

CITY OF HOUGHTON
MASTER PLAN
2019-2023

Acknowledgements

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Glossary

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

DDA – Downtown Development Authority

Form-Based Zoning – an alternative means of regulating urban development, such as in downtown districts, that focuses more on physical form than use, allowing for mixed use where traditional zoning would not

KCVB – Keweenaw Convention and Visitors Bureau

KEDA – Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance

KTS – Keweenaw Trail Service

LED – light-emitting diode

LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

MDOT – Michigan Department of Transportation

MEDC – Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Michigan Tech – Michigan Technological University

MSBDC – Michigan Small Business Development Center

MTEC – Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation

Placemaking – creating a livable, walkable, vibrant community

SmartZone – a specially created technology park designed to spur the growth of technology-related or research-orientated businesses and employment opportunities

Sustainable City – a city that meets the needs of the present without sacrificing the future

The City – City of Houghton

TIFA – Tax Increment Finance Authority

WUPPDR – Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region

chapter 1: introduction

Introduction:

This is Houghton's Master Plan; documentation of our community's principles and guidebook for our future. The preparation of this document involved community leaders, citizens who participated in the citywide survey and public meetings, the planning commission and staff. This plan reflects what the residents of Houghton said is important to them and thus provides a guide for future decision-making, actions and policies by city leadership.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 requires each community to have a master plan that satisfies three criteria:

- Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient, and economical.
- Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land development and population changes.
- Best promotes public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare.

This Master Plan is a flexible document serving as the foundation of community vision—what the people of our community envision for their collective future. This Master Plan incorporates significant community and regional input which aids in establishing appropriate goals and strategies consistent with our regional identity.

The Master Plan establishes a framework for zoning and other public policies affecting the community. Community goals relating to growth, economic development, recreation, environment, education, historic preservation, and resource management provide criteria for updating this Master Plan. A desirable community implements policies consistent with community goals conveying a strong sense of identity and pride of place, while stimulating public and private investment.

This Plan's Guiding Principles:

- Attract and retain a diverse and talented workforce
- Foster a "Sense of Place"
- Preserve our rich history
- Improve non-motorized and motorized travel and create connectivity with neighboring communities
- Assist Michigan Tech in attracting a diverse student body
- Strengthen neighborhoods
- Establish a more vibrant downtown
- Plan future land use

- Promote a viable business community
- Incorporate sustainable practices into daily operations.

Use of the Plan

This Master Plan is prepared under authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended. It provides the basis for zoning under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended. The Master Plan also provides a basis for subdivision regulations, local land use regulations, and the capital improvements program ensuring consistency with expressed community goals and policies. This Master Plan is designed to be consistent with other regional plans, thereby setting the stage for regional collaboration.

The Master Plan provides advisory guidelines for development based on public vision, interests and intentions. This aids private sector landowners and developers in making decisions that are consistent with public goals.

Chapter 2: the master plan process

- The City conducted a community survey to garner opinions related to the quality of the present services provided, areas where the City can improve and what city services should be provided in the future. A total of 1,500 surveys were distributed and the response rate was 32 percent.
- The planning commission hosted three open house events involving the community in the planning process.

City residents, business owners and city officials played an important role in the development of this Master Plan. During the planning process, the City offered several opportunities for public involvement.

Survey

In order to gain public input for the Master Plan, the City distributed a survey to all households. Thirty-two percent of the paper surveys were returned and 87 percent of the online surveys were returned. The respondents represented a good cross section of residents by location and age.

The survey team, consisting of City staff, a faculty member from Michigan Tech, and a student intern from Michigan Tech School of Business and Economics, prepared a detailed report and analysis of the survey responses. Overall results were very positive, matching closely the input provided at the open house events. Highlights from the survey are reported below and the full report can be found on the City's website.

- The demographic of survey respondents closely matched the 2010 U.S. Census demographic numbers.
- Almost 90 percent of survey participants perceived an improvement in parks and recreation since the 2011 survey.
- Over 50 percent of respondents saw improvement in neighborhoods. Over 80 percent feel they live in a secure and peaceful environment. There is less satisfaction with the condition of the neighborhoods.
- About 75 percent of respondents perceived improvement in transportation. Respondents are satisfied with the maintenance of bike paths, sidewalks and roads.
- Almost 90 percent of respondents feel curbside recycling is important. The City has offered curb-side recycling since 2016.
- Respondents are very satisfied with city services. Over 50 percent are satisfied with the police department, fire department, water and sewer service, maintenance, and snow removal.

The survey measured respondent's satisfaction levels and perceived improvement since the last survey. Recommendations from the survey included increasing social media, and improving Dee Stadium, code enforcement, public transit, road conditions and public restrooms.

Open House Events

Residents, business owners, landlords and developers from the City were invited to imagine the future of the City of Houghton and discuss any issues or opportunities the City is facing. Planning commissioners and staff were on hand to meet with the public.

The topics included:

- Future Land Use
- Neighborhood Improvements
- Traffic, Transportation, Walkability and Cycling
- Recreation Opportunities
- Parking
- Smart Growth and Sustainability

The open house included map displays for participants to comment on and informational presentation boards covering event topics.

Suggestions received from the events included: more accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists; provide opportunities for public composting; allow owner-occupied Airbnb's; and increase code enforcement in neighborhoods.

chapter 3: historical timeline

- 1850 – Houghton’s first downtown building is constructed. Most of today’s downtown buildings are over 100 years old.
- 1861 - Houghton becomes a village shortly after both entrances to the Keweenaw Waterway are developed to accommodate larger boats. This establishes Houghton as the area’s commerce and business center. The area’s copper mining boom is just starting and by 1890 Houghton County is the wealthiest county in Michigan. The Village of Houghton’s population is 854.
- 1876 - The first bridge was built across the Keweenaw Waterway between Houghton and Hancock.
- 1885 - The Michigan College of Mines (now Michigan Tech) is established by the State Legislature.
- 1903 - Houghton becomes the Birthplace of Professional Hockey where, for the first time, hockey players are openly paid to play.
- 1959 - The present lift bridge opened on December 20, 1959, and was recently designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers.
- 1970 - Houghton becomes a city.
- 1972 - Houghton completes its first Master Plan.
- 1982 - Houghton completes its first waterfront plan and begins converting its four miles of shoreline from industrial to residential and public recreation.
- 1987 and 1989 - Houghton receives the State of Michigan Community of Excellence Award from the Michigan Department of Commerce.
- 1988 - Houghton receives the International Winter Cities award for Urban Design for the downtown parking and pedestrian connection system and receives the Shoreline Partnership Award from the State of Michigan for the work done on the waterfront.
- 2001 - Houghton and Hancock are designated by the state as one of 10 SmartZones in Michigan collaborating with Michigan Tech to foster high-tech business growth in the area.
- 2002 – Houghton declared among the “50 Best Places to Live” by *Men’s Journal Magazine*
- 2006 – Houghton receives a Michigan Cool Cities award.
- 2007 – Houghton receives the *Signature Building of the Year* award from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.
- 2009 – Houghton completes a Downtown Streetscape Project that receives the Michigan Construction Quality Partnership Breaking the Mold Award and the National Partnership for Highway Quality Making a Difference Gold Award.
- 2010 – The League of American Bicyclists designates Houghton as a Bronze level Bike-Friendly Community.
- 2010 – U.S. Census shows Houghton’s population grows by the largest percent of any Upper Peninsula city from 2000-2010.
- 2012 – The Great Lakes Research Center is constructed along the waterfront of the Michigan Tech campus.
- 2013 – The League of American Bicyclists designates Houghton as a Silver level Bike-Friendly Community.
- 2014 – Houghton declared among the “Best Towns Ever” by *Outside Magazine*.
- 2017 – Houghton receives an Infrastructure Capacity Enhancement Grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to complete a major improvement project on Lakeshore Drive.
- 2017 – MTEC SmartZone receives a 15-year funding extension from MEDC.
- 2018 Houghton experienced a 1000-year rainfall-induced flooding event that resulted in a federal disaster declaration.
- 2018 Houghton is designated a five-star community by the Michigan eCities Program.

chapter 4: demographics

Highlights

- With a population nearing 8,000, the diversity in age, race and ethnicity in the City differentiates our community when compared to Houghton County.
- The number of housing units and households in the City has steadily increased.
- In the 2010 Census, the median family income in the city was \$56,146.
- Michigan Tech remains the largest employer in the City.
- The Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation (MTEC) SmartZone continues to grow and develop high-tech jobs and entrepreneurial endeavors.

Population growth is the most important factor influencing land use decisions. If the population of a community is growing, there will be a need for more housing, roads, commerce, industry, parks and recreation, and public services and facilities.

Population and Age Distribution

The population in the City of Houghton has been increasing since 2000. In the 2000 Census, the City's population was 7,025. In the 2010 Census, the City's population increased by 683 to 7,708. The 2017 American Community Survey estimates the population to increase by another 174 to a total of 7,882 in 2020.

Information on age distribution assists a community in matching public services to community characteristics and in determining special needs by age groups. Policy makers may use current and projected age distributions to identify current gaps in services and to project future service needs for housing, education, recreation and medical care.

A unique feature of Houghton's population is the predominance of persons in the age groups of 15 to 19 and 20 to 24, especially when compared to Houghton County. The city has more than double the percentage of persons in these age groups than Houghton County. This large number of 15 to 24-year-olds can be attributed to the presence of Michigan Tech. (Appendix – Table 1)

Another important characteristic of a community is its ethnic and racial make-up. Knowing this makeup helps to identify the cultural needs of its population. The City has a slightly more diverse population when compared to Houghton County. The City was comprised of 85 percent white, 1 percent African American and 11.2 percent Asian (Appendix, Table 2). For comparison, Houghton County reported 95.7 percent white, 0.8 percent African American, and 3.3 percent Asian. Similar to its age distribution, the diversity of the City can most likely be attributed to Michigan Tech.

Households

Since the 1970's, the nationwide trend has been a decline in household size. If a community's household size is decreasing, new housing units might be necessary to accommodate more residents needing places to live. This can be true even if the overall population of a community is declining. In some cases, new housing units are built to accommodate the demand for housing created by smaller household sizes in spite of an overall decline in population.

Table 3 shows the changes in household attributes between 2000 and 2010. The Census classifies households in terms of the relationships among the persons who share a housing unit. Some households are families, while others are non-family households composed of persons living alone or with unrelated persons. According to the 2010 Census, there was a total of 2,380 households in the City, an increase of 266 from the 2000 Census. Although the City has seen an increase in the overall number of households, the number of households with children has decreased.

Population Trends

Houghton's population is predicted to increase slowly over the next 20 years as job growth continues at both the university and high-tech companies; and with people seeking "place" as the digital economy allows many jobs to be done from nearly anywhere. This should increase the population of people ages 18 to 60. As families are having fewer children and people are getting married later, the number of children under 18 in the City is predicted to decline slightly or remain the same. As with a lot of other communities in Michigan, the over-60 population should continue to grow over the next 20 years.

Housing

Shelter is a primary need of every community. Meeting the housing needs of residents in different stages of life and circumstances can help to revitalize communities and retain residents. One way to do this is by supporting mixed-use neighborhoods, which combine residential and commercial uses in an effort to promote walking and a sense of community. This allows greater independence for those who either do not have the opportunity or prefer not to depend on the automobile as their primary mode of transportation.

The number of housing units in the City increased slightly over the last 10 years. The 2010 Census reported 2,516 housing units, an increase of 294 over the 2000 Census. The 2017 American Community Survey estimates the amount of housing units has increased by another 380 for a total of 2,896. As shown in Table 4, the only categories to decrease since the 2000 Census were rental vacancies and the average household size of owner-occupied units.

Income

Measures of income in a community include median family income, median household income and per capita income. According to the 2010 Census, the median family income was \$56,146, the median household income was \$21,993 and the per capita income was \$15,528. These numbers are greater than those for Houghton County. This can be explained in part by the City's proximity to Michigan Tech.

Employment

Michigan Tech is a largest employer in the area. The Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation (MTEC), one of now twenty SmartZones in Michigan, has fostered new job creation. The SmartZone is focused on commercializing ideas, patents and other opportunities surrounding corporate, university or private research institute efforts. The SmartZone works with the cities of Houghton and Hancock, Michigan Tech, Finlandia University, and the Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance (KEDA) and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). There are four SmartZone incubators, three in Houghton: The Advanced Technology Development Center on the Michigan Tech campus, the Powerhouse, and the first floor of the Michigan Tech Lakeshore Center. The fourth, the Jutila Center, is located in Hancock. The SmartZone office is in the Michigan Tech Lakeshore Center in downtown Houghton. The SmartZone continues to develop high-tech jobs in the area.

Along with Michigan Tech and the SmartZone, Houghton is home to local employers employing people in businesses large and small as Houghton is the commercial hub of the Keweenaw.

chapter 5: physical and natural setting

Highlights

- Houghton ranks among the snowiest cities in America.
- The City's steep hillside location creates challenges for infrastructure maintenance, winter driving, walking and cycling, but provides spectacular views and contributes to Houghton's unique sense of place.
- The Keweenaw Waterway is an important community asset.

Located in the northwestern portion of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the City is considered the gateway to the Keweenaw Peninsula as US-41 and M-26 merge in Houghton and cross the only bridge to the north. The Keweenaw is a unique physical and geological land formation clearly visible on satellite photos. Houghton is 200 miles east of Duluth and 200 miles north of Green Bay. Minneapolis and Milwaukee are about 350 miles away and Detroit is about 550 miles away.

Climate

Lake Superior influences the climate of the Keweenaw Peninsula. The open waters of the lake moderate temperatures in both the summer and winter. Houghton's location on the Keweenaw Peninsula, with Lake Superior on both sides, ensures that the area is among the snowiest in the Midwest. Annual lake-effect snowfall usually exceeds 200 inches making for excellent skiing, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing. As Lake Superior generates the snow, it also keeps our temperatures warmer than most winter communities to the west, such as Duluth and Minneapolis. Winter recreation activities typically start in early December and end in early April. During the summer months average daily high temperatures in the 70s to low 80s, make outdoor activities very comfortable. Spring temperatures tend to be cooler and the autumn is typically warmer than other areas with the same latitude.

Topography

The City occupies steep hillside areas sloping down to the water. As a result of this natural setting, the City has spectacular panoramic views of the surrounding hillsides and the Keweenaw Waterway.

Keweenaw Waterway

The Keweenaw Waterway offers excellent boating, fishing and swimming activities in the summer months and ice fishing in the winter. There is access to Lake Superior on both the north and south ends of the Keweenaw Waterway.

Soils and Geology

Soil composition analysis is used in land use planning to predict soil behavior for selected land uses and to identify special practices needed to ensure compatibility of land uses. Depending on the planned use of the land, improvements may be needed to overcome

soil limitations. This information is useful to community officials, engineers, developers and home buyers. Most of the soils in Houghton are deep loams amid rock outcrops.

chapter 6: community facilities

HIGHLIGHTS

- Entertainment, recreational, and cultural opportunities in the City provide year-round enjoyment for all age groups.
- The City provides essential services to the community including police, fire and public works departments that are integral in protecting and maintaining the community and our resources.
- The City is home to one elementary school and one combined middle & high school complex that serves not only City residents, but also residents from surrounding communities.
- Michigan Tech enrolls more than 7,000 undergraduate and graduate students from across the nation and internationally.

The facilities and services offered by a community enhance its residents' quality of life. The City, other local governments or quasi-public entities own, operate and maintain the facilities listed below that benefit City residents.

GOVERNMENT FACILITIES AND SERVICES

City Center

The City Center at 616 Sheldon Avenue houses the police department, transit department, manager, clerk, treasurer, assessor, and the council chambers. The City occupies about 1/3 of the building and the remaining space is leased to business tenants. The four-story Jacobsville standstone building was constructed in 1910 as the Masonic Temple.

Police Service

The City provides police protection through a department consisting of a police chief, lieutenant, sergeants, corporal, patrol officers and a parking enforcement officer. The department patrols with the help of SUVs, cars, bicycles and a snowmobile for winter patrol of the snowmobile trail. The department provides mutual aid throughout Houghton County.

Fire Service

The City's Fire Department was established in 1861 as the Continental Fire Company on Montezuma Avenue. The department includes a fire chief and approximately 28 volunteer fire fighters. Their equipment includes one 100' aerial platform truck, two full-size pumpers, and one mini-pumper truck. The department provides ice water rescue on the Keweenaw Waterway, elevator rescue, and mutual aid throughout Houghton County.

Water Service

The City's wells and water filtration plant on Portage Cove Drive operate under the direction of the Director of Public Works. The plant has the capacity to pump up to 2,200,000 gallons of water per day. Three wells pump groundwater from a subsurface aquifer. The water is filtered to remove nuisance amounts of iron and manganese to improve aesthetics. The water is then chlorinated and pumped to the storage and distribution system composed of four water tanks, three pumping stations, and more than 30 miles of distribution mains.

Wastewater Service

The Portage Lake Water and Sewage Authority oversees treatment of the City's wastewater. The cities of Houghton and Hancock jointly established the Authority in 1964 to construct and operate a wastewater treatment facility. The current treatment plant was constructed in 1992 as a modern replacement for the original facility that was located in Hancock. The facility treats wastewater from the cities of Houghton and Hancock and two surrounding townships. In 2006, the Authority received the United States Environmental Protection Agency award for Second Best Wastewater Treatment Facility in the Nation.

Department of Public Works

The department includes a Director of Public Works, two foremen, two mechanics and several heavy equipment operators. They spend approximately five months each year managing and removing snow from the streets. The rest of the year they break up into smaller construction crews that concentrate on maintaining City infrastructure including 10 miles of major streets and 25 miles of local streets. Street maintenance consists of patching potholes, line striping, cleaning catch basins and sweeping. The department is also responsible for maintenance of all City water and sewer lines and mains. The City continually focuses attention on groundwater infiltration and/or storm water not separated from the sewer system. Crews use a television camera for inspecting sewer mains throughout the year. The department repairs all problem areas.

The department also maintains the City's general infrastructure such as street signs, sidewalks, parking lots, and parks. The department members have diverse skill sets such as carpentry, concrete, plumbing, and welding which allows the City to perform much of its own heavy maintenance work when not committed to snow removal.

