

MARQUETTE COUNTY 2040: YOUR COUNTY, YOUR PLAN.

Our Common Future

A Master Plan for Marquette County, Michigan



Adopted by the Marquette County Planning Commission on
Prepared by the Marquette County Planning Commission and the Marquette County Planning Division
Approved by the Marquette County Board of Commissioners on September

DRAFT



Introduction

In 2021, Marquette County completed the first comprehensive rewrite of its Master Plan since 1982. It attempted to answer the question that the Marquette County Planning staff posed to ourselves and to the thousands of County residents who engaged in this process:

"What do we want our Marquette County communities to be like in the year 2040?"

This plan is a five-year update to that plan. The scope is more limited, but aims to check in on the progress we have made as a County so far and to account for the changes that have occurred since 2021.

Plan Purpose

The county-wide Master Plan is pursuant to Public Act 33 of 2008, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. This is a public policy document that can be integrated into the community master plans of local units of government to help achieve a common vision for the future of Marquette County over the next 20 years. The Master Plan serves as a resource guide and foundation for local land use policies and a common source of data and information, aiming to help unify the County's many unique communities. The Plan reflects common goals, objectives, and themes to enhance the current planning initiatives already underway at the County and in each community, and provides a general framework for leaders and decision-makers in Marquette County.

Plans are a basis for zoning and support land use and zoning decisions made by municipalities. As noted in

Look
for the
County
logo throughout
the Plan to learn
about Marquette
County's Planning
Division



Role of County Planning

Marquette County Planning, Community Development, Forestry, and Recreation is a division of the Resource Management and Development Department of the Marquette County government. In this Plan, it is referred to simply as the "Planning Division." The County Planning Commission and Planning Staff provide guidance to the rest of the County government on implementation of the Master Plan. They also assist with a wide variety of local and regional planning efforts in Marquette County, including community development, forestry and recreation.

the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, "Zoning shall be based on a plan." (MCL 125.3203(1)). Beyond use by municipalities within Marquette County for zoning and land use planning, the Marquette County 2040 Master Plan is intended to be referenced by organizations, businesses and nonprofits in grant applications to help obtain funding to benefit the people, businesses, and communities of Marquette County.

Methodology

The 2021 Plan and its 2026 update were created "in-house" by the Planning Division, with strong guidance from the Marquette County Planning Commission. An extensive public participation strategy was developed to ensure that the final Plan represented the complexity and diversity of communities in the county. For the purposes of this planning process, Marquette County was subdivided into four planning regions based on geographic and socioeconomic characteristics. In 2026, County planners assembled unique [data-based fact](#)

How to Read this Plan

The Master Plan is organized broadly by:

1. INTRODUCTION.....pg 1
Purpose, methodology, planning regions
2. WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO.....pg 5
Demographics, economy, public health, arts & culture, recreation
3. WHERE WE LIVE.....pg 18
Environment & natural resources
4. HOW WE LIVE.....pg 29
Land use, housing, food access, energy, transportation
5. HOW WE WORK TOGETHER.....pg 50
Services, service providers, intergovernmental coordination
6. HOW WE WILL GET THERE.....pg 61
2040 vision, goals, implementation, strategies
7. REFERENCES



This symbol introduces the following topics that are highlighted throughout the Plan:

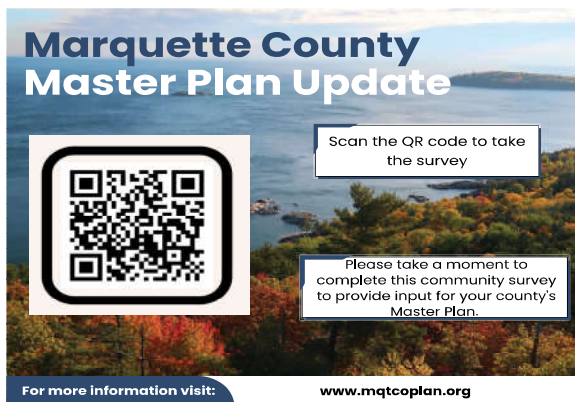
1. County Planning Division
2. Community Survey Snapshots
3. Planning Regions at a glance
4. Supplemental information, like case studies

References and additional information are [hyperlinked](#) throughout this Plan. References can be found at the end of this Plan and hyperlinked at the end of each chapter.

Marquette County 2040 is not just this document!



sheets for each region, distributed a community survey, and held regional meetings across Marquette County to discuss the issues affecting local communities.



An online community survey was made available to the public and heavily publicized from October 2025 to June 2026, garnering more than 1,000 responses with heavy engagement from all regions and age groups. The county website has been maintained to host process and public participation information, community data and fact sheets. This public input directly informed the update to the 2040 Master Plan, which was completed in December 2026.

Public Participation

This plan was crafted based upon a massive amount of public participation and feedback. Public participation took several different forms in order to engage the largest possible number of County residents and stakeholders and adequately represent the complexity and diversity of Marquette County. In a real sense, this plan is only as

good as the public input which forms its foundation. The goal of this plan is to represent the needs and desires of all of the people of Marquette County, and to be an accurate reflection of their collective vision for the future.

The public participation process began in October 2025, when the community survey was made available to the public. The survey was available online and publicized by the County, community partners, and local residents for half a year - methods of publicity included numerous social media posts; posters that were displayed in public gathering places; links and web pages on the Marquette County Master Plan website (mqtcoplan.org), the County website, and many other local government websites; and in-person promotion by County planners at numerous public meetings and events. The survey had received 1,343 responses by the time the survey closed on June 15, 2026 in a county of fewer than 68,000 people. The survey was statistically valid and representative of all demographics in Marquette County, including hard-to-reach populations such as residents of both high-poverty and extremely

Look for Survey Snapshots throughout the Plan for Community Survey findings



Survey Snapshots

2021
3,053
Responses

2026
1,343
Responses

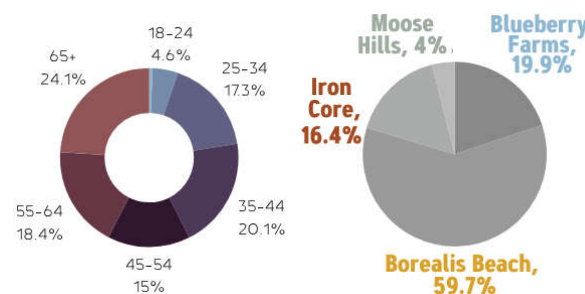
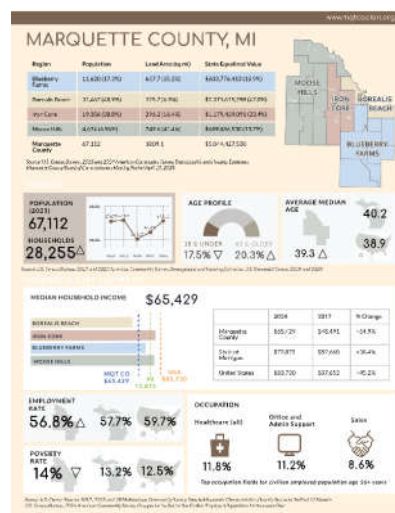
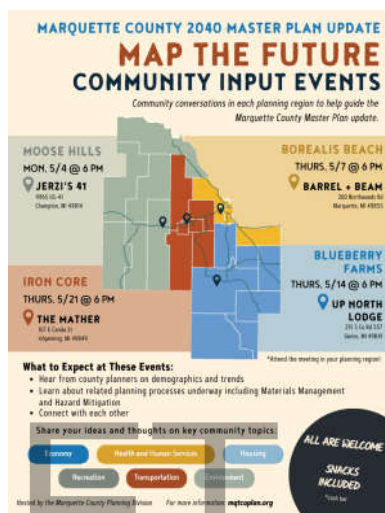
The survey results during the original 2021 overhaul were truly an unprecedented level of public participation in a local planning process. During the 2026 update, the County distributed the same survey to obtain a temperature check for how residents of Marquette County are responding to the changes over the last few years.

The survey was:

- available online
- promoted by the county, community partners, and residents
- publicized via social media posts; posters displayed in public gathering places; links on many municipal websites; and in-person promotion by county planners at public meetings and events.
- statistically valid and representative of all demographics in Marquette County, including hard-to-reach populations such as residents of both high poverty and extremely rural communities.

Survey data cited in this Plan include both:

- quantitative data, like hard public opinion information, and
- qualitative data, more subjective but equally important, like quotes from free response questions in the survey



rural communities. The online survey took 5-10 minutes to complete on average.

A plan is only as good as the public input which forms its foundation.

In addition to the survey, stakeholder interviews were conducted beginning in February 2026. County planners conducted stakeholder interviews with representatives of various local organizations, businesses, and government entities. Feedback from these interviews was also incorporated into the Plan.

The public participation plan included "Map the Future Events," in-person community input sessions held at non-

governmental public gathering spaces, with the goal of drawing community members to the four events. The Map the Future Events were held during May of 2026, and the feedback from the 80+ attendees was incorporated into the plan update.

Planning Region Concept

At the beginning of the planning process, Marquette County was divided into four "Regions" based on their geographic and socioeconomic characteristics: Blueberry Farms included the rural townships of southern Marquette County, including the major towns of Gwinn and K.I. Sawyer in Forsyth Township; Borealis Beach consisted of the greater Marquette area and the bulk

of Marquette County's Lake Superior shoreline; the Iron Core represented the greater Ishpeming-Negaunee area, a historic iron mining center; and Moose Hills consisted of Marquette County's remote "West End" townships.

Finally, public participation will not end with the adoption of this plan - it must be an ongoing process that continues throughout the next 20 years.

Look for this four colored box throughout the Plan to learn more about the Planning



Introduction to Marquette County's four Planning Regions

MOOSE HILLS REGION

Champion, Ely, Humboldt, Michigamme, Powell, & Republic Twps.

The western gateway of Marquette County, Moose Hills is home to many beautiful inland lakes and pristine woodlands and wetlands, and it boasts many miles of Lake Superior shoreline. It is the largest region by land area but also the least populous, dotted with only a few small communities and containing more "camps" and seasonal homeownership and tourism while also diversifying the local economy and improving the quality of services available to local residents.

IRON CORE REGION

Ishpeming & Negaunee Cities and Ishpeming Negaunee, Richmond & Tilden Twps.

The Iron Core's rich iron ore mining heritage and historic neighborhoods contribute to the rugged, resilient small-town character of this region. Ishpeming and Negaunee are proud American Heartland communities that contain most of the Iron Core's population, they have struggled in recent years with population loss, the Empire Mine closure in 2016, and residential and downtown blight. In the next two decades, Iron Core will significantly benefit from continued revitalizing of its neighborhoods and downtown districts, meeting the evolving needs of its population, and capitalizing on local, national, and global trends to create opportunity for the next generation.

Chocolay & Marquette Twps. and Marquette City

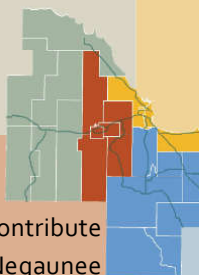
BOREALIS BEACH REGION

A vibrant populous region that is still close to nature, Borealis Beach is defined by its location along the south shore of Lake Superior, with its beautiful beaches, marinas, public lands, and iconic ore docks. Marquette is the county seat and the largest city in the U.P., and has many of the assets of much larger city, including Northern Michigan University, a regional hospital, an extensive park system, retail, and a thriving downtown. In the next two decades, the region will significantly benefit from managing growing pains, including increased tourism and shortages of family-sustaining jobs and affordable housing.

Ewing, Forsyth, Sands, Skandia, Turin, Wells, & West Branch Twps.

BLUEBERRY FARMS REGION

Abundant in resources, land, and opportunity, Blueberry Farms is a rural region founded on a natural resource based economy that included forestry, mining, and agriculture. The closure of the KI Sawyer Air Force Base has resulted in a unique set of challenges and opportunities that the region continues to navigate 25 years post closure. In the next 20 years, Blueberry Farms will significantly benefit from finding a way to meet the needs of all residents and using its natural assets to generate sustainable, equitable growth.





Interactive Dashboard

The online dashboard provides a wide range of additional data related to the Marquette County 2040 Master Plan. It is designed to provide a statistical snapshot of the current situation in Marquette County, including data on the county's population, the local economy, housing, community services and assets, and a wide range of other topics. The dashboard is interactive and can be sorted by the four planning regions.

www.mqtcoplan.org/dashboard



Acknowledgments

A special thank you to the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community for their monetary grant support enabling the opportunity to hold the community input gatherings across the County. Many partners as well as local and regional stakeholders added valuable content to this plan and into the implementation of its contents.



Look for boxes like this throughout the Plan. They provide supplemental information about topics.



History of People

The land now known as Marquette County has been inhabited by the Anishinaabe people for many centuries, and their rich historical, cultural, and artistic traditions are still practiced by many Indigenous Marquette County residents today. Marquette County has been permanently inhabited by a wide variety of European settlers since the mid-19th century, with the influence of the Finnish, Italian, and various Scandinavian cultures continuing to have a major impact on local culture today.

Many thanks are due to the thousands of Marquette County residents who helped create this plan – without them, this task would have been impossible. The vision they articulated for Marquette County's future is ambitious and inspiring, and if local policymakers are willing to put this plan into action, that vision can become a reality. As you read this plan, we would ask you to decide for yourself:

What do you want Marquette County to be like twenty years from now?

DRAFT

Demographics

According to the [2024 American Community Survey \(ACS\) 5-Year Estimates](#), which are the primary demographic data source throughout this section, the Upper Peninsula has a population of 303,392, up 0.6% from the 2020 U.S. Census. This is a change from the 3.1% population decline the U.P. saw from 2010-2020. [Marquette County's population](#) peaked at 75,600 in 1979, experienced a sharp decline of about 9,000 from 1993-1997, due mostly to the closure of K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base in 1995, and has since recovered to its current level of 68,064. Marquette County's population had stagnated at about 67,000 since 2010, despite the fact that Marquette County was one of only two counties in the U.P. to experience population growth from 2010-2024. Populations in the rest of the U.P. have declined or stagnated, with an estimated population loss of 2.6% across the U.P. from 2010-2024.

Population characteristics by U.P. county

County	Population	Under 18	65 & Over	Black	American Indian	Poverty Rate
Alger	8,762	14.7%	27.2%	7.6%	2.3%	10.4%
Baraga	8,191	17.0%	23.2%	6.3%	12.0%	15.2%
Chippewa	36,295	17.6%	19.6%	5.7%	13.5%	14.0%
Delta	36,813	19.1%	26.2%	0.2%	1.5%	12.7%
Dickinson	25,954	20.0%	24.2%	0.4%	0.6%	10.5%
Gogebic	14,319	16.4%	29.4%	0.5%	2.4%	14.4%
Houghton	37,693	19.8%	18.0%	1.2%	0.5%	16.5%
Iron	11,667	17.5%	31.4%	0.9%	0.9%	17.0%
Keweenaw	2,133	14.9%	36.5%	0.0%	0.1%	15.2%
Luce	6,271	16.3%	22.6%	8.2%	6.9%	16.7%
Mackinac	10,957	15.0%	29.7%	4.8%	13.7%	16.1%
Marquette	67,112	17.5%	20.3%	1.4%	1.1%	14.0%
Menominee	23,247	17.4%	26.9%	0.4%	2.1%	12.2%
Ontonagon	5,850	11.4%	38.2%	0.5%	0.5%	12.5%
Schoolcraft	8,128	17.7%	28.9%	0.6%	7.3%	14.1%
U.P. TOTALS	303,392 (3.0% of MI)	17.8%	23.7%	2.0%	3.7%	13.8%
Michigan Totals	10,140,459	21.1%	18.5%	13.2%	0.5%	13.2%

 Above U.P. average poverty rate  Below both MI average poverty rate and U.P. poverty rate

Demographics Characteristics by Planning Region

MOOSE HILLS REGION

POPULATION GROWTH



MEDIAN AGE

52 

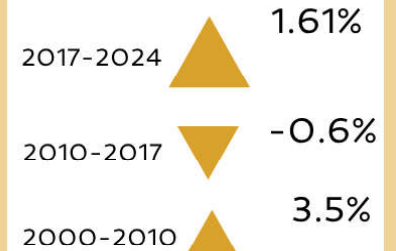
2017 Median Age:
48.7

7%

Of County
Population

BOREALIS BEACH REGION

POPULATION GROWTH



MEDIAN AGE

34.7 

2017 Median Age:
38.4

47%

Of County
Population

IRON CORE REGION

POPULATION GROWTH



MEDIAN AGE

39.8 

2017 Median Age:
42.8

29%

Of County
Population

BLUEBERRY FARMS REGION

POPULATION GROWTH



MEDIAN AGE

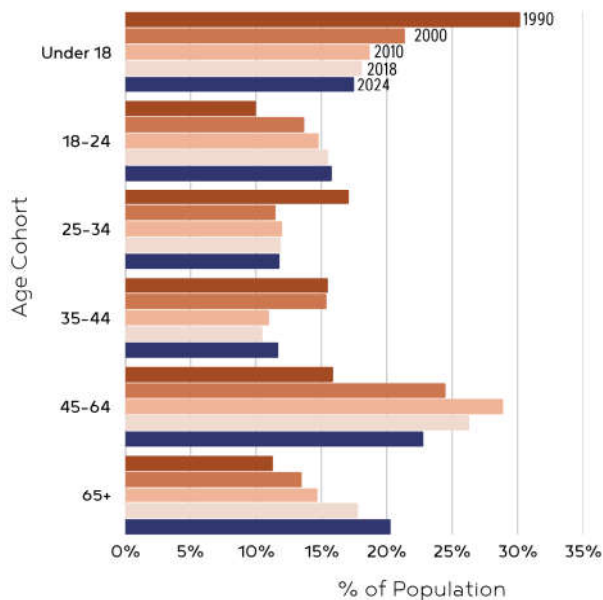
44.8 

2017 Median Age:
49.3

17%

Of County
Population

Gross population loss in Marquette County occurred mainly among the 45-55 age cohort from 2010-2024. This could be the outsized cohort of the “Baby Boom” generation aging, and increasing Marquette County’s senior population (ages 65+) by 42% from 2010 to 2024. Marquette County and the U.P. are “graying,” with the elderly making up an increasing percentage of our population. How Marquette County can achieve the goal of attracting and retaining more Millennial and Generation Z residents will be a major focus of this Plan.

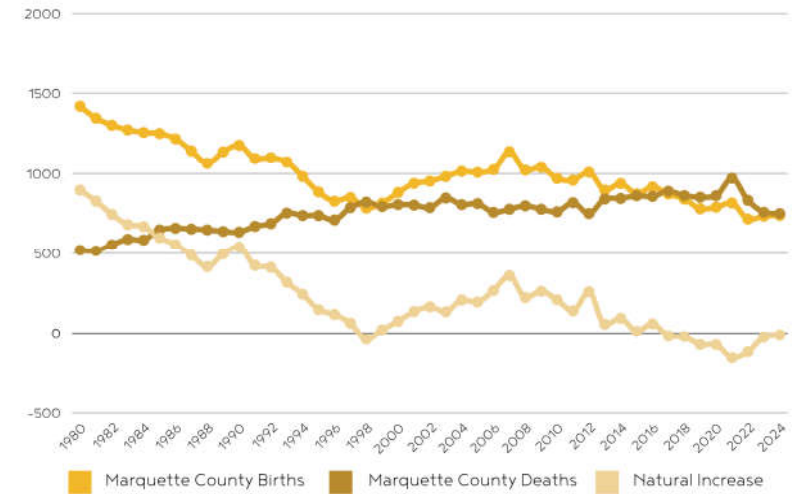


Historic population by age cohort, Marquette County

The figure to the right shows that population loss in Marquette County since 1990 occurred mainly among the

Under 18 and 25-34 age cohorts (i.e., those age cohorts most likely to be part of a family with children) from 1990-2010. The large population decline during this period was primarily due to the closure of K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base in 1995. This base closure disproportionately impacted younger people whose families and livelihoods depended on the base. However, since 2010 these younger age cohorts have stabilized both in terms of raw numbers and share of the total population. This stabilization of the young population has occurred even as the “Baby Boom” generation has aged – from 2010-2024, Marquette County’s senior population (ages 65+) increased by 42%, but in the same time period Marquette County’s median age actually declined slightly after increasing rapidly from 1990-2010.

Within Marquette County, there have been variations in this overall demographic pattern. As can be seen below, Marquette and Negaunee Townships have experienced modest population growth since 1980 while the County as a whole has experienced a 9.4% population decline from 1980-2024. Meanwhile, since 2010 the City of Marquette has experienced a 7.7% decline in the number of “family households,” a 22.6% decline in the number of children under 5, and an even larger 44.3% decline in the number of children ages 5-9. In Marquette County as a whole, not only are increasing numbers of people entering retirement age, but the mortality rate surpassed the birth rate in 2017 and has continued to exceed it ever since. A declining



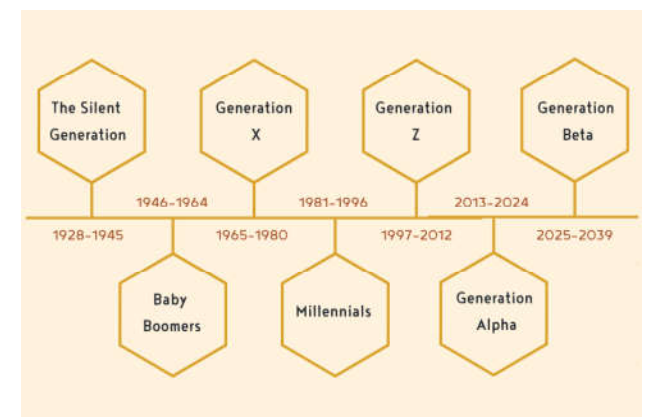
Historic population by age cohort, Marquette County

birth rate means that there will be fewer working-age residents to replace retirees in the workforce, fund public services through taxes, and provide services and care for seniors.

Population Distribution

Marquette County is home to three incorporated cities (Ishpeming, Marquette, and Negaunee) and 19 townships. The dot density map shows population distribution throughout Marquette County.

Generational names timeline



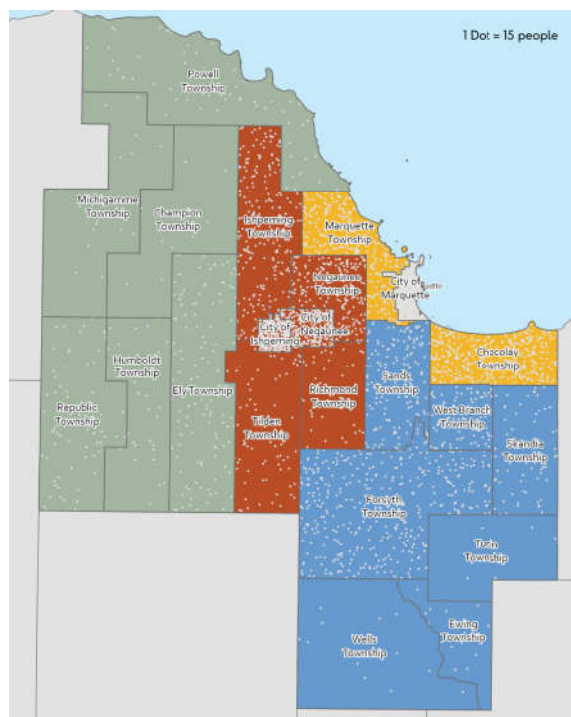
Census Bureau population estimates for Marquette City and Marquette County include the prison population. Marquette County is home to the Marquette Branch Prison, a [Level I and Level V state prison](#) which housed 582 inmates as of March 2026. While these inmates are not able to vote, they are included in Census Bureau population estimates for the City of Marquette and Marquette County, including both the decennial Census and the annual American Community Survey.



country, Marquette County has also lost hundreds of jobs to big-box retail closures of Shopko, Best Buy, and many anchor businesses at the Westwood Mall in Marquette. Additional concerns lie ahead, as Marquette County remains vulnerable to long-term economic and demographic trends.



Population distribution, Marquette County



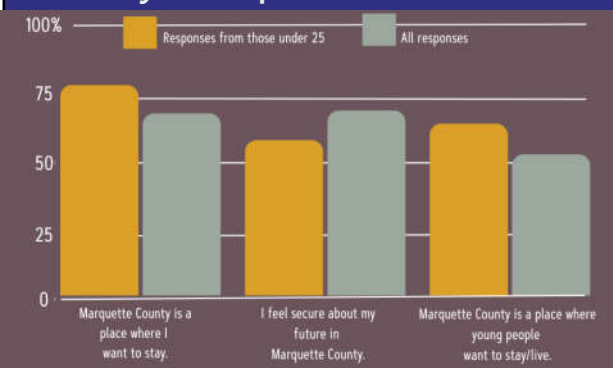
Overview of Economic Sectors

Marquette County's economy, while more diversified than other Upper Peninsula economies, is still largely concentrated in just a few industries, with government services (including public education), health care, and mining being the three most largest. Mining can be very volatile with its share of Marquette County GDP fluctuating between 8 and 34 percent over the past two decades. Manufacturing is an emerging industry with its slice of County GDP doubling in the past two decades to 5%.

Demographics and the Economy

Demographic trends represent the greatest current threat to Marquette County's economic well-being, as Marquette County's economic future is intimately tied to its demographics. Three of the County's major employers - Northern Michigan University, public school districts, and UPHS Marquette - are directly affected by changes in the age structure of the local population. Attracting new residents and retaining young people who grow up here or come here to get an education will be crucial to Marquette County's long-term economic prosperity over the next twenty years.

