB+CI will provide small, flexible, and affordable spaces with access to both Shelden Avenue and Lakeshore Drive, offering cottage-law businesses, artists, craftsmen, and other retailers a visible, high-traffic location at the heart of downtown. By coordinating with the region's small business support ecosystem, the project will also connect entrepreneurs to the resources, mentorship, and information they need to succeed—laying the groundwork for new storefronts on Shelden and activating underused spaces on Lakeshore Drive.

Physical connections from the proposed NTC and social connections through improvements to the Waterfront Walkway will link new and established talent with the downtown community, providing a soft landing for entrepreneurs who want to stay and grow locally. Modeled on successful ventures like Muskegon's Western Market Chalets and Lansing's Middle Village Micro Market, the incubator will be a launchpad for the region's next generation of creators and community leaders. **By tying together Michigan Tech's campus, Houghton's cultural center, and a low-barrier space for entrepreneurship, the project transforms the city's core into a vibrant hub—ensuring that talent nurtured in the Keweenaw has every reason to remain and thrive.**

The Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation (MTEC) SmartZone

The Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation (MTEC) SmartZone (recognized by Crain's Detroit Business) is already successfully doing this for high-tech entrepreneurs in our community, but those specialized services do not always translate completely to small retail business or artists. MTEC's Smart Start program serves any start-up business, but the continuum of services they can provide are more attuned to the high-tech sector. The HB+CI will support those non-tech entrepreneurs.

Regional Economic Resilience through Diversification

MTU is not only the region's largest employer but also one of the biggest

drivers of demand for local businesses. Restaurants, shops, service providers, and housing all benefit directly from the steady flow of students, faculty, staff, and visitors the university attracts. This daily activity supports dozens of small businesses downtown and across the area, creating a reliable customer base that sustains year-round commerce in a rural market.

Beyond the university, the region's robust outdoor recreation economy and infrastructure add another layer of strength and diversification. A well-developed network of trails, waterfront amenities, ski areas, and parks not only drives tourism but also supports the attraction and retention of talent, offering a quality of life that appeals to professionals, entrepreneurs, and families. Local businesses—from outfitters and guides to lodging, dining, and retail—benefit from this steady recreational draw, while employers leverage the area's lifestyle advantages to recruit and keep top talent.

At the same time, Michigan Tech's research and innovation culture has fueled the creation of entirely new local businesses. Through partnerships with organizations such as the Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance (KEDA) and the MTEC SmartZone—an incubator jointly funded by Houghton and Hancock—startups have been launched that now compete nationally and internationally. Firms like GS Engineering, IR Telemetrics, ThermoAnalytics, Great Lakes Sound & Vibration, and Orbion Space Technology all began here, bringing high-paying jobs and contracts that ripple out to local suppliers, contractors, and service providers.

This multi-faceted impact—steady institutional demand, a vibrant recreation-based economy, and a pipeline of high-growth entrepreneurial companies—gives local businesses both stability and opportunity. It ensures that Houghton's economy is not dependent on a single sector but instead provides a resilient foundation where small businesses can adapt, thrive, and grow alongside Michigan Tech's continued presence and innovation.

4. SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Anchored in Collaboration

Houghton is one of the few Upper Peninsula cities that saw population growth in the 2020 Census—proof of successful economic development and placemaking led by the City and KEDA. This reflects both vision and capacity to implement and sustain the Talent District as a model for rural talent retention in Michigan. **The proposed North Landing Talent District projects will build on the strong City-KEDA partnership, backed by decades of experience in economic development, placemaking, and execution.**

From Vision to Vitality: A Roadmap for Long-Term Success

The City has led major efforts including waterfront redevelopment, Lakeshore Drive construction, and downtown revitalization. With a skilled team and a record of managing complex grants, the City will oversee coordination, infrastructure upgrades, and integration with community assets. **Over the past decade, the City's small but effective team (7 FTEs) has leveraged nearly \$10M in grants, bonded millions in match funds, and coordinated tens of thousands of volunteer hours to reimagine downtown and the waterfront**—now a source of community pride and connection. In 2024, Houghton received the Michigan Municipal League's Community Excellence Award for creating places that serve residents.