Parks and Recreation System

Houghton is known for its extensive parks and recreation infrastructure that contributes to the quality of life for our residents. The park system is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

EDUCATION:

Houghton Portage-Township School District

The Houghton-Portage Township School District supplies the K-12 education for the City and Portage Township. The elementary school on Jacker Avenue was built in 1973, with an addition in 1998. It contains a computer lab, library, gym, and large playground. The middle school and high school are located on Gundlach Road. The High School was built in 1990. The Middle School addition was completed in 1998. Another addition was built in 2010. The High School-Middle School complex includes a pool, two gyms, computer labs, music room, and an auditorium/theatre. In 2018 the athletic fields underwent a significant improvement project. Houghton High School is a Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School.

Copper Country Intermediate School District

The Copper Country Intermediate School District provides skilled-trades programming at several teaching venues around the Keweenaw. These programs include building trades, culinary, health care, cybersecurity, accounting, machining, welding, and automotive. The programs are available to local high school students interested in Career Technical Education.

Michigan Tech

The City is home to Michigan Tech which enrolls more than 7,000 undergraduate and graduate students from across the nation and around the world. Students “create the future” in more than 120 degree programs in engineering, arts, humanities and social sciences; business and economics; computing; forestry and environmental science; natural and physical sciences; and technology. Michigan Tech earns praise for quality academic programs and a friendly and safe campus environment. Recent rankings include:

- Forbes.com ranked Michigan Tech No. 12 in the US for public universities whose graduates earn the highest mid-career salaries. (August 2017)
- Bestcolleges.com ranked Michigan Tech No. 18 in the US for ROI. Michigan Tech’s 30-year net ROI –the average net earnings a graduate can expect over 30 years of work, minus the cost of their education-is \$999,300. (May 2016)
- SmartAsset ranked Michigan Tech No. 2 in Michigan comparing the cost of a college education to graduates’ average starting salaries. (May 2017)
- Money Magazine ranked Michigan Tech No. 90 out of 706 Best Colleges.
- College Magazine ranked Michigan Tech 20th on its list of the 50 Safest College Towns in America. (2018)

Michigan Tech was founded in 1885 as the Michigan Mining School, specializing in training for mining engineers, with four faculty members, 23 students and housed on the second story of the Continental Fire Hall on Montezuma Avenue. In 1898, the School moved to its present location and became the Michigan College of Mining and Technology. In 1964 the institution became Michigan Technological University.

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Carnegie Museum of the Keweenaw

The Museum occupies the former Carnegie public library building, built in 1909 with a grant from Andrew Carnegie. When the Portage Lake District Library moved to its present location in 2006, the City purchased the building and turned it into a museum with changing exhibits on local history, natural history, science and culture. The Carnegie also serves as a venue for regular public programming with informative lectures on history, current events, and other things of interest.

Portage Lake District Library

The 11,000-square-foot library on the waterfront in downtown Houghton, erected in 2006, includes a children's area, community room and computer and Wi-Fi access. The Portage Lake District Library houses more than 46,000 items for check-out, including print books, audio books, movies and music CDs. The library also offers interlibrary loan services giving patrons access to over 9,000,000 titles and media. The library serves the residents of the City and Portage Township, as well as fee-paying individuals from outside of its district.

Rozsa Center for the Performing Arts

The Rozsa Center opened in 2000 on the Michigan Tech campus. The 80,000-square-foot building was designed to resemble the architecture of copper mine shaft houses. The main theatre has 1,101 seats. The Rozsa hosts world-class theatre, orchestra, ballet and dance ensembles. The theatre also hosts performances from students in the Department of Visual and Performing Arts, the Keweenaw Symphony Orchestra, Michigan Tech Theatre Company, Michigan Tech Concert Choirs, Superior Wind Symphony and jazz ensembles. An art gallery with rotating exhibits is also part of the center.

A.E. Seaman Mineral Museum

The official Mineral Museum of Michigan is located on East Sharon Avenue on the Michigan Tech campus. The museum dates back to 1902, with the present museum building opening in 2011. The museum features one of the finest collections of minerals in North America. Exhibits are separated into 14 galleries and include a collection of crystallized native copper, native silver, datolite, Lake Superior agates and greenstones, and a worldwide suite of minerals. The 1890 school catalogue stated that the collection of minerals numbered over 27,000 specimens. Some specimens from the collection were sent to the Paris Exposition of 1900.

The Keweenaw

With Houghton as a hub, residents can avail themselves of numerous other cultural opportunities in neighboring communities. Live music venues, museums, art galleries, and historic sites are scattered all over the Keweenaw within a short drive of Houghton.

GOALS

- Continue to provide the best possible level of public services to city residents.
- Enhance and improve public infrastructure and cultural facilities.

- Pursue private and public partnerships to promote development of existing community resources.

STRATEGIES

- Actively assist the Carnegie Museum of the Keweenaw with becoming financially independent.
- Regularly evaluate City operations examining ways to leverage opportunities to improve services and lower operational costs.
- Pursue timely grant opportunities to make impactful improvements.
- Work to build an asset management system to allow resources to be targeted for maximum benefit while maintaining all assets.
- Study long-term facility needs to formulate a strategic plan that will allow for the rehabilitation or replacement of City facilities to be approached systematically.
- Address aging water, sewer, and street infrastructure holistically to maximize community benefit.
- Possibly sell the City Center to an interested tenant and relocate the city office and police department to another site.
- Construct an elevated water tank and booster station at the south end of Razorback Drive when needed for development on Cedar Street.

chapter 7: recreation

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.

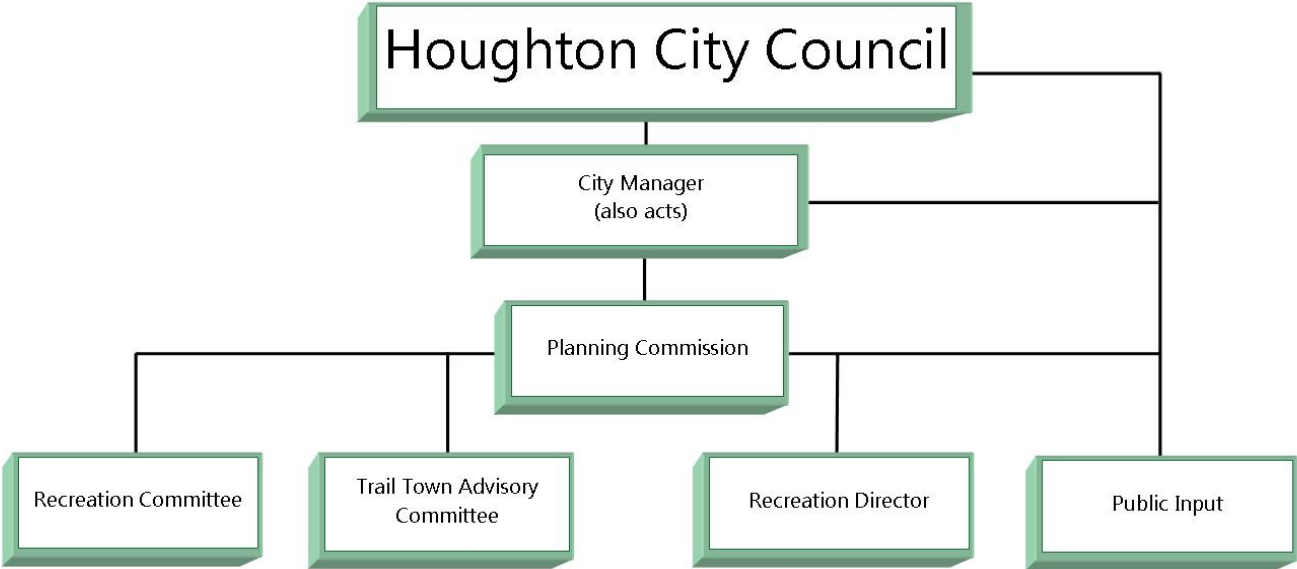
In addition to its residents, the City also has the unique distinction of being a hub to tourists and the traveling public providing a variety of public recreational opportunities. The City's geographic location has established it as a destination and home base to travelers visiting the Upper Peninsula, 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 Tech 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 Tech 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

Phase 1 of the Houghton Skatepark was completed in Spring 2019 on a section of land within the East Houghton Waterfront Park to serve Houghton residents and the region. This park is accessible by foot and bike on the waterfront trail as well as car and boat. 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 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 construction of a deck and seating area to view the Keweenaw 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. Accessible 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

Since 1977, the City has received 12 recreation grants from the DNR. Houghton Bugni Park was sold to the Houghton Portage Township Schools for recreational expansion. All of the other grant-funded parks are still owned by the City.

- A large grant funded project in 1986 allowed the City to develop the Kestner Waterfront Park. The original work included the beach site, construction of bridges, picnic area, landscaping and lighting. The City continues to maintain and improve this very popular park.
- In 1989 The DNR funded a restoration project at Dee Stadium to provide a new roof, siding, fire resistant ceiling, and viewing area. The City continues to operate and upgrade Dee Stadium. At this time, the City is performing a locker room renovation partially funded with a DNR Passport Grant.
- The Chutes and Ladders play area was funded through a grant in 1991. The City continues to maintain and improve this facility which is part of the Kestner Waterfront Park.
- In 1995, the DNR funded a grant to construct the first Nara Park boardwalk, a woodchip trail and fishing piers. In 2002, Phase 2 of the project was completed at Nara Park adding another boardwalk and more fishing sites. The final grant-assisted project at the park was the renovation of the chalet and restroom improvements completed in 2006. The City continues to maintain this park. 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.

- College Avenue Park was improved with grant funds in 2000. A concrete walk, deck, benches, lighting, and landscape were completed providing a place to sit and enjoy nature between the Michigan Tech campus and downtown.
- In 2002, the DNR assisted the City with the purchase of 1.9 acres of waterfront land east of downtown. A pavilion with restrooms, showers, and seating, trail, utilities and landscaping were added with the assistance of grant funds in 2004. The City recently added a Skatepark.
- In 2008, the DNR assisted the City with the purchase of .77 acres of wooded land in East Houghton for the East Houghton Greenspace Park. This park contains a rustic trail for nature walks.
- The Central Houghton Greenspace Park is comprised of 4.5 acres purchased in 2014 with the assistance of a DNR Grant. This park contains rustic trails for hiking and bird watching. Maintenance is provided by the Keweenaw Land Trust.

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 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 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 Keweenaw 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 Goal 3 Goal 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of a basketball court 	2019	\$ 8,000	General
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved storm water management 	2019	\$ 15,000	General, DNR, NRCS
	<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
<i>Goal 1 Goal 5</i>	<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 Goal 3 Goal 4 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
<i>Goal 2 Goal 4</i>	<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
<i>Goal 1 Goal 2 Goal 3 Goal 4 Goal 5</i>	<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
<i>Goal 1 Goal 3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform a detailed study of future maintenance requirements 	2019	\$ 15,000	General
	<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
<i>Goal 3 Goal 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of trees, including an increase in species diversity 	2020	\$ 25,000	General, Grants

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to coordinate with veteran organizations to create enhancements 	Ongoing	\$ 25,000	General, Veteran Orgs
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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
<i>Goal 1</i> <i>Goal 3</i>	<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
<i>Goal 1</i> <i>Goal 3</i>	<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
<i>Goal 1</i>	<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
<i>Goal 1</i> <i>Goal 5</i>	<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
<i>Goal 3</i> <i>Goal 5</i>	<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 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 Goal 3 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
<i>Goal 1</i>	<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
<i>Goal 1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve docks 	2020	\$ 50,000	General, DNR
<i>Goal 3</i>	<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
<i>Goal 1</i>	<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
<i>Goal 1</i> <i>Goal 4</i>	<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
<i>Goal 1 Goal 3 Goal 5</i>	<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		
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Recreational Boating Facilities:

Applicable Goals	Proposed Project	Projected Completion Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Funding Source
<i>Goal 1 Goal 3</i>	<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 Houghton City 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’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'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.

chapter 8: neighborhoods

HIGHLIGHTS

- ***The City offers a variety of housing options; whether it be the bustle of downtown apartments, a quiet waterfront town home, an older home in a well-established neighborhood, or a newer home constructed on larger lots in a more suburban setting.***
- ***Consistent with national trends many young adults and senior citizens are interested in renting rather than purchasing.***
- ***The supply and demand for rental housing continues to be a factor affecting ownership dynamics in the City.***
- ***New single- and multi-family housing construction continues to occur throughout the City.***
- ***Houghton's place as a regional center naturally bolsters property values and home sales in the City as people generally desire to live close to employment, school, shopping, and recreational opportunities.***

City residents desire neighborhoods that are attractive, well maintained, and affordable. Houghton's expansive park system, proximity to K-12 schools, a university, shopping, and employment create a community with a strong housing demand. Each of the City's neighborhoods has its own unique sense of place as described by these general geographical boundaries:

- **Downtown Houghton** – Downtown Houghton features apartments above retail shops lining Shelden Avenue with a mix of building types along Montezuma Avenue. Apartments are populated mostly by university students and senior citizens.
 - Living Downtown is attractive to those seeking proximity to restaurants and shops, the waterfront, and Michigan Tech.
 - While not to the extent of “big city downtown living”, apartment living in Downtown Houghton carries a different pace and lifestyle than a traditional house/yard scenario.
- **Waterfront** – This post-1980 residential waterfront corridor is divided into four parts:
 - West Lakeshore Drive from the Kestner Waterfront Park to the lift bridge is a single strip of owner-occupied homes, several rental units, and businesses.
 - East Lakeshore Drive at the East Houghton Waterfront Park contains two large multifamily buildings.
 - Beyond the park and a present motel, the East Lakeshore Drive waterfront contains owner-occupied waterfront homes that extend to the Michigan Tech campus.

- East of the Michigan Tech is the Isle Royale Sands location made up of a newer apartment complex and relatively new owner-occupied waterfront homes.
- **West Houghton** – West Houghton, located between Bridge Street and M-26, is comprised of a mixture of houses constructed prior to and after 1960. The area includes owner-occupied homes, rental homes and rental complexes.
 - A pedestrian tunnel under state highway M-26 provides safe and convenient access to Kestner Waterfront Park and to the trailhead of the Waterfront Trail. The West Houghton Neighborhood Park includes an outdoor ice rink, basketball courts and playground equipment. The elementary school is within walking distance.
 - Many homes are on single, smaller lots. Off-street parking spaces are in short supply. The closeness of residential structures encourages neighbors to get to know each other.
- **Central Houghton** – This area, roughly between Bridge Street and Franklin Street, contains older homes, new townhouse construction, and apartment complexes.
 - This area is close to Downtown, providing residents with walking access to shopping and services. This area is also home to the Pewabic Street Community Garden, of which many Central Houghton residents are members.
 - This neighborhood has the traditional smaller lots as in West Houghton, but also contains areas developed later in the 20th century with larger lots and a significant amount of green space between some lots due to the bedrock topography.
- **East Houghton** – East Houghton is located near the Michigan Tech campus from Franklin Square to MacInnes Drive and is a combination of early 20th century homes and homes built in the late 20th century and early 21st century. The homes are a combination of owner-occupied and rental homes. The area has experienced recent construction of apartment complexes.
 - The neighborhood is made up of several zoning districts (R-1, R-3, R-4 and Business). Residents have multiple housing options as well as grocery and dining businesses within the neighborhood.
- **MacInnes Drive – Campus Corridor** - Historically defined by institutional facilities and parking lots, this area realized some of the most housing growth in recent years. New residential rental apartment developments have significantly increased the population density in this relatively small area. The City in cooperation with the university, has responded by improving sidewalk access along Upland Road and Fairview Avenue to complement the private developments.
- **M-26 Subdivisions** – Developed post-1985, this area west of the state highway M-26 commercial corridor contains relatively large residential lots with ample off-street parking. Most homes are owner-occupied. The area is also home to The Bluffs senior citizen complex.
 - This area resembles the traditional suburban neighborhood with larger homes and some cul-de-sacs. It contains a playground, and the area is connected to the M-26 business district by a paved walking trail. A new privately-funded subdivision is being developed along West Sharon Avenue.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

The geographic areas summarized in the preceding section provide a brief history and depiction of the housing options in each neighborhood. The breakdown, however, does little to describe the demographic make-up of each neighborhood, nor does it convey the opinions or observations of residents about their neighborhood.

In 2017 the City surveyed residents to better understand the more personal aspects of the neighborhoods. Consistent with the results of the community survey conducted in 2011, the results of the 2017 survey show that although residents are generally satisfied with the character and appearance of their neighborhoods, they remain divided about rental properties. Survey results indicate the following:

- Residential character, city maintenance, and security are perceived well by residents;
- Code enforcement is important to residents and is a perceived issue; and,
- Respondents generally found their neighborhoods to be safe/secure and peaceful, but the quality of rental properties leaves many residents unsatisfied.

Residents often voice concerns at public hearings, public meetings, and through personal conversations with councilors, commissioners, and administrators. It is not uncommon for negative comments to fuel resident misunderstandings related to property codes and zoning ordinances. Some common examples (*shown in italics*) are summarized as follows:

- *Rental homes are kept in a state of disrepair* – City inspections and code enforcement does not show a significant distinction between the appearance/maintenance of owner-occupied and rented homes.
- *Rental properties in the City are occupied by transient and disruptive students* – Rental properties in the City are occupied by a diverse population ranging from a life-long senior resident renting a single-story home to students leasing a multi-room house or apartment. Similar to the preceding bullet, there is no evidence that renter-occupied homes are more disruptive or have more reported nuisance issues than owner-occupied homes.
- *Rental houses have too many occupants* – Ordinances related to rental properties in the City have historically been revised and rewritten to address concerns from residents. Currently, R-1 rental properties are restricted to the occupation of two (2) unrelated people. In the past, however, this was not the case and as such, a select number of homes are “grandfathered” under the historical zoning ordinances. A grandfathered property’s use and occupancy generally transfers with a sale, meaning the new property owner can choose to maintain the existing use/occupancy requirements or comply with current restrictions.
- *Rental properties never revert back to single-family ownership* – There is no evidence to support this statement. The availability of housing in the City changes regularly and with the exception of senior and affordable housing, generally seems adequate based on market demand. In fact, 2018 saw a significant number of R-1 licensed rental properties chose not to renew their licenses, some of which were “grandfathered”.
- *Rental properties have inadequate parking* – Streets, sidewalks, alleyways and residential parcels developed over 100 years ago remain in place today and do not necessarily accommodate the multi-car needs of residents, renters and

homeowners/single families, alike. New rental properties under current ordinance must provide adequate parking to receive a license.