Survey Snapshot



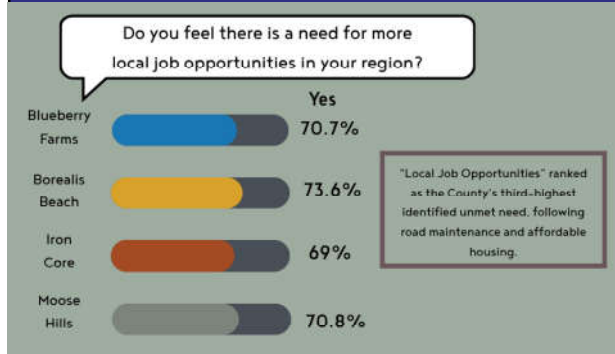
“Young people WANT to live here, but they are increasingly struggling to do so – too expensive and too few job opportunities”
-Borealis Beach

Marquette County GDP was stagnant and even slightly decreasing during the 2010s. However, from 2020 to 2024, total GDP went up 30%, and, during that same period of time, inflation adjusted GDP increased by 5.0%.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, workers in Marquette County earned \$3.5 billion in **personal income** in 2024, and that same year Marquette County's total gross domestic product (GDP) was \$3.6 billion.



Survey Snapshot



"Encouraging mining and logging are very important"
-Moose Hills



Mining

Mining has long been a mainstay of the Marquette County economy. Its impact on the county, while still significant, has diminished over time.

Until recently, Cleveland-Cliffs Inc. operated two iron ore mines in Marquette County, the Empire Mine and the Tilden Mine. These open-pit mines represent a change from the historic underground mines that once could be found throughout the Marquette Iron Range. [The Empire Mine](#) in Richmond Township employed more than 400 workers and had an annual capacity of 5.5 million tons in 2010, but just a few years later, profitable iron ore reserves had been depleted and the mine was closed in 2016. In contrast, the Tilden Mine, located nearby in Tilden Township, employs nearly 1,000 workers, has an annual capacity of 8 million tons of iron, and [proven/probable reserves of 462 million tons](#) which are estimated to last for [at least another 25 years](#). [The Eagle Mine](#), opened in 2014 and located in Michigamme Township, has 470 full-time employees. More than 80% of direct hire employees

at Eagle Mine are local hires. In 2026, Eagle Mine and the Humboldt Mill were sold by Lundin Mining to Talon Metals for [approximately \\$127.0 million in stock](#). One of the goals that Talon has stated is to [materially extend the life of Eagle Mine](#). Eagle Mine has also partnered with [Revex Technologies](#) to re-process and obtain new critical minerals from previous and future mine tailings. In March 2025, Revex Technologies received a \$145 million grant from the Department of Energy.

The [Humboldt Mill](#), a \$275 million facility on a historic brownfield site, processes 2,000 tons of nickel and copper ore per day. The Humboldt Mill could survive the closure of the Eagle Mine, as it could serve multiple mines at once and process various kinds of ores, although it's long-term future is still far from certain.

The mining industry has seen both successes and struggles over the past decade, as exemplified by the closure of the Empire Mine and the projected long-term profitability of the Tilden Mine. The future of the Eagle Mine, and sulfide mining in general, remains both uncertain and controversial – in 2019, the first nickel and copper ore from the Eagle East ore body was mined, extending the life of the Eagle Mine, but the long-term viability and impacts of the Eagle Mine remain unclear. The eventual closure of the Eagle Mine will have major negative impacts on local residents, businesses, and municipal budgets that have come to rely on jobs, income, and tax revenue from that mine over more than a decade of operations. The mine is currently cross training their existing workforce with the goal of giving each employee a broader skill set that will make them more employable. However, that employment may be locally, regionally, or nationally.

Iron-ore mining and beneficiation is the major industry

in Marquette County. Substantial amounts of the high-grade, easily accessible, direct-shipping ore have been reduced by various methods of underground mining. Attractive reserves of these ores do exist in areas such as Richmond Township, where occurrences can be found at depths of 1000 feet. Currently, there is one active underground mining operation located within Marquette County. Prior to this, the last operating underground mine was the Mather "B" which closed in 1979. One open-pit mine is presently operating in the county (the Tilden), while another such mine (the Empire) closed in 2016. Open pit mining utilizes vast amounts of water and land resources. Iron ore mining is sensitive to the demand for steel, and fluctuations in the steel industry have historically affected the local economy as a result.

"Many students ... cannot afford to live here even if they really want to" (affordable housing)."
- Current NMU Student



Education

Education is a critical part of Marquette County's economy, and it is strongly tied to demographics.

Without a major influx of young families, it seems that K-12 school enrollments will continue to decline in the area. Most school districts in Marquette County have already struggled with declining enrollment or are heavily reliant on school of choice. It is imperative that the County attract and retain young residents. In addition to Northern Michigan University, which is a major employer and source of population and economic growth for Marquette County, the county is also home to six public K-12 school districts and two public K- 8 districts. In addition, Turin, Ewing, and Wells Townships send many of their K-12 students to the Mid-Peninsula and Escanaba districts in

Delta County, and a small number of students still attend local charter or parochial schools in Marquette. Finally, another important component of the local educational system is the network of local public libraries which exist in several communities in Marquette County, most notably Peter White Public Library in Marquette.

According to the 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, approximately 2,000 Marquette County residents are employed in "Educational instruction and library occupations." However, these figures also do not encompass all employees of educational institutions in Marquette County – for example, administrators, bus drivers, janitors, IT, security/law enforcement, etc. would not be included in these estimates.



Health Care

The health care industry is a large employer in Marquette County. Major employers include UPHS Marquette, UPHS-Bell Hospital in Ishpeming, and U.P. Home Health and Hospice. UPHS Marquette employee approximately 1,800 employees with an additional 300 employed at UPHS Bell. Great Lakes Recovery Centers also provides a variety of substance use disorder and mental health treatment at seven locations in Marquette County, including two outpatient centers in Marquette and Negaunee, two adult residential facility in Marquette and Negaunee, an adolescent services center in Negaunee, a men's recovery house in Marquette, and a women's recovery house in

Negaunee. Since the 2012 purchase of the nonprofit Marquette General Hospital and Bell Memorial Hospital by Duke LifePoint, a for-profit Tennessee-based health care corporation, in 2012 and 2013, the Marquette County health system has been unified under the for-profit U.P. Health Systems (UPHS). In that time, a new, modern hospital campus has been built in south Marquette near US 41. However, since the creation of UPHS, there have been multiple strikes by the Michigan Nurses Association (MNA) and problems with physician retention. Having a more robust, diverse economy here would help with recruitment, because spouses need to work as well, not just health care providers.

Several biomedical companies also exist and are

Top Occupations & Key Employers by Planning Region

MOOSE HILLS REGION

OCCUPATION

Office and Admin. Support



13.8%

Production



11.9%

Health Care (all)



9.6%

Top occupation fields for civilian employed population age 16+ years

Key Employers: Eagle Mine (203), Wawonowin County Club (50), Jerzi's 41 (24), Republic-Michigamme Schools (22)

Key Employers: UPHS-Marquette (1,599), Northern Michigan University (1003), Upper Peninsula Medical Center (603), Marquette Area Public Schools (430), Walmart (392), County of Marquette (308)

BOREALIS BEACH REGION

OCCUPATION

Health Care (all)



12.3%

Food Prep and Serving



10.9%

Office and Admin. Support



10.6%

Top occupation fields for civilian employed population age 16+ years

IRON CORE REGION

OCCUPATION

Office and Admin. Support



12.4%

Health Care (all)



10%

Construction



7.8%

Top occupation fields for civilian employed population age 16+ years

Key Employers: Cleveland-Cliffs, Inc. (96), UPHS- Bell (366), Negaunee Public Schools (249), NICE Community Schools (165), Ishpeming Public Schools (128)

Key Employers: VanDamme Trucking (190), Envoy Air (160), Superior Extrusion (188), Gwinn Area Community Schools (165), Potlatch Deltic (140)

BLUEBERRY FARMS REGION

OCCUPATION

Health Care (all)



12.8%

Office & Admin. Support



9.8%

Sales



9.2%

Top occupation fields for civilian employed population age 16+ years

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2024 American Community Survey, Selected Economic Characteristics



UPHS-Marquette Specialties

- Only NICU in the U.P.
- Cardiac catheterization lab – first in state of Michigan 8 years ago.
- Only open-heart surgery provider in the U.P.
- Has a family medicine residency program affiliated with Michigan State University.
- Guardian Flight provides third-party medical helicopter service



expanding in Marquette County. [Able Medical](#) completed a new 30,000 square foot site in the City of Marquette. It will expand its workforce by 40 to fill the new space. [Exalta](#) completed a merger to become a part of a global company. [Mount Mfg](#) is moving into a new, larger facility in Marquette Township.

Rural hospitals continue to struggle and face high risks of closure across the state and the country, and UPHS will not necessarily be immune to these struggles in the long run. Federal budget cuts are [projected to cost Michigan hospitals \\$6 billion over the next 10 years](#). To alleviate this change the federal government created a \$50 billion grant program for rural hospitals. Budget fluctuations and pushes for national health care reform will remain a

topic of debate over the next 20 years.



Forestry

Forestry has a long history in Marquette County, and like mining, had an impact on the settlement of the area. There are many family-owned logging companies throughout the Upper Peninsula. However, loggers also face the difficulty of increased fragmentation of land ownership. Permission must often be received from multiple owners in order to log an area that was once held by one large landowner. The individual landowners may have different land management strategies from one another, making it difficult to implement sustainable and consistent forestry practices.

The industrial side of forestry in Marquette County is concentrated at KI Sawyer, where [Rayonier operates a sawmill](#). PotlatchDeltic previously managed the mill before a [merger of equals in January 2026](#) with Rayonier. The new combined company will [retain the name of Rayonier](#) and has the [second greatest timber acreage in the US](#). The mill is one of the largest lumber production facilities in North America and employs 170 workers, making it one of the largest private-sector employers in Marquette County outside of the mining, health care, and public sectors.



Agriculture

Agriculture in Marquette County is concentrated in the Skandia-West Branch area, Wells Township, and Ewing Township – this is part of why this region is referred to as Blueberry Farms. The soils of

much of the rest of the county are generally not well-suited to farming, although some farms have existed in other regions. [Jilbert's Dairy](#) still operates in Marquette, although it is now owned by Dairy Farmers of America (the largest dairy cooperative in the U.S.). There has been a large downward trend of dairy producers in the region. Although many farmers are currently struggling in the U.S. due to a variety of economic factors, agriculture could still be a source of future growth and economic opportunity in Marquette County.

According to the ACS 2024 5-Year Estimates, 113 Marquette County residents were employed in "Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations." While this may seem low at first (and the margins of error for ACS data can be quite large), it can be largely explained by two factors: 1) the heavy automation and mechanization of these occupations compared to the past, and 2) the fact that most farms in Marquette County are very small, generate very little income, and are operated by part-time farmers. In fact, according to the [2022 USDA Marquette County Profile](#), there were 212 farms in Marquette County in 2022, but 41% of these were less than 50 acres and only 17 were more than 500 acres. According to the same USDA data, 39% of farms grossed less than \$2,500 in sales in 2022 and 18% grossed over \$25,000, while just 5 farms in the entire county grossed more than \$100,000. Most farms in Marquette County today are better described as "hobby" or "sustenance" farms, providing some supplemental income but not serving as the primary source of income for most of their owners. However, farming is actually a growing occupation in Marquette County, with the number of farms increasing by 18% and the land in farms increasing by 15% since 2017.

National trends in organic agriculture have increased drastically, along with increasing consumer awareness.



These trends have been a catalyst for an increase in small/ local farming. Locally, the [Marquette Food Co-op](#) has created a market for farmers to sell to. The creation and expansion of farmers markets has also provided more of a means for farmers to get exposure and sell products.



Tourism

Tourism has been a significant part of Marquette County's economy for nearly a century. Its beautiful and

enduring natural assets, coupled with the expansion of recreational assets such as the extensive local motorized and non-motorized trail networks, the supply of local hotel rooms and campsites, and revitalized downtown districts from Michigamme to Ishpeming to Marquette have led to dramatic growth in the local tourism industry over the past decade. This has not come without costs, with many local natural assets being overused, increased traffic congestion during the tourist season, rising housing prices, and at-times controversial new developments near inland lakes and the Lake Superior shoreline. The Respect Marquette County campaign brings together a variety of community partners to promote respect for the local culture and natural resources of Marquette County.

Short-term rental services, such as Vrbo and Airbnb, have also had mixed impacts on communities in Marquette County, providing accommodations for tourists and a source of supplemental income for some families, while also leading to increased real estate speculation and the removal of long-term rental units from the market. This can contribute to rising housing prices and gentrification, most notably in the Boreal Beach region. While some local communities, like the City of Marquette, have implemented innovative regulations to limit the potential negative impacts of short-term rentals, others have taken

a more hands-off approach. However, all communities in Marquette County should make proactive decisions about how they will deal with short-term rentals in the coming years.

The total estimated amount of money spent by visitors in Marquette County for 2023 was [\\$268.3 million](#). Tourism directly supported 2,650 Marquette County jobs and indirectly supported another 1,244 jobs. The 2024

Tourism Tax

Tourists visiting Marquette County utilize the infrastructure, local government services, and public nature areas but do not pay the property taxes used to pay for them. This observation has led to a call for a tourism or hotel tax to be assessed on visitors to close this funding gap. State law currently allows for a [hotel tax of up to 5% but the resulting revenue can only be used for tourism promotion](#). These fees raise a substantial amount of money with the [Traverse City Convention and Visitors Bureau](#) (Traverse City Tourism) taking in \$9,893,381 from 2025 hotel room assessments, and the [Marquette County Convention and Visitors Bureau](#) (Travel Marquette) collecting \$2,125,652 in 2025 hotel room assessments. Opponents of the hotel tax argue that tourism and their spending brings money into the County and therefore indirectly contributes to supporting services and infrastructure. The debate over hotel taxes will continue and is a topic the County should keep an eye on. Any change from the current status quo would require action by the State Legislature.

American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates said 3,956 Marquette County workers (12.3% of the total workforce) were employed in "Arts, entertainment, and recreation,

and accommodation and food services." These tourism-dependent industries actually employed more Marquette County workers than agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining, and construction combined. However, it should be noted that median earnings are generally significantly lower in these tourism-dependent industries than in heavy industries like mining, construction, manufacturing, etc. The number of jobs created by a particular industry should not be the only consideration for economic development– the quality of those jobs must also be considered.

Tourism is an important and growing industry in Marquette County, but it is not an economic "silver bullet" that will solve all of the County's economic challenges over the next 20 years.



Construction

As Marquette County has recovered from the Great Recession over the past decade, the local construction industry has experienced a revitalization. Marquette County has added construction jobs over the past decade and a half – according to the American Community Survey, in 2010 there were 1,664 people employed in the construction industry in Marquette County (5.3% of the entire workforce), but by 2024 this number had risen to 1,943 jobs (6.0% of the entire workforce), a net increase of nearly 300 jobs.

One contributing factor to the growth of the local construction industry is the fact that many major developments have taken place in Marquette County in recent years, including the \$30 million Liberty Way project in Marquette (2016), the \$16 million Grandview Marquette orphanage renovation (2017), the \$300 million

UPHS-Marquette hospital (2018), the \$19.2 million One Marquette Place (2019), the \$6 million Jasperlite Senior Living project in downtown Ishpeming (2021), the \$27.5 million Hemlock Park projects (2025), the \$15 million Renovare housing development (2026) and the \$4.8 million 401 W Washington St project (2026).

There has been investment into training resources for the trades. The [Carpenters & Millwrights Local 1510](#) opened a Union Skilled Training center in Negaunee Township in 2020. The [Iron Workers Local #8](#) opened a training center in Harvey in 2024 and received \$1 million for equipment in 2026.



Retail Trade

According to the 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, retail trade has 4,214 employees (13.1% of the total workforce). However, the retail trades are not a particularly well-paying industry – for full-time, year-round employees, “Sales and related occupations” paid only about \$44,468 per year, just 85% of Marquette County’s median annual income across all occupations and far less than most other major occupations in the County.

Marquette County’s Labor Force

From 2000-2009, Marquette County’s labor force

expanded by 6.6% and the county experienced steady job growth. Although the impacts of the Great Recession were delayed by about a year in Marquette County, by late 2009 a major economic decline had begun, with the labor force shrinking by 11.3% from 2009-2020. The labor force bounced back from COVID and increased by 4.2% from 2020-2025.

Marquette County’s population in 2020 is significantly lower than its peak population in 1979, but the number of jobs has increased over the same period. One explanation for this apparent contradiction is the increasing participation of women in the workforce, with women joining the workforce in greater numbers over the past 60 years. In 2009, men had a slightly lower labor force participation rate than women in Marquette County for

Labor Force Statistics by Planning Region

MOOSE HILLS REGION

Employment Rate	46.1%
Avg. Median Household Income	\$72,591
Lowest: Powell Twp	\$48,804
Highest: Ely Twp	\$100,104
Poverty Rate	9.1%

BOREALIS BEACH REGION

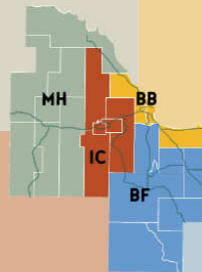
Employment Rate	58.8%
Avg. Median Household Income	\$61,909
Lowest: Marquette city	\$55,613
Highest: Chocolay Twp	\$87,167
Poverty Rate	18.4%

IRON CORE REGION

Employment Rate	58.1%
Avg. Median Household Income	\$73,322
Lowest: Ishpeming City	\$52,754
Highest: Negaunee Twp	\$97,955
Poverty Rate	11.7%

BLUEBERRY FARMS REGION

Employment Rate	53.2%
Avg. Median Household Income	\$68,388
Lowest: Wells Twp	\$58,438
Highest: Sands Twp	\$87,443
Poverty Rate	10.1%





the first time ever. Some issues that will be important over the next 20 years include child care accessibility and affordability, family leave policies, and gender pay equity. In order to provide a more skilled workforce and increase the overall labor force, a heavy focus must be placed on improving educational opportunities and attracting new residents over the next 20 years.

Emerging Local Industries

Hope for Marquette County's economic future can be seen in strengthening its position as the regional center. Regional institutions like Northern Michigan University and UPHS Marquette are major employers and sources of economic growth and potential. Marquette also has the potential to become a regional center in the following industries:



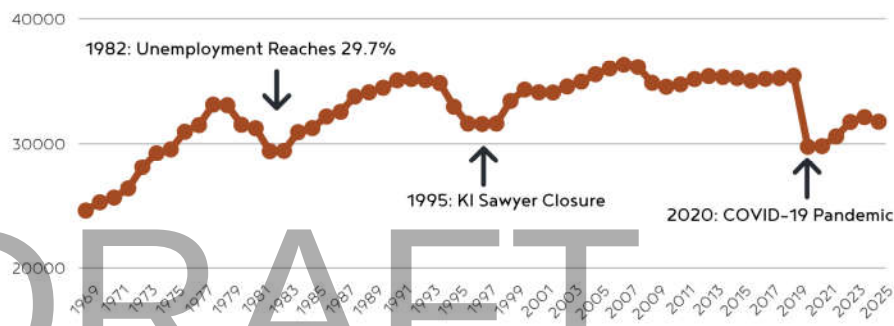
"Renewable Energy" is the second most desired type of new development among County residents.

Energy

Hundreds of megawatts of new energy generation and storage capacity, primarily

"Lean into a new industry that can attract higher paying jobs and recruit more health professionals." - Boreal's Beach

Jobs in Marquette County



in the form of utility-scale solar, is anticipated in the next few years. Low-carbon energy generation is a very promising source of future growth for the area.



Materials Management

In 2020, the Marquette County Solid Waste Management Authority (MCSWMA) upgraded its [recycling facility](#). This facility should increase the County recycling rate, and extend the life of the landfill. The goal of the facility is to attract recyclables from other counties and municipalities.

[Partridge Creek Compost](#) (PPC) offers residential compost collection for the City of Marquette, City of Negaunee, City of Ishpeming, Trowbridge Park, and Harvey. It also offers commercial compost collection in the cities of Marquette, Negaunee, and Ishpeming. The PPC compost site in Ishpeming was the first, fully permitted compost facility under Part 115, the updated state law for materials management.

The state of Michigan, through its [Materials Management Plans](#), is focused on increasing recycling and composting. This is a potential area of growth in Marquette County over the next 20 years.



Technology

Computer science is growing in popularity as a major at NMU in recent. In 2019, NMU launched the [Upper Peninsula Cybersecurity Institute](#) to create a cybersecurity education and industry hub in

Marquette. The [Marquette SmartZone](#) is also a unique community organization that helps to "facilitate the commercialization of tech and tech-enabled ideas that come from the inventors, innovators, and researchers of the Marquette community. [Here are some of the companies that they have supported:](#)

[Syncurrent](#)- an AI tool that organizes funding opportunities for local and tribal governments.

[Authsnap](#)- a healthcare technology company that streamlines the appeals process for health insurance claim denials.

[SwimSmart](#)- a beach safety company that has created new beachfront safety towers.

[Invivus Technologies](#)- created Moldmap which analyzes indoor air quality for hotels.

In the coming years, increased skills-based tech education, the growth of more local tech startups, and high-speed broadband internet with upload and download speeds of 1 Gbps or more could all help Marquette County become a major regional tech industry hub. The growth of AI has and will continue to make the technology field an area of rapid development and change over the next 20 years.



Aerospace

An emerging Marquette based aerospace company is [Kall-Morris Inc.](#) Two of their co-founders were named in the [2025 Forbes 30 Under 30 in the category of Transportation & Mobility](#). The company works on the collection of space debris and satellites at the end of their life. A prototype of their technology has been [tested at the International Space Station](#).



Craft Beer & Cannabis

Marquette County has already seen an explosion in the craft beer and cannabis industries, and while growth may eventually level off, these industries are likely to continue to provide significant economic opportunities. Marquette County was home to at least 10 microbreweries in 2026.

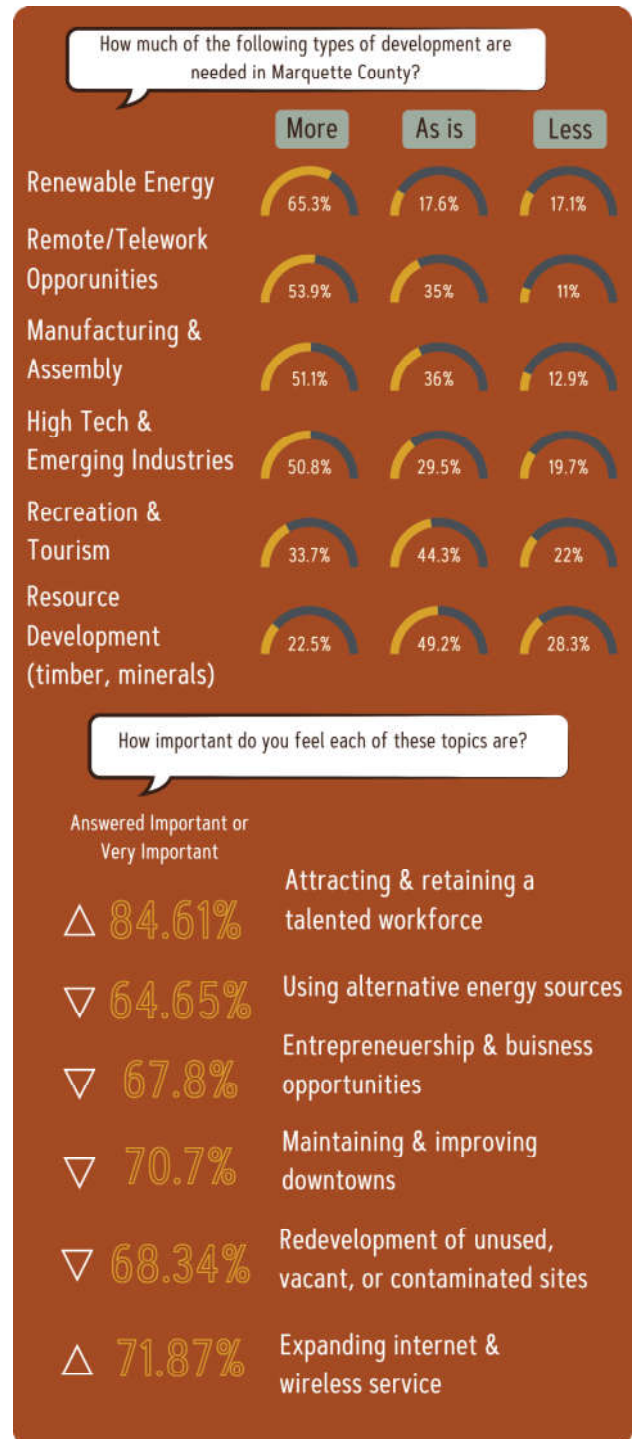
As for cannabis, after the legalization of recreational adult-use marijuana in Michigan in 2018 and the rollout of statewide regulations and guidelines in 2019, various cannabis-related businesses have sprung up. In 2025, there were [13 cannabis businesses in operation in the County](#). The state marijuana tax has become a significant source of revenue for local governments. Marquette County received \$702,222.30 in 2026 for 2025 licenses which is a bit down from the \$815,201.24 received in 2025. The recently approved budget for State of Michigan added a new “[Pot for Potholes](#)” tax on marijuana to fund road repairs. The tax is a 24% wholesale tax and is predicted to raise \$420 million a year. The industry argues this will increase prices for consumers and reduce growth for the industry. This new tax along with continuing [efforts to legalize marijuana in Wisconsin](#) are important factors to watch for the Marquette County marijuana industry. In 2019, NMU launched an extremely popular [Medicinal Plant Chemistry program](#), “the first 4-year undergraduate degree program of its kind designed to prepare students for success in the emerging industries relating to medicinal plant production, analysis, and distribution.”

enhances opportunities for economic growth. Marquette County has only 22% of the Upper Peninsula’s population, but MSRA accounts for 30% of the airline passenger traffic in the region. MSRA has also attracted considerable industry to the region, creating an estimated employment impact of 3,500 jobs.

