

Chapter 10.0 Planning Commission Recommendations

10.1 Introduction

Throughout the preceding chapters of this plan, detailed information has been presented defining the historical trends and current situation in the City of Ishpeming. This background information has helped the Planning Commission gain an understanding of the forces which have shaped the growth and development of the City to this point.

In order for a community to have a sound plan for growth and development, it is essential that goals be set. These goals are broad statements which reflect desired future conditions and are based on the background information, assumptions, alternatives and policy variables presented earlier. More specific recommendations are then developed, defining actions that can be taken to implement the goals.

The final stage of the planning process, implementation, begins once the goals and recommendations have been defined. The first step in implementation is the adoption of this plan by the Planning Commission and the City Council following a public hearing and consideration of any public comments received.

Plan implementation continues through adherence to the goals and recommendations set forth in this plan. It should be emphasized, however, that these goals and recommendations are a guide and provide a long-term vision; ideas and projects mentioned are adjustable per the City's needs. While the Planning Commission has developed these goals and recommendations based on the best information available, the needs of the community at a point in time, changing needs and desires within the community, or changes in the local population or economy may mean that these goals and recommendations will need to be re-evaluated. This plan must remain flexible enough to respond to changing needs and conditions, while still providing a strong guiding mechanism for future development. The Planning Commission and City Council, together with other groups, organizations and individuals, can use this plan as a dynamic decision making tool, and should assure that the plan is referred to frequently and updated periodically.

To assist in understanding the nature of the goals and recommendations presented on the following pages, the following definitions are presented:

Goal:

A broad statement of a desired future condition, the generalized end toward which all efforts are directed. Goals are often stated in terms of fulfilling broad public needs, or alleviating major problems. Goals are generally difficult to measure and are idealistic.

Recommendation:

A course of action that is advisable. Recommendations are opinions about what could or should be done about a situation or a problem to achieve desired goals. Many recommendations stated in the plan are long-term and may need to be reevaluated periodically to meet new goals developed by the City.

10.2 Population

Discussion: The City of Ishpeming's population has declined nearly 30 percent from 1940 to 2000. Population estimates for the City of Ishpeming from 2000 to 2007 also indicate a slight population decrease of 212 persons, or a 3.2% decrease. The median age of Ishpeming residents in 2000 was 38.9 years. This figure was about a year and a half older than the median age for the County. Baby boomers account for about 25 percent of the City's population, Gen Xers make up about 12 percent and Millennials comprise about 20 percent of Ishpeming's population. Nearly 20 percent of the City's population is over the age of 65. The City's population density of 769.8 persons per mile is the second highest of the communities within the Ishpeming-Negaunee-Marquette urban area.

Goal:

Continuously monitor population trends and opportunities to retain population density in the City of Ishpeming and surrounding areas as part of the Master Planning process.

10.3 Economic Base

Discussion: The historical basis of Ishpeming's economy is based on iron ore. The mining industry remains a significant part of the area's economy today. The City of Ishpeming has several organizations dedicated to the growth of the Ishpeming economy including the Ishpeming Area Business Association, Ishpeming Downtown Development Authority and the Ishpeming Development Authority. Business owners and developers also have access to several tax incentives for new construction as well as building rehabilitation in the City of Ishpeming. A key to economic growth in Ishpeming is will be the continued revitalization and promotion of the City's unique downtown area. Per capita income, median household income and median family incomes remain much lower for the City than Marquette County, state and national averages.

Goal:

Maintain the existing economic base and continue to improve the Ishpeming area by attracting diversified businesses.

Continue to enhance the appearance of the City to attract development.

Recommendations:

- Rezone several properties along the US-41 corridor from Single Family Residential to Commercial.
- Complete City land development plan for vacant properties.
- Explore reuse options for vacant buildings throughout the City.
- Continue façade improvements for commercial properties, including properties with 2nd floor housing units.
- Continue to pursue economic diversification.
- Continue to support the renovation and reuse of buildings.
- Continue to support the revitalization of the downtown and significant buildings throughout the City.
- The DDA should develop a long range plan for viable business development and retention in the downtown.
- Pursue outlet (outdoor) mall type business development in the downtown.
- Improve access to and from the downtown as well as traffic circulation and parking availability.
- Expand office and service developments downtown.
- Continue to develop retail businesses along the US-41 corridor.
- Continue to improve and expand 2nd floor apartment rentals in the downtown area.
- Develop a long range plan for the downtown that includes building demolition, reconstruction and reuse options.
- Collaborate with the DDA to develop a reuse plan for the downtown to include a central theme, new anchor/retail stores, and zoning regulations for signage, parking and access. Comparable cities from the Midwest could be studied as examples.