The single defining aspect of a “neighborhood” is that it’s comprised of neighbors. The City asks that neighbors, both renters and homeowners, be respectful of one another and understand that the current codes/policies affect the housing market. The quality of our neighborhoods is a community issue that will require the City, property owners, and renters to work together to improve the perceptions of the City’s residents.

MANAGING CHANGE

People live and work differently than they did even as recently as five years ago. Global connectivity and social interaction have created a digital marketplace that has changed how residents buy, rent, and lease property, both short- and long-term. The lending industry has also changed significantly since 2008, including eliminating loan products and tightening of down payment/credit score requirements making home ownership more difficult for first time buyers. These and other contributing social factors present challenges for residents living in our community, as well as the City ensuring that ordinances are in place and kept relevant to meet the changing needs of our residents and the housing market.

Although several higher density multi-family housing developments have been constructed in the past five years, new home construction in the City remains steady. Home sales and rental conversions also remain relatively consistent when compared to previous years. Conversion of single-family homes to rentals is highly cyclical in response to market conditions. The market factors are a combination of Michigan Tech enrollment, availability of purpose-built apartment units, and overall rental unit availability in the general area; including outside of the City. Each of these factors combine to create a variety of housing options that meet the changing needs of our age- and income- diverse population summarized as follows:

- Single-family homes are routinely available for rent or purchase;
- Convenient apartment-style rental options are available for professionals and students alike;
- Multi-family housing options are available for lease and largely service the student renters;
- Senior living facilities are available for rent in the City.

Housing options and availability are discussed further in the following subsection. In general, the housing market tends to track with changes in demand, with some consistency being provided by student rentals. As a university town, Houghton welcomes a diverse population. The City assists and manages development and redevelopment including possible rezoning of areas where the residents request changes or where the changing demographics and uses of property create a long-term need.

The City has identified areas for development and redevelopment in Chapter 13 of this plan.

HOUSING OPTIONS

The City desires to have housing options available to people wanting to live in Houghton.

The single-family housing market in Houghton remains strong. Competitively priced, and well-kept homes that meet the needs of buyers do not remain on the market for very long. The supply and demand for single family homes with the regular recruitment and turnover at MTU and local companies equates to steady sales each year.

Options are available for those who prefer to rent a home. Many rental homes are conducive to occupancy by a group or a single family. Rental homes are interspersed throughout the neighborhoods amongst owner-occupied homes.

Developers have been testing the different housing markets by constructing new homes and housing options on speculation at differing price points and building townhome-style apartments that offer more amenities than typical apartments such as larger interior space and onsite garage space.

Housing options presently lacking are:

- **Independent senior living** – dwellings for older adults who desire to leave their single-family homes and live an independent life in an easy-to-access and easy-to-maintain environment. Houghton senior housing is occupied mostly by low-to-moderate income residents or those needing daily assistance. Independent senior living communities are lacking.
- **Affordable housing** – The City is proactive in increasing the availability of affordable housing by:
 1. Encouraging the redevelopment of vacant buildings into mixed-use buildings with businesses on the first floor and apartments on remaining floors,
 2. Identifying funding programs to assist with neighborhood revitalization,
 3. Encouraging private developers to take advantage of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority’s grant and loan programs to assist in creating new apartments for low-and moderate-income residents.

Available housing options, beyond the traditional buying or renting a single-family home, include:

- **New single-family construction** - Most of the available vacant lots for single-family housing construction are located on the Isle Royale Sands and in the neighborhoods west of M-26.
- **New multi-family construction** - Recent construction of multi-family housing has taken place near the Michigan Tech campus and on smaller redevelopment sites throughout the City.
- **Subsidized housing** - The Houghton Housing Commission has single-family homes and apartments for low-to-moderate income people as defined by the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). The Commission has 30 houses

scattered throughout Houghton and 40 senior citizen apartments at Heritage Manor. Other rent-subsidized properties include the Douglass House Apartments downtown, Copper Hills Apartments and Arbor Green Apartments.

PROGRESS

The previous master plan discussed the condition of neighborhoods as a concern of residents. A diverse population and aging housing stock in some neighborhoods present challenges in uniform maintenance of properties to certain standards. As a result, in 2013 the City adopted Section 3 of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) to set a minimum standard for the maintenance of building exteriors. Since the enactment of the IPMC, the City routinely conducts City-wide inspections of properties and notifies property owners of code violations. That effort encouraged increased exterior maintenance and caused the number of properties in violation of the code to drop considerably after the first year and steadily thereafter.

In 2016 the City brought on a full-time Code Enforcement Officer to assist in the further application of the IPMC, rentals and ordinances, and general code. Since then the officer has been able to establish systems for more consistent and thorough application of codes and ordinances. The City must continue to make overall code enforcement a priority in order to protect and improve the overall look and feel of our neighborhoods for residents and potential residents.

CHALLENGES

Differing viewpoints, just like different people and different households, make up our neighborhoods. With a variety of perspectives and evolving needs within our community, the following outlines some of the foreseeable obstacles related to both the housing market and finding an acceptable balance of housing options for neighborhoods and the community as whole.

- Although a wide variety of housing options are available, there are shortages of suitable housing options for low income residents, senior citizens, and families looking for suitable rental options.
- Century-old development, topography, and multi-vehicle households combine to create a shortage of off-street parking, which is only exacerbated during the winter months.
- Property maintenance is critical to the perceived quality of a neighborhood. Aging homes, costly repairs, and insufficient budgets can contribute to maintenance issues for property owners, regardless if the property is renter- or owner-occupied.
- Neighborhoods are comprised of a variety of people, assorted households, and any number of different perspectives and viewpoints. The quality of our neighborhoods is a community issue that will require the City, property owners, and renters to work together to improve.

- University goals for growth combined with anticipated local population growth suggest that housing needs can be expected to shift in the coming years. Accordingly, the availability of housing options, parking, and rental conversions will continue to be community discussion topics.
- The City encourages open dialogue with the community and attempts to provide a number of outlets for residents to express their views. Based on the results of the community survey, changes will be implemented to improve and consolidate communications between the City and its residents.
- A growing desire to rent both owner-occupied and non-owner-occupied homes on a short-term rental basis creates a new challenge as this use often conflicts with zoning ordinances and can disrupt neighborhoods. At the present time, the zoning ordinance considers this use to be commercial and not an allowable use in residential districts. The City may need to address this use in the zoning ordinance.

GOALS

- Foster a wide range of housing options along with public and private amenities demanded by a diverse (income, age, family size) population.
- Modify the existing zoning ordinance to meet our goals.
- Promote regular care and maintenance of existing residential structures to improve the quality of neighborhoods and increase property values.
- Promote regular communications amongst neighbors to increase interaction and create strong relationships between residents.
- Create the conditions within the community that make Houghton the most sought-after place to live within the region.

STRATEGIES

- Continue to vigorously and consistently enforce ordinances.
- Explore funding opportunities for neighborhood revitalization.
- Continue to make lots available for new construction.
- Install and maintain sidewalks according to the Safe Routes to School Plan.
- Install lighting at bus stop locations in the subdivisions on West Sharon Avenue.
- Study the need for housing options for older adults who do not want the responsibility of home ownership.
- Regularly review the zoning ordinance and zoning map.

chapter 9: transportation

HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Providing safe and efficient transportation is a priority for the City.***
- ***The City's street and road system is anchored by two state highways that are primary transportation routes in the region.***
- ***Lighting and access improvements on Townsend Drive, College Avenue and Shelden Avenue have made these stretches of highway more usable to pedestrians and bicyclists.***
- ***Planning initiatives, such as the Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School Programs are helping the City to further improve access and traffic flow on shared local roadways.***
- ***Houghton's significant snowfall creates challenges for maintaining roads and walkways in winter.***
- ***Very steep street grades in Houghton create transportation infrastructure challenges.***
- ***Bicycling for exercise and commuting year-round has become commonplace.***
- ***The City operates a successful public transit system and is seeking ways to collaborate with Michigan Tech to reduce parking requirements and better serve Michigan Tech students and employees.***

STREET AND ROAD SYSTEM

The transportation network may be the most complicated program managed and maintained by the City. Anchored by two state highways, the City is a transportation crossroads in the area that is further complicated by the presence of the lift bridge spanning the Keweenaw Waterway. The City also has a network of side streets providing access to residential neighborhoods. Sharon Avenue has become a well-traveled alternate route, bypassing downtown, while providing connectivity to the eastern and western limits of the City.

The City's roads are the foundation of the transportation network; however, roads are not the only part of the system the City manages and maintains. The City also ensures sidewalks, bicycle paths and snowmobile routes are well maintained, appropriately signed and accessible to the public.

Cultural shifts and economic factors influence the behavior and transportation needs of the community. For example, the popularity of bicycling as year-round transportation means more bikes on the roads in all seasons. Rising fuel costs may encourage carpooling, bicycling or the use of public transportation. Ride hailing, such as Lyft drivers, and electric scooters are new trends that will need to be addressed. Meeting the demands of the community must be balanced with the constraints of maintaining the transportation network, including but not limited to topography, accessibility and the short- and long-term costs and benefits associated with modifying the system.

This chapter addresses the state of the existing transportation systems in the City and recommended improvements.

STATE HIGHWAYS

The State of Michigan is responsible for and controls the two highways serving the City. U.S. 41 is integral to transportation in the region, serving as the primary thoroughfare through the City. The alignment of U.S. 41, oriented from east to west through town, is unique, as it features several distinct stretches of roadway shared by motorists. The following provides a summary of the U.S. 41 corridor as it passes through the City.

- **U.S. 41 – East** U.S. 41 is a typical two-lane highway east of the Michigan Tech campus. In this area, the highway has paved shoulders but limited access for pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Speed limits along this stretch of U.S. 41 range from 45-55 miles per hour, increasing risks to pedestrians and bicycles that are limited to traveling along the shoulder of the road. In addition, traffic on U.S. 41 hinders access to the Nara Nature Trail from the chalet on the south side of the highway.
- **U.S. 41 – Townsend Drive** As U.S. 41 enters the Michigan Tech campus, the speed limit decreases to 30 mph to accommodate students crossing the highway. The highway also transitions from a two-lane roadway to a divided highway. There is a center median to improve pedestrian safety. The medians include turning lanes, improving the overall traffic flow in the area.
- **U.S. 41 – College Avenue** At the west end of campus, the highway again returns to two-way traffic. Lined with historic properties, College Avenue is home to large private residences, multi-family developments, fraternal values-based organizations, businesses and churches. College Avenue is lined on the north and south sides by sidewalks and updated historically themed lighting. These well-traveled sidewalks along College Avenue serve as a primary walking route for commuters and students alike. Motorists use College Avenue for local access to north-south streets, often resulting in congestion and traffic back-ups, particularly during peak travel times.

College Avenue is the main thoroughfare linking the Michigan Tech campus and downtown Houghton. As of this writing MDOT is in the process of preparing plans for a major rebuilding of Townsend Drive and College Avenue. Plans include an extension of the pedestrian islands from MacInnes Drive to Pearl Street to improve pedestrian safety and the addition of a turn lane on the College Avenue section to eliminate the high number of rear-end accidents.

- **U.S. 41 – Shelden Avenue** At the west end of College Avenue, U.S. 41 enters downtown Houghton. The highway once again transitions from two-way traffic to a divided highway, featuring one-way traffic west/northbound on Shelden Avenue and east/southbound on Montezuma Avenue. Shelden Avenue is vital in routing traffic through the downtown district. Similar to College Avenue, the sidewalks along Shelden Avenue provide foot traffic to the shops, service businesses, and eateries lining

the roadway. Shelden Avenue is considered pedestrian friendly with well-marked and handicap-accessible crossings; however, at certain high-traffic periods of the day the one-way pair of lanes presents challenges to pedestrian crossing. The light-controlled intersection at Isle Royale Street provides ample opportunity for pedestrians to cross safely with traffic stopped. Farther to the west, gaps in traffic are few during busy times with side street traffic entering Shelden. Montezuma Avenue runs parallel to the south side of downtown, where motorists tend to travel at higher speeds, limiting safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Highway M-26 runs west from the lift bridge bordering the West Houghton neighborhoods and leads to the well-traveled shopping corridor south to the city limits. Much of the area is accessible from Houghton neighborhoods via sidewalk or paved non-motorized path, though there are limited crossing opportunities at the two light-controlled intersections at Sharon Avenue and Razorback Drive; and via the non-motorized tunnel near the Lakeshore Drive intersection. The tunnel under M-26 is a well-used crossing point that connects the bike boulevard and the West Houghton neighborhoods to the waterfront near Kestner Park.

The Michigan Department of Transportation sets the parameters for speed limits, placement of traffic lights, design and placement of traffic signs, maintenance, snow removal policy, and street use for special events. The state reimburses the City for plowing and snow removal on both highways which include the downtown's Montezuma and Shelden Avenues. These reimbursed funds are instrumental to the excellent winter road conditions we maintain and are of critical importance to preserve.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

The City uses an asset management software program to rate the condition of its roads, forming the basis for the City's road maintenance program. Routine maintenance includes regularly scheduled preventive treatments such as street sweeping, drainage clearing, gravel shoulder grading and sealing of tight cracks. Preventive maintenance consists of planned treatments applied to existing roads to retard further deterioration. Regular road paving projects to restore pavements at the end of their life are done as funds permit. The City has looked to a model where smaller critical paving projects are done each year, but compiling one large project encompassing a number of different streets every few years creates cost savings through economies of scale meaning more can be paved for less money. Results from the 2017 Quality of Life Survey show a majority of residents feel the condition of roads has improved in the past five years.

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Walking and biking are becoming increasingly popular throughout the City and are tightly linked to quality-of-life and economic development strategies. In general, communities that are walkable and bikeable encourage active and healthy lifestyles, resulting in a more vibrant community. Response to the 2017 Quality of Life Survey showed 85 percent satisfaction with bike paths in the City.

In 2013, the City's Bike and Pedestrian Committee developed the City of Houghton Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. This plan updated and combined the City's Walkability Plan from 2002 and the City's Bike Plan from 2007. The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan includes a set of goals and objectives to guide non-motorized improvements in the City, as well as an action plan to provide specific direction for achieving them, thereby improving conditions for cyclists and pedestrians.

Since the creation of this plan, the City has worked to improve non-motorized access. In 2017, the City designated a Bicycle Boulevard along Houghton Avenue which provides a direct crosstown route between the M-26 tunnel and the east end of Houghton Avenue near Michigan Tech. The route is painted with bicycle roadway-sharing arrows and wayfinding signage directing users to the best routes in the City.

The paved waterfront trail continues to be a well-traveled route for persons exercising and commuting, as well as simply enjoying the views and amenities along the trail. The trail also serves as the lone snowmobile route to the lift bridge in winter, requiring other users to take to the road. The trail is an important feature of Houghton's waterfront, and consideration should be made to develop it in such a way as it can meet the needs of multiple stakeholders year-round.

In 2010, the League of American Bicyclists awarded the City a Bicycle-Friendly Community bronze designation. In 2013, the City's designation was upgraded to silver.

COMPLETE STREETS

In 2010, the City was the first municipality in the Upper Peninsula to pass a Complete Streets Ordinance. This ordinance states when a street is constructed or reconstructed, the City or the developer will provide appropriate accommodation where practical for motorists and non-motorists.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

The City worked closely with the Houghton-Portage Township School District and the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department to complete a Safe Routes to School Plan. This 2011 plan recommended the installation of sidewalks on Second, Agate, Portage, Dodge, Bridge, and Fourth Streets as well as Jacker Avenue that will be maintained year-round. It also recommends the installation of traffic calming and pedestrian safety islands at the intersections of Sharon Avenue and Gundlach Road, and Sharon Avenue and Dodge Street. Additional recommendations include increased lighting along designated routes and bus stops, along with educating pedestrians and drivers about sharing the road.

In 2018, Schoolhouse Drive was constructed connecting the elementary school to Sharon Avenue to ease congestion at drop-off and pick-up times on Military Avenue.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Houghton Public Transit provides approximately 80,000 rides annually. The elderly make up about 20 percent of the ridership. Fixed routes and demand service are both offered between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. Current route information can be found on the City's website. A Citizen Advisory Committee assists administration.

Revenue for the transit system is provided from the federal government (19%), state government (39%), city general fund (20%), and the fare box (22%). Revenues from federal and state grants have decreased over the years.

The City presently uses eight buses of various sizes with four full-time drivers and some part-time drivers. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find qualified drivers who possess the necessary CDL license. The City will now request vans from MDOT to transition to a combination of vans and buses, reducing the need for drivers with CDL licenses.

At the present time the only bus service available in Houghton County is in the cities of Houghton and Hancock with each city offering their own service. State and federal grants cover capital costs and the cities cover operating costs. Not only is this service expensive for the cities to run, but it also limits availability to only residents of each city. Results from the 2017 Quality of Life Survey show residents would like the transit system to offer more hours of operation. The City would like to study the possibility of creating a Transit Authority with the City of Hancock, Michigan Tech and/or the County of Houghton.

RAILROAD

There are currently no active rail lines within or leading to the City. However, a Canadian National line runs to Baraga, 25 miles south of Houghton. The state owns the rail corridor in the City.

PORT

The City maintains a dock just west of the Portage Lake Lift Bridge for large-vessel mooring. It can accommodate a vessel up to 500 feet in length, depth of water varies. Cruise ships, the United States Coast Guard, and other large ships often use this dock. The Ranger III docks at the Isle Royale National Park headquarters downtown.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

SkyWest Airlines, a United Airlines regional affiliate, currently serves Houghton County Memorial Airport with two flights per day to and from Chicago O'Hare International Airport under the Federal Essential Air Service program. Fifty-passenger turbojet aircraft currently are being flown on this route. Occasional passenger charters and daily express shipments are provided by other commercial

operators. The airport also accommodates general aviation. As of January 2019, 25 single-engine aircraft were based at the airport. Isle Royale Seaplane Service is a private entity that provides seasonal flights between the Keweenaw Waterway and Isle Royale National Park from its base of operations in Ripley.