Public Health

According to the CDC, “public health is concerned with protecting the health of entire populations” which “can be as small as a local neighborhood, or as big as an entire country or region of the world.” The [Marquette County Health Department \(MCHD\)](#) is the local state-mandated public health authority in Marquette County – their mission is “preventing disease, promoting healthy lifestyles, and protecting the environment” in Marquette County. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the MCHD played a critical role in educating Marquette County residents, businesses, and institutions about public health measures and information, providing transparent public health data, and organizing a massive public vaccination effort.

The [2024 Upper Peninsula Community Health Needs Assessment](#) identified several long-range challenges for public health in Marquette County and the rest of the U.P. These include 1) learning the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2) adapting to the impact of an aging population, 3) recognizing the importance of prevention, and 4) reducing the correlation between health outcomes and socioeconomic status. Over the next two decades, the MCHD will continue to manage both public health emergencies like COVID-19 and long-term public health challenges.



Transportation

The access provided by Marquette Sawyer Regional Airport (MSRA)

Arts and Culture

Marquette County has a long history of arts and culture stretching back to the arrival of the first Indigenous peoples in the region. The land now known as Marquette County has been inhabited by the Anishinaabe people for many centuries, and their rich historical, cultural, and artistic traditions are still practiced by many Indigenous Marquette County residents today and continue to shape local artistic and cultural practices. Marquette County has been permanently inhabited by a wide variety of European settlers since the mid-19th century, with the influence of the Finnish, Italian, and various Scandinavian cultures continuing to have a major influence on local culture today.

Marquette County is home to many important artistic

and cultural events. Numerous visual and performing arts festivals are hosted in the County each year, particularly in the Marquette area. In fact, the City of Marquette has funded a Marquette Arts & Culture Center (MACC) located in the new [Future City Cultural Trailhead](#) building. In 2017 the [Marquette Public Art Commission](#) was established which has funded several notable works of public art in recent years. Projects have included the [Seven Grandfathers Teachings](#) sculpture located near the lower harbor ore dock, the [Elfin Skimmer Dragonfly](#) at the Lower Harbor Kids Cove playground entrance, and enhancements to the Cultural Trail. Maintenance of existing Public Art has been a priority of the over the last several years with the development of the City of Marquette [Public Art Policy](#) to guide maintenance of public artworks. Marquette has also hosted [Finn Fest USA](#), the annual national festival for Finnish Americans, in

1996, 2005, and 2008. A local [Italian Fest](#) is held annually in Ishpeming to celebrate Italian American culture. Historic downtown districts, and the many community events they host each year, are also vital parts of the local culture in Marquette, Negaunee, Ishpeming, Gwinn, and Michigamme. Finally, Marquette County has many public and private venues where both residents and visitors can enjoy outdoor recreation, sports, food, visual arts, and performing arts, all of which are important components of Marquette County's unique cultural identity.

Two cultural developments of note are the [Iron Ore Heritage Trail](#) (a 47-mile multi-use recreational and educational trail which extends from Republic to Marquette and explores the history and cultural impact of iron ore production in Marquette County), and the [Shoreline Cultural Trail](#), which opened in 2025 and is

Organization Name	Funding Sources	Type of Recreation	Municipalities
North Country Trail Assoc.	D, SP, G, F	H	Townships of Michigamme, Champion, Ishpeming, Marquette, & Chocoday; City of Marquette
Noquemanon Trail Network (NTN)	D, SP, G, F, M	MB, TR, XC, SN, H, C	Townships of Negaunee, Marquette, & Powell; City of Marquette
Range Area Mountain Bike Assoc. (RAM-BA)	D, SP, G, F	MB, TR, XC, SN, H	Townships of Ishpeming & Negaunee; Cities of Ishpeming & Negaunee
Iron Ore Heritage Trail Assoc. (IOHT)	D, G, T	B, R, XC, SN, H	Townships of Chocoday, Marquette, Negaunee, Ishpeming, Ely, Humboldt, & Republic; Cities of Marquette, Negaunee, & Ishpeming
Moose Country Snowmobile Club	M, F	S	Townships of Michigamme & Republic
Trenary Northern Trails	M, F	S	Townships of Skandia & Forsyth
Hiawatha Trails Inc.	M, F	S	Townships of Marquette & Forsyth
550 Snowmobile Club	M, F	S	Townships of Marquette, Powell, & Negaunee
UP Central Trails	M, F	S	Townships of Chocoday, Marquette, Ishpeming; City of Marquette



Key:

D= Donation
SP= Sponsorship
G= Grants
F= Fundraising
M= Membership Dues
T= Tax Millage
H= Hiking
MB= Mountain Biking

B= Biking
R= Running
TR= Trail Running
XC= Cross Country Skiing
S= Snowmobiling
SN= Snowshoeing
C= Camping



an educational trail focusing on storytelling of the unique history and culture of the area, with a particular emphasis on local Anishinaabe history and culture.

Recreation

Nearly all municipalities in Marquette County participate in recreation planning at the local level. Recreation areas often span over multiple jurisdictions. Recreation planning is largely influenced on meeting state requirements in order to be eligible to pursue state funding opportunities. As such regional coordination tends to be overlooked.

Long distance trails are difficult to establish and even harder to maintain properly without proper planning. It can be difficult to secure permanent easements of

private and public lands in order to build longer trails. Regional planning is vital in this process to ensure that adequate funding can be secured in the future, as well as appropriate easements and insurance to protect land owners provided by Michigan Act 451. Joint Cooperation with trail organizations through the joining municipalities can be a great asset to help maintain and preserve the trail. With regional planning, long distance trails can run through multiple municipalities and be successful, as with programs such as rails to trails that relies on regional transportation planning to help secure funding and to carry the joint vision of the trail into the future.

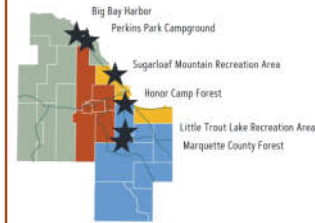
"having lots of parks and public access to beaches is so valuable, being able to safely walk and bike with my young children in our neighborhoods is important to me."
- Borealis Beach



Role of County Planning

Marquette County maintains a County Recreation Plan which is primarily focused on County-owned facilities – this Recreation Plan is updated every five years. County facilities draw recreation participants from throughout the County and beyond. As such it is necessary to widely gather public input.

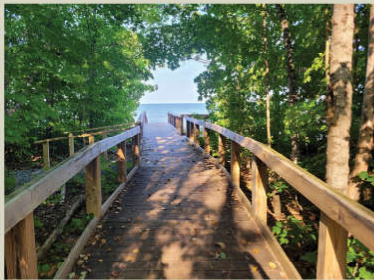
County owned Recreation Facilities



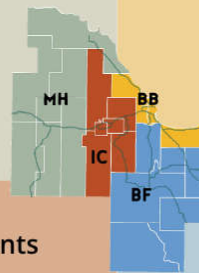
"Preserving recreational trails and green tracts are essential. Focused development and redevelopment (affordable residential and large commercial) in areas like KI" - Blueberry Farms

Parks & Recreation Improvements since 2021 by Planning Region

MOOSE HILLS REGION



Trail resurfacing & maintenance
Draver Park reconstruction and renovation
New trail signage & amenities



Presque Isle trail improvements
Bandshell upgrade
Beach access enhancements and shoreline restoration
Park facility upgrades

BOREALIS BEACH REGION



IRON CORE REGION



Iron Ore Heritage Trail improvements
Al Quaal park upgrades
Teal Lake recreation improvements
Trail connections & wayfinding

Little Trout Lake Park renovations and upgraded amenities
Silver Lead Creek Greenway creation
KISS Forest
Nordeen Park improvements

BLUEBERRY FARMS REGION



Funding for Marquette County parks is provided by the Marquette County Forest and Recreation Fund, which derives revenue from three sources: 1) timber sales in the County Forest, 2) user fees generated by campers at Perkins Park and boaters at the Big Bay Harbor of Refuge, and 3) grants. The County Board has delegated authority over the Forest and Recreation Fund to the Forestry Commission. Planning Division staff are responsible for day-to-day parks and recreation management.

The County of Marquette owns, operates, and maintains [five recreational facilities](#): Sugarloaf Mountain, Perkins Park, the Big Bay Harbor of Refuge, Little Trout Lake Park, and the Silver Lead Creek Greenway. The County also owns nearly 10,000 acres of multi-use forest land, with approximately 9,500 acres in the County Forest and 420 acres at the Honor Camp.

DRAFT

Explore more data, tools, and information at www.mqtcoplan.org

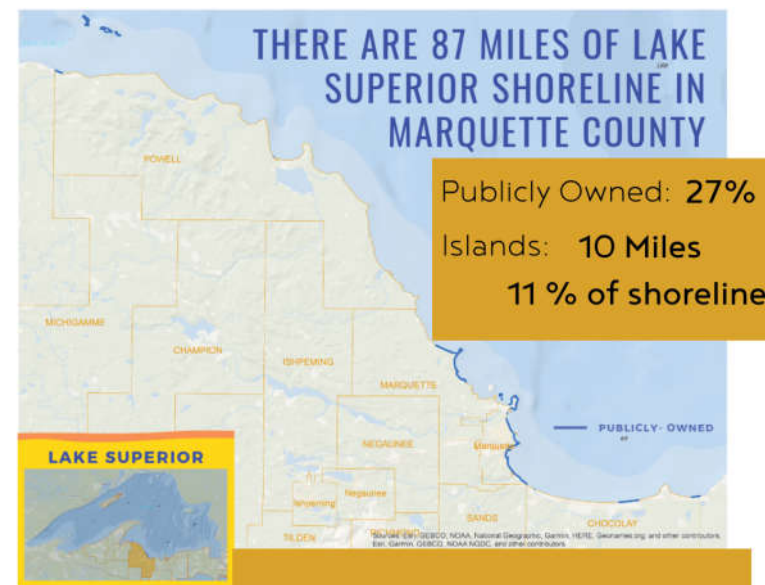


Environment & Natural Resources

Marquette County's diverse physical environment makes it unique among the 83 counties of Michigan. This uniqueness is first obvious from the county's size, shape, and location. Marquette County is the largest county in the state, containing some 1,873 square miles, well above the statewide average of 685 square miles. In addition, there are 87 miles (10 miles of which are islands) of Lake Superior shoreline along its northeast margin.

The county is situated in the transition zone where the ancient Precambrian crystalline rocks emerge from beneath the more recently deposited Paleozoic

sandstones and limestones of the Michigan Basin. This, coupled with as many as four occurrences of glaciation, created the mountainous landscape in the central and northern regions of the county and the rolling, forested glacial deposits to the south and east. As glaciers receded 8,000-10,000 years ago, scenic sharp cliffs and sandy beaches were left along the shoreline. Inland from the lakeshore, the glaciers deposited large tracts of sand plains and scoured out depressions that today form many lakes, wetlands and ponds. The result is a landscape that favors land and water-based forms of recreation, important components of the region's economy.



Natural Characteristics of Marquette County by Planning Regions

MOOSE HILLS REGION



The Moose Hills Region is home to many beautiful inland lakes and pristine woodlands and wetlands, and it boasts many miles of Lake Superior shoreline. Shown here is a Moose near the rolling hills and wetlands of Republic.

BOREALIS BEACH REGION



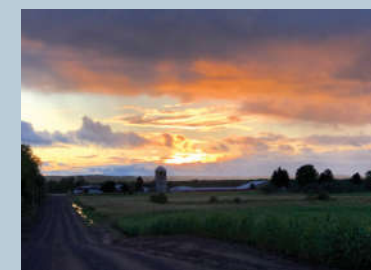
The Borealis Beach Region's most notable natural feature is many miles of Lake Superior shoreline, consisting of natural sand beaches and rock cliffs. Shown here is the Superior shoreline and Marquette Harbor Lighthouse in the city of

IRON CORE REGION



The Iron Core Region is best known for its mineral rich deposits, expansive bedrock, natural and manmade reservoirs. The region contains the tallest and deepest points in Michigan at the Tilden Mine (man-made). Shown here are the Teal Lake cliffs on

BLUEBERRY FARMS REGION



The Blueberry Farms Region houses the Sands Plains, acres of managed forestland, rivers, inland lakes, farms and wild blueberry patches. Shown here is a farm near Skandia.



Mining

Two distinct formations of iron-rich rock have been identified: the Marquette Iron Range, stretching west from Negaunee to Michigamme and then south to Republic, and the Gwinn Iron District, located in central Forsyth Township. Deposits of gold, silver, lead, nickel, copper, and zinc are found in the lower Precambrian greenstone which stretches from north of Ishpeming to Marquette and northwest to Baraga County in a "V" shape. Gold was historically mined from several mines in this deposit, including the Ropes, Michigan, Gold Lake, Superior, Peninsula, and Fire Center Mines. Proven reserves of copper mineralization occur in the Middle Precambrian kona dolomite interbeds which begin in the Marquette Mountain area and run west to Negaunee. Concentrations of uranium which have higher readings than background can be found in the Middle Precambrian granites and Michigamme slate.

Mining does have detrimental environmental effects which should be taken into consideration. The presence of former mining areas may have an adverse effect on land values because of stripping or tailings deposits left on the land surface. As larger tonnages of lower-grade ore are mined, correspondingly greater areas will be needed for tailing disposal areas. Mining operations may affect groundwater levels in the immediate vicinity of mines. When an operation ceases groundwater levels often rise, impacting adjacent residential areas by causing basement flooding.

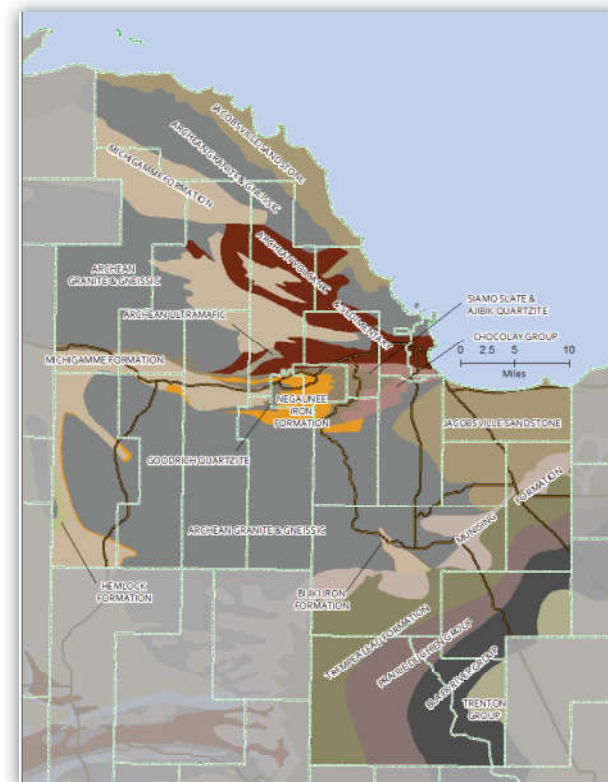
Roughly half of the County's watersheds drain north to Lake Superior, while the other half drain south to Lake Michigan. The climate and weather of Marquette County are heavily influenced by the forces of Lake Superior to its north. Warm, moist winter air from the open waters of Lake Superior can produce large amounts of lake-effect snow and extend the winter season - snow in May is not uncommon. In the summer months, Lake Superior helps keep much of the County relatively cool compared to inland areas.

Development in Marquette County has historically been resource-dependent and has occurred in nodes or centers of mining, lumbering, or transportation activity. Healthy natural systems, including forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and shorelines, provide ecosystem services for communities within Marquette County. These landscapes help reduce flooding, moderate air temperatures, improve water quality, reduce impacts of wildfires, support wildlife habitat, and provide recreation opportunities. Further development of Marquette County's valuable natural-resource base, along with the growth of new industries, will result in additional growth. Marquette County must recognize the problems and impacts that an increased population brings and take steps to conserve and use these important natural resources wisely. Separate planning and development decisions, made without regard for all elements of an ecosystem, can lead to devastating results.

Bedrock Geology

Bedrock can be defined as the solid material which comprises the earth's crust. Bedrock geology refers to the spatial distribution, thickness, and sequence of these rocks. Although much of the bedrock in Marquette County is buried beneath glacial drift, sufficient data exists from outcrop observations and drilling and mining records to illustrate the extent of various types of bedrock underlying the surface. Basically there are two groups of rock which form this mantle; Precambrian and Paleozoic. The figure to the right displays the types of bedrock in Marquette County.

Bedrock Geology of Marquette County



Bedrock Geology Types

PALEOZOIC	BLACK RIVER GROUP
	JACOBVILLE SANDSTONE
	MUNISING FORMATION
	PRAIRIE DU CHIEN GROUP
	SIAMO SLATE & AJIBIK QUARTZITE
	TREMPLEAU FORMATION
PRECAMBRIAN	ARCHEAN GRANITE & GNEISSIC
	ARCHEAN ULTRAMAFIC
	ARCHEAN VOLCANIC & SEDIMENTARY
	BIJIKI IRON FORMATION
	CHOCOLAY GROUP
	GOODRICH QUARTZITE
	HEMLOCK FORMATION
	MICHIGAMME FORMATION
	NEGAUNEE IRON FORMATION



Bedrock is fundamentally important to Marquette County in two ways: It serves as the source of groundwater for domestic and other purposes and contains considerable mineral deposits which form the “foundation” of the county’s present economic structure.

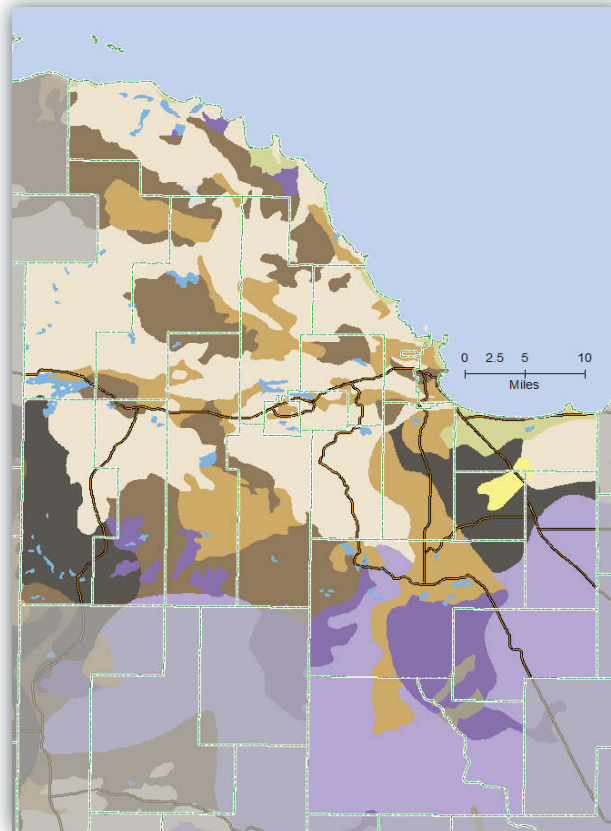
The hard crystalline Precambrian rock is a poor aquifer. In upland areas, most wells fail to provide enough water for domestic purposes. Almost total reliance is placed on supply from permeable glacial drift. In valleys having more than 20 feet of this drift, wells drilled into the underlying bedrock may yield enough water for domestic purposes. A few may yield more than 50 gallons per minute (gpm). Occasionally fissure water may be encountered as water passes into fractures or fragmented areas of rock. Oftentimes this water is not filtered as it enters the underlying rock directly from surface water, creating a potential health risk. Drilling more than 300 feet into this bedrock is usually futile. During 1976, a drought year, many wells failed in the central and western areas of the county underlain by this type of bedrock. The Paleozoic rocks are generally better producers of groundwater.

Surface Geology

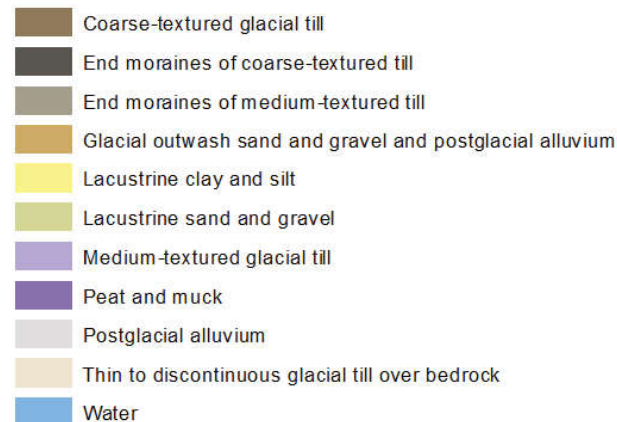
Surface geology deals with the composition, areal distribution, and thickness of the unconsolidated soil and rock materials lying above bedrock. Glacial deposits range in depth from zero to 500 feet. The figure to the right displays the types of superficial geology in Marquette County.

Surface geology has definite links with soils, vegetation, and land use. Soil development is often dependent upon the decomposition of the underlying parent material. Rock outcrops from glacial drift have made mineral

Surface Geology of Marquette County



Surface Geology Type



exploration and extraction economical. Communities have developed in many of these areas. Hilly moraines and glacial till areas have given rise to more fertile soils upon which some agriculture has thrived. Glacial deposits are also an important source of gravel.

Water infiltration and runoff are directly related to the permeability of the underlying surface materials. This factor governs the amount of water available for streams and the development and size of drainage patterns. Groundwater is also governed by the amount (thickness and area) and permeability of the sub-strata. Developed areas, which lie on top of impermeable Precambrian bedrock, rely totally on glacial drift for the supply and recharge of water systems. Outwash deposits, for example, are the best aquifers, as they have high permeability and can be quite extensive. Moraines and tills are generally poorer producers, containing impermeable clay.

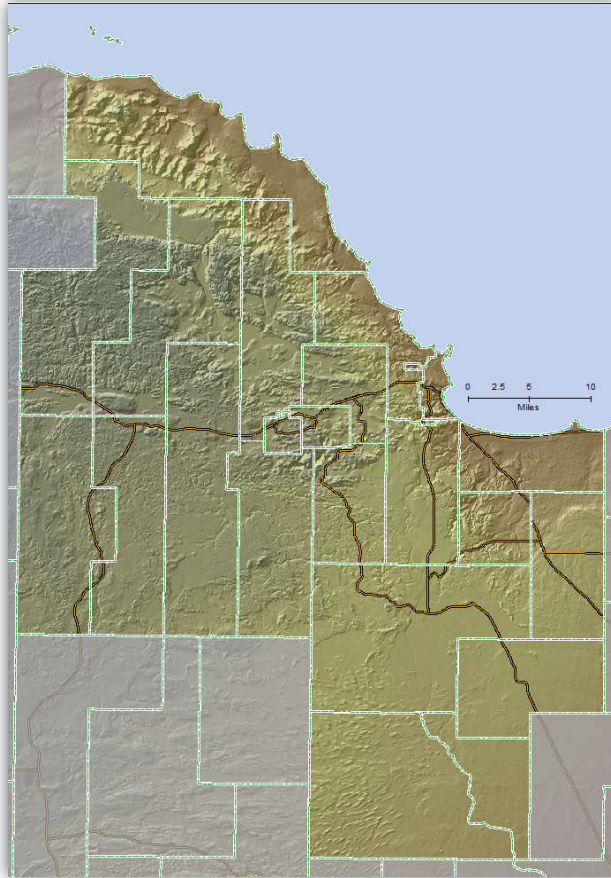
Areas of till/bedrock present many problems associated with development – shallow depth to bedrock, poor groundwater source, and inadequacy for wells and septic disposal being the primary factors. However, good potential exists for developing outwash plains as a possible groundwater source, and thicker deposits of gravel can be found in moraines and outwash areas which were near the ice front.