- Develop a long range development committee including DDA members, Planning Commission members, residents, business owners and engineers to collaborate on downtown improvement efforts.

10.4 Housing

Discussion: Census data demonstrates that the City’s housing stock consisted of 65.4 percent single family homes, while many of the remaining housing units are multi-family. Continuing to provide a diverse and affordable housing stock is a priority for the City. Over 62 percent of the housing units in the City of Ishpeming were constructed before 1939; maintaining the aging housing stock within the City is essential. Median housing values in the City have increased dramatically since 1990, while gross rent has also increased, but still remain significantly lower than the State average. Housing assistance programs and subsidized housing are available to qualified Ishpeming residents to help offset higher costs. Priorities for the Planning Commission regarding housing include: aging housing, condition of existing rental units, as well as dilapidated and abandoned unsafe housing.

Goal:

Preserve and enhance existing neighborhoods.

Develop a varied housing stock that meets the needs, preferences and financial capabilities of a diversified population.

Recommendations:

- Continue rental registration program.
- Continue the rental rehabilitation program through MSHDA.
- Continue façade improvements for commercial properties, including properties with 2nd floor housing units.
- Continue to support the renovation and reuse of buildings.
- Encourage neighborhood beautification programs.
- Remove dilapidated homes from the City when feasible.
- Encourage the sale of vacant properties in neighborhoods.

10.5 Community Facilities and Services

Discussion: Current budget constraints limit numerous City departments; from downtown parking enforcement to library operations. Innovative and responsible spending techniques will be necessary to continue to provide a high level of services with reduced funding. Many City departments and services are in need of upgrades and updates. Grant funding may help offset the City's cost for these necessary improvements.

Goal:

Provide, maintain and improve the quality and efficiency of community facilities and services in a cost-effective manner.

Recommendations:

- Explore alternatives for garbage and recycling programs.
- Explore land options and feasibility for relocating the Department of Public Works facilities and garage.
- Consider improvements to existing Department of Public Works facilities and garage such as buffering and screening. (Low priority)
- Develop a long range plan for Department of Public Works facilities, garage and equipment.
- Investigate the feasibility of hiring a grant writer to assist with long range planning opportunities.
- Pursue grant funding for fire and police department equipment, gear and vehicles when available.
- The City should draft future development plans for the Department of Public Works, Police Department and Fire Department; include options on developing a public safety department.
- Continue to take part in annual meetings with the City of Negaunee and Ishpeming Township to discuss joint project opportunities and intergovernmental cooperation.
- The City should develop a long range plan for the water/wastewater system including options for all segments of the system from supply through distribution.
- The City should develop a storm sewer plan.
- The City should develop a long range street improvement plan that includes plans for water and sewer lines, sidewalks, curbs and gutters and nonmotorized transportation opportunities to maximize dollars spent.
- The City should analyze the annual water and sewer budget to set aside money for valve replacement.

- The Negaunee Ishpeming Water Authority Board should continue discussions regarding the water supply for the two cities.
- The City should develop a long range plan for the cemetery; including water lines, access roads, sewer, water usage and water supply/distribution.
- The City should support meeting ADA standards for all City buildings and facilities where feasible.
- Continue competitive bidding standards for all engineering and architectural work in the City.
- Develop a “Think Green” plan for all City departments to become more energy efficient.
- Continue spring clean-up program and develop a fall leaf pickup program.
- Continue District Library discussions.

10.6 Land Use

Discussion: Ishpeming is an example of a community that was developed near mining activities; mining remains a considerable influence on the City today. The availability of public and private services, accessibility, existing conditions of the area, and price are other important considerations for residential development. The City has taken steps to make improvements in older neighborhoods, such as demolishing dilapidated buildings. Residential development continues to expand in the surrounding Townships, due to the availability of larger lots. Commercial land use is concentrated along the US-41 corridor and in the City’s downtown area. The City has numerous lots available for residential, commercial and industrial development at various locations throughout the City. The City’s purchase of the former Cleveland Cliffs property provides many opportunities for development, including PUD, Residential-Recreation, as well as additional development alternatives.

Goal:

Establish land use patterns that maintain the character and health of the City.

Continue to seek development opportunities for available properties.

Recommendations:

- Develop beautification plans for entrances into the downtown area.