TAXI SERVICE

There are licensed private taxi companies providing transportation in-and-around the City. Ride sharing such as Uber and Lyft, a relatively new phenomenon, has come to the City with Lyft-identified vehicles driven by and in use by residents. As the popularity of this new business model grows it should be expected that more persons will provide and use the service.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

The City has one public EV Charging Station downtown on the larger parking deck. Students at Michigan Tech installed the charging station with support from General Motors, UPPCO, and the City. The City has plans to designate other places throughout the business district as EV charging stations.

GOALS

- Continue to develop and promote an efficient, safe and well-maintained multi-modal transportation system that recognizes pedestrians, bicycles, motor vehicles and public parking.
- Develop trails, bike paths, and walking paths that can be used as all-season routes for exercise, commuting, and general wellness.
- Improve public transportation by offering more service, controlling cost, and taking advantage of emerging technologies.
- Continue to implement the Asset Management Plan for road maintenance.

STRATEGIES

Non-Motorized

- Implement the recommendations of the Safe Routes to School Committee.
- Implement the Complete Streets Ordinance when constructing new roads and making renovations to existing roads.
- Install road stencils and signage for bike routes.
- Link the Waterfront Trail to the Michigan Tech campus at the top of Cliff Drive.
- Collaborate with the Bike and Pedestrian Committee on planning projects.
- Investigate and implement ways to improve walking and biking during winter months.

- Work with the Safe Routes to School Committee to create safer pedestrian crossings at the intersection of Sharon Avenue and Dodge Street and the intersection of Sharon Avenue and Portage Street.
- Obtain ownership of the rail corridor within the City and maintain the trail easement.

Motorized

- Pave and maintain local streets as funds become available.
- Install LED Lighting on Townsend Drive.
- Conduct a feasibility study to look at reconstructing Montezuma Avenue as a two-way street to relieve some traffic on Shelden Avenue.
- Assess public parking adequacy.
- Continue with the asset management rating system to evaluate road conditions.
- Monitor the continuing development and use of emerging technologies and systems, including autonomous vehicles, electric scooters, drone deliveries, and ride hailing. Take into account their potential impacts on City infrastructure.

Public Transportation

- Study the implementation of a Public Transportation Authority between the City of Houghton, City of Hancock, Michigan Tech, and/or the County of Houghton to create better service for residents.
- Follow nation-wide transit developments that may be useful in the City, including apps for hand-held devices that display bus routes and schedules, real-time locations, and enable the payment of fares electronically.
- Look for ways to enhance the coordination of bus service with walking and biking.

chapter 10: downtown

HIGHLIGHTS

Downtown Houghton generally encompasses the area from Franklin Square to Kestner Waterfront Park and Montezuma Avenue to the waterfront, it contains the Shelden Avenue Historic District that was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987

Downtown Houghton is home to a variety of businesses that provide a multitude of employment opportunities as well as two business incubators associated with the Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation SmartZone

Downtown Houghton is home to about 400 residents who mostly reside in apartments on the 2nd and 3rd stories in mixed-use buildings

Since 2006, more than \$20 million has been invested in the downtown area, including

- ***\$12 million in public grants for façade improvements, marketing, streetscape, utilities and building acquisition and rehabilitation***
- ***City investment of \$5 million***
- ***Private investment of \$ 3 million***

Houghton's 4.5 mile waterfront trail runs through downtown connecting downtown to all of the City's waterfront parks. When snow covered it serves as part of the main snowmobile trail system

The Houghton Business Association assists with marketing and special events for the downtown area

Downtown Houghton is home to a number of special events, including the Parade of Nations, Bridgefest, Treat Street, Victorian Christmas, Farmers Market and even the finish-line stage of an automobile rally race

Dee Stadium is our nation's documented birthplace of organized, professional hockey

There are approximately 1,250 public parking spaces downtown.

FOCUS ON DOWNTOWN

Our downtown is an indicator of our City's overall health and well-being for prospective businesses and visitors; as well as a source of pride for residents. Downtown is a place where people go to meet, parades are held, and business is done. Houghton will continue to place emphasis on maintaining and improving its downtown as it always has been an important part of our identity as a community.

With ever-changing consumer trends, the rise and fall of the mall concept, and a rebirth of society's longing for community and a sense of place, our downtown, like many others, has become a renewed focus for community planners, state and federal funding assistance, and business development.

Houghton, through the years, has put a lot of energy and resources into maintaining downtown. Those efforts have paid off with relatively high occupancy rates, well maintained property values, and a multitude of patrons enjoying what Downtown offers.

BLUEPRINT FOR GROWTH

Growth is not a natural evolution, it requires planning and resources. With an eye towards the future and an understanding of community development, in 1983 the City established a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to finance public improvement projects in downtown Houghton. In general, the DDA District boundary is the Keweenaw Waterway to the north, Franklin Square to the east, the Kestner Waterfront Park to the west and 100 feet south of Montezuma Avenue. The DDA financing mechanism allows for the capture of the incremental growth of local property taxes over a period of time to fund public infrastructure improvements in the District. It also provides a mechanism to borrow against the future tax increments to fund large-scale projects, which can lead to new development within the downtown.

Development of our downtown creates challenges because the building, structures, and boundaries are relatively fixed. Although the opportunities for the construction of new structures are limited, it fosters creative development and renovation while maintaining the historic character of downtown. In 2005, the City took part in the Blueprints for Michigan Downtowns technical assistance program, a partnership of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, the Michigan Municipal League, and a committee of local representatives. Hyett-Palma, Inc., completed the *Houghton Downtown Blueprint Strategy* in 2005.

As recommended in the *Blueprint Strategy*, the City commissioned the *Façade Study and Historic Preservation Guidelines* to guide improvement projects. This guide made it possible for the City to take advantage of grant-assisted façade restoration projects of 21 downtown buildings through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation Community Development Block Grant program.

Grants and private investment renovated building facades at these 21 buildings:

100 Shelden Avenue	401 Shelden Avenue	507 Shelden Avenue
120 Shelden Avenue	403 Shelden Avenue	517 Shelden Avenue
126 Shelden Avenue	408 Shelden Avenue	609 Shelden Avenue
307 Shelden Avenue	414 Shelden Avenue	614 Shelden Avenue
317 Shelden Avenue	417 Shelden Avenue	54 Huron Street
323 Shelden Avenue	500 Shelden Avenue	100 Portage Street
324 Shelden Avenue	503 Shelden Avenue	506 Shelden Avenue

In 2006, the City received a Signature Building Grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation Community Development Block Grant program to purchase the vacant building at 418 Shelden Avenue. Under a public/private partnership, the building was renovated into retail space on the first and basement floors with high-end apartments upstairs. The project received the *2007 Signature Building of the Year* award. As part of the grant program, the partnering developer purchased the property.

In 2009, multiple funding sources contributed to the restoration of the Shelden Avenue streetscape and infrastructure. A brick street surface, historic-themed lighting and colored concrete sidewalks and curbing accentuate the character of downtown Houghton and provide a new clean aesthetic. Beyond the visual appeal of the changes, the water and sewer systems in downtown Houghton were completely replaced during the project. In addition, private utility providers used the opportunity to make major improvements to the electric, gas, and communications infrastructure. This project resulted in the *2010 Breaking the Mold Award* from the Michigan Construction Quality Partnership.

The City's active positioning and pursuit of funding opportunities has facilitated continued development and preservation efforts in downtown Houghton. In 2017, Lakeshore Drive underwent a significant utility upgrade project funded by Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the City. The project scope included the replacement of the road pavement and many sidewalks with the water and sewer work that has further helped the transformation of Lakeshore Drive become an integral part of downtown. Improvements have allowed the area to continue to evolve from its historical role as a side street to a contemporary downtown featuring specialty businesses and modern, affordable living space.

The City is currently working with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation toward certification as a Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC). This state-wide program is designed to certify a community as one that actively engages stakeholders in the planning process. RRC certification signals business owners, developers, and investors that a community has removed barriers to development by enacting deliberate, fair, and consistent processes that will attract investment to create thriving places where people will want to live, work, and play.

PRESERVING THE PAST

Part of the charm of a downtown is its preservation of history. While building uses change, the preservation of the historic backdrop must be balanced with today's needs to protect what makes a downtown unique and desirable.

The Sheldon Avenue Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. The District encompasses the historic core of Houghton's central business district. The District contains 43 historical buildings ranging in age from the 1870s to the 1980s, with a majority dating from the 1880s to 1920s. These buildings are the western Upper Peninsula's largest concentration of architecturally significant historic commercial buildings. Historically the structures housed lodge halls, municipal facilities, a movie theater, warehouses, and a railroad passenger depot.

Downtown Houghton's historic buildings and diverse past are celebrated in the Historic Houghton Self-Guided Walking Tour. Fifteen downtown displays, each with a specific theme, emphasize various historical aspects that contributed to Houghton's unique personality. Maps of the aforementioned may be found on the City's website. A self-guided geological tour highlights places of geological interest in and around Houghton. A link to a map and information for this tour can be found on the City's website.

Establishing historic districts and registering buildings on state and federal registers not only preserves the past, but also ensures that changes to the community are consistent with the intent of preservation. Federal funding sources typically require review of projects for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in an effort to maintain a balance between preservation and progress.

PROMOTING THE PRESENT

Houghton remains a destination and meeting point for travelers, but it is also home to hundreds of people living in the apartments and lofts above the storefronts. Downtown Houghton offers residents a high quality of life in an accessible and safe neighborhood. Rental units are available with short- or long-term leases. Downtown's proximity to Michigan Tech, employment opportunities, indoor/outdoor recreation, shops and restaurants make downtown an attractive place to live and work. All of these downtown elements coupled with their close proximity to waterfront amenities make for a unique business and residential ecosystem.

Downtown Living

Apartments in the upper floors of downtown buildings provide ideal living space for young adults. Building owners continue to make the buildings desirable living space with modern amenities and design aesthetics that are consistent with current building trends. In addition, the vantage point from the upper floors of Shelden Avenue offers views of the Keweenaw Waterway through north-facing windows.

In addition to downtown's younger population, older adults also find downtown to be a convenient place to live. The Douglass House Apartments and Heritage Manor provide subsidized apartments for more than 400 residents. Tenants in these buildings have convenient access to public transportation, restaurants and businesses lining Shelden Avenue, as well as being able to interact with those working in and visiting downtown.

Most residents with cars living downtown purchase parking permits from the City. A few apartments have onsite or nearby private parking.

Shopping and Businesses

Downtown Houghton serves an important niche in providing a shopping experience that welcomes diversity of goods and services, coupled with the ability to rest on a park bench, chat with a store owner, or grab a quiet meal that makes for a more relaxing experience. This mix of retail, restaurant, and services allows each business to support each other as customers can accomplish a lot downtown. Following is a brief overview of the businesses and services that are found in downtown Houghton.

- **Nightlife** – from quiet microbrew pubs, a date night meal, a sports bar with the game on, or a pulsing dance club; downtown Houghton has a mixture of places to go and things to do. From iconic historic establishments to new favorites serving new experiences, multiple options are all found downtown.
- **Shopping** – In the span of about five blocks one can find everything from wool clothing to books, ice climbing gear, fine wine, vintage vinyl records, snow scoops, Michigan-shaped mittens, ice skates, socks, plumbing supplies, the latest issue of a favorite comic book, to an engagement ring. This diversity of offerings and experiences, coupled with the feel of a traditional downtown where each shop is different makes for what many consider a better shopping experience.
- **Dining** – interspersed throughout the retail and service businesses are a wide variety of restaurants that range from a candle-lit cuisine dinner to relaxed breakfasts in a diner-like setting. One can find take-out pizza, fresh Lake Superior fish tacos, or professionally rolled sushi as well as ethnic foods, coffee shops, and seafood to ice cream.
- **Lodging** – with five hotels located throughout the downtown and waterfront within walking distance of Michigan Tech, visitors have easy access to all of the amenities downtown has to offer, including views of the lake and direct access to the waterfront trail system.
- **Services** – the mix of services creates a consistent flow of employees and clients who also shop and eat downtown while conducting business. From the post office to attorneys to accountants to financial advisors to insurance agents to realtors to

marketing agencies to printers to mortgage servicing to charitable organizations to the public library and City government; these local services help maintain an active downtown.

In support of business, the City sponsors and assists with events and ongoing initiatives to bring people downtown. Some of the events the City initiates directly, while for others the City provides the venue and logistical support to the organizers. These efforts help to round out the range of experiences available to appeal to a broader population.

- The City's Farmers Market, held June through October, is an event that brings locally grown and made products to market and draws hundreds each week. Partnering with the Portage Lake District Library and local health professionals the Market offers a wide variety of goods and services.
- Treat Street is a popular Halloween event where traffic is rerouted from Sheldon Avenue and children of all ages dress in costume; filling the street for a trick-or-treating event. The event has grown to draw numbers in the thousands.
- Afternoon on the Town is a Michigan Tech-sponsored event held just prior to the start of fall semester when students fill the downtown. Businesses showcase their goods and services, restaurants tempt them with samples, and organizations offer membership.
- Parade of Nations is a Michigan Tech sponsored event that celebrates the diversity of its peoples and cultures. The parade runs from Hancock to downtown Houghton and finishes at Dee Stadium where the rest of the day is filled with ethnic foods, music from all over the world, and fellowship.
- The Lake Superior Pro Rally, formerly known as the Press on Regardless Rally, continues to be a late fall event that draws visitors to the Keweenaw. Houghton hosts the final stage of the rally downtown, which makes for a unique venue in a paved, more urban environment.
- Ladies Night, held each November, is a popular evening event where local merchants extend their business hours and offer sales, creating a busy evening of pre-holiday shopping and a night out for many.
- A Victorian-inspired Christmas celebration sees period-costumed carolers, warming fires, and horse-drawn sleigh rides. Downtown is punctuated by a tree lighting in Bridgeview Park.
- Winter Carnival is a tradition at Michigan Tech that draws visitors each winter. Downtown Houghton makes efforts to attract and entertain these visitors with ice sculpture carving, snow-themed creations, and a decorated atmosphere while providing food, drink, and shopping.
- Bridgefest is an annual weekend-long event that celebrates the lift bridge linking Houghton and Hancock with a parade, food, music, and fireworks.
- The Yooper Luge is a one-day event where a section of Isle Royale Street is shut down to create a toboggan run. People of all ages compete with home built cardboard sleds and enjoy downtown in a way not normally available.

Beyond the events listed above, Houghton continues to promote events that either involve downtown as a venue or draw visitors to the area. These events are constantly evaluated by the City and partners in the business community to increase attendance.

The City supports an ongoing beautification program as an important component of placemaking. This effort includes adding plantings and gardens, murals, and interesting elements for people to enjoy throughout the City. The Houghton Beautification Committee, a group of volunteers, has for several years been the driving force in creating new garden spaces, rehabilitating old ones, and adding seasonal elements, especially to the downtown infrastructure. The City supports these efforts by purchasing plants and materials; performing excavation, and providing consistent watering of the gardens and planters. These efforts have been key in differentiating Houghton from other areas and have been credited with positive responses and “reviews” from residents and visitors. Other aesthetic elements such as banners, large murals, and public art such as whimsical crosswalk stenciling are added each year to enliven public spaces and add color throughout the year.

Two other important assets draw people downtown. The Portage Lake District Library was once housed in the historic Carnegie Library building. In 2006, the library was relocated to a new City-owned building located on the waterfront. It may be the only public library that can also be accessed by watercraft. The library has become a dynamic crossroads for the community, offering hundreds of programs each year covering a variety of topics. With the new building has come further expansion of the collections. Today, PLDL offers the traditional materials of books, audiobooks, and magazines, and an interlibrary loan program, along with subscription services such as eBooks and eMagazines, Ancestry Library, Foundation Director, and other resources including a community room also available to outside groups, computer access, and public Wi-fi.

The Headquarters for Isle Royale National Park is located adjacent to and east of the Dee Stadium. The National Park Service maintains offices and equipment at the location that provide access and support to park operations, including docking of the *Ranger III*. The Headquarters brings a significant portion of Park visitors to Houghton to board the *Ranger III*.

PARKING

There are more than 1,250 public parking spaces in downtown Houghton. Spaces are divided between street side and defined lots.

In the 1980s the City began constructing parking decks to meet the demand for downtown parking. Two of the parking decks were built on the north side of Sheldon Avenue overlooking the Keweenaw Waterway. One of these decks, the oldest and largest, recently underwent extensive repairs to extend its life expectancy. In 2018, maintenance was performed on two other parking decks located on the south side of the 600 block of Sheldon Avenue. The City continually examines possible opportunities to provide for additional or better parking downtown. Future efforts will need to look at densifying some areas and creative use of existing spaces as City-owned real estate on grades conducive to parking are limited.

PLANNING THE FUTURE

Preserving the aesthetics and vitality of our downtown district is paramount to maintaining our sense of community. As in the last century, downtown Houghton will continue to be the core of the City and, with foresight and planning, sustain its importance to the region.

In recent years, Houghton has placed a renewed focus on the details of placemaking in the downtown. Over the past several decades, the City has maintained conditions for a strong downtown by building needed infrastructure, while protecting and remaining faithful to our history. Key to the future will be the preservation of real experiences that can be had as opposed to those that are paid for, scripted, and homogenous.

The importance of placemaking has become paramount in the information age and with a changing economy of how people conduct business, shop, pick a restaurant, decide where they spend their next vacation or where they would like to live. The sharing of experiences through social media means; a community must pay close attention to the experience they give residents, potential residents, and visitors, as experiences are easily shared with a global audience.

From undertaking major maintenance projects on the parking decks; to painting and sprucing up public spaces, to adding gardens and greenery, to adding murals and public art, to creating relaxing niches for persons to gather or eat take-out on a summer night – these efforts support all City residents, visitors, and businesses in creating the conditions where a vibrant ecosystem of place provides a desirable atmosphere to live, spend leisure time, or conduct business that enhances the overall quality of life.

Recent projects have improved connectivity between Sheldon Avenue, Lakeshore Drive, and the waterfront toward unifying the downtown as a single place. As of 2019, the City is working with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to construct a transformative waterfront project that will create a large central gathering spot on the water, densify parking, and improve the flow on the waterfront trail. This project will add to our sense of place in downtown Houghton.

Developers, investors, and site selectors look to communities that understand the importance of place, pay attention to detail, make the effort to provide unique, inviting experiences; and foster fun, healthy lifestyles. Houghton will continue to proactively cultivate its sense of place in order to maintain that environment.