Terrain

Marquette County terrain varies from mountain slopes to swampy depressions. One of the “mountain” masses in the Upper Peninsula, the Huron Mountains, arch across the northern edge of the county. Basically, these comprise lake/knob topography. The majority of slopes in the area range from 20-45%. The remainder of the county varies

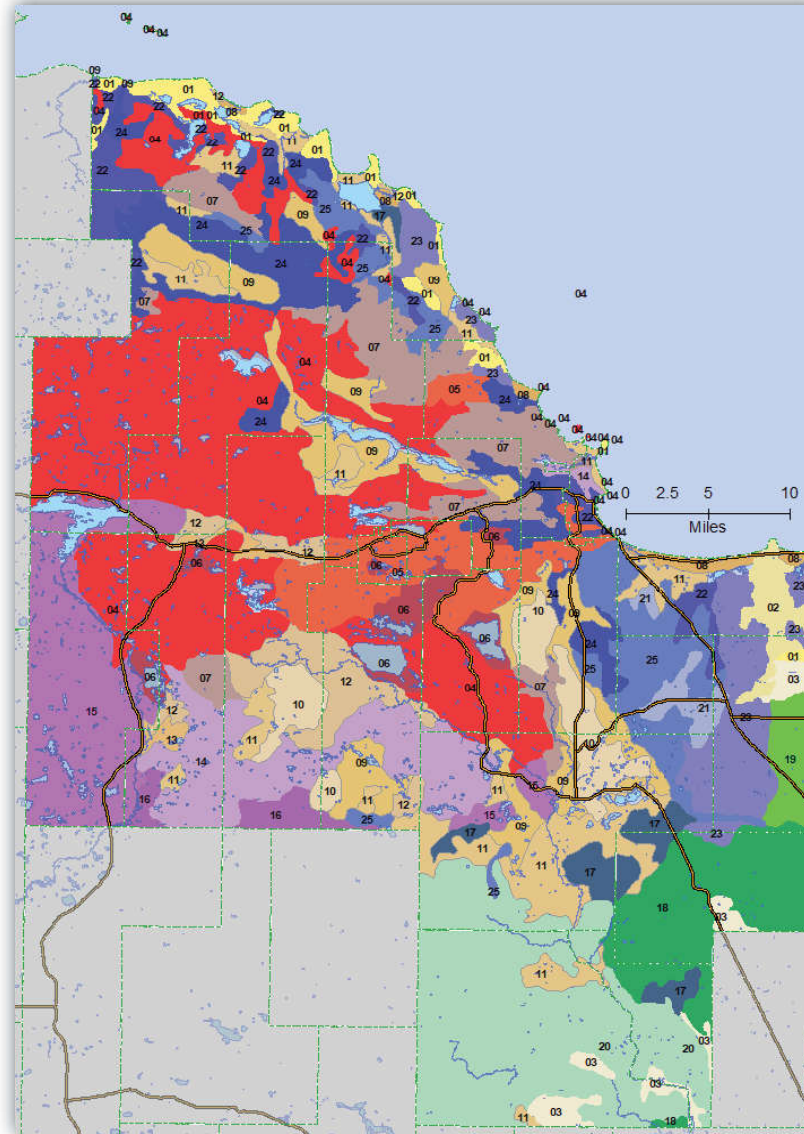


Terrain of Marquette County



from rolling in the west to almost level in the east, where there are many swampy depressions. Slopes are quite steep around kettle lakes in southern Republic, Humboldt, Tilden, and Forsyth Townships. There are also steep, dramatic cliffs, ravines and canyons along the Mulligan Plains, the Lake Superior shoreline, and along segments of the Yellow Dog and Chocolay Rivers. Several waterfalls also exist where masses of bedrock meet such features as outwash plains. Some of the highest topography (Greater than 1,800 feet in elevation) in Michigan is located in northwest Marquette County. Here relief ranges as high as 400 feet. Altitudes range from about 600 feet above sea

Soil Types of Marquette County

**Soils on Bedrock Benches**

- 1 Buckroe-Yalmar Association
- 2 Zeba-Jacobsville Association
- 3 Cunard-Nahma Association

Soils and Miscellaneous Areas on Bedrock-controlled Moraines

- 4 Keewaydin-Michigamme-Rock Outcrop Association
- 5 Schweitzer-Michigamme-Rock Outcrop Association
- 6 Pits-Dumps, Mine-Slickens Association
- 7 Kalkaska-Ishpeming-Rock Outcrop Association

Soils on Outwash Plains, Terraces, and Beach Ridges

- 8 Deer Park Association
- 9 Rubicon-Sayner Association
- 10 Grayling Association
- 11 Kalkaska-Carbondale-Deford Association
- 12 Pence Association
- 13 Sundog-Minocqua-Channing Association

Soils on Disintegration Moraines

- 14 Rubicon-Keweenaw Association
- 15 Goodman-Sundog-Greenwood Association
- 16 Sagola-Rubicon Association

Soils in Swamps on Lake Plains, Outwash Plains, and Moraines

- 17 Carbondale-Tawas Association

Soils on Ground Moraines

- 18 Shoepac-Ensley-Charlevoix Association
- 19 Shoepac-Carbondale Association
- 20 Emmet-Carbondale Association

Soils on Till-floored Lake Plains and Dissected Moraines

- 21 Munising-Fence-Paquin Association
- 22 Munising-Yalmer Association
- 23 Skanee-Munising-Gay Association
- 24 Keweenaw Kalkaska Waiska Association
- 25 Garlic-Alcona-Voelker Association

level along the Lake Superior shoreline to 1,900 feet in Section 31, T50N, R29W, in the northwest.

The varied landscape of Marquette County creates a wealth of opportunity for outdoor recreation, such as skiing, hiking, biking, and kayaking, for example.

Soils

There is a direct relationship between soil types and underlying glacial deposits. Soils overlying outwash are predominantly sand or sandy loam at the surface grading downward to sand and gravel. Soils that have formed over clay-rich glacial till and lacustrine deposits consist of silty loam to loamy clay. Thick, mucky peat soils overly organic deposits. Little or no soil has developed in areas

where bedrock is exposed, primarily due to the resistance to weathering and break-up of the rocks and the natural ability of materials to move downhill.

Awareness of soil characteristics should be a prerequisite to development. Pertinent soil characteristics include moisture and nutrient content for agriculture, bearing capacity for structures, permeability levels affecting drainage, erosion factors, and many other important considerations. Soils are major components of the ecosystem. Limitations can sometimes be overcome by careful applications of technology. Enforcement of the [Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Act](#) by the

"People come to get into the woods/lake to feel connected to something bigger." – Borealis Beach

Marquette County Building Codes Dept. will help ensure soil conservation in Marquette County.

Vegetation

The vegetation patterns that originally occupied Marquette County before 1840 have been altered considerably. Large stands of hardwood were harvested during the late 1800's for use in blast furnaces for making pig iron. Pure strands of pine and other species were cut to provide building materials and supports for underground mining. Both human-caused and natural wildfire followed extensive timber cutting and this drastically altered soil conditions which resulted in a change in the capability of many sites to produce the same species.



Tree Species

Listed in order of abundance:

Balsam Fir, Sugar Maple, Quaking Aspen, Red Maple, Cedar, Black Spruce, Paper Birch, Jack Pine, Black Ash, Hemlock, Big tooth Aspen, Yellow Birch, White Spruce, Black Cherry, Ironwood, White Pine, Tamarack, Red Oak, Red Pine, Pin cherry, Mountain Maple, Striped Maple, Basswood, Choke Cherry, Green Ash, Scotch Pine, American Elm, White Ash, Apple, Beech, Norway Spruce, River Birch, Black Maple, Silver Maple.



Common Animal Species

Beaver, Black Bear, Coyote, Eastern Chipmunk, Garter Snake, Green Snake, Pine Snake, Porcupine, Red Squirrel, Ruffed Grouse, Red Fox, Skunk, Snowshoe Hare, Spruce Grouse, White Tailed Deer, Woodcock

Common Birds (Over 300 observable species)

Herring Gull, Warbler, Waxwing, Canada Goose, Blackbird, Pine Siskin, Redpoll, Grackle, Starling, Junco, Grebe, Swallow, Grosbeak, Sparrow, Robin, Chickadee, Raven

County Forest Management Plan



Common Fish

Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Brook Trout, Brown Trout, Catfish, Carp/Suckers, Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, Crappie, Lake Trout, Steelhead Trout, Menominee, Northern Pike, Pink Salmon, Rainbow Trout, Smelt, Sunfish, Walleye, Whitefish, Yellow Perch

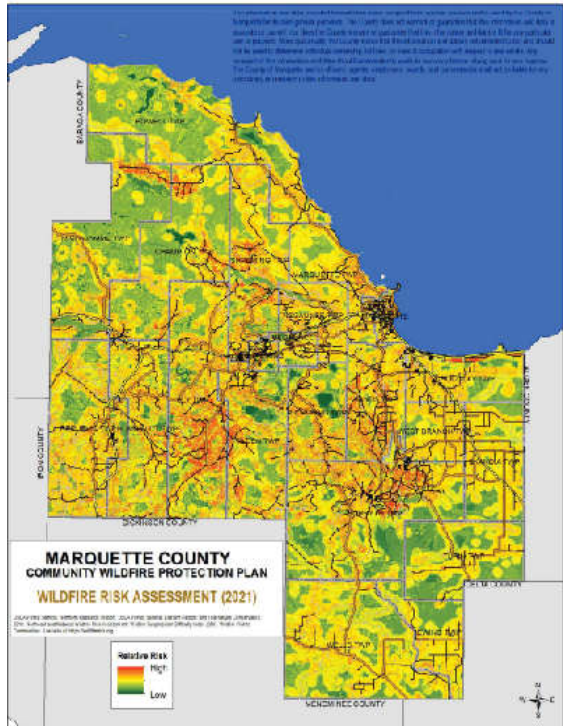
MDNR

9 in 10 (90.1%) County residents say that "Preserving open spaces, green spaces, and natural areas (e.g., woodlands, wetlands) is "Very Important or Important."

MSU Extension

Between 66-83% of the county is forested, while other vegetative cover consists of shrubs and grasses.

Marquette County has significant wildfire risk depending on type of vegetation, closeness to human activity that could start a fire, access to water resources and roads, and critical infrastructure risks. The Marquette County wildfire risk map is shown here. Please see the [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) for complete details.



Wildfire Risk Assessment

Wildlife

Historically, as land cover changes so do the types of animal species. Wildlife is highly dependent on the local ecosystem. Wildlife currently present in Marquette County can be found at Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) and key species are highlighted in the

"Protecting waterbodies (rivers, streams, lakes)" was rated the most important issue in Marquette County by survey respondents.

96.3% of County residents who say that protecting waterbodies is "Very Important or Important."

text boxes on the bottom of the previous page.

Water

One of the most valuable natural resources in Marquette County is the abundance of fresh water. Surface water is but one element of the hydrologic cycle. Major drainage basins and surface water features are shown in the figure to the right.

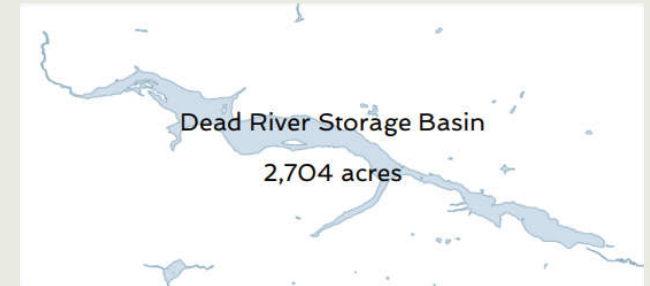
Surface Waters

The surface waters of Marquette County face development pressure. Other than residential lots, some of the main uses of streams, lakes and reservoirs are for recreation, agriculture, fishing, dilution of wastewater, hydroelectric power generation and iron ore processing.

Sedimentation

Large quantities of sediment allowed to enter surface water from land adjacent to water features create negative impacts. Transported sediments degrade water quality, destroy natural plant growth, increase nutrient levels, and decrease the carrying capacities of watercourses. The highest sediment yields in the county can be expected from exposed soil materials. Increased recreational use of lakes and streams, more development in general, and poor farming practices can greatly increase sediment yields.

Major Waterbodies and Rivers



Greenwood Reservoir
1,400 acres



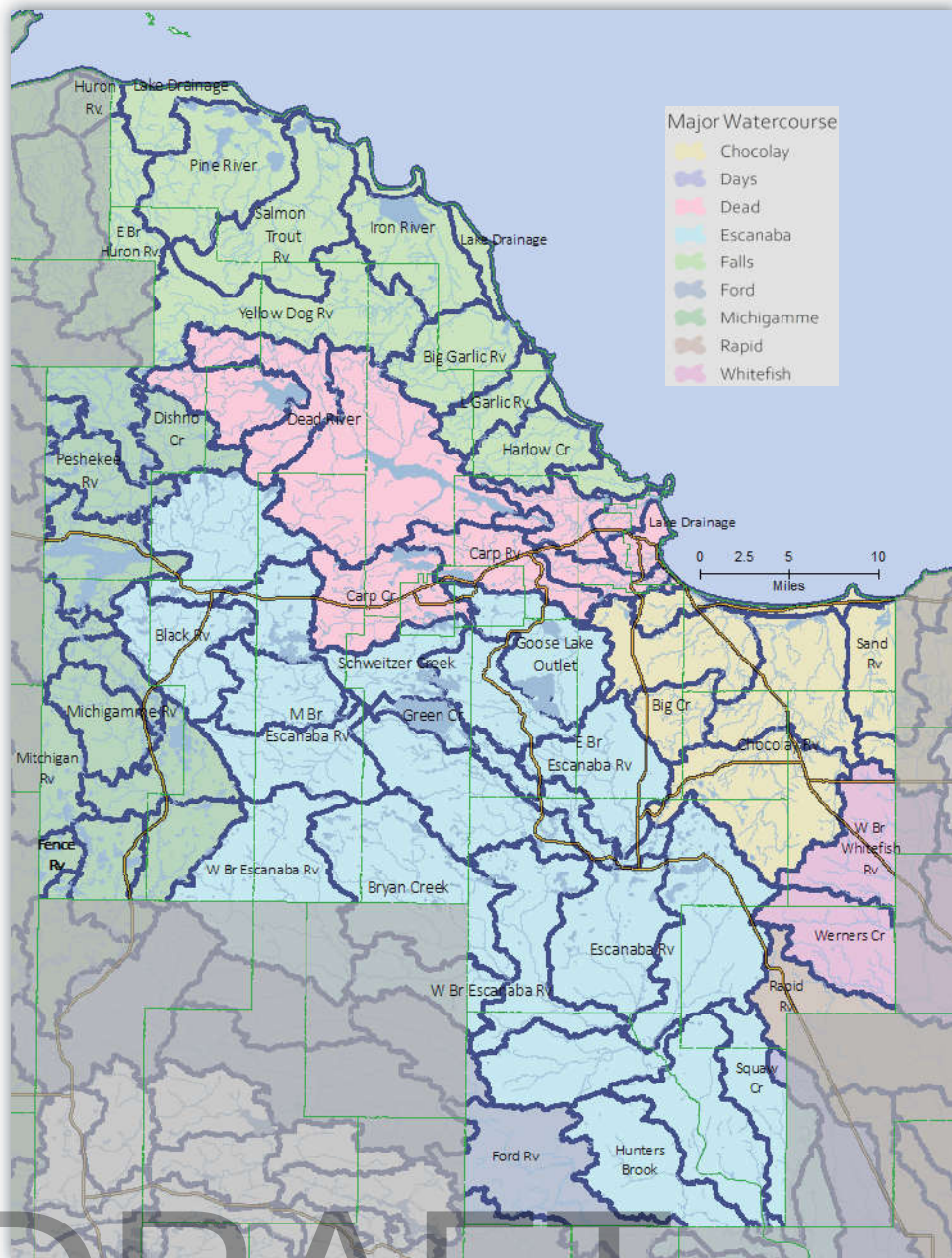
Silver Lake Basin
1,214 acres



Schweitzer's Reservoir
1,214 acres

River	Length (miles)	Drains To
Dead	43.2	Lake Superior
Carp	21.9	Lake Superior
Chocolay	21.7	Lake Superior
Michigamme	67.0	Lake Michigan
Escanaba	52.0	Lake Michigan

Watersheds of Marquette County



Erosion

Beach erosion, both natural and human-caused, has been an issue along the Lake Superior shore. Naturally occurring longshore currents along the Lake Superior shoreline continually transport material (sand). The process causes erosion along some areas of the coastline and can infill other areas. This process has implications in that it causes valuable recreational beach loss and necessitates dredging of harbors such as the Big Bay Harbor of Refuge and harbors in the City of Marquette.

Wetlands

Wetlands are areas of low, level or nearly level land where water is at or near the surface for all or part of the year. These areas are often described as marshes, swamps, or bogs. Production of food and cover for wildlife, natural filtration of surface water and surface water storage are some of the functions of these areas. Michigan's wetland statute, Part 303, Wetlands Protection, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended is intended to provide for the preservation, management, protection and use of wetlands. The Act requires permits for altering these areas.

Considerable urbanization along U.S. 41 Whetstone and Badger Creek watersheds in the City of Marquette and Marquette Township has resulted in excessive surface runoff which consequently affects low lying areas downstream.

Much of the development in Marquette County, which utilizes groundwater as a source for municipal or industrial use, is located on the Precambrian bedrock formations. Here glacial drift is the main source of subsurface water. Glacial outwash deposits in these areas appear to be the best source of potential groundwater. These deposits are up to 250 feet thick. Most wells in the northern and extreme southern part of the county are completed in bedrock at depths less than 100 feet with yields between 3 and 40 gallons per minute. Deeper wells are found in the central part of the county completed in glacial deposits and yield up to 200 gallons per minute. The static water table is near ground surface (0-50 feet) in most of the county. However, some areas, such as area outwash or hilly terrain underlain by bedrock, this figure may approach 100 or more feet.

Flood Plains

A flood plain is that area adjacent to rivers, streams, etc., that is subject to flooding under high water conditions. Flood plain development today is primarily related to the aesthetics

"Public recreation spaces should be prioritized. Natural environment should be preserved and our watersheds are our county's greatest asset."
- Blueberry Farms

associated with living near them.

Flood insurance is available only in communities that participate in the [National Flood Insurance Program \(NFIP\)](#). Participating communities must adopt and enforce a floodplain management ordinance that meets NFIP requirements. Marquette County jurisdictions [participating in the NFIP include](#): the townships of Chocolay, Ely, Ewing, Ishpeming, Marquette, Powell, Republic, Skandia and West Branch and the City of Marquette. More information about the NFIP can be found in the [Marquette County Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) or at the [Flood Insurance page on FEMA's website](#).

Watersheds

No matter what the reason for development on flood

plains, the inherent risk of loss to flooding exists. The attraction to these areas means some flood loss will take place and, therefore, one should plan to minimize the loss. The main methods by which this may be achieved are: engineering works (dams, dikes, etc.), regulation of development, and modification of structural requirements for construction. From another perspective, financial loss can be reduced through flood insurance.

Climate Change

Climate has a strong influence on all natural and cultural processes. It controls social patterns—recreation and tourism for example—and impacts agriculture as well as other types of land use activities. Energy consumption is tied to climatic conditions. Stream flow and availability of

The Marquette County Multi-Jurisdictional [Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) contains information related to environmental hazards, including recent storm events from the NOAA Storm Events Database.



groundwater are also affected.

The [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#) has examined the wide variety of changes associated with a warming planet and concluded that “human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming.” The

“Stop trying to move toward more technology, and start trying to build community, connection to ecology, increase biodiversity, and address climate change.”
– Iron Core

“We need to do more to address climate change, including moving forward with solar and wind energy.” – Borealis Beach

67% of County residents who agree that “Climate change is impacting Marquette County and should be considered when regulating future development.”

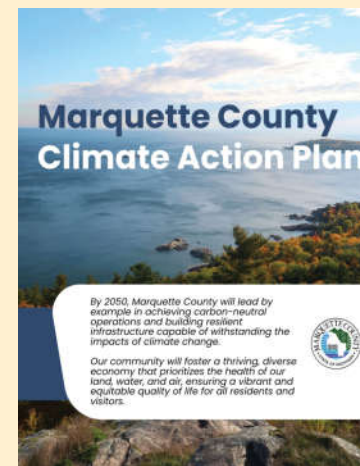
“Insulating against the effects of climate change. We need food gardens, greenhouses, etc. Ice storms will become more frequent and infrastructure needs to be ready. Need to encourage back up energy systems.”
– Blueberry Farms

Marquette County has 22 watersheds or drainage basins, nearly 4,000 miles of rivers & creeks, over 1,900 inland lakes, 87 miles of Lake Superior shoreline (islands account for 10 of these)

Climate Action Plan

In 2023, the Marquette County Board passed a resolution, “Supporting Measures to Respond to a Changing Climate”, establishing a goal of eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from County operations by 2050. This resolution led to the creation of the County's [Climate Action Plan \(CAP\)](#), a strategic roadmap to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prepare for climate impacts, and increase community resiliency throughout the County, which was approved by the County Board in 2025. The plan includes detailed climate trends and

data, an ASHRAE Level 2 Energy Audit, greenhouse gas emissions inventory, and a fleet review/EV analysis for County facilities, in alignment with the Michigan Healthy Climate Plan. Recommendations throughout this Master Plan complement and support the implementation of the CAP by encouraging sustainable growth, resilient infrastructure, responsible land use, and protection of the County's environment and natural resources.



effects of climate change on human enterprises and quality of life and on ecosystems vary widely across the Earth, necessitating place-based adaptation planning.

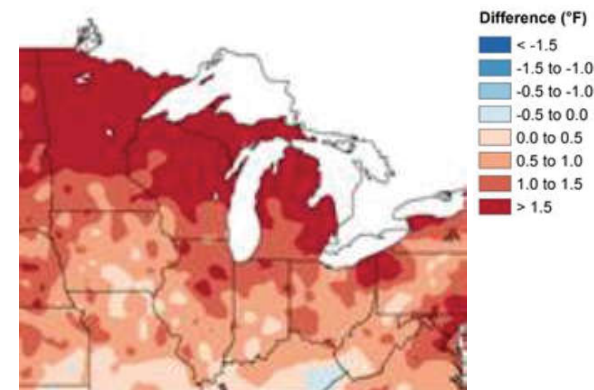
According to the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association \(NOAA\)](#), climate is determined by the long-term pattern of oceanic and atmospheric conditions at a location and is described by averages and extremes of temperature, precipitation, and other variables. Human-induced climate change is projected to continue, and it will accelerate significantly if global emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane continue to increase. The underlying cause of climate change is a warming planet stemming from an increase in greenhouse gases (e.g., carbon dioxide, methane, water vapor) that trap reflected solar radiation on Earth. According to a report from the World Research

Observed Climate Trends in Marquette County

- Shorter Winters
- Hot, Dry Summers
- Frequent, Intense Precipitation and Wind events
- Warming Lake Superior Temperature
- Lake Superior Water Level Fluctuation

Institute, this rise in temperature translates to higher ambient temperatures but also to complicated interactive effects such as increased storm frequency and intensity, droughts, melting of glaciers and ice caps, rise in sea levels, increases in plant pathogens and more. This build-up of greenhouse gases results primarily from human

activity, with the largest contributor being transportation for the nation and electricity generation using fossil fuels



Midwest temperature changes, 1986-2016 average compared to the 1901-1960 average

Lake Superior Water Levels

There are many factors that affect lake levels. The major factors are evaporation and precipitation. Evaporation is simply the liquid water in the lakes turning into a gas and entering the air. Evaporation is always happening, but it increases when the water is warmer than the air and decreases when the water is colder than the air. Precipitation is any liquid (rain) or solid (snow) water that falls from the air into the lakes. Runoff is water that falls within the drainage basin area of the Great Lakes and makes its way into the waters of the Great Lakes via running over land and into creeks and rivers.

Primary drivers of changing levels include weather patterns and evapotranspiration (evaporation and transpiration from plants, soil and water bodies) rates during the fall and winter seasons. Fall evapotranspiration rates are responsible for bringing lake levels down from

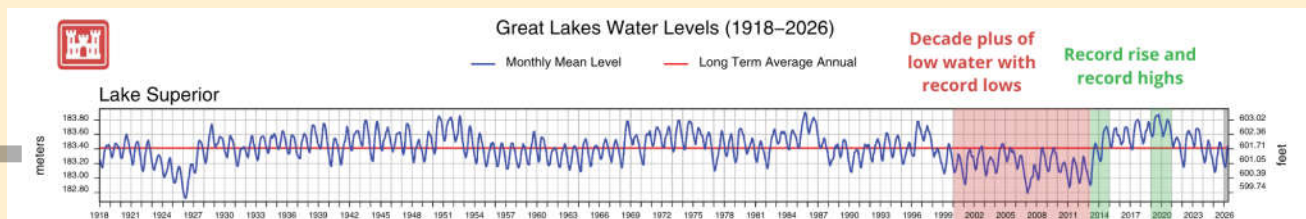
their peak in late summer, and are driven by the gradient between water and air temperatures.

Lake Superior's [maximum annual ice coverage](#) has been trending down since the 1970s. Less winter ice coverage means more open water and moisture can be picked up and turned into lake effect precipitation for downwind communities. It also means that more water evaporates from the surface of the lake further destabilizing lake water levels.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) data indicates that in 2007, Lake Superior had record low lake levels, but

in 2013 and 2014, the lake experienced a record two-year rise. In 2019, Lake Superior broke several monthly lake-level records. It is difficult to predict future lake levels – in early 2020, the USACE explained that the factors influencing lake levels, and levels of uncertainty around those factors, was larger than the USACE had ever seen.

The USACE reports water levels as a measure of the lake's elevation above sea level as a lake-wide average. Lake levels are a measure of still water and do not account for storms or flooding events, which are measured and monitored by other agencies such as NOAA.

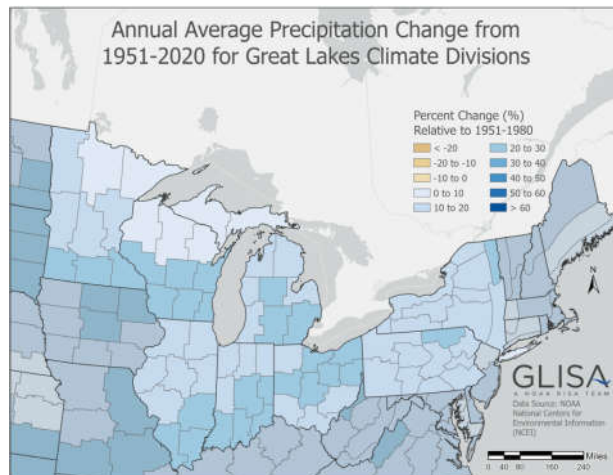


for Michigan.

Climate Data Trends

Air Temperature

Compared to average temperature levels of the early to mid-20th century, the Midwest region and Michigan have both warmed overall as shown by the Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments (GLISA) in the figure on the previous page. Marquette's climate has undergone similar though not completely identical changes. Residents are experiencing higher overall temperatures, with most dramatic increases occurring in the winter, as displayed in the table to the left.



Midwest annual total precipitation changes, 1991-2020 average compared to the 1901-1980 average

Precipitation

Unlike most of the Midwest region, Marquette has seen no change in the levels of annual precipitation as shown by GLISA, see the table and figure below.

According to the [2025 Assessment of Climate Change on the Great Lakes Report](#), precipitation rates have increased in the Great Lakes region nearly 15% since 1951.

Lake Superior Water Temperature

Lake Superior is the [fastest warming of the Great Lakes](#) while also warming three times faster than the global average. Lake Superior's surface temperature [has risen 3.5 degrees Celsius](#) in the past four decades resulting in a substantial decrease of total ice cover and duration of ice cover. One of the obvious reasons is the warming air temperatures. A direct effect of global warming, regions further north feel these changes the most due to the historic presence of snow and ice. However, that presence is slowly declining. These changes create challenges for coastal communities and stress aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems throughout the region.

Climate Change Effects and Impacts

Climate and weather events have contributed to damaging infrastructure and impacting human health. In Marquette the groups considered particularly sensitive include the aging, young children, those in poverty, the homeless, those without access to health care or other essential services, people with chronic diseases and mental stress, and socially isolated individuals and towns. The table to the right lists a subset of key socio-economic and health related indicators of vulnerability for Marquette County compared to the rest of the state.