- Continue to seek development opportunities for vacant properties.
- Continue discussions with developers for condominium development projects.
- Investigate the feasibility of hiring a grant writer to assist with long range planning opportunities.
- Create a part-time position for a grant writer that involves research, pursuit, writing and securing grants and may also include lobbying efforts for the City.
- Develop a zoning ordinance amendment (access management standards) for the US-41 corridor.
- Support the renovation and reuse of buildings.
- Support the revitalization of the downtown and significant buildings throughout the City.
- Inventory all vacant property by current zoning classification.
- Complete a land development plan for all vacant property.
- Consider pursuing a policy to sell vacant properties to neighboring owners for cost of building demolition.
- Inventory vacant buildings.
- Maintain the City Master Plan.
- Remove all dilapidated buildings from the City.

10.7 Recreation

Discussion: The City of Ishpeming’s current five year Recreation Plan was updated and adopted in 2008 to provide for the development of recreational activities, programs and facilities in the City and has been accepted by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. There is a diverse array of both private and public recreational facilities within the Ishpeming area. Recreation related to tourism is crucial to area economics and is an expanding industry nationwide. Attractions and facilities located in close proximity to the City of Ishpeming present many opportunities for active and passive recreation. Ishpeming is rich in natural resources, drawing a growing number of visitors each year. The City has a conceptual recreational development plan for the “Cliffs Land Purchase” and will continue reviewing the plan for possible implementation of recreational opportunities. Opportunities are available to purchase and potentially develop land on the north side of Teal Lake for recreational uses in partnership with neighboring communities.

Goal:

**Maintain and improve recreational opportunities
for residents of all ages.**

Recommendations:

- The Planning Commission should continue to review the 5-Year Recreation Plan in cooperation with the Recreation Committee for compatibility with the Master Plan.
- The Planning Commission should continue review for potential ATV use in, through and around the City.
- Continue to explore recreational development along the north shore of Teal Lake and Deer Lake in cooperation with the City of Negaunee and Ishpeming Township.
- Continue to support and develop the Iron Ore Heritage Trail.

10.8 Transportation

Discussion: Communities depend on the safe and effective movement of people and goods to sustain a thriving economy. The ability of the Marquette County Road Commission to keep up with maintenance and construction needs on the county road system has decreased in recent years. If additional funding cannot be secured, the Road Commission may defer maintenance, and the condition of many roads will continue to deteriorate. The City Council and the Planning Commission should continue to work with the Road Commission and MDOT to ensure that transportation deficiencies are not impediments to investment in the City. The City should continue to identify local road improvement projects and work with the Marquette County Road Commission to schedule these projects as local and road commission funds become available.

Goal:

	<p>Provide a safe, well maintained and efficient multi-modal transportation network.</p>	
	<p>Continue to develop a non-motorized transportation system within the City and connections to county wide non-motorized trails.</p>	

Recommendations:

- The City should develop a long range street improvement plan that includes plans for water and sewer lines, sidewalks, curbs and gutters and nonmotorized transportation opportunities to maximize dollars spent.
- Improve access to and from the downtown as well as traffic circulation and parking availability.

- Pursue non-motorized transportation facilities.
- Establish Ishpeming as a “bike-friendly” community.
- Pursue compatible uses for non-motorized facilities along roadways.
- Establish bike lanes where feasible; 3rd Street may be an option.
- When major street reconstructions occur, develop bike lanes.
- Pursue a connection from the retail development along the north side of US-41 to the south side of US-41 and the downtown.
- Pursue grant funding for non-motorized facilities when available.
- Promote safe bicycle use in the City through informational pamphlets.
- Encourage the extension of Hematite Drive.
- Encourage the north/south extension of Malton Road from Business M-28 to US-41.
- Support the MDOT Park and Ride concept to promote mass transit options.
- Continue promotion of MARQ-TRAN services and pursue expansion of operational hours and the addition of bike racks to buses.
- Pursue an alternate east-west connection with the City of Negaunee through the Hematite Heights property.
- Develop an overhead or underground pedestrian walkway across US-41 to improve non-motorized connections.
- Submit proposal to MDOT for pedestrian cross walk signals for the US-41 and Lakeshore Drive intersection as well as the US-41 and Second Street intersection.
- Expand the bike path from the Iron Ore Heritage Trail into the business areas.
- Develop a long range plan to pave residential streets.
- Develop a long range plan for sidewalk repair/replacement.
- Continue development of the Iron Ore Heritage Trail.
- Develop a bike path plan; connect bike path to Iron Ore Heritage Trail.
- Develop a City-wide surface drainage plan to control stormwater runoff and discharge.