The City must keep aware of development - especially *redevelopment* - opportunities throughout the downtown. As building uses and market demands change, as buildings and infrastructure age, the City must actively pursue development and redevelopment projects either through private developers or publicly by action of the City. Where property or structures can be improved or better used to promote growth, the City must maintain a healthy downtown for growth to occur.

The City will continue to be proactive downtown by providing the physical infrastructure and public services that will help business flourish. The City will also maintain its role as an advocate for growth, a matchmaker helping put people together, and a problem solver for our business community. Matchmaking has been key in past and current success and will be important to maintain in the future.

ATTRACTIONS

Downtown Houghton owes much of its continued success to the preservation of many of the buildings still in use today in various forms. Many of downtown Houghton's buildings exemplify the architecture of the late 19th and early 20th century.

Stepping off the train just after the turn of the 20th century, visitors would have found themselves at the doorstep of downtown Houghton, just a few steps away from the Peninsula Grocery Company and the legendary Amphidrome. A short walk up the hill from the train station, one would immediately notice the three- and four-story buildings lining Shelden Avenue, constructed of distinctive red-colored Jacobsville sandstone. From a room at the distinctive Douglass House Hotel, visitors could look out their windows to the west and see the Carnegie Library and the Continental Fire Company less than a block away. Beyond these buildings, one could see horse-drawn carriages and electric trolley cars of the Houghton County Traction Company moving along Shelden Avenue.

Although the trains, trolley cars and telegraph lines are no longer part of the landscape, downtown Houghton continues to be the central part of the community. The buildings and architectural style of a bygone era continue to be a home to businesses and residents, maintaining downtown Houghton's character and appeal. Many of these iconic, historic buildings remain part of our downtown are described below. More detail is available on the City's website.

Amphidrome/Dee Stadium – 700 East Lakeshore Drive

In 1902, prominent businessman James R. Dee built the Amphidrome, an indoor hockey rink. The original rink burned down in 1927. A replacement stadium was built on the same location and is still in use.

In 1946 the Michigan College of Mining and Technology purchased the building and changed the name to Dee Stadium. The Dee Stadium served as home ice for the university hockey team before moving to Michigan Tech's Student Development Complex in 1972.

The City leased Dee Stadium starting in 1974, and then acquired the building in 1988. After years of investment and upgrades, including rebuilding the lobby, locker rooms and ballroom, the building continues to serve the community as a public ice arena from October through April. In 1997, the City borrowed \$250,000 and replaced the ice-making plant, rink piping, and concrete slab along with new dasher boards. The City also established a hockey history museum off the lobby that displays photographs and memorabilia of local hockey teams and individuals. Dee Stadium is home to the Houghton-Portage Township School hockey teams and the Great Lakes Hockey League's Portage Lake Pioneers.

Recently there was an addition of the Houghton High School Hockey Team locker room, purchase of a new Zamboni, and renovations to the women's locker room, ballroom, and lobby bathrooms. New updates and renovations will be part of an ongoing plan to keep Dee Stadium an active part of our downtown and community.

Shelden-Dee Block – 514 Shelden Avenue

James R. Dee and Mary Shelden developed the Shelden-Dee block in the late 1890s directly north of the Douglass House Hotel on the corner of Shelden Avenue and Isle Royale Street. The building provided elegant commercial and office space in Houghton's booming downtown. The frontage along Shelden Avenue was originally occupied by a drug store, a shoe store, a dry goods store, and a café and saloon, with a barber in the basement. The upper floors held office suites.

The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Today, the frontage along Shelden Avenue continues as commercial space. The former offices on the upper floors were converted to apartments.

The Douglass House Hotel – 517 Shelden Avenue

The original Douglass House was a three-story frame structure built in 1860 on the corner of Isle Royale and Montezuma Streets, with a garden stretching down the hillside to Shelden Avenue. The hotel featured 50 guest rooms, a dance hall, and dining room that served as a social gathering place. In 1899, a group of Houghton-area investors, headed by John C. Mann, incorporated the Douglass House Company and purchased the hotel. In 1901, the original frame hotel on the south side of the building burned down. By 1902 the building had been restored and renovated, creating the building and facade present on Shelden Avenue today.

The Douglass House Hotel was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. In 1984, it was converted to apartments while preserving the historic saloon along Shelden Avenue.

The Continental Fire Company – 404 East Montezuma Avenue

Constructed in 1883, the Continental Fire Company building served as home to the Houghton Fire Department. The Continental Fire Company, which organized in 1860, occupied the basement of the building. The basement also housed horses, used to pull the fire engines and pumps that were stored on the main floor. Village offices were on the second floor, and the Michigan Mining School (now Michigan Tech) held its first classes on the second floor in 1886.

In 1974 the Houghton Fire Department moved to its current location on Sharon Avenue. The fire bell was removed from the Continental Fire Company Building in 1975 and established as a memorial at the new fire hall.

The fire bell from the Continental Fire Company, cast in 1884, serves as a memorial to volunteers at the current fire hall on Sharon Avenue.

The Continental Fire Company building was listed as a Michigan State Historic Site in 1976. Michigan Tech purchased the building from the City in 1978. After years of being used for storage, a private owner bought the building in 2010. The new owner renovated and restored the building, now converted to a popular downtown nightclub and restaurant.

The Carnegie Museum of the Keweenaw – 105 Huron Street

Directly across Huron Street east of the Continental Fire Company building, the Carnegie Museum of the Keweenaw is the former location of the Houghton Carnegie Public Library. The building was constructed in 1909, using a \$15,000 grant from Andrew Carnegie, on the site previously occupied by the Armory Building for Company G of the Houghton Light Infantry. The Houghton Public Library was completed in 1910 and operated by the local school district.

The Houghton Carnegie Public Library building was listed as a Michigan State Historic Site in 1976. The Portage Lake District Library occupied the building until 2006, when the library moved to its current location along the downtown waterfront. Today, the Carnegie Museum of the Keweenaw is owned and maintained by the City and serves the community by providing rotating exhibits on science, local history, and culture. The “Carnegie” is a venue for educational and informative seminars throughout the year.

The Michigan Tech Lakeshore Center – 600 East Lakeshore Drive

Early records indicate that portions of the building may have been constructed as early as the late 1890s as a warehouse for Graham Pope, a local merchant who operated several stores in the area. Ownership transferred to the Peninsula Grocery Company in 1902. By 1917 the warehouse footprint had grown to cover the four city lots it currently occupies. In addition to managing the warehouse, the company also operated an active dock adjacent to the building, assisting with the transloading of deliveries between watercraft, railroad cars, and other modes of local delivery.

In 1928, the warehouse changed owners and was used for many decades by the Cohodas-Paoli Company, a wholesale marketer of fruits and vegetables. The building suffered fire damage in 1935, but following renovations, it continued to serve as the Copper Country warehouse for Cohodas-Paoli's food-distribution network in the Lake Superior region.

In the late 1980s, the City acquired the Cohodas-Paoli warehouse in hopes of finding a civic use for this significant prime waterfront property. The Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO) agreed to purchase and renovate the building, which opened as UPPCO's headquarters in 1991. Additional commercial tenants rented space in the renovated warehouse.

Michigan Tech, having leased space in the facility since the 1990s, purchased it from UPPCO in 2008. Michigan Tech and the Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation (MTEC) SmartZone received more than \$3 million of federal economic development grants for a building enhancement project. At present the building is fully utilized by Michigan Tech and MTEC.

GOALS

- Cultivate the downtown district by maintaining it as a center for retail, service, and dining experiences while optimizing access for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.
- Support existing businesses and encourage continued growth and investment in new ventures, job opportunities, and product offerings.
- Enhance the experiences of the community and visitors by establishing comprehensive and consistent signage that orients and informs the public of City facilities, attractions, and events.
- Enhance the waterfront and existing public attractions by incorporating sustainable design elements and investing in new cultural experiences for community members to share.
- Improve, maintain, and add elements that enhance the sense of place felt downtown.
- Improve connectivity between Shelden Avenue and the waterfront.

STRATEGIES

Traffic

- Study and consider options to improve traffic flow and safety through downtown.
- Paint robust and highly visible crosswalks throughout the downtown.

Real Estate and Economic Development

- Continue to support and partner with the MTEC SmartZone, as their continued success will be a critical driver towards the vitality of downtown Houghton.
- Assist business ventures that are interested in establishing in Houghton and look for potential advantages that would encourage locating downtown.
- Continue working with downtown businesses to assist with marketing, special events and business consulting offered by the Michigan Small Business and Technology Center.
- Continue to monitor development opportunities for real estate in downtown Houghton similar to the success of the Portage Lake District Library relocation.
- Continue with façade improvements and work on filling vacant buildings as businesses change.

Pedestrians and Bicycles

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to the waterfront trail at Quincy, Huron and Isle Royale Streets.
- Consider pedestrian and bicycle signage and controls to promote motorist awareness.
- Provide more bike racks.

Parking and Signage

- Consider sites and develop options for the construction of new parking lots and structures as land becomes available and anticipated demand demonstrates the need.
- Continue parking structure renovations to maintain the present parking availability.
- Continue the plan for a coordinated system of wayfinding signage, including gateway, attraction, directional and parking signage.

Landscape and Urban Design

- Work with MDOT to replace the existing overhead sign and steel truss on Shelden Avenue at the bridge with a sign arrangement that meets MDOT requirements while being more context sensitive to the historic downtown district and urban design.
- Plan and implement streetscape and visual enhancements for Montezuma Avenue.
- Explore options for adding street trees and vegetation on Shelden Avenue.

- Design and implement landscape and vegetation treatments for slopes currently landscaped with mine rock cover.
- Consider locations and take advantage of opportunities for incorporating public art and interpretive displays into the downtown setting.

Redevelopment Opportunities

- Continue to monitor property transactions and opportunities for redevelopment.
- Collaborate with the National Park Service on a new Isle Royale National Park headquarters facility, possibly at another location, and evaluate redevelopment opportunities for the property.
- Consider options for enhancing pedestrian connections, green space and parking at the “Mattila Square” site between Dodge and Isle Royale Streets just north of Lakeshore Drive.
- Work with the Pewabic Street Community Gardening Association and local farmers to create a multi-seasonal farmers market that can be used for community-related activities in the non-growing season.
- Continue to work with property owners to improve and increase the availability and diversity of living spaces downtown.
- Assess the operational costs for city-owned facilities and coordinate with facility management to evaluate funding resources and establish goals for operational cost sharing.

Downtown Waterfront

- Enhance the aesthetics and function of the waterfront multi-use trail by continuing to develop infrastructure along the trail, add lighting, widen the trail where possible, reconfigure the areas that are confusing to navigate, add art, and add opportunities for exercise.
- Pursue the transfer of ownership of the waterfront trail property from MDOT and MDNR to the City so we can apply for funding to assist in improvements.
- Install finger piers and/or boat slips to improve the broadside mooring facility.
- Create more public waterfront space by constructing a deck at the Portage Lake District Library.
- Create parking areas south of Sheldon Avenue to open up the current parking areas on the waterfront for other uses.

chapter 11: M26/Sharon Avenue business corridor

HIGHLIGHTS

- ***The City planned much of the development east of M-26 with safety in mind, limiting access points onto the highway***
- ***The expanding commercial corridor has experienced steady business growth for several decades***
- ***The growth and development of the M-26/Sharon Avenue commercial district is supported and controlled by City ordinances and the Tax Increment Finance Authority***
- ***Planning initiatives and regional review committees strive to improve access for pedestrians and bicyclists, while also incorporating landscaping and urban design elements into developments along the corridor***
- ***Huron Creek, which serves as a central drainage feature in the district, has been the focus of a watershed management plan to improve water quality, aesthetics, natural environment and more recently flood planning and mitigation.***

Highway M-26 and Sharon Avenue are distinctly different from neighborhoods and downtown areas of the City. With limited room for expansion within the City limits, M-26 has been a focus of commercial growth and development in the community since the 1980s. Sharon Avenue appeals to developers as an increasingly traveled roadway. The roadway has evolved as a secondary connector from east Houghton, Michigan Tech, and Portage Township as a direct route to the M26/Sharon Avenue Business District. As such, the effective radius of the district has increased eastward along Sharon Avenue as new businesses and property developments take advantage of available real estate along the popular thoroughfare. The intersection of Sharon Avenue and M-26 is the busiest in the City, and this trend is expected will continue. This chapter discusses the issues and prospects associated with this growing commercial district, as well as the City's plans for ensuring that development is consistent with the community's goals.

DESCRIPTION

Highway M-26 was realigned and widened in the early 1980s and further widened to five lanes in 1990. The realignment and subsequent expansion created a commercial corridor with acres of opportunity for the commercial development. The majority of the planning and business development along this corridor occurred between 1985 and 2000. Teardown and redevelopment of some of the older original development occurred in the 2010s. Many of the open properties, once considered less attractive for development, have seen major improvement as developers seek space in this busy commercial corridor.

With the growth of the M-26 corridor, traffic on Sharon Avenue has increased along with the development of real estate, most notably from M-26 east to Bridge Street. Presently, property is being redeveloped where the “original” structure is being modified and added onto to build multistory townhouses and another is being redeveloped to change its use.

The Copper Country Mall, developed in the late 1970s just outside the southern City limits along M-26, was a major retail center for a number of years. In the early 2000s, the changing economy brought about the decline of malls in general with many traditional national retailers consolidating stores or simply going out of business. The waning retail offerings and the lack of a substantial “anchor” store resulted in a decline in business and numerous vacancies at the facility by the early 2010s. Much of the mall has pivoted to nontraditional occupancy; the Houghton campus of Gogebic Community College, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Veteran’s Affairs along with indoor self-storage and traditional movie theaters, sporting goods, and hair salons.

Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA) District

In 1985, the City created the M-26/Sharon Avenue Tax Increment Finance Authority, encompassing developed and undeveloped land in this area to encourage new development as a commercial district. As an economic development tool created by the State of Michigan, the TIFA collects a portion of the city and county property taxes on the increased value of the properties developed within the district. Those funds are then used for projects such as utility extensions, sidewalks, street lighting, etc., within the district. These projects enhance the district, leading to further economic development and, in turn, an increase the tax base.

The City continues to reinvest those collected taxes into the TIFA District as this particular tool of economic development has grown the district into a center of commerce for our area.

Zoning

The growth and development of the M-26/Sharon Avenue commercial district is supported and controlled by City ordinances. The commercial district is currently a B-3 General Business zone. Consistent with national trends, the City has revisited ordinances to ensure that sustainable practices are incorporated into developments. Notable changes to the City’s ordinances include a requirement for a site plan review for all new construction, the incorporation of green space/infiltration around parking areas, bike-friendly amenities, and sign and lighting restrictions limiting heights and dimensions with an eye towards light pollution mitigation. In 2015, the City enacted a storm water ordinance as part of site development to help mitigate the effects of development on our watersheds. The implementation of these and other changes ensure that these developments provide overall benefit to our community.

Undeveloped Land

A few large tracts of undeveloped land still exist within the City. As those properties with road frontage are developed, the remaining pieces become more attractive as building sites. The City has taken a proactive role in future development by building new roadways and installing utilities to sites where opportunities present themselves. A map of undeveloped land is included in the appendix.

A tract of land between the Copper Country Mall and Walmart is available. A portion of the land with M-26 frontage was developed into a large automobile dealership in 2015, leaving some heavily wooded land still available for development.

Razorback Drive, developed in the mid-1990s, still contains several vacant lots with utilities in place.

Evergreen Drive contains some large tracts just off of Sharon Avenue west of the M-26 corridor. This area has City utilities and a basic roadway.

The City owns 160 acres southeast of Walmart and has preliminary plans and right-of-way for connecting M-26 north of Walmart to the Hurontown/Dodgeville Road in Portage Township. This road would alleviate some congestion and would be instrumental for the development of the 160-acre parcel. The City continues to work with developers to make sites available as market conditions create demand. The City welcomes future development in the area and would consider rezoning to accommodate the development.

The City's goals for corridor improvements will contribute to the future of the business district, particularly as it relates to safety, aesthetics, and accessibility; however, economic factors and changing markets will truly dictate the growth and viability of the district. As of the time of this writing, one long-standing retail outlet closed its doors due to bankruptcy. Conversely, a 10-acre site owned by the City on the southwesterly city limits zoned B-3 has been purchased by Meijer, Inc. along with adjoining parcels. One of which is in Portage Township and was brought into the City under a Public Act 425 tax-sharing agreement. The combined 20+ acre parcel is intended to be developed for a large retail store.

Traffic

Highway M-26 has the highest traffic count in the region with approximately 26,000 vehicles per day. Traffic volume declines to about 7,000 cars per day just south of Walmart, demonstrating the importance of the M-26/Sharon Avenue commercial district. As commercial and residential developments in the area continue to evolve and more buildings are constructed, traffic volumes are expected to increase. The current infrastructure needs continued evaluation to properly address growth or any unforeseen paradigm shift the City encounters.

Past City plans called for additional access roads along Highway M-26 to mitigate traffic-related issues. Local access roads would provide access to properties adjacent to the highway with a centralized entry point, eliminating some driveways on M-26. Roadways such as Ridge Road, with access to M-26 at Frogpool Lane and Luanne Avenue, already incorporate these concepts. The City has considered similar design elements for businesses on the west side of M-26, though practical issues prevent such a road because existing buildings and property lines leave little space. Some of the traffic issues were mitigated when MDOT installed a traffic signal at the intersection of M-26 and Razorback Drive in 2015.

PLANNING/ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Two plans are in place for the M-26/Sharon Avenue commercial district. In 2004, with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the City completed a Visual Enhancement Plan for M-26. The plan addresses additional bike and pedestrian facilities, limiting access driveways, and adding attractive landscaping along the roadway and around private parking lots. It also calls for preserving scenic vistas, enhancing landscaping, and establishing guidelines for signage and landscape materials. The City will continue implementing the recommendations in the plan and landscaping projects along the right-of-way as funds become available.

A Highway Corridor Access Management Plan covers the cities of Houghton and Hancock, as well as Charter Township of Portage and Franklin Township. There is a local Access Management Committee consisting of representatives of each community plus MDOT and the Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region. The purpose of the committee is to help manage access on-and-off the state trunk line for intersections and private drives. The Committee has a site plan review process for any new development within 1,000 feet of the state highways to ensure that any new access is necessary and safe. The Access Management Committee recommends ways to improve safety when accessing M-26.

