

## Chapter 1.0 Introduction and Brief Historical Background

### 1.1 Planning Overview

This Master Plan is the result of extensive data collection and analysis providing a method to address issues throughout the City of Ishpeming. Master Plans are governed by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008). Community input has played a critical role in the formation of this plan to ensure that it represents the needs of the residents. The initial sections of the plan present an analysis of the current conditions in the City, including demographic statistics, economic climate and the existing land use. The remaining chapters of the plan are designed around the key issues highlighted by residents and community officials. Recommendations for Ishpeming officials addressing key issues are outlined in detail.

By analyzing the current condition of the area and factoring in desired outcomes, the plan provides a clear view and direction toward achieving the proposed goals. A future land use chapter will present the “preferred future” of how the City of Ishpeming would like to grow and will include recommendations on how development will be carried out. The future land use discussion will also include a zoning plan, which will guide the implementation of a zoning ordinance revision for the City.

To summarize, this plan is intended for use as a guide by local officials when considering matters related to development and land use. Planning is a process that requires ongoing review and analysis. This plan will remain a work-in-progress and will require timely and thoughtful revision to be of the greatest benefit.

### 1.2 Brief Historical Background

The beginning of Ishpeming coincides with the history of mining on the Marquette range. In 1846, explorer Philo Everett was led by a Chippewa Indian to a mountain made of ore 180 feet high and 1,000 feet wide. Today, this historic mountain is known as Jasper Knob, “The World’s Largest Gemstone,” and its discovery was the first step in the establishment of the city known today as Ishpeming.

Until 1862, the town was known only as "Lake Superior Location." When the town gained enough citizens to be a city, it was difficult to find a suitable name. The settlers decided upon "Ishpeming," a Chippewa word for "high" or "on the summit." This name was appropriate because Ishpeming sits on a ridge about 850 feet above nearby Lake Superior. A statue of a Native American figure has stood in the small town square since 1884 and is referred to as "Old Ish." It is important to note, that although the City’s name has a Chippewa basis, the Native Americans had not settled in the area.

In the fall of 1856, Henry Ely employed the Longtine brothers of Marquette to clear timber on what was the Lake Superior Mine land. The first permanent building, a boarding house for miners (located in the SE corner of the current downtown area) was then built. Up until this time workers lived in tents and in the summer had to camp by smudge fires at night and deal with mosquitoes.

In 1860, the first store was established by Robert Nelson. This business occupied a portion of his boarding house, called "The Ishpeming House." Three years later, a post office was established in the same building. The Iron Cliffs Mining Company was formed in 1865 by financier Samuel J. Tilden and other influential New Yorkers. The company established the Barnum Mine in 1867, north of the Lake Superior Mine. The Barnum operated successfully for many years.

Clusters of homes, called locations, developed near the mines and were given names based on the mines, such as: Lake Superior, Cleveland, Lake Angeline, Barnum, New York, etc. In the fall of 1869, Ishpeming was incorporated as a village and the first town elections were held. In 1873, the village of Ishpeming was granted a charter.

Ishpeming was a boom town like the gold rush towns in California, only iron was the reason for the massive influx of settlers. The large amount of money in the area at the time drew in special and eclectic characters. In 17 years (1856 to 1873) Ishpeming grew from its first building to a population of 6,000. Robert Nelson, called the "Father of Ishpeming" had a major influence in developing downtown Ishpeming. In 1869, Nelson purchased the surface rights of the area now known as the original plat of the downtown area, from the Iron Cliffs Company for \$470. This area was the middle of a large cedar swamp, but Nelson made the land usable by getting the waste rock from the Cliff Mine and used it as fill. Once filled in, the lots sold rapidly and within four months, there were ten businesses on Division Street and seven on Main Street. In 1870, Nelson also bought a parcel of land on Strawberry Hill from the Marquette & Bay De Noc Company for \$200, and platted it for residential purposes.

In the early 1870's Ishpeming was growing fast; the community was in need of a hotel. The Barnum House was built in 1875 by Mr. Nelson. Unfortunately it burned to the ground four years after it opened. The Nelson House was built to replace it, with Robert Nelson as the owner. The Nelson House was built of solid brick and existed for 48 years before it was also razed by fire in 1928. The Mather Inn, which remains in existence to this day, was built in its place with assistance from William G. Mather, the longtime president of Cleveland Cliffs Mining Company. Currently, the Mather Inn is undergoing a mixed use redevelopment effort by its new owner.

In the late 1870s the Iron Cliffs Company began exploratory work in the north and drilled two holes. The first hole, given the name “A,” was started in March of 1877. No ore was found by February of 1878 and the drilling was stopped. The second drill hole, to the west, was started in June of 1877 and was named “B.” Hole “B” was completed in July of 1878 and ore was found. The two exploratory holes became mine shafts and the operation was called the “New Barnum.” In the early 1880s, along the shores of Lake Bancroft, a new engine house and boiler house were constructed, in addition to a set of wooden shaft houses. In 1886 the New Barnum’s name was changed to the Cliffs Shaft.

In May 1891, the Iron Cliffs Mining Company merged with the Cleveland Mining Company to form Cleveland-Cliffs Mining Company. William G. Mather was the first president of the newly formed merger. The Cliffs Shaft became the principle mine and worked continually long after the Old Barnum open pit mine was closed in 1897.

In 1919, the old wooden head frames were in need of replacement and Mather decided to change their appearance in the new construction. Architect George Washington Maher designed a 97-foot tall concrete Egyptian-revival Obelisk for both the “A” and “B” shafts. These structures are recognizable symbols of Ishpeming and the mining company.

In the 1950s the mine was in need of modernization and in 1955 a new shaft was placed into service. The “C” shaft was located between the “A” and “B” shafts and was marked by a 174-foot tall structure. The “A” and “B” shafts were retired the same year because they were no longer useful. The longest operation of an underground iron mine in the world ended in December of 1967. Over 100 years, the mine had produced 27 million tons of high grade ore.

Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company had also established the Mather Mine in 1941, which produced ore until 1979. After its closure, there were no longer any mines in operation within the City limits. Some residents are still involved in the mining industry; many current Ishpeming inhabitants are employed at Cliffs Natural Resources Empire and Tilden Mines.

For years, Ishpeming prospered because of its mining industry. Nonetheless, many mines across the country began to compete with the mines surrounding Ishpeming. The main highway, US-41 was then rerouted. Originally, the road had run directly through downtown Ishpeming, making the area visible to people traveling through. When the road was rerouted, the town became essentially invisible to travelers. In the 1990s, an entrepreneur built the Country Village along the rerouted highway. This part of town is now thriving with many businesses.

A major challenge facing the City of Ishpeming is maintaining and improving the existing quality of life for residents while enriching the characteristics that make the City an attractive place to live. This plan seeks to find ways to attract redevelopment while maintaining the significant natural and cultural resources currently enjoyed by residents. The master plan can be viewed as a community blueprint for the future, a mechanism to help ensure each decision fits as part of the whole vision.

Sources:

<http://www.ishpeming-michigan.com/>

Ishpeming Development Authority, <http://www.ishpemingdevelopmentauthority.org/history.php>