KEDA has a proven record of growing the local economy by supporting entrepreneurs, emerging developers, attracting investment, and collaborating with Michigan Tech, MTEC SmartZone, SBDC, MEDC and private industry. KEDA will lead business recruitment, incubation programming, and partnerships to ensure the Talent District supports startups, small businesses, and creative entrepreneurs.

- The **City of Houghton** and **KEDA** will jointly oversee project implementation, ensuring accountability and coordination across all components.
- The **City's Department of Public Works** will manage, operate, and maintain physical infrastructure, drawing on its experience with climate-resilient asset management.

- The **City's Community and Business Development Manager** will lead operations for the HB+CI, in collaboration with consortium organizations providing small business development services.
- **KEDA** will lead business recruitment, incubation programming, and partnerships to support startups, small businesses, and creative entrepreneurs.
- Partnerships with **Michigan Tech, MTEC SmartZone**, downtown businesses, and cultural organizations will align resources and amplify impact.
- Projects will be delivered in phases with clear milestones and reporting.

Project Sustainability

The HB+CI will be managed by the City's Community and Business Development Manager in partnership with consortium organizations that will provide a continuum of small business development services to tenants. The City will leverage MTEC's incubator leasing experience along with its own in managing office and concessionaire spaces, applying best practices from proven models to ensure long-term success. As other proven models exist for such space, the City will draw on best practices from similar spaces in Muskegon, Grand Rapids, and Lansing. As a condition of tenancy, small and emerging businesses will be required to interface with small business development resources, have a business plan, and work toward growth that will propel them into the downtown market. Terms of tenancy will be tied to their growth and readiness for their next evolution. It is expected that many artists and creatives may be more suited to shorter term space or pop-up status, which can stem occasional vacancies, but also provide for a rotating diversity of tenants and programming. The physical spaces will be equipped to address the basic needs common to the tenants but left adaptable to accommodate retail, makers, and artists.

Maintenance of the HB+CI will be funded through leases and as part of the Downtown Development Authorities annual budget. Maintenance of the Pocket Park and Waterfront Trail and Pier improvements will be managed through the existing City budget that is used to maintain the existing amenities and facilities downtown.

PROJECT CONSORTIUM INFORMATION

5. LEAD APPLICANT

Eric Waara, City Manager
City of Houghton
616 Shelden Avenue
Houghton, MI 49931
906-482-1700
eric.waara@cityofhoughton.com

6. SUPPORT OF CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

The City of Houghton is the lead applicant. City Manager Waara is the Chief Administrator.

7. PROJECT CONSORTIUM AND SUPPORT

Established in 2018 with support from the **MTEC SmartZone**, Team Peninsula was formed following the completion of a region-wide economic development strategy led by **KEDA** in 2015. This consortium brings together local leaders from local organizations to collaborate on initiatives that drive economic development, attract new residents, and increase household incomes.

The group's mission is to identify shared priorities and work collectively to advance high-impact regional projects. Emphasizing collaboration, transparent information sharing, and unified messaging, Team Peninsula convenes every six weeks to build trust, address community-wide challenges, and pool resources to strengthen the local economy.

Diverse representation within the group enables a multi-perspective approach to common challenges. Regular participation from business and development leaders ensures alignment with private sector efforts, enhancing the district's appeal to investors.

With its inclusive structure, strategic focus, and strong stakeholder engagement, Team Peninsula is well-positioned to lead the **North**

Landing Talent District. Members are actively engaged in efforts to attract and retain talent and support small business growth—both individually and as a collective force for regional impact.