Predicted Climate Change Impacts

- Infrastructure Damage
- Influx of "Climate Migrants", see Climate Migration
- Negative Mental Health Implications
- Loss of Native Plant Species
- Increased Spread of Diseases
- Elevated Risk of Chronic Health Conditions

Elevated Rates of Chronic Health Conditions	Marquette County	State of Michigan
Disability	29.1%	30.6%
Asthma (Still)	14.8%	11.9%
Asthma (Ever)	20.8%	17.3%
Obesity	25.6%	35.4%
Arthritis	28.7%	30.4%



Extreme Weather

The Great Lakes region has experienced more frequent and intense extreme weather events like high winds, heavy rains and periods of drought. Examples include: floods impacting roads and water treatment plants; wildfires cutting off power and access to services; cold snaps freezing pipes; stream and beach contamination from storm water runoff; and diminishing aquifer recharge leading to water shortage. High Lake Superior

Water Quality

Air Quality

Vector Borne Diseases

[illegible]

West Nile Virus (mosquito borne) and Lyme Disease (Tick borne).

Climate Migration

With Marquette County being more minimally impacted by climate change compared to other places nationally and around the earth, we expect to see an influx of people moving to the area, a “climate migration”. This means that Climate change will exasperate existing social issues we face, such as equitable housing and food access.

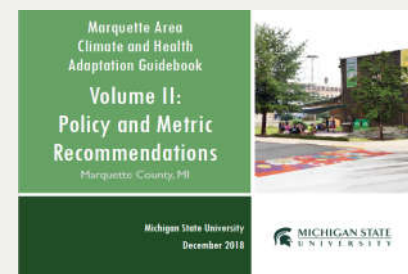
Marquette Area Climate and Health
Adaptation
(MACHAP) Guidebooks

The three MACHAP Guidebooks demonstrate how local adaptive capacity can be built to reduce or prevent the health impacts from climate change.

Following the CDC's Building Resilience Against Climate Effects framework (BRACE), MACHAP is building a climate resilient public health system by following three main principles:

- Climate change is recognized as a public health issue and is integrated into public health practice
- Public health agencies and stakeholder organizations have the tools, resources and activities to respond to climate change impacts within existing programs, and
- Vulnerable populations are explicitly considered in programs and policies addressing climate change impacts.

Click the image to learn more:



This section of the Plan addresses how our community, and its basic needs, interacts with the natural environment. Thoughtful use of land is essential in order to maintain and improve the characteristics that our community values the most.

Land Use

In order to coordinate existing and future land development and maximize the benefits of the land we use, it is necessary to be aware of factors affecting land use.

Factors Affecting Land Use

- public interest
- transportation
- land ownership
- land conservation
- land value
- natural determinants
- economics

"our beautiful lakeshore, Chocoy Bayou nature preserve, public lands, and waterways being accessible and abundant (IE don't develop more woodland, work with local groups to preserve... the UP land conservancy lands are amazing for communities)."

—Borealis Beach

Land Value

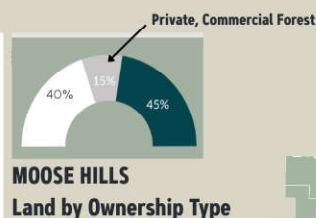
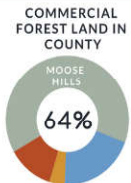
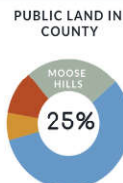
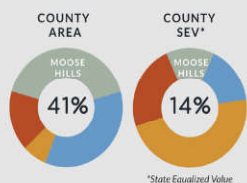
The value of land can impact its use and adjacent uses. Land value is the value of land in terms of its ability to be used to satisfy a particular need and as a commodity. In order for property to have monetary value, there are three features it must possess: utility (usefulness), scarcity (supply), and desirability (demand). Either an increase in demand or a decrease in supply will increase the value of land. The inverse is also true – when an excessive supply of land or a lack of demand exists, value will be lower.

"The entire Lakeshore area, Mattson Park, Third Street & Downtown, Presque Isle ... has a great vibe." —Borealis Beach

Land Profile by Planning Region

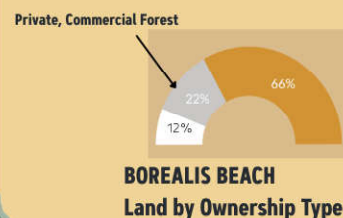
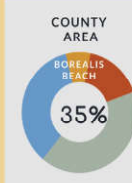
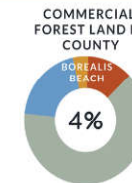
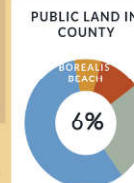
MOOSE HILLS REGION

Equalized Value:
\$743 million



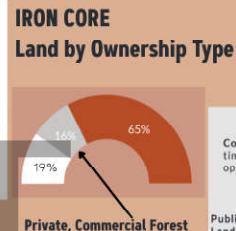
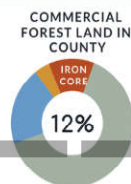
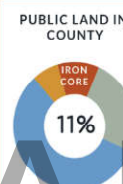
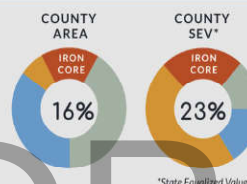
BOREALIS BEACH REGION

Equalized Value:
\$2.56 billion



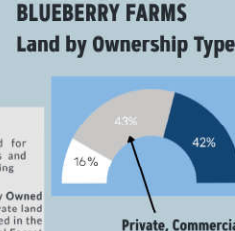
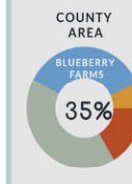
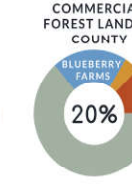
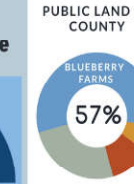
IRON CORE REGION

Equalized Value:
1.30 billion



BLUEBERRY FARMS REGION

Equalized Value:
\$870 million



KEY- Land by Ownership Types

Commercial Forest Land- private land managed for timber production, receiving a reduction in taxes and open to the public (foot access) for fishing and hunting

Publicly Owned Land- land owned by a public body

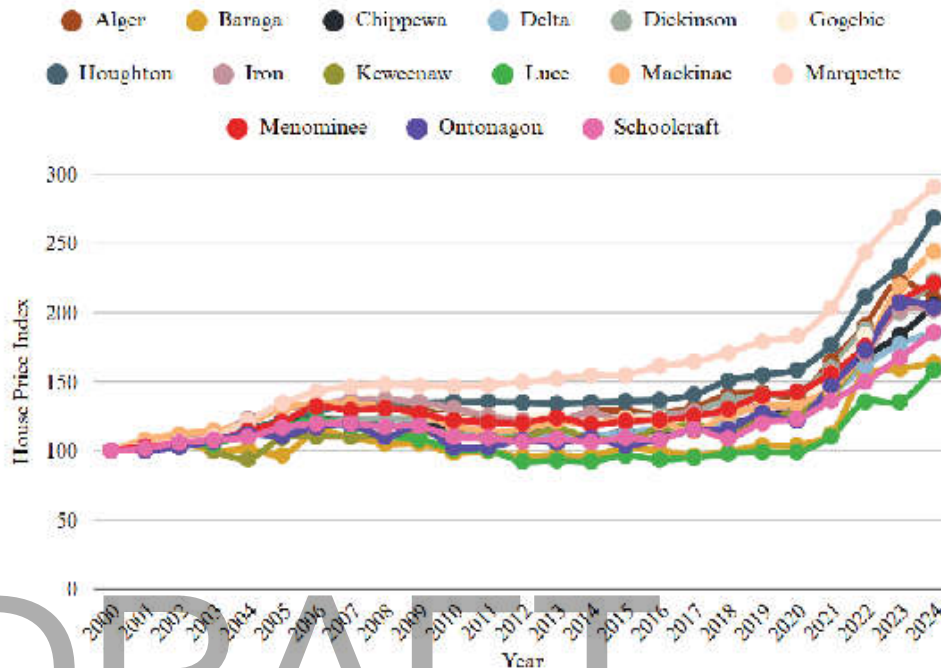
Privately Owned Land- private land not enrolled in the Commercial Forest Program

*Market, Resale, and Equalized Value*

For purposes of comparing or rationalizing the worth of anything, there needs to be a mechanism by which value can be gauged. Market value is an old and simple measure and is defined as relating to personal, real, or public utility property. Personal property consists of movable items that are not permanently affixed to the land. Real property is the land and all things attached to the land, and real property value must account for potential future land uses on that property. Finally, the market value of public utility property is the present value of the property, plus costs of improvements, minus depreciation.

The [All-Transactions House Price Index](#) for UP Counties Figure shows the housing story since 2000 using data

All-Transactions House Price Index for UP Counties

All-Transactions House Price Index for Upper Peninsula Counties

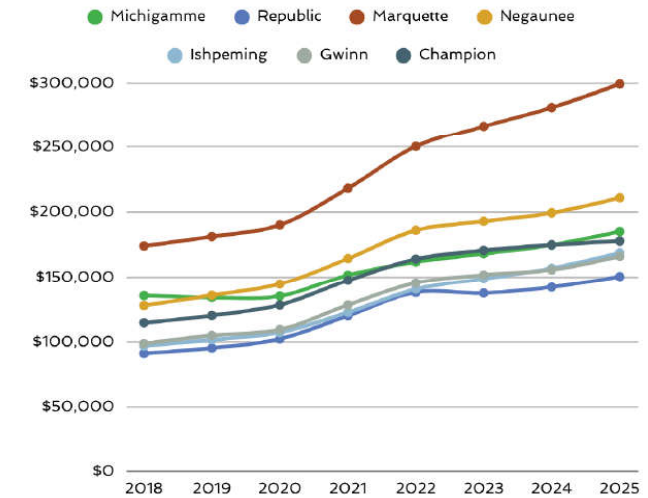
from the US Federal Housing Finance Agency. This index standardizes each county's house prices to 100 in the year 2000 and allows you to see changes over time. The index does not show the actual prices, just change over time. The pre-Great Recession period had steady growth across the UP. The decade after the Great Recession was generally stagnant with some UP counties having housing prices drop from 2008 to 2019. Finally, there has been an explosion in housing prices since COVID. Even counties that had decreased reversed course. For example, Gogebic County had home prices fall 2.2% from 2008 to 2019 and then saw an 84.0% increase in the next six years. Marquette County home prices have followed the same pattern as the rest of the UP.

The [Zillow Home Value Index](#) Figure shows the average home value across an entire area and focuses within

Marquette County. The areas do not follow political boundaries but roughly map with zip codes. For example, Marquette includes the City of Marquette, Marquette Township, most of Chocolay Township, and some of Powell Township. The data goes back to late 2017 and since then the growth in home value has been similar across the most populous areas of the County. The Marquette area leads the County in home value followed by Negaunee. The year-to-year changes had the growth rates peaking in the same years with 2021 and 2022 having the largest

increases. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see the Housing section later in this chapter.

Assessed property values are another measure of land value. Features such as towns, lakes, businesses, and even

Zillow Home Value Index Yearly Average

transportation corridors have significant effects on values of specific locations. The property with the highest value per acre typically is within denser core communities, such as the Cities of Ishpeming, Marquette, and Negaunee, than in the surrounding lower-density rural areas.

Assessed Value

Total assessed value in Marquette County exceeded \$1 billion for the first time in 1996, it exceeded \$3 billion in 2018, it exceeded \$5 billion in 2025, and it was \$5.48 billion in 2026. In 2026, Borealis Beach accounted for nearly half (47%) of the equalized value in Marquette County despite having only 7% of the land area, Iron Core accounted for 25%, Blueberry Farms was 16% and Moose Hills was just 12%.

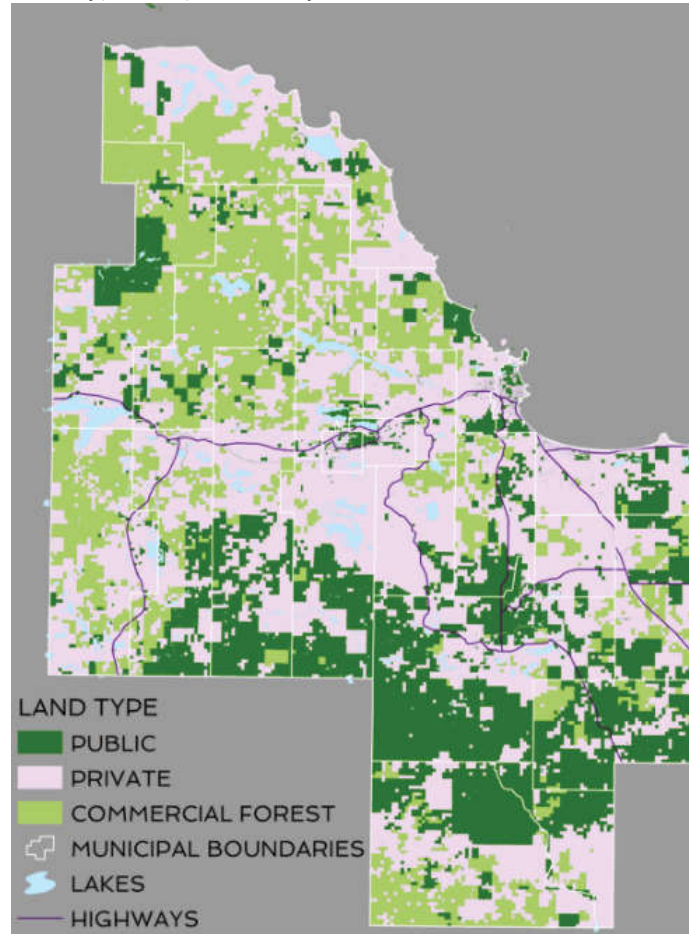


Land Ownership

In 2025, roughly 25% of the land in Marquette County was publicly owned, while the remaining 75% was under private ownership. The three-quarters of the County's land that is privately owned is split between a few large corporate ownerships and a much larger number of small landowners. The largest private landowners in the County are corporate owners such as Cleveland-Cliffs, Inc. (the owners of the Tilden and Empire Mine properties), [Lyme Great Lakes Timberlands](#) (a timber company), and Longyear Realty Corporation (which is affiliated with [J.M. Longyear, LLC](#), the parent company of JML Forestry and Northern Hardwoods). Much of this land is used for forestry – 26% of all land in Marquette County is designated as commercial forestland and enrolled in the [Michigan DNR Commercial Forest Program](#).

Public lands are located primarily in southern Marquette County, though less consolidated public lands exist throughout the County, see the Land Type Figure. Public land ownership includes Federal, State, County, township, public school district, and city-owned properties. The large amount of public land ownership in Marquette County has many ramifications. In terms of land use planning, large tracts of state forest lands will probably not be used for any purposes other than conservation, recreation, and occasional timber production. From a land value standpoint, these lands are not “on the market,” functionally reducing Marquette County's supply of land by a quarter.

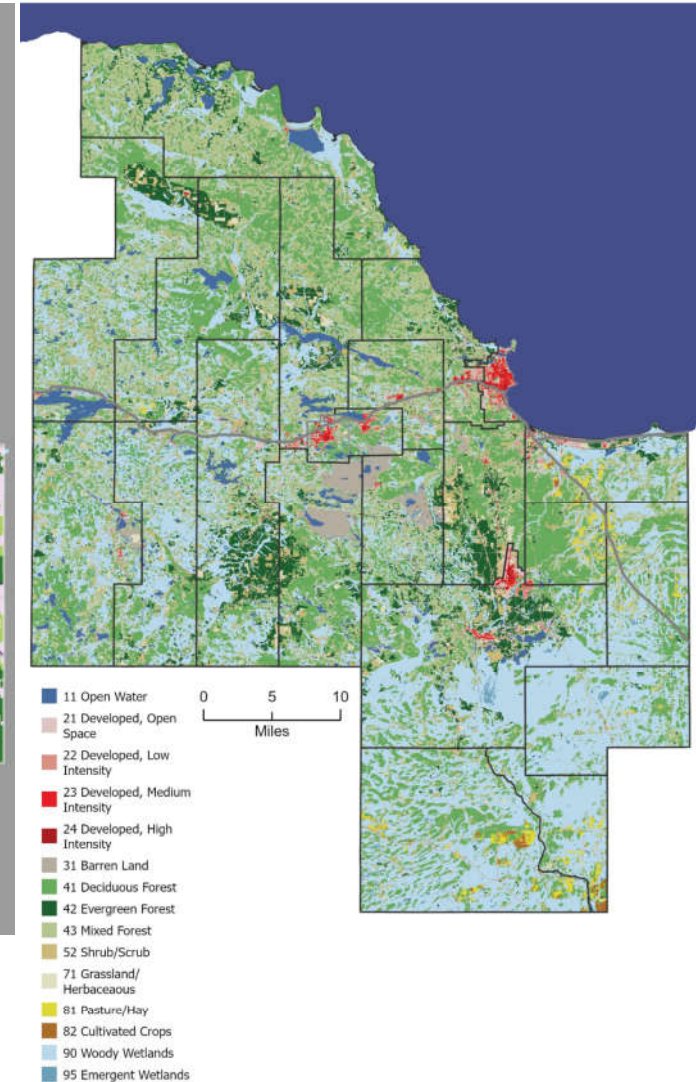
LandType, Marquette County



Land Ownership Highlights

- 25% Publicly owned
- 75% Privately owned
- 3/4 of privately owned land is split between a few large corporate ownerships
- 26% designated as commercial forestland. See map of CFA lands here

Land Cover Marquette County, 2024



Current Land Cover and Land Use

An inventory of land use is valuable in understanding how use changes over time. In Marquette County, approximately 5% of the land is classified as urban and built up, 85% as agriculture/forest, 8% wetlands and the remaining is classified as water features.

Michigan Mineral and Surface Rights

“Mineral rights” are the rights to some or all of the mineral resources beneath a piece of property and are separate from “surface rights”. Most property owners



Forested/Agricultural

In Marquette County, 85% of land falls under the general category of forest/agriculture. This category includes: coniferous and deciduous forests, cropland and pastures, and rangeland. The amount of land in this category decreases as land becomes urban and built up. Since 1978, approximately 10,600 acres have been converted from this category to urban and built up. This equates to about 400 acres of undeveloped land becoming developed every year.

Residential

Residential land use steadily occurs throughout the County. Most of the residential growth is in or near the county's urban corridor which encompasses Marquette, Negaunee, and Ishpeming. However, inland water bodies scattered throughout the County have experienced a range of residential development including: small cabin development, conversion of seasonal dwellings to year-round homes, and construction of expansive single-family dwellings.

Commercial

Commercial land use, which includes retail and business, changes over time and development in one area can affect land use across the county. The introduction of "big box" stores, noticeable along the US-41 corridor in Marquette Township, impacted retail in downtowns requiring these areas to transform and move toward specialty stores and entertainment. Today, the use of large retail structures is in a state of transition, evidenced by the demolition of the Marquette Mall, the [potential redevelopment of the Westwood Mall](#), and the closure of Best Buy.

Downtown Marquette has remade itself in the last twenty-plus years. The City of Negaunee has been recognized for

Sprawl and Wildland/Urban Interface

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released [a report](#) in 2018 which defined sprawl as, "... an urban development pattern characterized by low population density that can manifest itself in multiple ways."

Sprawl is particularly wasteful in its consumption of tax dollars to provide extension of infrastructure (utilities, water, sewer) and in providing services such as fire and police protection, snowplowing, student bussing, etc. The existing urban areas typically have the infrastructure base necessary to support development. Development of this type is low density and requires large amounts of land when compared to the more compact urban development. Sprawl is also auto-dependent in that everything in the developing area is spread out, and the development itself is removed from services and employment that are most typically in the urban area.

Sprawl is a resource consumptive (both economic and physical) type of development. It is essential that sound land use planning and strong land use controls are in place to deter proliferation of this type of development. The expansion of low-density residential use into rural, undeveloped areas surrounding the County's core communities presents several land use problems. Much of the area being consumed by this type of development in Marquette County is being converted from forest cover. Inherent in residential development of these areas is ecological damage and the increased risk of wildfires and erosion. This forest/residential zone is referred to as the "wildland/urban interface." More information on this topic can be found in the County's [Community Wildfire](#)

improvements to its downtown. Ishpeming is making movements in the same direction. Big box stores and strip development can still be found along US-41 in or near all three cities. However, low-density retail as whole has struggled in Marquette County and the rest of North America in recent years due to the rise of online retail and the revitalization of downtown districts in many cities and towns. At least in these core communities, there may be a gradual transition away from low-density strip development along highways and back towards a more walkable, downtown-centric retail industry. This will be especially true if local small businesses can adapt to the booming e-commerce economy and local government entities encourage greater density, reduce blight, and attract greater commercial and residential development in their downtown districts.

Industrial

Industrial uses continue to change the land make up of Marquette County. The mining industry is a land intensive use. More than a third of the land in Marquette County characterized as urban and built up has been used for the mining industry. The impact of mining in Marquette County is noticeable from space.

Mining

A variety of land uses are associated with mining operations. Land is used for excavation of the ore, industrial areas for processing, tailings disposal areas, transportation, and forest land. With these varied uses are a number of past, present, and future impacts. Mining first occurred underground, but it eventually switched to an open pit approach to maintain financial viability. The County's history of underground mining creates the risk of caving grounds. Areas that are at risk have been identified, cataloged, and should be evaluated before future development. Present mining operations are also

an activity that has an impact on adjacent land uses. The open pit mining method requires large volumes of material to be extracted and generates vast amounts of waste that need to be disposed of near the site. There have also been use conflicts with nearby residential communities who are impacted by the ore dust emitted during processing. Future mining activities will likely be accompanied by additional land use changes such as removal of tree cover and will require reclamation planning.

Aerial view of the Tilden and Empire Mines



Landfills

The management of solid waste is an important component in land use planning. The Michigan Solid Waste Management Act of 1979 allowed Marquette County to gain control over the many “scattered” landfills (more appropriately, dumps) in the County. During the 1980s, the Marquette County’s Resource Management and Development Department identified 78 such sites scattered throughout the County. Materials management planning has resulted in closure of these scattered sites and concentration of waste disposal at one site engineered to precise technical specifications in order to maintain environmental integrity today and into the future.

Landfill sites are a relatively permanent land use as they typically are not readily convertible to other uses in the

future. Waste deposited in these facilities is encapsulated in plastic liners that can be easily damaged and costly to repair. It is a priority to extend the lifetime of the County landfill in order to minimize the impact of this land use. Thankfully, recent recycling facility upgrades and a shift to single stream recycling are projected to extend the lifetime of the County Landfill by a decade or more.

Housing

Shelter is a basic need of all individuals. While most housing is privately owned, it is generally considered a valid governmental function to influence it and, in some cases, directly provide it. The supply and condition of housing affects the quality of life within a community, the financial wellbeing of local households, and the physical welfare of individuals. Housing costs, as the largest expense in most household budgets, have a major impact on each household’s standard of living and Marquette County’s economic prosperity and sustainability. This section evaluates the housing stock in Marquette County with respect to five criteria: availability, affordability, form, location, and condition.

Compared to the 2021 survey results- 3 in 5

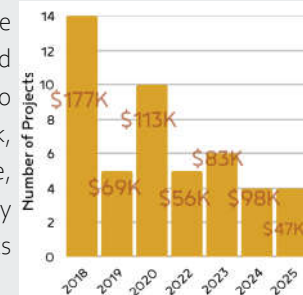
it. The supply and condition of housing affects the quality of life within a community, the financial wellbeing of local households, and the physical welfare of individuals. Housing costs, as the largest expense in most household budgets, have a major impact on each household’s standard of living and Marquette County’s economic prosperity and sustainability. This section evaluates the housing stock in Marquette County with respect to five criteria: availability, affordability, form, location, and condition.

These five factors are all strongly interrelated, and each household must find an acceptable balance between them in order for their housing needs to be met. A wide range of housing types must be provided within each community in the County in order to meet the needs of all households. If a community cannot provide a range of housing options, it will likely see households migrate to other communities that can better meet their housing needs. This can have serious negative consequences for a



Role of County Planning

The Marquette County Planning Division administers the Marquette County Housing Rehabilitation Program to provide assistance to homeowners in Marquette County to help ensure their residence is safe, habitable, and livable. By providing emergency home repair assistance to qualified homeowners, we are able to improve the housing stock, strengthen the local tax base, implement energy efficiency standards, and help residents age in place.



According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 33,607 housing units in Marquette County.



Rental housing is heavily concentrated in the City of Marquette, as well as the Negaunee-Ishpeming and Sawyer areas.



community in the long-term. Thus, all local governments have a vital interest in helping to meet the housing needs of all local residents.

Housing resilience is increasingly important as communities prepare for changing climate conditions and more extreme weather events. Taking measures to prioritize energy-efficient construction, weatherization,

passive heating and cooling, backup power, and fire-resistant materials can improve building resilience, reduce household energy costs, and improve safety and well-being during extreme events.

Availability

The population, number of existing housing units, tenure of occupancy (owner occupied or renter occupied) and current vacancy rates among those units determine the availability of housing in Marquette County. These factors are relative to the number of individuals and households seeking housing.

About 1 in 6 housing units in Marquette County are labeled as “vacant” by the U.S. Census Bureau, homes may be vacant for a variety of reasons. For example, 67% of the vacant housing units (or 11% of all housing units) in Marquette County are used “for recreational, seasonal, or occasional use” - in essence, the Census Bureau considers “camps,” short-term rentals, and seasonal homes to be “vacant” even though they have a current use. In fact, the percentage of housing units in Marquette County used for “recreational, seasonal, or occasional use” has decreased from 17% in 2017 to 11% in 2024.

High vacancy rates can have negative impacts on local communities and neighborhoods, as homes that are intended to be used as full-time residences are left vacant or abandoned. If a home remains vacant for an extended period it often begins to physically deteriorate, making the neighborhood look blighted and affecting the surrounding property values and the character of the neighborhood.