Further growth of the corridor as a regional retail center may occur westward along M-26. West of the southern intersection of Sharon Avenue and M-26 the corridor continues into the Charter Township of Portage and is outside the City limits. Several larger parcels exist on the highway frontage that are suitable for commercial development. The committee will review future development plans when proposed.

HURON CREEK WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

Huron Creek's headwaters are south of the City. The creek flows on the westerly side of the City's 160-acre open parcel of land, dividing the M-26 corridor as it flows north to the Keweenaw Waterway at Kestner Park. The Huron Creek Watershed Management Plan, approved by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality in 2009, was developed with guidance from the Michigan Tech Center for Water and Society. The goals of the plan are to improve water quality, protect aquatic life, maintain recreational access to the creek, and provide opportunities for community education.

Huron Creek has experienced significant environmental issues as a result of mining activities, failing septic systems, closed landfills and commercial development. Storm water management techniques have been implemented to reduce pollutants entering the creek through uncontrolled inflow. The City implemented a storm water management ordinance to prevent further contamination of the creek and continues to monitor water quality. The Huron Creek Watershed Management Plan has identified many potential improvement projects for the watershed. The City should continue to collaborate with the Michigan Tech Center for Water and Society to monitor the health of the creek and implement the improvement projects outlined in the plan. Implementation of the plan's recommended actions is expected to achieve the goals of improving water quality, creating a creek that the public can enjoy and sustaining a viable aquatic ecosystem.

In 2018, the importance of storm water management was demonstrated when an historic 1000-year rain event dropped over seven inches of rain in just a few hours. The Huron Creek watershed collected massive amounts of rainwater that was funneled into the corridor between Razorback Drive and Ridge Road. The massive flow increase moved loose material, trees and vegetation and eroded streambanks, leading to the plugging of the culvert under Sharon Avenue. The fill around the culvert eventually failed and that section of Sharon Avenue was washed away along with several sections of commercial property near the culvert crossing. The event triggered a state disaster declaration for the Houghton/Hancock area which eventually was declared a national disaster. However, newer developments that were designed and built according to the recent storm water ordinance appeared to both suffer less damage and be less of a contributing factor to the damaging increase in flow.

The City will continue efforts to mitigate potential hazards in the basin within the City limits. A significant portion of flow enters Huron Creek from outside of the City, so collaboration with Charter Township of Portage will be critical in order to control or reduce upstream flows into the basin within Houghton. As of this writing, the City is awaiting word on funding assistance from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to update the watershed plan and perform a more detailed study of the Huron Creek basin to guide future improvement and minimize risk.

GOALS

- Promote continuing commercial development of the M-26/Sharon Avenue corridors that meets the changing needs of the City while remaining consistent with zoning and overarching development plans.
- Continue to evaluate traffic and use patterns in the commercial district to allow for the preservation and/or improvement of traffic safety for both motorized and non-motorized travel.
- Continue to mitigate flow-related hazards within the Huron Creek basin and collaborate with neighboring units of government to enact best management practices within the greater watershed to lessen the impact on City infrastructure.

STRATEGIES

- Maintain the legal status/tax capture of the TIFA District to allow for continued maintenance and development of the district.
- Continue access management and site plan review processes to ensure development does not negatively impact the highway's capacity and safety.
- Consider pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the development of the corridor.
- Develop and implement a plan for a coordinated system of wayfinding signage including gateway, attraction and directional signage.
- Implement the M-26 Visual Enhancement Plan.
- Evaluate lighting needs on Sharon Avenue.
- Consider revising parking requirements on private commercial development.
- Continue to monitor and improve Huron Creek water quality.

chapter 12: economic development

HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Since 2010 the State of Michigan has focused on an economic development strategy dubbed “placemaking,” which focuses on the concept of creating livable, walkable, vibrant communities aimed at attracting talented workers and entrepreneurs.***
- ***Houghton continues its long history of supporting collaborative efforts surrounding regional economic development.***
- ***Grants, loans and support offered and maintained by the City ensure financial and business development assistance is available for new and long-standing businesses in the City.***
- ***Business organizations and community groups serve as resources for local businesses, assisting in marketing, education and organizational planning.***
- ***The City actively collaborates with business and academic leaders to cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship that strengthens the City’s employment base.***

PLACEMAKING

An important means of attracting a wide range of new businesses, including those in the growing high-tech sectors, is placemaking, a concept recognized by the State of Michigan. “Placemaking is the process of creating quality places where people want to live, work, play, shop, learn, and visit. Placemaking is a simple concept -- people choose to live in walkable, mixed-use places that offer the amenities, resources, social and professional networks, and opportunities to support thriving life styles.” (Source: Placemaking as an Economic Development Tool, Land Policy Institute, Michigan State University, 2015)

By actively engaging in placemaking, Houghton creates a thriving community by attracting talented workers in high-tech industries, entrepreneurial pursuits, medical and education fields, skilled trades, and creative endeavors such as art and music. The City continues to focus on how to best utilize and expand its unique placemaking assets.

Our neighborhoods are complemented by streets, utilities, and parks in addition to our neighbors and homes. The City invests in the public infrastructure through projects to maintain and improve utilities and streets where opportunities present themselves to take

advantage of needed work for making desired improvements. For instance; a critical water or sewer main needs to be replaced and thus the street above must be replaced, resulting in a finished product where the utility project can be leveraged with road maintenance funds to yield a new, upgraded street. The City has been successful obtaining grant funds to improve the parks, streets, and utilities systems to consistently improve the overall built environment.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

The City's financial health is a key component to economic development. Adopting an annual general fund budget is challenging because of fluctuating revenue and expenses. The City's general fund budget consists of three major revenue sources:

1. property taxes – 41%
2. government shared revenue and grants – 26%
3. charges for services – 33%

Major expenses generally consist of:

1. employee wages and benefits – 38%
2. contracted services - 12%
3. supplies, maintenance, and other – 50%

With increasing expenses and uncertainty in levels of state-revenue sharing, the City has to be diligent to maintain its budget, which by state law must be balanced. Revenue sharing funds have not kept up with the rising costs of maintaining the level of service to which residents are accustomed, thus the City looks for opportunities to become more efficient while improving overall service to its residents.

State-shared revenues are based, in part, upon population levels. Therefore, it is in the City's interest to increase its population, which includes Michigan Tech students living on campus.

GRANTS, LOANS AND SUPPORT

Houghton's downtown plays a key role in the City's economic development. Currently, the City offers downtown businesses seeking to locate downtown several opportunities:

- *Revolving Loan Funds.* The City's revolving loan fund provides moderate to small low-interest loans to downtown businesses.

- *Facade Improvements.* The City provides four free hours of design assistance for businesses wanting to renovate storefronts. The City works with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to acquire grant funding assisting owners making historic facade renovations. The City has leveraged local façade mini grants assisting property owners within the boundaries of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) with smaller projects that do not meet the threshold of the MEDC program.

Assistance is offered to all Houghton businesses by:

- *Michigan Small Business Development Center (MSBDC).* The City works with the MSBDC, which provides free consultants to advise start-up businesses and assist existing small businesses.
- *Local banks* are an integral part of our community. Historically, local banks are more likely to support local efforts because of the relationships within the community.
- City administration stands ready to assist businesses seeking to locate within its boundaries whenever the assistance is both financially feasible and benefits the community. City administrative staff routinely connects entrepreneurs and current business owners with local, state and federal business development organizations.
- The City retains a Business Development Specialist who regularly works with Downtown and M-26 businesses to enhance business growth and retention.

The City actively supports local business development as discussed in Chapters 10 and 11, but has also made other efforts such as:

- Rezoning property to help bring desired business services to a neighborhood;
- Compiling and presenting plans for the relocation of the Isle Royale National Park Headquarters to create a waterfront development opportunity;
- Working with local broadband providers to install broadband infrastructure throughout the downtown;
- Working toward MEDC Redevelopment Ready Community certification to encourage growth;
- Developing City owned properties, through placemaking, to create and maintain an environment that will continue to help businesses succeed;
- Actively pursuing redevelopment projects to improve the overall business climate.

TALENT

With Michigan's ongoing transition from a manufacturing-based to a knowledge-based economy, the ability to provide employers with skilled workers is critical to the City's economy. The local two universities (one a research institution) together with a growing base of high-tech businesses position the City to become an innovative leader. Just as important as the high-tech workers are the

tradespersons that play a critical role in the community.

The City works with other organizations to support initiatives that help ensure young professionals and recent graduates who will choose to live and work in our area, creating a vibrant and attractive community that will continue to attract new talent and businesses.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCE AUTHORITY

The state created Tax Increment Finance (TIF) legislation as an economic development tool in the early 1980's. A TIF collects a portion of the city and county property taxes on the increased value of the properties developed within the district. The funds are used for projects that support business growth within the district.

The City has two TIF districts: The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) collects a portion of the city and county taxes to be used within the boundaries of the DDA for improvements. The Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA) collects a portion of the city and county taxes to be used within the boundaries of the M-26/Sharon Avenue district.

BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCE GROUPS

The City actively collaborates with the following organizations supporting economic development. More information regarding these organizations can be found on their websites.

Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation Smartzone (MTEC SmartZone)

The MTEC SmartZone was incorporated in 2002 as one of fifteen SmartZones in the State of Michigan. The cities of Houghton and Hancock, Michigan Tech and the State of Michigan collaborated to form the SmartZone with a goal of increasing employment opportunities in the area for students and graduates of Michigan Tech through the mission of starting, growing and sustaining technology companies in the community.

Michigan Tech Talent

With more than 1500 faculty and staff members, many of which are respected researchers in their fields of expertise, the community has a vast pool of talent to tap. When appropriate, the City and businesses partner with university professors and staff for community improvements.

Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance (KEDA)

The Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance (KEDA) is the private, non-profit local economic development organization serving the Baraga, Houghton, and Keweenaw County region.

Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR)

Since 1968, WUPPDR has provided general planning support to the western six counties of Michigan's Upper Peninsula through its many programs, projects and services.

Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)

Located in Lansing, the MEDC has been a key player in the City's growth. Established in 1999, MEDC is a public-private partnership that serves as the state's marketing arm and lead agency for business, talent and jobs, tourism, film and digital incentives, arts and cultural grants and overall economic growth. MEDC offers a number of business assistance services and capital programs for business attraction and acceleration, entrepreneurship, strategic partnerships, talent enhancement and urban and community development. MEDC manages the state's popular Pure Michigan marketing program.

Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce

The Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce is a community resource for small businesses that focuses on supporting, attracting and developing business. The Chamber also provides information and referrals to people inquiring about visiting or relocating to the area.

Keweenaw Convention and Visitors Bureau (KCVB)

The KCVB is funded by a 2% lodging room tax in Houghton and Keweenaw counties. Its main objective is to increase tourism awareness, promotion and visitation.

Keweenaw Trail Services (KTS)

The KTS is responsible for the year-round operation and management of an extensive multi-use, motorized trail system throughout Houghton and Keweenaw Counties.

Copper Country Intermediate School District (CCISD)

The CCISD serves the educational needs of all citizens in Houghton, Keweenaw and Baraga counties through leadership, cooperation and quality support services.

GOALS

- Grow Houghton's population and economy.
- Establish new collaborations to achieve increased area-wide prosperity.

STRATEGIES

- Maintain a strong, vibrant downtown through business recruitment, retention and enhancement.
- Continue to work on placemaking community-wide as a catalyst for economic growth.
- Continue to support and partner with the MTEC SmartZone.
- Solicit all sources of funding, including grants, for continued improvements within the City.
- Work together to create, improve, maintain and support all business organizations and resource groups.
- Stay engaged with residents, businesses and governmental agencies on evolving trends to meet the needs of the 21st century
- Continue to collaborate with Michigan Tech and community businesses to develop civic improvements and cultivate a shared vision for the community.
- Continue to work with neighboring communities to consolidate services where appropriate.
- Continued use of Public Act 425 agreements to bring additional property into the City for development.

chapter 13: zoning plan and future land use

HIGHLIGHTS

- **The City maintains flexibility regarding land use and zoning to be adaptable to change.**
- **The City may benefit from the flexibility provided by form-based zoning.**
- **The City currently owns nearly 200 acres of undeveloped land that would be considered for rezoning to accommodate a suitable development.**

EXISTING ZONING

Residential areas in the City are comprised of both single-family and multi-family districts with the majority of those properties being zoned R-1. Business districts are primarily downtown and within the M-26/Sharon Avenue business corridor. There are also two industrial sections established by the City, - one located on the south side of Sharon Avenue and the second situated on the east side of town bordering the Keweenaw Waterway. The land zoned as Reserve in East Houghton is the Michigan Tech campus, which also includes a significant number of multi-family dwellings in the form of residence halls and apartment complexes.

REZONING

Zoning is a common tool used by city planners to bring about the orderly development of communities. The establishment of zoning boundaries is generally conducted with the general welfare of the community in mind; however, creating and changing districts can also have unintended consequences as it relates to future changes and development within the community. As such, rezoning is not to be taken lightly. The process to rezone property is lengthy and involved, but provides assurances that any changes are done with thought and planning.

The City will consider rezoning of areas where changes are logical, the residents and property owners are in favor, and such a change will serve the greater good of our community. An example may be rezoning some sections of R-1 to either R-2 or R-3 to increase density within the City limits. If determined to be appropriate, increased density can benefit a community by spatially concentrating people and structures for example. A density increase can take advantage of the service area of existing infrastructure (ie: water, sewer, roads) that can easily support a denser population and potentially increase property values. The City also recognizes that these types of changes can have inadvertent negative impacts such as increases in pedestrian and vehicle traffic or limitations on parking, reinforcing the importance of thoughtful deliberation when it comes to zoning changes.

Recently the City proactively rezoned a section of East Houghton to R-4 allowing for denser population closer to the Michigan Tech campus. Other R-1 zoned areas close to campus in neighborhoods that are predominantly rental properties may be considered for

rezoning to R-2 or R-3 to further increase density closer to campus thus reducing the conversion of R-1 homes to rentals in other R-1 neighborhoods.

The process for rezoning includes public hearings with both the planning commission and council.

CONDITIONAL REZONING

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act includes a process for property owners to request rezoning of their property by offering voluntary conditions to the use of the property. The City reviews the request to determine if it is acceptable. The process for a conditional rezoning also requires the aforementioned public hearings with the planning commission and council.

FORM-BASED ZONING

Form-based zoning provides an alternative to conventional zoning that can benefit both the City and developers. Conventional zoning primarily focuses on the use of the property (residential or commercial) and provides strict separation of land uses. Form-based zoning focuses primarily on form (building placement and the physical form of structures). Because there isn't strict separation of land uses, form-based zoning encourages mixed-use urban design, economic development and pedestrian mobility. The City should consider form-based zoning as another tool to assist economic development.

ZONING ORDINANCE CHANGES

The City will proactively review the zoning ordinance to maintain consistency with norms and long-term trends. The City will also continue to investigate and pursue changes that support community initiatives and position the City for a shared vision of the future. For example:

- Creation of a zoning district for the central business district (downtown) that supports concentrated development, mixed-uses, and incorporates placemaking components.
- Modifications to setback requirements may be necessary in some neighborhoods with small lots. The amount of setback variances granted in neighborhoods may be an indication that requirements are too stringent.
- Consider allowing some hard-surface off-street parking in front and side-yards to provide property owners with the ability to provide more off-street parking on their properties, alleviating pressure on the neighborhood.
- Review parking requirements for commercial uses to alleviate storm water issues and reduce impact on the environment.
- Consider changes in residential zoning districts to address owner-occupied short-term rentals.

FUTURE LAND USE

The City's overall size, geography, and current buildout limits the number of "empty" development sites as the most desired have been occupied, especially over the past 30 years. While some larger parcels are available, the market may not be right at any given time for them to be chosen by developers given the number of factors that drive development. In some cases properties exist, but are not marketed for sale and thus remain inactive. Inactivity could be the result of a variety of reasons, potentially including lack of interest in selling the parcel by the owner(s) or the owners may have their own development plans upon which they have not acted.

Although these limitations are in place, the City continues to work with developers, residents, and our neighboring communities to find creative solutions to our land-use challenges. Reevaluating existing properties combined with a form-based zoning model could maximize land use and drive the City towards its goals for future residential and commercial development. The City will continue to work with property owners and those seeking property to develop by staying apprised of the overall market and being actively involved in putting people together where opportunities arise.

Dependent on zoning and adjoining land uses these properties may be developed as residential or commercial uses. Residential development of lands within the City can occur on the single-home scale, multi-unit buildings or as a planned subdivision-type composed of several homes to create a new neighborhood. A variety of factors can influence whether a single family home is built on an empty lot or a larger scale development is undertaken; however, each of the developments summarized above have occurred within the City in the last five years.

Some vacant properties in the City:

- **Land southeast of Walmart (City-owned)**
An undeveloped 160-acre parcel southeast of Walmart is owned by the City and zoned R-1. Most of the land is rock outcrop and shallow bedrock, which makes it difficult and expensive to install utilities. The City would consider development in this area and would consider rezoning to accommodate the development. (Chapter 10)
- **Land south of Walmart (Privately-owned)**
A 60-acre parcel due south of Walmart has been actively marketed for sale.

- **Land on City's west end (City/Private-ly-owned)**
An undeveloped 80-acre parcel west of the M-26 neighborhoods. The City owns 40 acres, with the other 40 acres privately owned. The parcel is tree covered and contiguous to the R-1 residential district.
- **509 Shelden Avenue (Private-ly-owned)**
After a fire an empty lot downtown was created. While not practical to increase parking opportunities, a structure could be built on the privately-owned lot in central downtown.
- **Shelden Avenue 700 Block (City/Private-ly-owned)**
Several lots, owned by the City and private owners, encumbered by a large rock outcrop downtown could be developed. The combined land area, if it were able to be bundled, may present a development opportunity.
- **Razorback Drive Lots (Private-ly-owned)**
Lots along Razorback Drive off of Sharon Avenue are available for sale and development by the owner.

Michigan Tech owns a significant amount of property within the City that is currently undeveloped. With much of it in close proximity to campus there are opportunities for development, though the university's own master planning and future land needs will dictate whether any may be offered for development at some point in time. The City will continue to work with Michigan Tech in planning for mutual growth, benefit, and sustainability.