Beyond Team Peninsula, Houghton works with other local partner organizations to bring cultural and civic resources to the district. This includes local Rotary events, the Portage Lake District Library (located on the Waterfront Walkway), our local schools, the Rosza Performing Arts Center, and others who create events and adorn the district with art pieces and murals, plant flowers, organize events, and hold concerts to complete the spectrum of enrichment and involvement that feeds a community's soul.

Together our stakeholders build and maintain both the hard and soft assets that make up who we are.

Appendix D includes a comprehensive list of the entities within the Team Peninsula consortium and provides a narrative overview of the partnership, detailing the roles and resources contributed by each organization.



ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES + PROJECT READINESS

8. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND COMPREHENSIVENESS

Houghton's proposal for the North Landing Talent District includes **four (4) of the defined eligible activities**, demonstrating deep alignment with Michigan Talent Partnership (MTP) objectives and ensuring comprehensive, transformational outcomes across walkability, placemaking, housing, cultural enrichment, and entrepreneurship, all elements aimed at attracting and retaining talent.

Eligible Activity v: Road repairs and other surface improvements that will increase walkability, access to green space, dedicated nonmotorized transportation, and access to rapid transit or high-speed rail.

Projects that address this activity include:

- Nonmotorized Trail Connection and Waterfront Enhancements

Eligible Activity vi: Costs associated with site improvements such as access (including ADA improvements) and streetscaping elements such as lighting, fencing, street furniture, etc.

Projects that address this activity include:

- Nonmotorized Trail Connection and Waterfront Enhancements
- Houghton Business and Creative Incubator (HB+CI)
- Shelden Avenue Pocket Park
- Phase 2 Pier Expansion

Eligible Activity vii: Supports for small businesses and emerging entrepreneurs, including access to credit and professional development.

Projects that address this activity include:

- Houghton Business and Creative Incubator (HB+CI)

Eligible Activity viii: Plans to enhance parks, green space, community recreation, promotion of local artists or art installations, and outdoor social spaces.

Projects that address this activity include:

- Nonmotorized Trail Connection and Waterfront Enhancements
- Houghton Business and Creative Incubator (HB+CI)
- Shelden Avenue Pocket Park
- Phase 2 Pier Expansion

Additional Eligible Activity: Property Acquisition

Two of the City's four proposed projects will require property acquisition. The HB+CI will require the acquisition of 326 Shelden and the Shelden Avenue Pocket Park will require the acquisition of the 509 Shelden lot. Without the acquisitions, the City will be unable to convert these blighted and unused properties into transformative Placemaking spaces.

9. ZONING AND CODE RESTRICTIONS

The district and overall project area are presently zoned as Business and R-3 Multifamily; both districts allowing higher density residential development. Within the business zoned area many mixed-use buildings house local businesses on the ground floor and residential spaces above. The R-3 area is specifically zoned for higher density development with denser, multistory living units near downtown and MTU. Our downtown has a Central Business Overlay District zoning designation that encourages higher density development and the cultivation of a lively, mixed-use downtown. **No zoning changes are required for more high-density residential developments.**

10. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The proposed project schedules are based on each of them receiving funding through the Michigan Talent Partnership.

Description		2025	2026				2027	
		Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Nonmotorized Trail Connection and Waterfront Walkway Enhancements	Nonmotorized Trail Connection							
	Grant award							
	Data collection and design							
	Bidding							
	Construction							
	Pier Amenities							
	Grant award							
	Design and material selection							
	Bidding							
	Construction							
	Bridge Restroom Conversion							
	Grant award							
	Design and permits							
	Bidding							
	Construction							
	Dark Sky Lighting Conversion							
	Grant award							
	Design and material selection							
	Bidding							
	Construction April 2026							

	Houghton Business and Creative Incubator (HB+CI)							
	Grant award October							
	Building acquisition and legal							
	Data collection and preliminary design							
	Architectural design and specifications							
	Bidding and contracts							
	Begin intake, services, coaching to future tenants							
	Construction							
	Project completion and opening							
	Shelden Avenue Pocket Park							
	Grant award							
	Data collection and design							
	Bidding and Contracts							
	Construction May 26 – July 26							
	Phase 2 Pier Expansion							
	Grant Award							
	Data collection and preliminary design							
	Plans and permitting							
	Bidding and contracts							
	Construction							
	Project completion and opening							