On the other hand, extremely low vacancy

rates (below 1.5% for owner-occupied homes and below 5% for rental units) may indicate a housing shortage, which often contributes to rapidly rising housing costs. As you can see, Marquette City and Township have the lowest vacancy rates in the County for both owner-occupied and rental housing by a considerable margin. The Borealis Beach region (Marquette City and Township and Chocolay Township) has a homeowner vacancy rate of just 0.2% and a rental vacancy rate of 1.1%, the lowest of any of Marquette County’s four regions. These very low vacancy rates are indicative of significant shortages of both owner-occupied and rental housing. Left unaddressed, rising housing costs can compromise the future prosperity, diversity, and sustainability of a community by effectively “pricing out” low- and middle-income households, young professionals, and families with children.

In 2023, the Marquette County Land Bank Authority, the Lake Superior Community Partnership, and Marquette County Intergovernmental Housing Task Force members secured funds to complete a [Target Market Analysis](#). A TMA aims to better understand existing demand for housing in an area, putting real data on paper to support or refute anecdotal evidence that otherwise can be widely used in housing discussions. The study suggests Marquette County can absorb up to 980 new units a

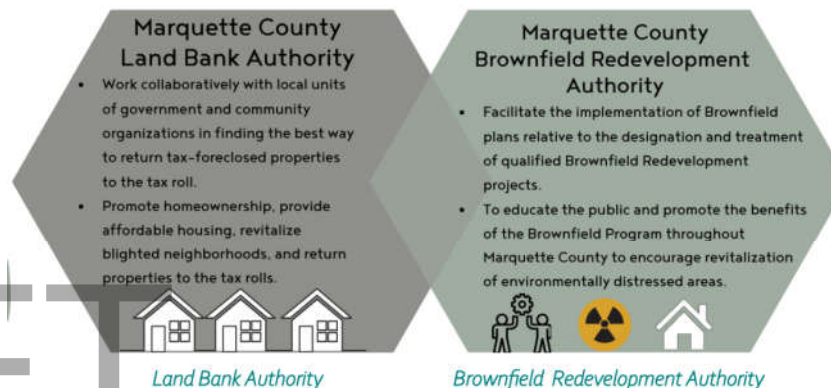
year and rehabilitate up to 1,445 units a year. The TMA includes data on a countywide scale as well as seven local government units.

Housing for an Aging Population

The population of the United States is aging, and that is true in Marquette County as well. As age increases, mobility generally decreases and more assistance and services are needed to meet basic needs. Our aging “Baby Boomer” population will require different housing accommodations in order to live comfortably. This massive demographic shift requires both the public and private sectors to place a renewed emphasis on improving accessibility and meeting the needs of retirees on limited incomes in Marquette County.

The County’s housing stock is old. Typical dwellings in historic neighborhoods in Marquette and old mining communities like Ishpeming, Negaunee, and Michigamme are multi-storied structures with no bathrooms or bedrooms on the main level. Steps leading into homes and staircases within them are also very common. These characteristics present a problem as individuals age and lose mobility. Seniors, regardless of health and access to services, will only be able to age in place if their homes accommodate reduced mobility.

If housing cannot be renovated to accommodate a reduction in mobility, a different type of housing must



be built. Accessible subsidized housing is available in some parts of the County, but often has extensive waiting lists. Assisted living facilities provide support for daily living to ensure health, safety, and well-being, and nursing homes provide care to seniors with significant needs, but these options can be prohibitively expensive for many seniors and their families, and are in short supply in Marquette County. Expanding the supply of accessible, affordable housing in the County is critical to meeting the rapidly changing housing needs of the Baby Boomers. This development should be concentrated in walkable core communities like the Cities of Marquette, Ishpeming, and Negaunee, allowing seniors who are unable to drive to still meet their basic needs and participate in community life by living within walking distance of basic services and downtown amenities.

Unhoused Population

Marquette County has an increasing homeless population, particularly in the City of Marquette. Room at the Inn, [Janzen House](#), Harbor House, Superior Housing Solutions, and Lutheran Social Services offer shelter to homeless individuals on an emergency and transitional basis. Since the previous Master Plan update, the scale of services provided at the [Room at the Inn](#) (RATI) Warming Center has grown substantially. While the RATI in 2018 averaged 25-30 guests per night, served approximately 115 unique individuals annually, and provided shelter primarily during the colder months, RATI has since expanded both its year-round operations and the range of services it provides. In 2025 alone, RATI served more than 350 individuals, provided 15,824 nights of shelter to over 100 adults, offered emergency shelter to 9 families (16 adults and 15 children), distributed motel vouchers to 20 households (48 individuals), provided street outreach

case management to 211 individuals, and delivered permanent supportive housing services to 10 chronically homeless individuals. These figures reflect the continued demand for homelessness services and the expansion of local resources available to meet that need. Between 2020 and 2024, [homelessness statewide has only cumulatively increased 1%](#). According to the Michigan Campaign to End Homelessness, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the Upper Peninsula increased from [696 in 2021 to 1,022 in 2022](#) and [1,204 in 2023](#), showing an 18% increase from 2022 to 2023 and a 73% increase overall since 2021. This increase occurred alongside post-pandemic housing market shifts, including substantial increases in home values and rental costs, and followed the expiration of the federal eviction moratorium.

4 in 5 (82.4%) County residents say reducing barriers to affordable housing & addressing homelessness is "Very Important or Important."

"Less corporate ownership of housing, more developments that are ACTUALLY workforce housing, resources to assist people in keeping their housing when they face instability, and housing for the homeless (especially family units) beyond the strict requirements RATI has to abide by. Life can't happen here without housing, and currently it is hard to obtain, hard to stay in, and hard to pay for."
 –Moose Hills

Originally operating as a seasonal shelter that rotated weekly among local churches, in 2020 Room at the Inn transitioned into a [30-bed permanent homeless shelter in downtown Marquette](#), qualifying for state funding like many existing shelters downstate. More recently, RATI expanded its services through a [family shelter in Forsyth Township](#), which provides temporary housing for intact families with young children who are not fleeing domestic violence. The family shelter offers a safe, stable environment separate from the main warming center, helping minimize disruptions for children while families work toward stable housing. Guests undergo criminal background screening, and social workers assist families

Organizations & resources for the Unhomed Population, Marquette County

Organization	Services Provided
Room at the Inn (RATI)	Permanent emergency homeless shelter, warming center, and support services.
Superior Housing Solutions (SHS)	Transitional/permanent supportive housing.
Lutheran Social Services (LSS)	Rapid rehousing, homeless prevention.
Janzen House	Transitional housing, emergency shelter, and support services.
The Women's Center Harbor House	Emergency shelter for victims of intimate partner violence.
Community Action Alger-Marquette (CAAM)	Housing, Homelessness Services, Heating & Utility Aid, Home Repair.

with transportation to school, housing navigation, and connections to supportive services.

The RATI permanent homeless shelter alone is not enough to provide a long-term solution to Marquette County's homelessness problem. Marquette needs a way to provide emergency housing for homeless families, as families with children cannot currently be admitted to the RATI shelter. There is also a dire need for more transitional and permanent supportive housing in the Marquette area. The Janzen House is a transitional housing facility located in downtown Marquette and can serve up to 32 clients, but it is typically at 95-100% capacity. The director of the Janzen House reports that more housing options and programs for ex-felons would help their capacity issues.

The [Women's Center](#) in Marquette also operates an

emergency shelter, along with counseling and support services, for survivors of domestic abuse at their “Harbor House” facility in Marquette. According to The Women’s Center [FY 2025 Annual Report](#), in 2025 the Harbor House sheltered 114 residents (77 adults, 37 children), a 62% increase from FY24, received 8,298 24/7 support line calls, a 67% increase from FY24, and provided support services to 479 survivors, up from 404 in FY24. The Northern Lights Child Advocacy Center, a child-friendly facility providing coordinated support and services to children who have experienced abuse or witnessed violence, joined the Women’s Center’s programs and services in 2025.

[Lutheran Social Services](#) has three homelessness programs. The Substance Abuse and Homeless Prevention Program serves families and individuals at risk of being homeless and have a history of substance abuse. The Welcome Home Program helps individuals transition from homelessness to safe, secure and permanent housing. Voices for Youth offers services designed to meet the basic needs of homeless youth, while offering support services that will allow youth to be reunited with their family or make a successful transition to independence.

The current transitional and permanent supportive housing resources in Marquette County are insufficient to meet demand which continues to grow. While the vast majority of Marquette County residents experiencing homelessness are actually in short-term “housing crises” that can usually be resolved relatively quickly, a significant minority of Marquette County’s homeless population are experiencing long-term homelessness due to mental illness, substance use disorders, disabilities, past evictions, and criminal records that make it difficult to find housing

and employment. According to the [2024 Annual Report on Ending Homelessness in Michigan](#), 28% of homeless individuals had at least one disability.

While a permanent emergency homeless shelter and rapid rehousing programs that are currently being developed in Marquette County will be very helpful, they will not be sufficient to address homelessness. A housing-first approach that incorporates adequate transitional and permanent supportive housing is the only viable long-term solution to homelessness in Marquette County.

Affordability

Housing is considered affordable if it consumes [no more than 30%](#) of a household’s gross monthly income. When affordable housing is not available, households are forced to pay a higher percentage of their incomes to reside in adequate housing, resulting in inadequate funds for home maintenance and improvements and living expenses. Alternatively, they may be able to downgrade to housing that is low-quality or in a remote location far from the jobs and services located in the County’s urban centers.

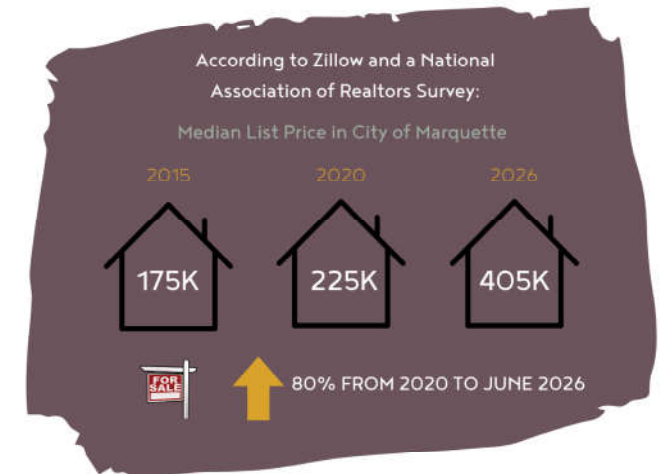
Those that have achieved homeownership are significantly better-off financially than renters. According to the 2024 American Community Survey, there are approximately 10,853 homeowners with a mortgage in Marquette County. Of those homeowners, only 21.5% spend more than 30% of their household income on housing. This is likely due to homeowners generally having higher incomes and the ability to refinance to receive lower interest rates on their mortgage, thus lowering their monthly payment.

By contrast, 53.6% of renters in Marquette County spend more than 30% of their household income on housing. Renters typically have lower incomes than homeowners, making them more vulnerable to market rent conditions. This creates major financial challenges for rental households already struggling to make ends meet on lower incomes. These challenges will be explored in greater detail in the following section on the local housing affordability crisis.

The Housing Affordability Crisis: Local Trends

Like many other parts of the country, Marquette County is facing rapidly rising housing prices, and this trend has been especially severe in Borealis Beach, sparking a serious and steadily worsening housing affordability crisis in the Marquette area.

More than one in four Marquette County housing units (and 54% of City of Marquette housing units) are rentals, and according to American Community Survey data, median gross rent has increased along with owner-



“Better plan for addressing homelessness in city and parks/beaches.” -Borealis Beach

“Affordable housing is a huge barrier to growth.” -Borealis Beach

“Housing options, workforce and population growth ... will make this region great!” -Borealis Beach

occupied home prices in Marquette County, rising by 34.6% in the county as a whole and 33.4% in the City of Marquette from 2018-2024. In 2024, the percentage of renters who were considered "cost burdened" (spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing) was 55.6% in the City of Marquette and 53.6% in Marquette County as a whole. Given all of these statistics, it is not surprising that Borealis Beach has the highest rate of "cost-burdened" households in the County, with 1 in 2.9 households spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing - this cost-burdened rate ranges from 1 in 4.4 to 1 in 6 in the other three regions in Marquette County. This housing affordability problem has been exacerbated by the fact that new residential development in Marquette County over the past two decades has been

very limited and highly concentrated at the high end of the market.

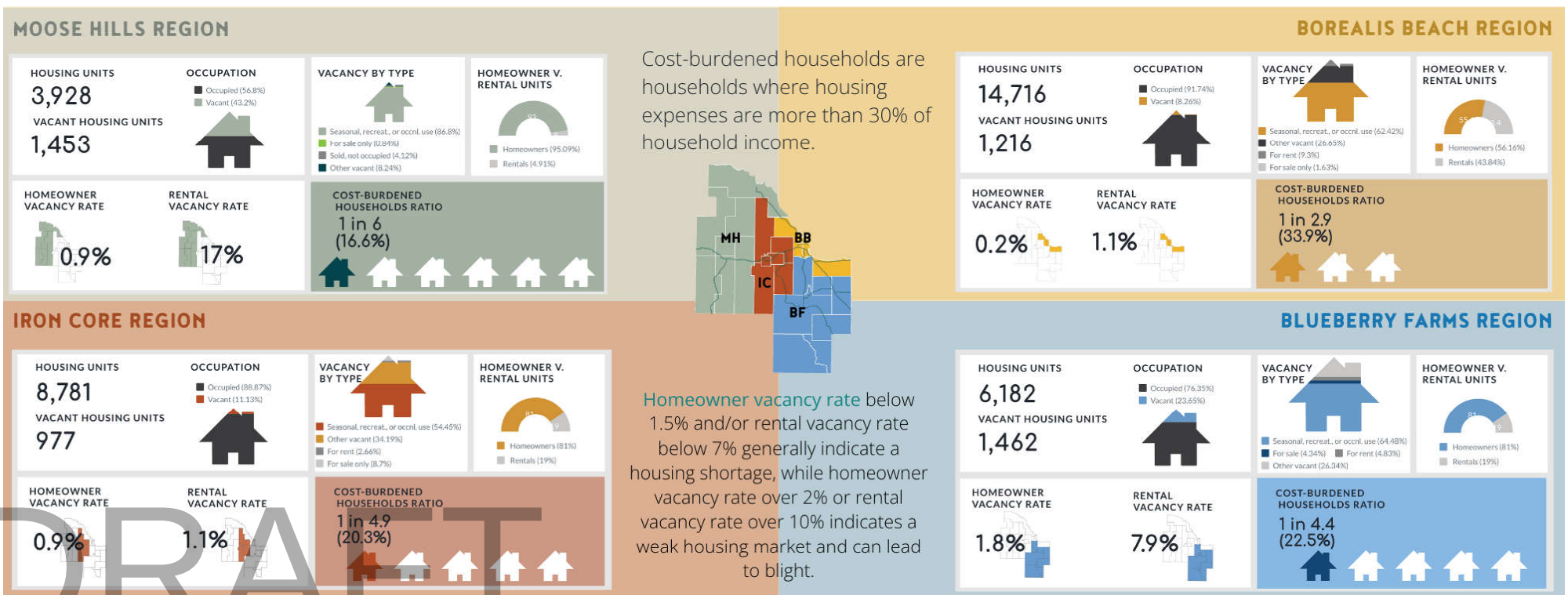
One of the greatest challenges for Marquette County and local communities over the next two decades will be to facilitate new housing development and the redevelopment of existing housing stock to provide quality housing that is affordable for low- and middle-income households. These new housing units will also need to meet the needs of both the aging Baby Boom generation and a new generation of younger Marquette County residents who have different housing needs and preferences than their parents and grandparents. Homeownership should also be promoted, but many Marquette County households will continue renting

Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are small housing units that are typically built on properties on which a single-family home is already located, usually in a backyard, side lot, or even on top of a garage. A benefit of ADUs is they typically do not negatively alter the appearance, character, property values, or parking availability of existing neighborhoods. Opportunity exists to increase housing availability and supply at the local level through the review and amendment of zoning ordinances to include ADU development as a permitted or special use.

housing either by choice or out of necessity, and increasing homeownership should not come at the cost of ignoring the needs and concerns of renters. Rentals are

Housing Comparison by Planning Region



not inherently bad, and in fact, there is an urgent need to increase the number of available rental units that are affordable for low- and middle-income households. This will inevitably require gradual change in lower-density single-family neighborhoods that are composed primarily of owner-occupied homes.

There are many steps that communities, housing developers, and the County can take to help meet this goal, and in fact the challenge of expanding housing affordability and housing choice is so large and complex that it will require an “all of the above” approach and strong partnerships between the public and private sectors. These steps will be explored in detail in the Action Plan in Chapter 6 of this Plan.

Form

A community must provide a wide range of housing forms to meet the needs of all of its residents, and this is certainly true in Marquette County. As previously discussed, there are a wide range of populations in Marquette County whose housing needs are often not being satisfied, but there are a wide range of needs and preferences among these populations. The growing senior population will need homes that are accessible and affordable but may not need as much space, while middle-income families with children need housing that is affordable, and would likely have a preference for homeownership, green space, and locations within walking distance of schools. Marquette’s young professional population needs “Missing Middle” rental housing, preferably in walkable neighborhoods, while for low-income families and NMU students the top priorities are affordability and the ability to get to work quickly and reliably. Shortages of certain housing forms are not just a “Marquette problem.” Residents of the Iron Core region also identified a

The Missing Middle

The phrase “Missing Middle Housing” was coined by the groundbreaking planner and urban designer Daniel Parolek, and his [definition](#) has become widely accepted among planners and housing experts:

“Missing Middle Housing is a range of house-scale buildings with multiple units—compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes—located in a walkable neighborhood.”

It is also common to include small, affordable detached single-family homes as a form of Missing Middle Housing, and we will do so for the purposes of this Plan. Besides modest single-family homes, Missing Middle Housing encompasses a wide variety of housing forms, including duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, cottage courts or tiny home communities, medium-sized apartment buildings, and accessory dwelling units, among other housing forms. It is important to note that the word “middle” in Missing Middle Housing refers not only to affordability (i.e., Missing Middle Housing should be affordable for middle-income families), but also scale – Missing Middle Housing is a way of providing more housing units in existing neighborhoods while still

adhering to the general size and land use intensity of existing single-family homes in those neighborhoods. Missing Middle Housing units can generally be sold or rented at more affordable price points because they are smaller and more efficient than traditional single-family homes, but are also easier to build and less controversial than large apartment complexes.

But why does more Missing Middle Housing not exist in Marquette County? One reason is that local zoning codes frequently prohibit any housing forms other than detached single-family homes in most residential neighborhoods, or pose other significant barriers to the development of more “missing middle” housing types in these neighborhoods. These policies are often in place due to logistical issues (for instance, winter parking bans discourage missing middle housing development by precluding on-street parking for half the year), or political (for example, residents in low-density, higher-income neighborhoods opposing a new apartment building or allowing duplexes in their neighborhood, aka the “Not In My Back Yard,” or NIMBY mentality). Creating a wider variety of housing forms and expanding the supply of Missing Middle Housing in Marquette County will be critically important as Marquette County evolves over the next 20 years.



need for more decent, affordable multi-family rental housing for seniors and low-to-middle-income families in Negaunee and Ishpeming. There will of course always be demand for housing at the high end of the market, but while affluent families with children may prefer large homes on large lots on the edge of town, wealthy retirees or couples without children may prefer luxury apartments or townhomes near the lakeshore or downtown district. All of these evolving housing needs must be met, but the question is how to generate a wide variety of housing forms in Marquette County, and where the emphasis should be placed.

The private housing market has produced relatively little new housing in Marquette County in the past two decades, and what has been built has tended to be large, expensive homes in suburban-style neighborhoods, or expensive luxury condos and apartments near the lakeshore in Marquette. Marquette County needs a greater supply of “Missing Middle Housing.” But what is Missing Middle Housing, how can it meet a wide variety of housing needs, and how can more Missing Middle units be generated in Marquette County to meet the changing needs and preferences of local residents?

Besides restrictive zoning, other regulatory barriers and construction costs are another major reason more Missing Middle Housing does not exist in Marquette County. Creating a wider variety of housing forms and expanding the supply of Missing Middle Housing in Marquette County will be critically important as Marquette County evolves over the next 20 years. This is a big task, and is also directly linked to the related challenges of creating more quality affordable housing in Marquette County and more walkable neighborhoods. Housing choice, form, affordability, and walkability go hand in hand, and must be a critical component of the housing strategies implemented by local policymakers

and housing developers in the coming years.

Location

As of the 2024 American Community Survey, 48% of the County’s population lived within the city limits of Ishpeming, Marquette, and Negaunee. Prior to 1970, as much as 68% of the population of Marquette County was concentrated in these three cities, but the increasingly low-density, suburban character of new housing development in the post-war period and the local housing construction boom of the 1970s eventually led to the townships’ collective population exceeding that of the three incorporated cities. While there are some people who want to live in rural areas of the County, many others are increasingly being forced to live outside the Borealis Beach region because housing is more affordable and readily available in the Cities of Ishpeming and Negaunee and outlying townships.

However, there is strong evidence that housing needs and preferences are changing, and Marquette County policymakers and housing developers must adapt with the times. [Surveys](#) show that Americans (especially younger Americans) increasingly prefer to live in pedestrian-friendly communities within walking distance (or at least easy driving distance) of work and important amenities. They also generally expect to be able to use public transportation.

There is also growing evidence that low-density, auto-centric, suburban-style residential development is not only increasingly undesirable among consumers and contributing to rising housing costs, but that it is also fiscally unsustainable. In most cases, this suburban-style development carries greater long-term infrastructure maintenance costs for local governments than it generates in new tax revenue. In fact, even lower-income

Explore more data, tools, and information at www.mqtccoplan.org

A 2026 National Association of REALTORS® Survey Found That:

- 89%** of respondents said sidewalks and places to walk are important when deciding where to live
- 63%** would pay more to live in a community where they could easily walk to parks, shops, and restaurants
- 59%** preferred a smaller lot in a walkable neighborhood over a larger lot that requires more driving
- 46%** say it should be a high priority for local governments to make it easier to develop communities where people don't have to drive long distances to work or shop
- 63%** say small-lot single-family homes are a good idea for their community
- 51%** support townhomes, duplexes, and other attached housing options in their communities

but higher-density neighborhoods often generate more tax revenue per acre for local governments than more affluent suburban-style subdivisions. These shifting needs and preferences must be taken into account by both public and private housing developers and local planners and policymakers.

Condition

Marquette County housing stock is relatively old. Nearly 21% of structures were built in 1939 or earlier. Statewide, only 15 percent of structures were built before 1939. Over 16,000 housing units were built in the County before the State began requiring building permits in 1970. Housing units built before that time did not have access to modern, low maintenance materials. Energy standards were lower, many older homes were never insulated properly, and their windows are inadequate. Construction standards currently required by the state building code may not have been used, increasing the possibility of defects and poor workmanship. The table on this page shows the percent of houses built before 1970

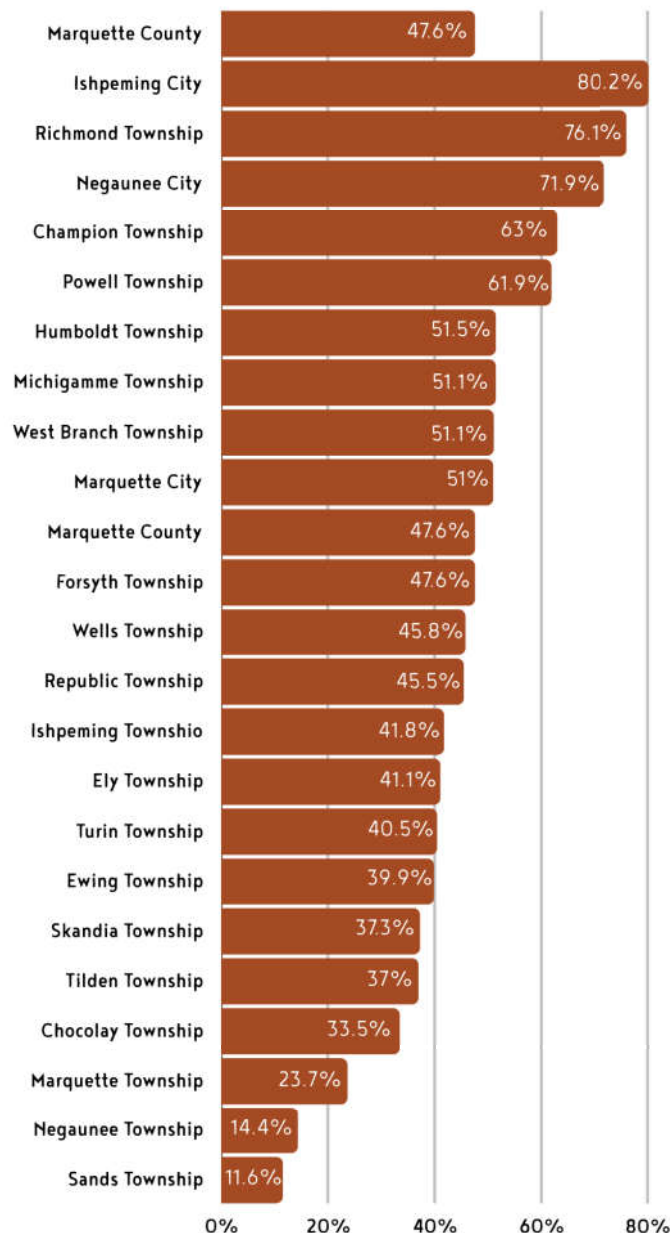
by municipality. Over 70% of the residential structures in the Cities of Ishpeming and Negaunee and Richmond Township were built before 1970.