There are several other parcels that are partially developed within the City where significant undeveloped acreage exists as part of a smaller development on a larger parcel of property. As the supply of developable property eventually decreases these properties may be separated from their parent parcels and marketed. Again, availability would rely on a willing seller if a buyer or developer came along.

There are underutilized, but otherwise occupied, properties within the City that may present redevelopment opportunities. These properties can range from older developments to properties that were not developed according to thoughtful development practices. Both privately-owned properties, some for sale, and publicly-owned properties fall into this category.

- **Downtown Parking Decks (City-owned)**
In the 1970's the City purchased the land north of Lakeshore Drive between Quincy Street and Huron Street for the construction of a large parking deck to meet downtown parking needs. These decks were built prior to the development of the waterfront into a major place making asset for the City. The structures and the land that they occupy could present a redevelopment opportunity given their location downtown along the Keweenaw Waterway, fronting on a park, and their

overall size. Any redevelopment of this property would have to be done with consideration of current and future parking needs and access to the buildings at deck level.

- **Shelden Avenue 700 Block Parking Garage and Deck (City-owned)**

The City converted a multilevel parking garage formerly owned by the Upper Peninsula Power Company into a municipal parking garage and added a small parking deck to increase capacity from the Shelden Avenue level. The garage portion provides covered and indoor parking, but due to its age will require extensive maintenance in the coming years. This property which fronts on Shelden Avenue has a panoramic view of the Keweenaw Waterway and Mont Ripley. Reconfigured and repurposed, this property could be redeveloped into multistory parking with mixed-use above.

- **Isle Royale National Park Property (Federally-owned)**

Isle Royale National Park in downtown Houghton is in need of a new headquarters facility. As stated in Chapter 11, by encouraging the National Park Service to move its headquarters, the City would have a development opportunity along the downtown waterfront.

- **East Houghton Avenue and Ruby Avenue (Privately-owned)**

The area from Vivian Street to Agate Street and Ruby Avenue to Houghton Avenue was zoned R-4 Redevelopment Ready in 2017 to allow for higher density redevelopment near the Michigan Tech campus. Redevelopment depends on housing market conditions.

From time to time there may be some commercial properties that are placed for sale or otherwise become unoccupied. In some cases these properties adjoin others in a similar circumstance or where the owner has indicated that they would consider selling. In the interest of a healthy, growing business climate the City actively engages the business community to stay abreast of changes which could lead to opportunities for growth.

PROGRESS

- Rezoning of West Houghton Avenue from R-3 to R-1 in response to a request by the neighborhood's residents.
- Creation of an R-4 zoning district and rezoning a section of land close to the Michigan Tech campus to increase density closer to campus.
- A property identified by the City from the previous master plan is now in the process of being developed.
- The City issued its first Request for Proposals for redevelopment of City-owned property downtown.

GOAL

- Use zoning as an instrument for preserving quality neighborhoods and implementing land-use changes that support quality development.

STRATEGIES

- Consider adopting form-based zoning.
- Encourage development of undeveloped parcels with possible zoning changes.
- Designate Redevelopment Ready Sites to take advantage of the MEDC marketing assistance.
- Review Zoning Ordinance for possible changes to development standards in residential zoning districts.
- Consider changes to residential zoning ordinance to consider owner-occupied short-term rentals.
- Review ordinance development standards to encourage development and redevelopment of commercial properties.
- Work with Michigan Tech regarding the possible sale of unused university property for development.

chapter 14: sustainable practices & energy conservation

HIGHLIGHTS

- ***The City implemented energy-conserving initiatives including incorporating LED and induction lighting into public lighting projects and energy-efficient equipment in public buildings.***
- ***The City maintains a viable public transportation system that reduces traffic congestion and air pollution.***
- ***The City encourages recycling by providing single-stream curbside recycling, and supports the development of a countywide hazardous waste and recycling program.***
- ***The City promotes collaborative projects, such as the Pewabic Street Community Garden, that preserve green space and encourage sustainable development.***
- ***An historic summer rainstorm caused significant damage in the City and surrounding area.***

A sustainable city meets present needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Cities around the world are achieving improved sustainability through various means, including:

- Doing more with less; cities are finding ways to maintain or even improve services through the use of technology, more efficient operations, partnerships and shared services.
- Different agricultural systems, such as agricultural plots within a city, reducing the distance food has to travel and providing locally grown, healthy food.
- Renewable energy sources, such as wind turbines, solar panels, biomass, district heating and other energy sources. Cities provide economies of scale that make such energy sources viable.
- Various methods reducing the need for both heating and air conditioning, such as planting trees, using appropriate surface colors, green roofs, natural ventilation systems, an increase in water features and more green spaces. These measures counter the “heat island effect” caused by an abundance of hard surfaces, which can make urban areas several degrees warmer than surrounding rural areas. Likewise, winter cities are encouraging higher development density, compact development patterns and better building design to reduce costs and consumption of fuels for heating.
- Improved public transport and facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists to reduce car emissions. This requires a radically different approach to city planning, with integrated business, industrial and residential zones. Roads may be designed to slow traffic. Reduced parking availability may discourage driving.
- Solutions to decrease urban sprawl, seeking new ways of allowing people to live closer to the workplace. Since workplaces tend to be in cities, downtowns or urban centers, cities are seeking opportunities to increase density by considering Smart Growth principles in their planning and development.

This chapter describes accomplishments, goals and strategies for the City to become more sustainable.

SUSTAINABLE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Consistent with the concepts and strategies outlined by the State of Michigan, “placemaking” continues to be a guiding principle for the City. The strategies outlined in Chapter 9 for incorporating “Complete Streets” into the community and the importance of maintaining a relevant and dynamic downtown community (Chapter 10) not only contribute to the placemaking concepts, but also align with sustainable growth initiatives for the community.

Establishing and maintaining safe cycling and walking routes contribute to a reduction in emissions and fuel consumption. The development of new green space and protection of the existing green space contribute to the preservation of natural resources.

Community Gardens

The City has designated an area as a community garden site to allow individuals and families to come together to grow their own food. The Pewabic Street Community Garden, south of downtown between East Houghton Avenue and East South Avenue, has blossomed into a community asset.

Downtown Development and Preservation

Consistent with state and national trends, the City has experienced an increase of interest in urban/downtown living close to work, school and recreation. This shift can lead to a denser core of city residents and provides a growing demand for different housing types. The City’s active positioning and pursuit of funding opportunities has facilitated continued development and preservation efforts in downtown Houghton. In turn, the improvements to downtown Houghton have allowed the community to continue to evolve from the role that it has played historically to a contemporary downtown featuring specialty businesses and modern, affordable living space.

Pedestrians and Bicycles

Communities that are walkable and bikeable encourage active and healthy lifestyles, resulting in a more vibrant community. The City continues to develop strategies for improving pedestrian conditions and encouraging walking and bicycle use. The City’s Bike and Pedestrian Committee created the City of Houghton Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. This plan includes goals and objectives for non-motorized improvements in the City as well as providing direction for improving conditions for cyclists and pedestrians. Support for these initiatives is enhanced by the City’s Complete Streets Ordinance, which incorporates use plans for bicyclists and pedestrians into street improvement projects.

The City’s “Bicycle Boulevard” along Houghton Avenue allows for cross-town bicycle traffic to follow an established, marked route between West Houghton and Michigan Tech. The route contains wayfinding signage directing cyclists to various parts of the City along the way. To make the route more efficient for cyclists the City revised the stop sign placement along the way to reduce the number of stops.

Public Transportation

The City operates an affordable public transportation system providing approximately 80,000 rides annually with scheduled service throughout the City. The provision of public transportation is a sustainable practice promoting reductions in traffic congestion and emissions of air pollution. The City continues to work with Michigan Tech to expand public transit opportunities and further reduce traffic and parking needs.

The City is investigating the creation of a larger transportation authority with the City of Hancock so as to increase the overall availability and quality of public transportation while potentially lowering the overall cost to both cities.

SERVICES AND OPERATIONS

Reductions in energy use and fuel consumption directly impact operational costs while reducing emissions and overall consumption of natural resources. The following subsections outline the City's current operations impact on sustainability.

Energy Use

The following is a list of buildings the City owns and operates:

- City Center
- Dee Stadium
- Carnegie Museum
- Fire Department
- Public Works Building
- Water Filtration Plant
- William J. Hodge Visitor Center
- Nara Nature Park Chalet

The City continues to strive for ways to reduce energy consumption. All of the City's buildings have been upgraded to utilize the most energy-efficient lighting available. The City Center has a new, more efficient heating system. As other buildings need heating system replacements, the City evaluates energy-efficient options for the replacement system to maximize long-term economic benefits from energy savings. Energy efficiency contributes to improved comfort, while lowering energy demand and reducing air pollution.

Examples of energy efficient improvements in the City include:

- Street lights downtown and on College Avenue have been replaced with LED or induction lighting, saving 76 percent—about \$12,000 per year—in electricity and maintenance costs.

- The waterfront trail and street lighting on Lakeshore Drive was converted to LED in 2016 which recovered the cost of the upgrade within 2 years.
- The Michigan Tech Lakeshore Center, which used more than 18% recycled materials in its rehabilitation, is one of a handful of buildings in the western Upper Peninsula that is LEED Certified.
- Anaerobic digestion in the sewage treatment plant converts most of the organic material in the sludge to methane gas that can be recovered for plant operations.
- The processed biosolids from the sewage treatment plant are applied as a soil fertilizer and amendment to help revegetate the Mason stamp sands. Biosolids are also applied to local agricultural and wildlife areas in accord with MDEQ requirements.

Fuel Consumption

As fuel costs continue to increase, the City will evaluate more efficient vehicles, including electric/hybrid, alternative fuel and natural gas options. Alternative fuels should be considered for transit buses, police and public works vehicles.

Water and Sewer Utilities

The City shares the Portage Lake Water and Sewage Authority (PLWSA) treatment plant with the City of Hancock. The cost to operate the plant is determined by the ratio of gallons of sewer each community sends to the plant. Groundwater infiltrates the sewer system through both aging sewer mains and perimeter drains that empty into the sanitary sewer. Whenever possible, the City works to reduce groundwater infiltration. When a building is renovated downtown or on the Michigan Tech campus, where possible, the roof drain is separated from the sanitary sewer.

Recent investments in the City's water and sewer systems have decreased potable water leakage and infiltration into the sewer system. Houghton continues to undertake projects to further improve aging parts of both systems to reduce leakage and infiltration as both are not only wasteful, but increase the cost of operating each system.

Electric Charging Stations

The City currently has a single EV charging station located on a downtown parking deck. As more electric vehicles appear on the roads the need for more charging stations will be increased. The City plans to add more stations as part of ongoing improvements downtown.

CONSERVATION

The community relies on our natural surroundings as a valuable resource. Chapter 5 details the unique natural attributes available to the community, and Chapter 7 discusses recreation and use of public land by the community and visitors alike. The following subsections outline the City's commitment to preserving natural resources and developing sustainable economic development strategies around these natural assets.

Water Quality and Storm Water

The City's topography causes sediment and pollutant-laden runoff to flow to the Keweenaw Waterway. The Huron Creek and Pilgrim River Watershed Plans have identified the need for stricter site planning regulations to minimize impacts of storm and snowmelt runoff to watershed ecosystems that result from urbanization, particularly commercial developments and parking lots. The City compiled and passed a storm water ordinance that requires new development, or major redevelopment, to actively manage onsite storm water in such a way that maintains discharge rates at predevelopment levels and improves the overall quality of the discharge. The City continues to work with Portage Township to update storm water regulations, to address storm water management and protection of the Huron Creek and the Pilgrim River watersheds.

In June of 2018, a massive rainstorm, statistically occurring every 1000 years or so, dropped upwards of 7 inches of rain on the area in a matter of a few hours overnight. The ensuing flooding, washouts, and overwhelming of infrastructure caused tens of millions of dollars' worth of damage throughout central Houghton County including the City. Newer developments constructed according to Houghton's storm water ordinance fared much better than many of the older ones, attesting to the validity of the ordinance. In many cases, the man-made infrastructure that had been in place for nearly a century was insufficient to manage the sheer volume of water, but also many natural drainage courses washed out as well. Overall, the water damage in Houghton exposed the need for maintaining an active program of repair, replacement, and improvement of the storm water systems. Long-term the known drainage courses throughout our entire area are now forever changed by the storm, as they likely were from time to time over thousands of years, and the larger community will need to adapt to those changes. It will take some time for local, state, and federal officials to devise plans to address new issues as the long-ranging aftereffects of the storm are not known. Only time will tell as the coming seasons should reveal latent damages and new needs.

However, the severity of the 2018 storm must be considered in context that it was an historic storm. Much of the infrastructure that was damaged was designed and built according to the best engineering practices at the time. The storm severity exceeded all of the tables and design guidelines used to design infrastructure in the region. Our community was built around the range of experiences we've had in the relatively short time that we've been here. This most recent experience will be used to help us adapt to our environment once again, though it has to be recognized that no outcome can be certain.

Going forward the storm will serve as a reminder that the City has an important role in promulgating ordinances intended to protect the greater community and must continue to collaborate with neighboring units of government in managing the infrastructure to reduce risks.

Trash Collection and Recycling

The City provides trash collection to residents and businesses within the City limits by contract with a private waste collector. In 2016 the City bid out a new contract for waste collection that included single stream curbside recycling for residential and small business customers. Residential trash and recycling is collected weekly. The trash is placed in required "City" bags purchased by residents.

To encourage recycling, the City purchased a large quantity of City-branded recycling containers and made them available to residents for a low one-time fee. A second run of containers was purchased with grant assistance from MDEQ as the first run sold out. These containers make it simpler for residents to recycle. Thus far, the additional cost of adding recycling for Houghton has been relatively low and customer rates have remained the same. Recycling participation, based on weight, has steadily increased and the City continues to encourage increased participation.

Large commercial and residential trash collection is typically done using large containers with those generators paying City trash fees based on their average volume, and paying a rental on containers to the waste collector/hauler. Several very large waste generators have contracts directly with waste haulers. These larger waste generators have the ability to recycle by hauling their recyclables directly to the collection center, but the participation is limited due to the inconvenience factor. The main impediment to convenient downtown recycling is the lack of available space downtown for additional recycling containers. Downtown Houghton does not have alleyways in the traditional sense due to the topography and finding locations suitable for a dumpster, while preserving the streetscape and walkability is an ongoing challenge.

Recyclables are a commodity subject to wide variability in pricing due to changing market conditions.

The City would like to work with Houghton County to provide a hazardous waste collection site.

Parks and Green Space

Many neighborhoods in the City feature wooded lots and small neighborhood parks providing both natural beauty and a sense of privacy. Maintaining such areas throughout the region is important to the long-term protection of the Keweenaw Waterway and contributing creeks and tributaries. Incorporating green space and storm water controls encourages infiltration and protects these water bodies from excessive sediment loading and contamination. Nature preserves, such as the City's Nara Nature Park, are community-wide assets.

Recreational use of trails and forests, along with fishing and boating on the Keweenaw Waterway are economic drivers in the community. The City and surrounding units of government are responsible for ensuring these natural resources are sustained.

GOALS

- Encourage development of a countywide hazardous waste management and recycling program.

- Continue to implement energy-efficient improvements to City facilities and promote “green” development throughout the community.
- Collaborate with the community to foster grassroots initiatives that promote sustainable practices and green design principles.

STRATEGIES

- Generate countywide interest and enthusiasm to develop a household hazardous waste collection center and a diverse recycling program to reduce waste and reuse functional materials.
- Implement recommendations of the Huron Creek and Pilgrim River Watershed Plans where feasible.
- Expand the community garden.
- Continue to achieve energy use reductions by applying new technology where feasible and appropriate.
- Consider the use of new methodologies and technologies when providing city services.

chapter 15: life in a winter city

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Average annual snowfall exceeds 200 inches.**
- **A variety of outdoor winter activities attract new residents and tourists.**
- **Michigan Tech Winter Carnival started in 1922.**
- **The City spends nearly \$1,000,000 annually moving or otherwise dealing with snow and the effects of winter.**

“**Houghton...Undeniably a Winter Community**” proclaimed the cover of the February 2010 issue of *The Review*, the magazine published by the Michigan Municipal League. That entire winter-themed issue of *The Review* illustrated the possibilities of thinking about winter in an altogether different way and introduced Michigan municipalities to something Houghton has known for years: winter activities enhance the City’s image while offering its citizens quality-of-life opportunities.

Lake Superior influences the area’s climate, generating annual snowfall in excess of 200 inches and keeping temperatures warmer than in many other winter communities. Winter recreation activities typically start in December and end in April.

In 1997, the City participated in a planning workshop with the Winter Cities Association to explore opportunities to improve winter livability. A Winter City Plan identified a number of strategies for winter enhancement in four primary areas: Visual Environment, Access and Mobility, Land Use and Public Space. After the workshop, the City followed the winter city ideas when revising its recreation plan, creating a walkability plan and making the decision to more actively promote winter festivals and activities.

WINTER RECREATION

Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing. Nara Nature Park and the Michigan Tech Cross Country Ski Trails connect to provide over 35 kilometers (21 miles) of groomed trails for Cross Country skiing. These nationally recognized trails hosted the 2006 U.S. Junior Olympic Cross Country Ski Championship and the 2007, 2008, 2015 and 2016 U.S. National Championships. They will host the 2020 and 2021 U.S. National Championships. There are also miles of natural trails for snowshoeing and other non-motorized winter activities.

Sledding. Nara Nature Park provides a sledding hill and a warming chalet.

Skating. The West Houghton Ice Rink is a very popular outdoor skating and hockey rink maintained by volunteers. The rink in the center of the West Houghton neighborhood offers residents a winter gathering and recreation area within walking distance. Dee Stadium, located downtown, has ice from October to April. In addition to hosting school, recreational, and league hockey teams, the

rink provides free hockey and skating sessions open to the public throughout the winter months. Times are set aside weekly for adult-only and child-only skating.

Snowmobiling. Snowmobiling is a huge activity in the area. There are 233 miles of groomed snowmobile trails between Toivola and Copper Harbor. The City provides four miles of snowmobile trail along the waterfront, connecting the trails from the Houghton Canal to Chassell and allowing snowmobiles access to the Portage Lake Lift Bridge to cross the Keweenaw Waterway. The trail also provides convenient access to local businesses.