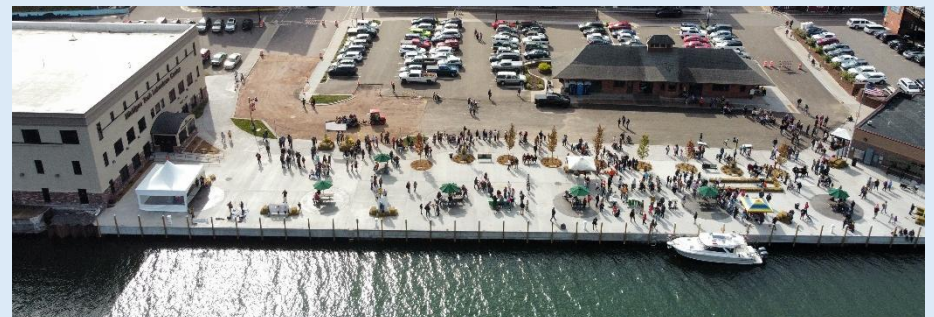
11. MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Based on the goals stated in the MTP application overview and instructions, the City's plan for collecting the hard and soft metrics will provide proof that the goals are being achieved:

Goal: Attract & Retain Talent. The proxy data for tracking attraction and retention of talent will be to track population change based on the U.S. Census.

Goal: Public Space Project Density, Amenities & Vibrancy. The proxy data for tracking this goal will be the use of metadata tools like PlacerAI to perform spot checks on events and general use of the district over time to provide data driven measures of users, dwell time, repeat visits, etc. to the district. The City will partner with Visit Keweenaw to gather this data. Additionally, the City will conduct visual surveys of the various public spaces to assess usage.

Goal: Create Business Opportunities for Residents. The proxy data for measuring this will be to annually count the number of startups and new business locations in the Talent District. This data will be coordinated between the City's Community Business & Development Manager, KEDA, and the SBDC.



BUDGET

12. TOTAL PROJECT COSTS AND FUNDING REQUEST

The estimated total project costs for all projects is \$7,299,000.00. Please see Appendix E for the detailed budget template spreadsheet.

Project	Estimated Cost
Nonmotorized Trail Connection	\$1,125,000.00
Houghton Business and Creative Incubator (HB+CI)	\$3,500,000.00
Shelden Avenue Pocket Park	\$300,000.00
Phase 2 Pier Expansion	\$2,374,000.00
Total Project Costs	\$7,299,000.00

To successfully complete all the listed projects, funding assistance of \$7,099,000.00 is essential.

13. PROJECT MATCH FUNDING

Project match funding is based on public and private investment in the District at \$19,833,015, including a City cash match of \$200,000. Please see Appendix C for the detailed match tabulation and evidence of match funding.

Match Name	Match Amount
L&Z Rentals Mixed-use 109 Shelden Redevelopment	\$2,154,515.00
Gateway Mixed-use Commercial/Residential Development	\$17,000,000.00
The Den Restaurant	\$53,500.00
Cork & Beans LLC/Beviamo Vino	\$245,000.00
Julien Properties 418 Shelden Renovations	\$148,000.00
City of Houghton Bridgeview Park Improvements	\$232,000.00
City Match to Waterfront Walkway Conn. & Enhance.	\$200,000.00
Total Match	\$19,833,015.00



TIE BREAKER

14. ADDITIONAL MATCH FUNDS

According to the Match Score Criteria in the Budget Template our total match funds exceed 100% of the total cost at 272%. See Appendix C for evidence of match funding.

APPENDIX

- A. 2024-2028 City of Houghton Master Plan
- B. Michigan Technological University Master Plan
- C. Investment Match Documentation
- D. North Landing Consortium
- E. Detailed Project Budget