The County's Building Code Division issues structural and electrical permits for new construction and improvements. The State of Michigan's Building Codes division issues mechanical and plumbing permits. With an aging housing stock, it is essential that repairs and upgrades occur. Tracking the number of permits for existing residential dwellings (referred to as "maintenance permits") is a good way to monitor housing maintenance activity in the County. However, these permits are only issued to homeowners or property owners having the financial resources to do the repair work. Lower income households typically cannot afford major household repairs, as they tend to spend most of their income on immediate needs. To compound this problem, many low-income families can only afford older homes that are in poor condition and in need of major repair work. These homes also tend to generate higher utility bills due to inefficient use of water, electricity, and heat.

The Residential Blight Crisis in Marquette County

High vacancy rates generally lead to higher levels of residential blight and declining property values and property tax revenue. We can see a clear example of this problem in Blueberry Farms, which has a high homeowner vacancy rate of 1.8% (above the recommended level of about 1.5%) and an extreme rental vacancy rate of 7.9% (more than the statewide rental vacancy rate), contributing to the severe blight that has afflicted the region, and the community of Sawyer in particular, since the closure of KI Sawyer Air Force Base 30 years ago.

However, residential blight is not always the result of high vacancy rates. For example, the Iron Core region (i.e.,



Percent of residential structures built before 1970 by municipality

Explore more data, tools, and information at www.mqtccoplan.org

the Ishpeming-Negaunee area) has a fairly low rental vacancy rate and a homeowner vacancy rate in line with the County and State, but has a substantial problem with blight. As in Ishpeming and Negaunee, blight can result from a combination of poverty and economic decline, evolving code enforcement, and concentration of housing vacancies in a few neighborhoods without the need for a high overall housing vacancy rate. In fact, while residential blight at Sawyer is usually attributed to high vacancy rates as described above, this same combination of concentrated poverty and economic stagnation has been a major contributor to blight and community decline in Sawyer as well.

Building codes ensure that minimum standards are met for new construction, but they have little impact on home maintenance. A home in need of repairs can have a negative effect on household occupants and the surrounding neighborhood, and ultimately contributes to the growing problem of residential blight in Marquette County. Municipalities in Marquette County are increasingly attempting to control residential blight by adopting or strengthening property maintenance ordinances. As of 2026, 13 of the 19 townships in Marquette County have some sort of blight ordinance. The cities of Marquette, Ishpeming, and Negaunee have Property Maintenance Codes. The cities of Ishpeming and Negaunee have rental inspection ordinances and the City of Marquette has a rental fire inspection ordinance.

Food Access

Access to healthy affordable food is a right and impacts the health of citizens. Food insecurity, lack of reliable access to healthy food, is present in areas of Marquette County and has been identified as a concern. A robust food system is rooted in a thriving agricultural industry

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that is able to supply healthy, nutritious food to the community. A contributing factor of a robust food system includes the recognition and support by government leaders often through supporting policy and action.

Food insecurity was identified as a major concern in Marquette County in local stakeholder meetings and the Master Plan survey, most notably in the Blueberry Farms and Moose Hills planning regions. A lack of reliable access to healthy, affordable food and community centers that can provide access to social assistance programs is a particularly serious problem in isolated rural communities like KI Sawyer or Michigamme. This issue is also intimately connected to other problems in the County like systemic poverty, a lack of services and economic development in rural communities, and limited access to public transportation.

In 2013, the Marquette County Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners approved a new [Local](#)

9 in 10 (93.3%) County residents say that access to healthy, affordable, and nutritious food is "Very Important or Important."

"More local food systems"
–Blueberry Farms

"I would like to see greater access to fresh food throughout the county, and greater access to curbside trash, recycling, and compost."
–Borealis Beach

[Food Supply Plan](#), a chapter of the previous Marquette County Comprehensive Plan. This chapter discussed the local food production, processing, distribution, and the role of government in Marquette County in detail. It also identified a need for increased food recovery and food waste reduction, a renewed emphasis on local food production and the costs of importing food, as well as future vulnerabilities, opportunities, and challenges for Marquette County's food system. Although the 2013 plan is not part of this Master Plan, it remains available at www.mqtcoplan.org for reference.

Energy

The electrical power system of Marquette County today is shaped by what was put in place in the late 1800s by the companies operating the mines, ore processing facilities and lumber mills. For the next 100 years, these industrial needs led to the development of dams and hydropower on the Dead, Escanaba and Carp Rivers and the development of the largest coal plant in the Upper Peninsula, the Presque Isle Power Plant, which was retired in 2019.

The UP has a patchwork energy system, and it is the "end of the line," in terms of electric power transmission and distribution. Sources of energy range from distributed sources that come from hundreds of miles away, to on-site energy sources that can be used if more cost effective. There is a complex system behind the act of turning the switch on in homes and businesses.

Generation

The Upper Peninsula power needs are met through a combination of power produced locally (woody biomass, hydropower dams, natural gas engines, solar and wind plus residential woodstoves/wood pellets) and power supplied from outside sources. Those outside sources include electricity generated in Wisconsin, natural gas supplied via pipelines and propane and fuel oil supplied via pipeline/rail/truck.

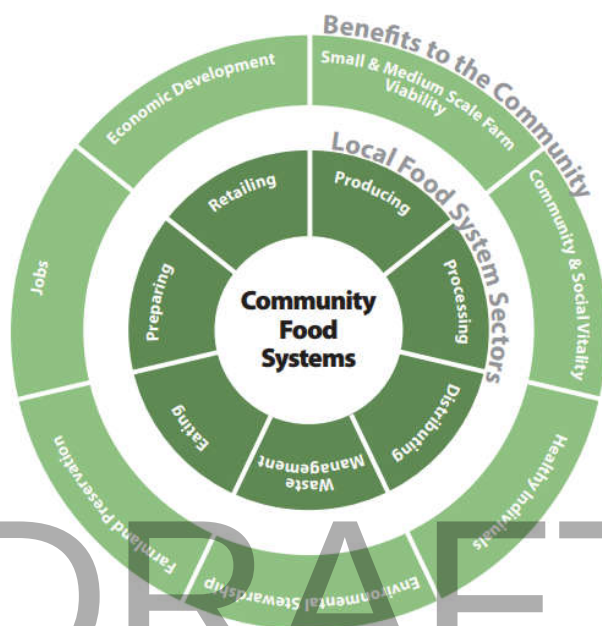
Heat Sources for Homes

According to a [2019 UP Energy Task report](#). In the Upper Peninsula, about:

- 18% of homes use propane for heat,
- 58% use natural gas,
- 10% use wood,
- 9.5% use electricity, and
- the rest use other means

According to the US Census, American Community Survey for 2024 here is the heating fuel use breakdown for Marquette County:

Heating Sources	Housing Units	Percent
Utility gas	17,486	61.9%
Bottled, tank, or LP gas	4,918	17.4%
Electricity	3,789	13.4%
Wood	1,165	4.1%
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.	588	2.1%
Solar energy	0	0.0%
Other fuel	112	0.4%
No fuel used	164	0.6%



In addition, several industrial facilities use co-generation for heat and to generate electricity. Co-generation is when heat and other by-products are used to make energy in the plants. A substantial amount of electricity and heat needs can be covered by the facilities in their operations.

Transmission

The bulk of Marquette County's electricity is supplied from the larger Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) grid. MISO is an independent, not-for-profit organization that delivers electric power across 15 U.S. states and the Canadian province of Manitoba. As the largest geographical organization of its kind, MISO provides access to the electric transmission system and supports increased grid reliability. Marquette County transmission is included in MISO Zone 2, and is made up of Michigan, Wisconsin and parts of Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Missouri. MISO plays a vital role in "generation dispatch" to relieve variability in the regional demand for electricity. The Marquette Board of Light & Power recently [completed its second interconnection to the regional grid](#). The project was first proposed over 40 years ago and provides better stability and dependability than the previous single connection.

While MISO manages the supply of energy to the region, the transmission lines in the UP are owned by the American Transmission Company (ATC) and Xcel Energy. A [map of the existing facilities](#) as of 2025 is included in [ATC's 10-year assessment](#). The assessment also includes upcoming projects to systematically upgrade the network. MISO provides research and hosts an auction where the electricity demands and generation capacity are met through selling power onto the transmission network and can be monitored in [real-time](#).

Distribution

Underneath these large networks moving electricity across states and the UP is the distribution system. The distribution system is made up of the wires, poles, equipment and people that bring power from the larger transmission system into buildings and homes. Some generate some or all of the power they need, others buy electricity off of the transmission system. These lines are maintained by the utility company.

Utilities

There are nineteen utility companies in the UP serving the region's electric customers. There are five electrical distribution utilities serving Marquette County:

- [Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association](#)
- [Marquette Board of Light and Power](#)
- [City of Negaunee Electrical Department](#)
- [Upper Michigan Energy Resources](#) (UMERC)
- [Upper Peninsula Power Company](#) (UPPCO)

There are two natural gas distribution utilities serving Marquette County:

- [Semco Energy Gas Company](#)
- [DTE Gas Company](#)

Each has separate business models and rate structures depending on whether they are municipal, rural cooperative or investor owned.

Marquette's Energy Future

The last decade has seen significant changes to the [UP and Marquette County's energy system](#). The Presque Isle Coal Power Plant closed in 2019 and was replaced with reciprocating internal combustion engines (RICE) units which burn natural gas, totaling 188 MW of generating capacity across two locations. The Tilden Mine is a main user of the electricity produced by these units and,

Assistance Programs

Low-Income Assistance Programs- Utility assistance payments for low-income communities come primarily from LIEAF (rate payer funded program) and LIHEAP (federally funded program), as well as from local sources, such as those listed below.

Energy Waste Reduction Programs- Each utility that operates in the county offers a variety of rebate programs designed to incentivize the adoption of energy efficient technologies and behaviors among residential and commercial rate payers.

Many utilities participate in [Efficiency United's Energy Waste Reduction \(EWR\) Programming](#).

Local sources for assistance include:

- United Way
- St. Vincent de Paul
- Community Action Agency
- Superior Watershed Partnership Energy Office
- Overall resource for locating an assistance program is Michigan 211

through a special contract with UMERC, Cleveland Cliffs will be paying for half of the capital cost of constructing the RICE units. The Marquette Board of Light and Power closed their Shiras Coal Power Plant in 2019 and replaced it with RICE units, totaling 51 MW of generating capacity. Both of these retirements eliminated coal generated electricity from the entire Upper Peninsula and reduced UP electricity CO₂ emissions by 71% from 2013 to 2022.

Currently, there is a large buildout of utility scale solar occurring in Marquette County and the Upper Peninsula. The [Renegade Solar project](#) is projected to come online first in mid-2026 and provide 100 MW of capacity. Renegade is located in Delta and Marquette counties. The [Groveland Mine Solar](#) project will bring 100 MW to a former mine site in Dickinson County. A similar project is



occurring at the former [Republic Mine site](#) in Marquette County and will provide 62.5 MW. Finally, the 150 MW [Superior Solar project](#) will be built in Sands Township in Marquette County. When the UP Energy Report was published in 2024 the [total UP electricity generation capacity was 803.9 MW](#). Combined these solar projects would add an additional 412.5 MW of electrical generation capacity to the UP or a 51% increase.

The State of Michigan has created a Renewable Ready Communities grant program to provide funding for municipalities that locally site renewable energy projects. To date, the program has provided \$881,725 for Marquette County municipalities and \$1,565,115 for Upper Peninsula municipalities.

State laws will also play a role in defining Marquette's Energy Future. Public Act 235 of 2023 established a Renewable Energy Standard of 50% by 2030 and 60% by 2035, and a Clean Energy Standard of 80% by 2035 and 100% by 2040. This bill is especially impactful for UP utilities who recently developed natural gas power units to replace retiring coal facilities. These new units were originally intended to run beyond the years now covered by the Renewable and Clean Energy Standards. Early retirement of the RICE units may lead to cost increases for UP and Marquette County residents. As a result, there

has been a push to exempt the UP RICE units from PA 235.

A forthcoming trend in the energy field is electric vehicles



(EV). The state of Michigan is taking a leadership role nationally by conducting studies for where EV charging stations should be installed. As EVs become more cost-effective, [there will be a shift towards more EV infrastructure statewide](#).

Transportation

Marquette County is the largest county in Michigan. Located in the central Upper Peninsula, it is removed from the interstate highway system, but has state trunklines that run east-west through the central part of the County

and north-south from the central part of the County to the south. Rail systems in the County are privately owned. The County of Marquette operates Marquette Sawyer Regional Airport, located at the former K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base (AFB), and the Marquette County Transit Authority (Marq-Tran) operates a bus transit system. Marquette County is also home to hundreds of miles of motorized and non-motorized trails. Pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks and bike lanes can increasingly be found not only in the County's core communities of Ishpeming, Marquette, and Negaunee, but in the more densely populated areas of outlying communities such as Champion and Forsyth Township. Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the State of Michigan.

Roads

The [Michigan Department of Transportation](#) (MDOT) is responsible for all state trunklines, and works with the [Marquette County Road Commission \(MCRC\)](#) and city road agencies to provide routine maintenance such as snow removal and mowing. The MCRC is responsible for the County road system and cities are responsible for city streets.

Many roads in Marquette County are in poor condition, with noticeable distortion, cracks, and potholes. There are several factors contributing to the current condition of the road system. Probably the most critical factor is funding. Less than adequate funding has created a situation in which it is not possible to improve, let alone maintain, the condition of the road network.

A second factor contributing to the poor condition of the County road system dates back to the period from 1950-1980. In those decades, it was common for 30-40 miles of road to be paved annually. Materials were cheap and the

The Hidden Costs of Auto-Centric Development

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Affordable fuel and increased vehicle ownership after World War II encouraged development beyond established communities. In Marquette County, expanded road access allowed housing and businesses to locate farther from community centers. Personal vehicles remain essential because of the County's size, dispersed population, and winter conditions. However,

development requiring driving for most daily activities carries hidden costs.

For households, lower housing prices farther from employment, schools, groceries, and health care may be offset by vehicle ownership, insurance, fuel, and maintenance expenses. These costs disproportionately

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roads were paved to facilitate low-density, suburban-style housing developments, the first strip malls and big box stores, or simply to “control dust.” Today, these roads are at the end of their lifespan and, to compound the issue, road material is no longer inexpensive and much of this new road infrastructure has not generated sufficient new tax revenue in the form of new development to offset the cost of long-term maintenance and replacement.

Last year the State of Michigan budget included a [\\$2 billion per year increase in road funding](#). This boost in funding could do a lot to address the issues that are detailed in this section. The next five-year update, in 2031, will be an excellent time to assess the progress made as a result of this budget.

Asset Management

The MCRC evaluates the condition of county roads every other year using the [Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating \(PASER\) system](#). Segments of road are rated on a 1-10 scale based on factors such as surface distress, pavement strength, and deflection. A rating of 10 indicates the pavement surface is in excellent condition while a rating of 1 represents a failed roadway with extensive loss of surface integrity. Ratings are classified into three asset management strategies- good, fair, and poor. The asset management approach shifts from the traditional

“fix the worst first” method to one that incorporates a “mix of fixes” so agencies can apply “the right fix at the right time.” Investing smaller amounts of money in roads that are in good or fair condition extends the life of the road, while similar investments in poor roads will yield much more limited results. For more information on transportation asset management, see the most recent [MDOT Transportation Asset Management Plan](#).

The [PASER ratings](#) for paved roads in Marquette County extend over a number of years because only portions of the County are rated each year. This data, provided by the Transportation Asset Management Council (TAMC), shows the magnitude of the challenge facing MDOT, the MCRC, and municipalities. In general, road conditions have gotten worse over the past decade, with many roads which were classified as good deteriorating to fair by 2019, and many fair roads crumbling into poor condition. Many roads that were rated poor in 2011 were still rated poor a decade later, often in worse condition. Although there are exceptions to this rule, and local streets have improved in many municipalities in recent years due to local millages, in general PASER-rated local, County, and state roads have declined sharply in quality over the past decade. Road maintenance and repair will therefore be a major challenge for Marquette County over the next 20 years.

Road maintenance millages in Marquette County:

-17 of 22 municipalities have roads millages

-Generating over \$2.5 million in 2020

-Estimated revenues for 2026 are \$3.8 million

Municipality	Has Roads Millage?	Year First Levied	2025 Roads Millage Rate	2025 Estimated Revenue
Champion Twp.	Yes	2012*	1.9562	\$54,944.69
Choclay Twp.	Yes	2017	1.5996	\$483,847.85
Ely Twp.	No			
Ewing Twp.	Yes	2012*	1.9934	\$25,303.64
Forsyth Twp.	Yes	2018	1.5944	\$406,562.12
Humboldt Twp.	Yes	2018+	2.9581	\$127,705.97
Ishpeming City	No			
Ishpeming Twp.	Yes	2015+	0.9846	\$143,913.42
Marquette City	No			
Marquette Twp.	Yes	2015+	1.4599	\$499,370.18
Michigamme Twp.	Yes	2012+	1.4226	\$73,333.51
Negaunee City	Yes	2016	1.9103	\$283,345.94
Negaunee Twp.	Yes	2017+	2.4808	\$721,470.62
Powell Twp.	Yes	2014	1.5777	\$191,190.82
Republic Twp.	Yes	2018+	2.9661	\$240,578.01
Richmond Twp.	No			
Sands Twp.	Yes	2012*	1.7415	\$224,542.09
Skandia Twp.	Yes	2012*	0.9836	\$34,028.50
Tilden Twp.	Yes	2020+	1	\$64,921.60
Turin Twp.	No			
Wells Twp.	Yes	2012*	2.97	\$180,693.89
West Branch Twp.	Yes	2024	0.9762	\$39,089.62
TOTAL				\$3,794,842.46

* Due to a lack of historical millage and election data available online from the State of Mi. and the Marquette Co. Clerk prior to 2012, millages labeled as being “first levied” in 2012 were most likely originally approved in 2012 or earlier.

^ Percentage of Principal Residence Millage Rate. Mean total millage rate is used when multiple school districts exist within the same municipality.

+ Humboldt Twp. levied a 1.00 mill roads millage since at least 2012, but added a new “road improvement” millage of 2.00 mills in 2018. + Ishpeming Twp. levies a 1.00 mill roads millage and, starting in 2015, a separate 0.50 mill street light millage. + Marquette Twp. also levied a 0.85 mill roads millage since at least 2012, but increased this to 1.50 mills in 2015. + Republic Twp. levied a 1.00 mill roads millage since at least 2012, but increased it to 2.00 mills in 2018. + Tilden Twp. levied a 1.00 mill roads millage since 2014, but also added a “road improvement” millage of 1.00 mill in 2020.

The Hidden Costs of Auto-Centric Development

burden lower-income households. Dependence on driving also creates barriers for older adults, youth, people with disabilities, and others who do not drive. Marq-Tran provides an alternative, although availability and schedules vary by location.

Dispersed development can fragment forests and wildlife habitat, affect water resources, and alter rural

character. Longer trips increase vehicle emissions. Separating homes, businesses, and services makes walking and bicycling less practical, while disconnected sidewalks and difficult crossings create safety concerns.

Excess parking consumes land that could support housing, businesses, landscaping, or public spaces. It adds construction, maintenance, snow removal, and

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The MCRC must also inspect the condition of its 93 bridges every 2 years per federal requirements. The MCRC inspects some of its bridges annually due to their structural condition. Nearly 8% of the bridges in Marquette County are classified as in poor condition, which means that although they are structurally sound, they do not meet current design guidelines and are considered functionally obsolete. According to the MCRC, the MCRC is responsible for the bridges within their jurisdiction, MDOT is responsible for bridges on the state trunklines, and municipalities are generally responsible for their own local bridges as well. Bridge location and condition in Marquette County can be found [here](#).

Commercial Truck Routes & Seasonal Weight Restrictions

Commercial truck routes can be a contentious subject. Commodities such as timber and mineral ores are transported primarily using trucks. Often, developed areas are between where natural resources are and where they need to go. As with the case of low-income and “Missing Middle” housing discussed in the Housing section of this chapter, this often leads to a “Not In My Back Yard” (NIMBY) reaction from local residents. Although natural resource extraction is a major component of Marquette

County’s economy, people do not want large trucks driving by their homes and businesses. They are loud, heavy, and a perceived hazard on the road. An example of this situation is access to natural resources in northern Marquette County. County Road 550, with a southern terminus at the Marquette City limit. This busy truck route requires trucks to pass through the City of Marquette in order to export goods. However, municipalities can define routes that trucks must use through their community per Section 726 of the Michigan Vehicle Code, Public Act 300 of 1949, and in the case of the City of Marquette, Eagle Mine provides significant funding to the City for road maintenance to make up for the wear and tear caused by their large mining trucks. Similar public-private agreements could be negotiated by other communities.

Transportation of goods is a County-wide and regional issue, but local municipalities are able to determine commercial trucking routes. As a result, careful coordination between local governments is important to ensure efficient, satisfactory commercial trucking routes in Marquette County.

Air Transport & Marquette Sawyer Regional Airport (MSRA)

MSRA is located at the former KI Sawyer AFB in south-

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The Hidden Costs of Auto-Centric Development

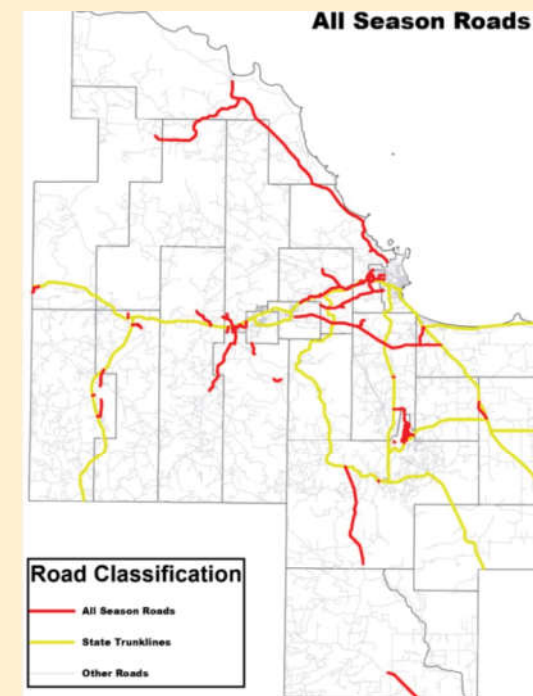
stormwater management costs. Parking requirements should reflect local demand and allow shared parking where practical.

New roads and utility extensions create ongoing maintenance and replacement obligations. Snow removal, drainage, and road upkeep are recurring public expenses. Although development may increase the tax

base, that increase should be weighed against the long-term cost of serving it. Directing development toward established communities and existing infrastructure can accommodate growth, strengthen community centers, and limit future public costs. Coordinating land use and transportation decisions can help protect rural character while improving affordability and access to essential services.

Seasonal Weight Restrictions

Seasonal weight restrictions are also set by road agencies to help reduce the impact of heavy trucks on roads during the spring cycle of freezing and thawing - in Marquette County, the permissible weight of a truck load is reduced by 65% from approximately mid-March to mid-May. Truck loads must be significantly reduced in order to adhere to the weight restriction. However, roads built to a Class A all-season standards do not have weight restrictions. Commercial haulers can transport fully-loaded trucks on this type of road year-round because the base of the road is built so that the seasonal freezing and thawing process does not affect its integrity. All state and federal highways in the county are built to this standard. The County road system does have some Class A roads (portions of CR 480, for example) but lacks connectivity. The figure below is a map of Class A all-season roads in Marquette County.



central Marquette County. MSRA has its own [Master Plan](#) for planning future capital projects and anticipated needs. MSRA has operated as a commercial passenger service provider since 1999. Major infrastructure investments in this mode of transportation include the construction of T-hangars for small aircraft, a passenger terminal, and an airport service center by the County. In the 2025 State of Michigan budget, Marquette Sawyer Regional Airport was [awarded \\$3M in funding](#). The County plans to utilize those funds to upgrade snow removal equipment, repair airport pavement, and repair/upgrade hangars. The County also manages nearly 9,500 acres of forest directly west and south of the airport, providing an important buffer between it and other land uses. Few airports have the luxury of such a buffer zone. The County shortened the runway at KI Sawyer to 9,000 feet due to a loss of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) maintenance funding, a length which is still more than sufficient for most aircraft. Hangars built by the Air Force have been rehabilitated and some are being used as maintenance facilities for an airline company.

Commercial service has been increasing at MSRA since the closure of KI Sawyer AFB in 1995. By the late 2000s KI Sawyer hosted 53% of all passengers flying to or from the Upper Peninsula. However, that number has declined over the past decades, and now Sawyer hosts roughly 30% of airline passengers in the UP, due to flight changes by the airlines and competition with other regional airports that, unlike MSRA, are subsidized under the Essential Air Service program. MSRA is the only Upper Peninsula airport that does not receive this federal subsidy.

MSRA's success stems largely from service by two, soon to be three, different airlines (American and Delta), providing more flight flexibility than other regional airports. Parking data from the airport indicates that people come to the airport from across the Upper

Peninsula. It is especially surprising that passengers from Houghton and Escanaba regularly use KI Sawyer, because both cities have passenger service at their own airports. However, air travel can still be prohibitively expensive for many travelers due to the lack of Essential Air Service subsidy and Marquette County's remote location and relatively small population.

Rail

Today trains are primarily used to transport commodities, particularly in rural areas like Marquette County. Major commodities include coal, mineral ores, industrial chemicals, grain and agricultural products, and other natural resources. According to the Department of the Interior, intermodal traffic (the movement of truck trailers or shipping containers by rail) is the fastest growing rail traffic segment. Trucks are used to transport the trailers or containers to and from a train, reducing shipping costs.



There are three classes of rail: I, II, and III. Class I, or freight, railroads are operated by major companies that take in over \$250 million per year in revenue. Most railroad tracks in Michigan are Class I railroads operated by four companies: Canadian National Railway (CN), Norfolk Southern Railway (NS), CSX Transportation (CSX),

and Canadian Pacific Railway (CP). Class II, or regional, railroads are also used for hauling freight and are operated by companies with between \$20 million and \$250 million in revenue. There are two such companies operating in Michigan: Great Lakes Central Railroad (GLC) and Indiana & Ohio Railway (IO). Class III, or shortline, railroads are operated by companies that take in less than \$20 million in revenue annually. Shortline railroads operate over a limited area and typically connect to one of the Class I or II railroad lines, making them a key link in transporting commodities from local areas to regional, national, and global markets. There are 15 shortline railroad companies in Michigan.