Bicycling. With the advances in bicycle technology and the advent of the fat tire bike many cyclists now bike for commuting and recreation year-round. Many of the cross-country ski trails in the area are also open from May through October to bicycles, increasing use of the abundant trail systems in our area.

WINTER EVENTS

Winter Carnival

A popular winter event in Houghton is Michigan Tech's Winter Carnival. It is an annual festival organized by the Blue Key National Honor Society that takes place in late January/early February. Activities include snow statue competitions, the crowning of a Winter Carnival queen, a torch light parade on Mont Ripley, fireworks, broomball competition, snow volleyball, curling, the Sno-Ball and hockey and basketball games.

Downtown Houghton hosts outdoor fireworks viewing around a large campfire ring where the community can gather to watch the fireworks. The City also sponsors an ice carving venue downtown where an artist turns blocks of ice into sculptures that remain in place long after Winter Carnival is over.

Yooper Luge and Cardboard Sled Competition

In response to the suggestion by the Winter Cities Plan to offer more winter festivals, the downtown Houghton Business Association hosts the Yooper Luge and Cardboard Competition in the latter part of February. The public works crew hauls snow and constructs a luge track on Isle Royale Street, which is then open to the public for sledding over the weekend. People of all ages bring their sleds downtown to enjoy the hill and then warm up with hot food and drinks in the neighboring establishments.

WINTER NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Abundant snow, ice and extended periods of darkness are some of the unique winter conditions that make walking and biking in the winter months a challenge. Previous plans suggested ways to improve the comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists in the winter months; implementing raised crosswalks for easier pedestrian crossings; ensuring public ramps and stairs are accessible in all

seasons by being covered where appropriate; increasing surface traction with textured paving surfaces for safer pedestrian use; preventing or managing snow and ice buildup on designated sidewalks; and providing sidewalks and bike lanes that are separated from vehicular traffic.

MANAGING SNOW

The Public Works Department clears the roads and designated sidewalks during the winter months. The crew works mostly at night with plows and loaders to clear snow from the roads, special sidewalk plows to clean sidewalks downtown and along College Avenue, and a compact loader with a V-plow to remove snow from the downtown parking structures. Sander trucks operate 16 hours per day when necessary to combat slippery roads. During breaks in snowfall, public works crews use a SnoGo snowblower and dump trucks to haul snow away, widening the narrowed streets and improving visibility at intersections.

PLANNING

Winter weather requires special planning for safety and comfort.

Public Spaces

When considering the placement of public furniture in gathering places and bus stops, care should be taken to ensure that benches and other seating areas are shielded from wind and harsh elements.

Development

Future development should consider the amount of snow and ice received every year, with attention paid to the storage of snow and the hazards of snow and ice falling and melting on buildings and walkways.

Access and Mobility

Transportation improvements should consider the ability of the City to keep sidewalks and bike paths free of snow and ice. When possible, separating vehicular traffic from pedestrians and bicycles enhances safety.

Recreation

Winter recreation should be continually maintained and improved. The City should continue to take an active role in city-sponsored winter events.

GOALS

- Provide more opportunities for outdoor activities and all-season outdoor gatherings.

- Improve winter transportation for pedestrians, cyclists and public transit users.

STRATEGIES

- Design and maintain bike and pedestrian facilities.
- Promote increased density and compact design in new residential development.
- New City projects should enhance the winter experience by incorporation winter-appropriate urban design, engineering and architecture approaches and elements.
- Collaborate and partner with researchers at Michigan Tech to consider cutting-edge technology and standards for snow management to reduce use of chemical deicers that have a negative impact on footwear, bicycles, automobiles, the environment and roads.
- Include appropriate urban design elements for activities and winter fun in new developments that make streetscapes and public spaces inviting and comfortable year-round.

chapter 16: strategies

INTRODUCTION

Simply documenting strategies and recommendations for improving the City is not enough. To ensure that the Master Plan is a useful document, it is necessary to outline an implementation plan to help set priorities for fulfilling the many recommendations presented. While the Master Plan is a tool for City leaders, its implementation requires commitment and involvement from the entire community.

PRIORITIZATION OF MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of steps must be followed to ensure that implementation of the Master Plan is a success:

- Promote community awareness and understanding of the Plan.
- Update City policies and regulations to reflect the Plan's vision.
- Partner with the City of Hancock, Portage Township, Houghton County and Michigan Tech to ensure consistency between individual master plans.
- Actively seek ways to promote and fund projects that are in accordance with the Plan.

The strategies outlined below are proposed for achieving the priority goals under each heading.

Chapter 6: Community Facilities

GOALS

- Continue to provide the best possible level of public services to city residents.
- Enhance and improve public infrastructure and cultural facilities.
- Pursue private and public partnerships to promote development of existing community resources.

STRATEGIES

- Actively assist the Carnegie Museum of the Keweenaw with becoming financially independent.
- Regularly evaluate City operations examining ways to leverage opportunities to improve services and lower operational costs.
- Pursue timely grant opportunities to make impactful improvements.

- Work to build an asset management system to allow resources to be targeted for maximum benefit while maintaining all assets.
- Study long-term facility needs to formulate a strategic plan that will allow for the rehabilitation or replacement of City facilities to be approached systematically.
- Address aging water, sewer, and street infrastructure holistically to maximize community benefit.
- Possibly sell the City Center to an interested tenant and relocate the city office and police department to another site.
- Construct an elevated water tank and booster station at the south end of Razorback Drive when needed for development on Cedar Street.

Chapter 7: Recreation

SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1 - Facility Maintenance and Improvement

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

Objectives:

8. Replace/upgrade aging park facilities and equipment;
9. Remove barriers to universal access;
10. Refurbish athletic fields and parking/pavement surfaces;
11. Provide training and education for personnel to ensure regulatory compliance and improve employee productivity;
12. Provide signage in each park with a consistent message to assist the public in understanding the purpose and use of the park;
13. Enhance park maintenance through increased weeding, tree pruning, and general park upkeep; and
14. 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:

7. Evaluate and consider opportunities for the development of new and expansion of existing recreation facilities;
8. Pursue grants, fundraising, and other funding opportunities that benefit and enhance our existing recreation properties;

9. Maximize the utilization of properties and their respective square footage to ensure that community recreation needs are being appropriately managed;
10. 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,
11. Integrate recreation facility considerations into city infrastructure projects to ensure that long-term cost savings are captured through economy of scale.
12. 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:

7. Incorporate sustainable design considerations into existing recreation properties and future park development opportunities;
8. Ensure that native vegetation is planted and maintained within the park system with eye towards pollutant reduction and wildlife sustenance;
9. Create natural storm water management systems and other green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and swales with native grasses;
10. Minimize non-porous surfaces like roads, parking lots and paved trails;
11. Minimize land disturbance during construction activities to ensure that native soils and vegetation remain intact and reduce susceptibility to erosion; and
12. 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:

8. Prioritize and implement accessibility improvements based on community input and documented shortfalls;
9. Ensure that accessibility is incorporated into park improvements and development, including but not limited to landscaping, equipment, and signage;
10. While considering seasonal availability, incorporate stops within the parks and recreation system into public transportation routes;

11. Incorporate “Complete Street” philosophies and best practices into planned infrastructure improvements and community development;
12. Continue to partner and pilot enhancements related to pedestrian, bicycle, and waterborne accessibility to the community parks and recreation system;
13. Connect recreational opportunities in the City to each other and to recreational opportunities in neighboring communities, and
14. 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:

6. Enhance availability of recreational facilities to accommodate external recreational programs;
7. Continue to sponsor and host public events that foster community and personal well-being;
8. Continue to sponsor and host community education and youth events;
9. Incorporate fitness and advocate for active lifestyles;
10. Continue to sponsor and support local and regional sporting events.

Chapter 8: Neighborhood Preservation and Development

GOALS

- Foster a wide range of housing options along with public and private amenities demanded by a diverse (income, age, family size) population.
- Modify the existing zoning ordinance to meet our goals.
- Promote regular care and maintenance of existing residential structures to improve the quality of neighborhoods and increase property values.
- Promote regular communications amongst neighbors to increase interaction and create strong relationships between residents.
- Create the conditions within the community that make Houghton the most sought-after place to live within the region.

STRATEGIES

- Continue to vigorously and consistently enforce ordinances.
- Explore funding opportunities for neighborhood revitalization.
- Continue to make lots available for new construction.
- Install and maintain sidewalks according to the Safe Routes to School Plan.
- Install lighting at bus stop locations in the subdivisions on West Sharon Avenue.
- Study the need for housing options for older adults who do not want the responsibility of home ownership.
- Regularly review the zoning ordinance and zoning map.

Chapter 9: Transportation

GOALS

- Continue to develop and promote an efficient, safe and well-maintained multi-modal transportation system that recognizes pedestrians, bicycles, motor vehicles and public parking.
- Develop trails, bike paths, and walking paths that can be used as all-season routes for exercise, commuting, and general wellness.
- Improve public transportation by offering more service, controlling cost, and taking advantage of emerging technologies.
- Continue to implement the Asset Management Plan.

STRATEGIES

Non-Motorized

- Implement the recommendations of the Safe Routes to School Committee.
- Implement the Complete Streets Ordinance when constructing new roads and making renovations to existing roads.
- Install road stencils and signage for bike routes.
- Link the Waterfront Trail to the Michigan Tech campus at the top of Cliff Drive.
- Collaborate with the Bike and Pedestrian Committee on planning projects.
- Investigate and implement ways to improve walking and biking during winter months.
- Work with the Safe Routes to School Committee to create safer pedestrian crossings at the intersection of Sharon Avenue and Dodge Street and the intersection of Sharon Avenue and Portage Street.
- Obtain ownership of the rail corridor within the City and maintain the trail easement.

Motorized

- Pave and maintain local streets as funds become available.
- Install LED Lighting on Townsend Drive.
- Conduct a feasibility study to look at reconstructing Montezuma Avenue as a two-way street to relieve some traffic on Shelden Avenue.
- Assess public parking adequacy.
- Continue with Asset Management rating activities.
- Monitor the continuing development and use of emerging technologies and systems including autonomous vehicles, electric scooters, drone deliveries, and ride hailing. Take into account their potential impacts on City infrastructure.

Public Transportation

- Study the implementation of a Public Transportation Authority between the City of Houghton, City of Hancock, Michigan Tech and/or the County of Houghton to create better service for residents.
- Follow nation-wide transit developments that may be useful in the City including apps for hand-held devices that display bus routes and schedules, real-time locations, and enable the payment of fares electronically.
- Look for ways to enhance the coordination of bus service with walking and biking.

Chapter 10 – Downtown

GOALS

- Cultivate the downtown district by maintaining it as a center for retail, service and dining experiences while optimizing access for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.
- Support existing businesses and encourage continued growth and investment in new ventures, job opportunities, and product offerings.
- Enhance the experiences of the community and visitors by establishing comprehensive and consistent signage that orients and informs the public of City facilities, attractions and events.
- Enhance the waterfront and existing public attractions by incorporating sustainable design elements and investing in new cultural experiences for community members to share.
- Improve, maintain, and add elements that enhance the sense of place felt downtown.
- Improve connectivity between Shelden Avenue and the waterfront.

STRATEGIES

Traffic

- Study and consider options to improve traffic flow and safety through downtown.
- Paint robust and highly visible crosswalks throughout the downtown.

Real Estate and Economic Development

- Continue to support and partner with the MTEC SmartZone, as their continued success will be a critical driver towards the vitality of downtown Houghton.
- Assist business ventures that are interested in establishing in Houghton and look for potential advantages that would encourage locating downtown.
- Continue working with downtown businesses to assist with marketing, special events and business consulting offered by the Michigan Small Business and Technology Center.
- Continue to monitor development opportunities for real estate in downtown Houghton similar to the success of the Portage Lake District Library relocation.
- Continue with façade improvements and work on filling vacant buildings as businesses change.

Pedestrians and Bicycles

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to the waterfront trail at Quincy, Huron and Isle Royale Streets.
- Consider pedestrian and bicycle signage and controls to promote motorist awareness.
- Provide more bike racks.

Parking and Signage

- Consider sites and develop options for the construction of new parking lots and structures as land becomes available and anticipated demand demonstrates the need.
- Continue parking structure renovations to maintain the present parking availability.
- Continue the plan for a coordinated system of wayfinding signage, including gateway, attraction, directional and parking signage.

Landscape and Urban Design

- Work with MDOT to replace the existing overhead sign and steel truss on Shelden Avenue at the bridge with a sign arrangement that meets MDOT requirements while being more context sensitive to the historic downtown district and urban design.
- Plan and implement streetscape and visual enhancements for Montezuma Avenue.
- Explore options for adding street trees and vegetation on Shelden Avenue.

- Design and implement landscape and vegetation treatments for slopes currently landscaped with mine rock cover.
- Consider locations and take advantage of opportunities for incorporating public art and interpretive displays into the downtown setting.

Redevelopment Opportunities

- Continue to monitor property transactions and opportunities for redevelopment.
- Collaborate on a new Isle Royale National Park headquarters facility, possibly at another location, and evaluate redevelopment opportunities for the property.
- Consider options for enhancing pedestrian connections, green space and parking at the “Mattila Square” site between Dodge and Isle Royale Streets just north of Lakeshore Drive.
- Work with the Pewabic Street Community Gardening Association and local farmers to create a multi-seasonal farmers market that can be used for community-related activities in the non-growing season.
- Continue to work with property owners to improve and increase the availability and diversity of living spaces downtown.
- Assess the operational costs for city-owned facilities and coordinate with facility management to evaluate funding resources and establish goals for operational cost sharing.

Downtown Waterfront

- Enhance the aesthetics and function of the waterfront multi-use trail by continuing to develop infrastructure along the trail, add lighting, widen the trail where possible, reconfigure the areas that are confusing to navigate, add art, and add opportunities for exercise.
- Pursue the transfer of ownership of the waterfront trail property from MDOT and MDNR to the City so we can apply for funding to assist in improvements.
- Install finger piers and/or boat slips to improve the broadside mooring facility.
- Create more public waterfront space by constructing a deck at the Portage Lake District Library.
- Create parking areas south of Sheldon Avenue to open up the current parking areas on the waterfront for other uses.

Chapter 11 – M-26/Sharon Avenue Business District

GOALS

- Promote continuing commercial development of the M-26/Sharon Avenue corridors that meets the changing needs of the City while remaining consistent with zoning and overarching development plans.

- Continue to evaluate traffic and use patterns in the commercial district to allow for the preservation and/or improvement of traffic safety for both motorized and non-motorized travel.
- Continue to mitigate flow-related hazards within the Huron Creek basin and collaborate with neighboring units of government to enact best management practices within the greater watershed to lessen the impact on City infrastructure.

STRATEGIES

- Maintain the legal status/tax capture of the TIFA District to allow for continued maintenance and development of the district.
- Continue access management and site plan review processes to ensure development does not negatively impact the highway's capacity and safety.
- Consider pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the development of the corridor.
- Develop and implement a plan for a coordinated system of wayfinding signage including gateway, attraction and directional signage.
- Implement the M-26 Visual Enhancement Plan.
- Evaluate lighting needs on Sharon Avenue.
- Consider revising parking requirements on private commercial development.
- Continue to monitor and improve Huron Creek.

Chapter 12: Economic Development

GOALS

- Grow Houghton's economy.
- Support population growth in Houghton that is sustainable.
- Find new collaborations with the greater Keweenaw community to create area-wide prosperity.

STRATEGIES

- Maintain a strong, vibrant downtown through business recruitment, retention and enhancement.
- Continue to work on placemaking community-wide as a catalyst for economic growth.
- Continue to support and partner with the MTEC SmartZone.
- Solicit all sources of funding, including grants, for continued improvements within the City.
- Work together to create, improve, maintain and support all business organizations and resource groups.
- Stay engaged with residents, businesses and governmental agencies on evolving trends to meet the needs of the 21st century.

- Continue to collaborate with Michigan Tech and community businesses to develop civic improvements and cultivate a shared vision for the community.
- Continue to work with neighboring communities to consolidate services where appropriate.
- Continued use of Public Act 425 agreements to bring additional property into the City for development.

Chapter 13: Zoning plan and future land use

GOAL

- Use zoning as an instrument for preserving quality neighborhoods and implementing land-use changes that support quality development.

STRATEGIES

- Consider adopting form-based zoning.
- Encourage development of undeveloped parcels with possible zoning changes.
- Designate Redevelopment Ready Sites to take advantage of the MEDC marketing assistance.
- Review Zoning Ordinance for possible changes to development standards in residential zoning districts.
- Consider changes to residential zoning ordinance to consider owner-occupied short-term rentals.
- Review ordinance development standards to encourage development and redevelopment of commercial properties.
- Work with Michigan Tech regarding the possible sale of unused university property for development.

Chapter 14: Sustainability

GOALS

- Encourage development of a countywide hazardous waste management and recycling program.
- Continue to implement energy-efficient improvements to City facilities and promote “green” development throughout the community.
- Collaborate with the community to foster grassroots initiatives that promote sustainable practices and green design principles.

STRATEGIES

- Generate countywide interest and enthusiasm to develop a household hazardous waste collection center and a diverse recycling program to reduce waste and reuse functional materials.
- Implement recommendations of the Huron Creek and Pilgrim River Watershed Plans where feasible.
- Expand the community garden.
- Continue to achieve energy use reductions by applying new technology where feasible and appropriate.
- Consider the use of new methodologies and technologies for providing city services.

Chapter 15: Life in a Winter City

GOALS

- Provide more opportunities for outdoor activities and all-season outdoor gatherings.
- Improve winter transportation for pedestrians, cyclists and public transit users.

STRATEGIES

- Design and maintain bike and pedestrian facilities to make it easier for people to get around in the winter.
- Promote increased density and compact design in new residential development.
- New City projects should enhance the winter experience by incorporation winter-appropriate urban design, engineering and architecture approaches and elements.
- Collaborate and partner with researchers at Michigan Tech to consider cutting-edge technology and standards for snow management to reduce use of chemical deicers that have a negative impact on footwear, bicycles, automobiles, the environment and roads.
- Include appropriate urban design elements for activities and winter fun in new developments that make streetscapes and public spaces inviting and comfortable year-round.