In Marquette County and other parts of the country, rail is again being discussed as a potential driver of economic development. In August 2013, nearly two miles of a recreational trail was approved to be converted back to rail in Humboldt Township to transport mining materials internationally, with a new recreational trail being created nearby. This project was the [first reactivation of a rail line in Michigan](#) since the "Rails to Trails" amendment to the National Trails System Act was passed by Congress in 1983.

Water Transport

Marquette County is positioned favorably for water transportation on the south shore of Lake Superior, with access to the busy Great Lakes-Saint Lawrence Seaway System. Presently, iron ore is exported from the area and limestone is imported by water freight – coal is no longer imported through the Marquette Port due to the closure of the Presque Isle Power Plant and Shiras Steam Plant in 2019 and 2020. In 2013, the U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration published the most recent "US Water Transportation Statistical Snapshot", highlighting major changes that occurred in

the water transportation industry from 2006-2011. During this time period, the average price for water shipping on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway increased by 51%, and perhaps unsurprisingly, total freight carried on the Great Lakes declined 9.3%, slightly above the national average decline of 7.0% for all waterborne shipping. Total water-based domestic trade declined by 13.2% during this time, but water-based foreign exports increased by 50.8%.

There are two ports in Marquette County – the Port of Marquette, which is located at the former site of the Shiras Steam Plant and is operated under the authority of the Marquette Board of Light & Power, and the Port of Presque Isle, which is the more active port that operates near the former Presque Isle Power Plant site and the Presque Isle Marina. In addition, there are two marinas in Marquette ([Presque Isle and Cinder Pond](#)) owned and operated by the City of Marquette. The [Big Bay Harbor of Refuge](#) is another harbor owned by the County of Marquette in Powell Township.

Other Types of Transportation

Public Transit

Transit service has been provided in Marquette County since 1985. The [Marquette County Transit Authority \(Marq-Tran\)](#) offers a variety of services including fixed and feeder routes, curb-to-curb service, special contract runs, and specialized service runs. Marq-Tran cannot provide service to all corners of the County given its size. Their fixed routes reach south to Gwinn and west to Ishpeming daily. Efforts to coordinate bus routes with carpool lots, trailheads and other regional transit are improving this mode of transportation. More information about Marq-Tran service can be found in the Services section of this Plan.

Carpooling

In 2026, there are eight carpool lots designated by MDOT in Marquette County, which is up from just five carpool lots in 2010. Information about MDOT's carpooling program, including a map of carpool lot locations can be found [here](#).

Non-Motorized Transportation

The most common forms of non-motorized transportation include walking and cycling, which are also important forms of physical activity. In Marquette County, it is difficult to rely solely on these modes of transportation for two reasons. First, our northern climate produces extremely cold and windy days in the winter. With some of the highest seasonal snowfall levels in the country, riding a bicycle and even walking can be challenging and dangerous in most parts of Marquette County during the winter. Second, given the rural nature and development pattern of Marquette County, there is simply a portion of our population who live too far from key destinations (work, school, food sources, etc.) to reach by foot or bicycle. Nonetheless, a significant portion of Marquette County's population does live within reasonable walking and cycling distance to many destinations.

Even small, rural communities like Champion are investing in sidewalks and other pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and residents of other rural communities like Chocolay Township often identified improvements to walkability and pedestrian safety as being a major need. Residents of walkable core communities expressed a desire for better plowing and de-icing of sidewalks to improve walkability during the winter months. Given the clear interest, developing and enhancing policies to support non-motorized transportation throughout the County is important.

Explore more data, tools, and information at www.mqtcoplan.org

Planning for Future Land Use

The practice of land use planning has developed over hundreds of years and continues to evolve today. A number of variables influence decisions about land use and development and therefore, a comprehensive approach to decision making is necessary. Land use is regulated at the municipal level and ends at the borders of each jurisdiction. Balancing development and preservation of the rural character of our communities requires regional vision and cooperation. Coordination of land use regulation is essential in achieving the vision and goals of this Plan.

Land use planning objectives include:

- 1) Ensure that housing is located near major employment centers;
- 2) Promote more compact development that conserves land and more efficiently utilizes infrastructure;
- 3) Incorporate transportation alternatives, walkable communities, non-motorized trail development, and public transit into development plans;
- 4) Protect environmentally sensitive areas; and
- 5) Protect agricultural land.

Regulating Land Use

Land use in Marquette County is controlled through a combination of zoning and other mechanisms. Land use is regulated for the betterment of the land and the community and is one of the means for implementing a community's long-term plans to meet their needs. A number of mechanisms exist to guide land use with zoning ordinances being the most common.



Other land regulating tools include, but are not limited to:

- design standards,
- planned unit developments,
- subdivision regulations,
- tax and fee systems,
- annexation,
- capital programming,
- public improvements, and
- deed restrictions/covenants.

A zoning ordinance is a legal tool that requires maintenance and skilled use to be effective. Conventional zoning regulates the type of land use, land use densities, bulk and height of buildings, and other site-specific requirements and conditions. A primary purpose of zoning is to mitigate negative impacts of individual land use decisions and reduce potential conflicts between adjacent land uses.

Marquette County does not have a zoning ordinance. Therefore, township and city zoning ordinances are important tools for the implementation of a county's goals and policies. There are currently 20 local zoning ordinances within Marquette County. Local zoning ordinances are generally adopted, amended, and enforced at the city and township levels by appointed planning commissions. Local planning commissions are advised and assisted by planning staff and/or a zoning administrator, and some decisions made by planning commissions have to be ratified by the local city council or township board. In 2016, local zoning ordinances in Marquette County were analyzed. Further information can be found at www.mqtcoplan.org.

This plan does not eliminate the need for local units to create and adopt their own zoning plan or the need to document the consistency between their plans and their

zoning ordinance and related decisions.

All decisions relating to zoning should focus upon implementing a well-thought-out plan that addresses the suitability of the land and infrastructure to the proposed use and the needs of the community. The plan(s), upon which the ordinance is based, must be updated regularly. Any ordinance that is not based upon official plans and policies, or does not comply with the State's enabling legislation, has a weak legal foundation.



Role of County Planning

The Marquette County Planning Commission (MCPC) was established in 1969 and is governed by the [Michigan Planning Enabling Act](#). The Act enables the MCPC to prepare and adopt a master plan. The enabling legislation also allows the MCPC an opportunity to review all master plans and township zoning ordinances, including amendments, of municipalities within and adjacent to Marquette County for consistency with statutory requirements and the County master plan. County planning has the unique role of creating a plan for growth over a larger geographic area and fostering coordination and cooperation between municipalities to address cross-boundary issues. With a county-wide plan, the Planning Commission can serve as a resource for municipalities, gather and disseminate data, and facilitate discussion by bringing groups together and encourage communities to plan together.

Explore more data, tools, and information at www.mqtcoplan.org

Smart Growth

"Smart growth" shifts from a short-term focus of tax base expansion to long-term fiscal, social, economic, and environmental sustainability. General goals of smart growth include achieving a unique sense of community and place; a choice in transportation, employment, and housing options; preservation of natural and cultural resources; and a healthy public.

THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF SMART GROWTH

1. Mix land uses.
2. Take advantage of compact design.
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
4. Create walkable neighborhoods.
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
7. Direct development towards existing communities.
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices.
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Land Development Tools

Infill Development

Infill development is further development or redevelopment of areas that are already developed. Infill development reduces the need to expand utilities, reinvests in existing systems, and can help revitalize communities and promote mixed use development (see below). Brownfield and greyfield sites typically have

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existing infrastructure in place, and although it can be extremely costly to remove environmental contamination, the benefit to the surrounding community and the cost savings of not extending utilities is great, making these prime infill development sites. Incentives for infill development can include density and/or height bonuses, expedited permit reviews, or reduction in permit fees. Brownfield funds can also be sought for site remediation.

Mixed-Use Development

The concept of mixed-use development includes allowing several different uses to occur in one area. The “mix” can include a range of different uses from varied types of residential to a multitude of general land uses such as residential, commercial, and office. Vibrant communities that are walkable, less auto-dependent, have higher density and capitalize on existing infrastructure result from mixed use development. Existing zoning districts can be modified to promote mixed use. Residential uses can coexist alongside commercial and even low-impact industrial uses, such as apartments above a commercial space or other business.

Cluster Development

The idea of clustering is to develop residential units close in proximity on small sites resulting in a large area of undeveloped commonly shared land. Cluster development typically costs less to build and promotes efficient use of infrastructure and utilities. Per the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, municipalities must provide a cluster option to developers either as a permitted or special land use. The undeveloped portion of the land should be placed in a conservation easement.

Planned Unit Development

Planned unit developments (PUDs) allow development to be designed and built as one unit and encourages innovative techniques. PUDs tolerate a variation in controls such as density, uses, open space, and timing and sequencing of the development without sacrificing public concerns for compatibility with adjacent uses of land.

Subdivision and condominium design standards regulate the layout of structures and infrastructure within a site. The standards protect the community by ensuring that lots are adequately served by proper utilities and roadway access.

The ability to view land use and development from a regional perspective, and coordinate among municipalities is invaluable. Growing “smart,” using development tools and adhering to land use planning objectives will move the county toward its goal.

Emerging Land Use Issue: Data Centers

A data center is “any physical room or facility that houses information technology infrastructure.” Data center facilities can be as small as a closet or as large as [250 acres \(28 football fields\)](#). These large facilities are called hyperscale data centers. Depending on the size and operations, data centers can use lots of water and electricity. The Saline Township Michigan hyperscale data center is proposed to require 1.4 GW of power in a state with a 2024 generation capacity of 32 GW. A large data center can require [up to 5 million gallons of water every day](#). This water usage is substantial but not unprecedented, for example in 2024, [power plants used 122 million gallons of water per day from the Lake Superior watershed](#). Often with data center design there is a tradeoff between water and electricity. Designs to limit water consumption will require more electricity and vice versa.

Data centers have sparked robust public discourse across the United States, the State of Michigan, and, more recently, Marquette County. In Marquette County there is at least [one municipality that has imposed a data center moratorium](#), others are considering moratorium, and [some are actively developing zoning ordinances](#).

The challenge for communities will be to develop regulations that will receive public support while not engaging in [illegal exclusionary zoning](#). Adopting illegal zoning can result in municipalities going to court and losing, as in [Saline Township](#). This result takes land use decisions completely out of local government hands.

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Community Services and Infrastructure

Community services are provided by a wide range of different entities and individuals in the community. Government certainly plays a critical role in providing many community services. The federal and state governments provide a wide variety of services, while local governments (counties, cities, townships, villages, etc.) provide water and sewer services, local road funding and maintenance, and public safety services, to name just a few. Other government agencies and entities provide community services as well. For example, in the City of Marquette electrical power is provided by the Marquette Board of Light & Power, a public electric

utility. Private organizations also provide many essential community services. For instance, the homeless shelter in Marquette is operated by Room at the Inn (a not-for-profit private entity), while electrical power in much of Marquette County is provided by the Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO), a for-profit utility company. Individuals can also provide important community services. For example, keeping the sidewalk in front of their home clear of snow and ice during the winter. Most services provided by the County of Marquette and other local governments are mandated by state or federal law. All public services can be enhanced by coordination among service providers, including potential public-private partnerships between government entities and not-for-profit or for-profit private service providers.

Governments are mandated to provide certain services. County governments in Michigan are required to provide law enforcement and court systems. City governments are required to provide for “public peace and health,” which implicitly requires them to provide a wide range of services from zoning to law enforcement to parks and recreation. Cities and townships are required to provide election services. In addition to constitutional requirements, the state legislature has created many regulations that must be enforced by local governments. Mandated services are a major concern for local governments, because they are often “unfunded mandates”. In essence, the costs of providing these services are often unfunded or inadequately funded by the state and federal governments that require local governments to provide

Community Assets and Services that Residents Care About, by Planning Region

MOOSE HILLS REGION

- Parks & recreation
- Road/street maintenance
- Dining & shopping
- Food access
- Transportation

BOREALIS BEACH REGION

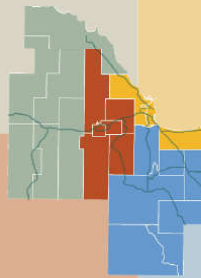
- Parks & recreation (esp. trails, Presque Isle, & beaches)
- Affordable housing choices (need more options)
- Road/street maintenance
- Health care & social services (incl. substance use treatment, mental health, homelessness, etc.)
- Pedestrian infrastructure

IRON CORE REGION

- Public school system
- Road/street maintenance
- Dining & shopping
- Youth programming
- Parks & recreation (esp. Iron Ore Heritage Trail & Al Quaal)

BLUEBERRY FARMS REGION

- Affordable housing choices
- Road/street maintenance
- Food access
- Parks & recreation (esp. trails)
- Transportation

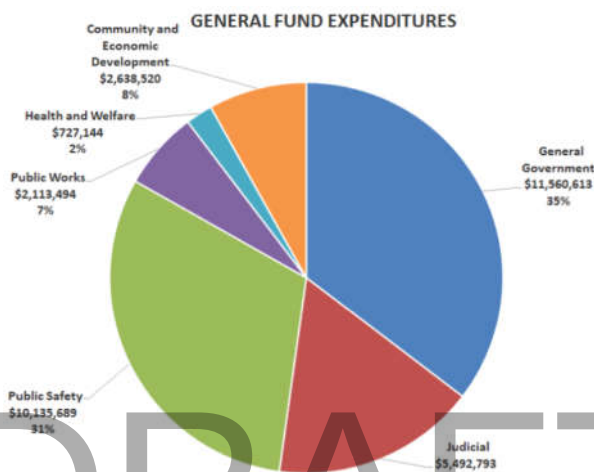
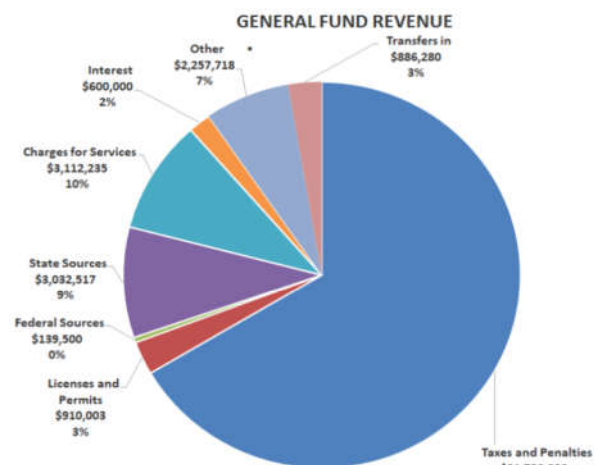




Marquette County 2026 Budget

The 2026 Marquette County Budget totals \$32,668,253 in general fund revenue and expenditures (up 1.9% from FY 2025).

A summary of the current budget can be found at the at the county's [website](#).

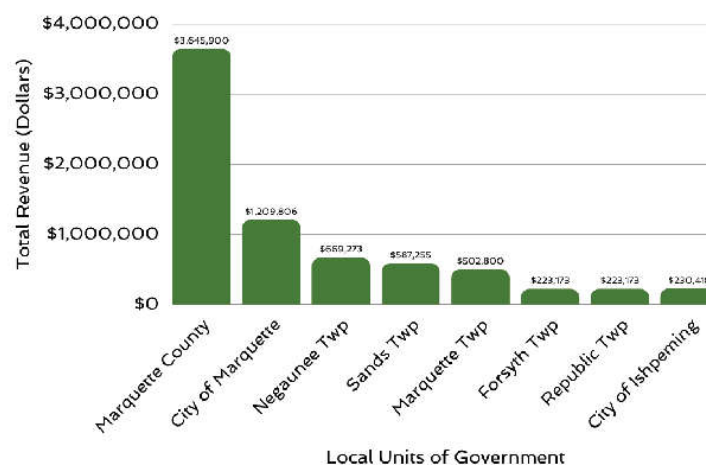


them. Approximately 75% of services provided by the County of Marquette are mandated by state law, and but only about half of County services are funded by state budget transfers.

Local Government Revenue Sources

Local governments, including the County of Marquette, derive their income from three primary sources: (1) direct taxes paid by constituents, (2) user fees, and (3) transfer payments from the state and federal governments. State governments across the country have been facing significant budget constraints since at least the Great Recession.

Total Marijuana Tax Revenue Distributed to Local Units of Government, 2020-2025



County Facilities

The County of Marquette operates many facilities throughout the County. These include criminal justice and court facilities, parks and recreation facilities, the

Marquette County Health Department, Marquette Sawyer Regional Airport, a Water Department and associated infrastructure at KI Sawyer, and many more. County-wide governmental agencies also maintain important facilities in Marquette County, including the County Road Commission (four garages and an office), the Solid Waste Management Authority (the County Landfill and Recyclego6), and the Marquette County Transit Authority (two depots in Marquette area).

Services

Government services must be accessible to the public. The large geographical size of Marquette County creates a challenge to provide equitable service, as evidenced by lack of transit service in some rural areas of the county, such as Ewing Township despite its residents paying a millage for it.

Types of Service Providers

There are a wide variety of entities that provide community services in Marquette County. In this section, we will attempt to divide these service providers into several broadly defined categories based on their jurisdiction, their public or private status, and the type of services they provide. Note that there will inevitably be service providers that fit into multiple categories.

Private For-Profit Service Providers

This category includes an extremely wide range of private businesses that provide services in order to make a profit. This includes banks and other lending institutions, most housing developers and landlords, automotive service providers, telecommunications service providers, gas stations, supermarkets and grocery stores, etc. Some private, for-profit entities can also provide services that would normally be considered "public" in nature. For



example, for-profit private schools provide education, but generally provide that service only to those students who are able to pay tuition fees or obtain private scholarships.

For-Profit Government Contractors

This subcategory are private, for-profit businesses that contract with governmental entities to provide public services. For example, Waste Management provides garbage and recycling collection services for the City of Marquette and many other municipalities throughout the country. This subcategory does not include all private entities that make a profit by providing community services (for example, private schools or hospitals), but only those that contract with a government entity to provide those services.

Local Units of Government (LUGs)

These include counties, cities, villages, and townships, which provide a wide range of public services including public safety; water, sewer, and stormwater services; local road construction and maintenance; public transportation; court and criminal justice services; parks and recreation; planning and zoning; and many more. LUGs provide services through direct public spending, or sometimes through public-private or intergovernmental partnerships. The authority and obligation of LUGs to provide certain services ultimately comes from the State of Michigan. There are 22 LUGs within Marquette County.

Independent Government Entities (IGEs)

These include a wide range of governmental entities that are organized on a municipal, county-wide, regional, or statewide level that provide important services to the public. These entities are usually created by an LUG or the State of Michigan, but operate with at least some degree of independence and autonomy from the

County Services include:

- Law enforcement, central dispatch, emergency management, and the County Jail
- Court services
- Road construction and maintenance (provided by the County Road Commission)
- Elections services provided by the County Clerk, in coordination with city and township clerks
- Administrative and record-keeping services (deeds, births, deaths, tax and fee collection, etc.)
- Building codes inspections and permitting
- Parks and recreation facilities, maintenance, and programming
- Planning, community, and economic development support
- Limited water and wastewater services
- Public transportation (provided by Marq-Tran)
- Materials management (County Landfill, recycling, etc., provided by MCSWMA)
- Various public health services (provided by the Marquette County Health Dept., or MCHD)
- Soil Sedimentation and Erosion and drain control
- Mine inspections
- Airport
- Aging Services
- Veteran Affairs

unit of government that originally created them, and often operate across municipal and county boundaries. Like Private For-Profit Service Providers and LUGs, Independent Government Entities provide an extremely wide array of services. In Marquette County this category includes public school districts, the Marquette Board of Light & Power, DDAs, the Marquette Housing Commission, the Marquette County Health Dept., Marq-Tran, the Marquette County Solid Waste Management Authority, the County Road Commission, the Marquette County Land Bank Authority, the Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service Agency (MARESA), the Marquette County Conservation District, Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development (CUPPAD), and the Sawyer Operations Authority (SOA), to name a few.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Municipal (cities & townships) Services include*:

- Trash and recyclable collection
- Local road, street, and sidewalk maintenance (townships do not own roads)
- Police, fire, and EMS services
- Water and wastewater services (though these are often not provided in very rural areas)
- Snow and ice removal and other public works services
- Planning, zoning, and local code enforcement
- Public libraries and community centers
- Stormwater management
- Parks and recreation
- Various economic development entities/services (DDAs, Brownfield Authorities, etc.)
- Voting and voter registration
- Administrative services (fee and fine collection, permitting, etc.)

*City and township services vary widely throughout the county based on population and financial ability

This category includes private, not-for-profit entities that provide services to solve specific problems or promote some specific public good, rather than to realize financial gains. In Marquette County this category includes the Marquette County Community Foundation, philanthropic organizations, trail user groups like the Noquemanon Trail Network (NTN), churches and most other religious organizations, the UP Land Conservancy, and Room at the Inn (which operates a homeless shelter in Marquette).

Tribal Governments

Tribes provide a variety of services for their members that reside in Marquette County including healthcare, housing, education, and much more. The two primary tribal governments with resources in Marquette County are the [Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians](#) and the [Keweenaw Bay Indian Community](#).

Business & Economic Development Service



Economic Development Organizations

Organization	Services Provided
Lake Superior Community Partnership	General economic development services for business and government in Marquette County.
Invest UP	General economic development services for the Upper Peninsula
Forsyth Forward	Economic development services for businesses and citizens in Forsyth Township
Ishpeming DDA	Downtown Ishpeming small business support, and downtown beautification and redevelopment.
Marquette DDA	Downtown Marquette small business support, and downtown beautification and redevelopment.
Michigamme DDA	Downtown Michigamme small business support, and downtown beautification and redevelopment.
Negaunee DDA	Downtown Negaunee small business support, and downtown beautification and redevelopment.
Marquette Township DDA	Multimodal transportation connectivity, corridor aesthetic improvements, all-user safety enhancements
Marquette Brownfield Redevelopment Authority	Facilitate redevelopment of eligible sites in Marquette City through Tax Increment Financing.
Marquette County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority	Facilitate redevelopment of eligible sites in Marquette County through Tax Increment Financing.
Marquette Local Development Finance Authority	Facilitate economic development through Tax Increment Financing.
Innovate Marquette SmartZone	Start-up incubation, small business assistance, focus on tech development.
Invent @ NMU	Start-up incubation and support for inventors from NMU student specialists.

Providers

This category can include both public and private entities that represent business interests in the community and promote and facilitate economic development and support for existing local businesses. This category can also include services provided to certain types of businesses – for example, businesses located in downtown districts or tourism-dependent businesses. Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs), the Lake Superior Community Partnership (LSCP), Forsyth Forward, Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities, Travel Marquette, Local Development Finance Authorities (LDFAs), and the Marquette SmartZone could all be included in this category. Almost all of the organizations in this category would also fall into one of the other categories mentioned above, but their purpose is sufficiently unique to warrant a separate category.

Types of Services

Health Care & Social Services

A wide variety of health care and social services are provided by various entities in Marquette County. The [Marquette County Health Department](#) provides public health expertise and services, with a notable recent example being the organization of public health announcements and vaccine distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic. General health care services are provided by Upper Peninsula Health System (UPHS) at the regional hospital in Marquette, UPHS-Bell Hospital in Ishpeming, and the UPHS-Negaunee Family Medicine clinic. Mental health care is available at UPHS-Marquette,

[Pathways Community Mental Health](#) in Marquette, and several smaller care providers in the Marquette area. Substance use disorder treatment for adults is available at [Great Lakes Recovery Centers \(GLRC\)](#) outpatient locations, residential treatment facilities, and recovery housing in Marquette and Negaunee, and at Pathways Substance Abuse Services in Negaunee, with treatment for minors available at the GLRC Adolescent Services facility in Negaunee.

Many other vital social services are provided by a wide array of both public and private entities. Many of these service providers are discussed in greater detail in other sections of this Plan.

Law Enforcement

Currently, law enforcement in Marquette County is provided by the Michigan State Police, the Marquette County Sheriff, three city police departments, three township police departments, Northern Michigan University Public Safety, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, and various federal agencies.

Jail Overcrowding

Jail overcrowding has become a major problem for Marquette County and many other counties in Michigan. Even as state prison populations have decreased in recent years, county jail populations have increased. According to the Marquette County Sheriff's Dept., the COVID-19 pandemic revealed several deficiencies in the Marquette County Jail. One consequence of overcrowding at the County Jail is the inability to properly isolate inmates who have contracted contagious diseases such as COVID-19. Another deficiency in the current facility is not having enough space to hold virtual court proceedings, telemedicine appointments, and attorney visits.

62% of survey respondents felt there was a need for more health and social services (including mental health services and substance use treatment) in their region

"There needs to be a campaign to recruit more health professionals so wait lists are not so long."

—Borealis Beach

"Mental Health and homelessness needs to be addressed."

—Borealis Beach



Courts

Marquette County hosts local courts for the State of Michigan. The courts include the 25th Circuit Court, the 96th District Court, Juvenile Court, and Probate Court. [The Circuit Court](#) handles felony criminal matters, civil lawsuits over \$25,000, and family cases, and, if necessary, has its rulings appealed to the Michigan Court of Appeals. [The District Court](#) covers misdemeanors, the preliminary steps for felony cases, civil infractions, and civil lawsuits up to \$25,000. [The Probate Court](#) has jurisdiction over wills; administers estates and trusts, appoints guardians and conservators; and orders treatment for mentally ill and developmentally disabled persons.

Fire Protection

Fire protection was possibly the first service to which intergovernmental cooperation was applied in Marquette County. Every fire department in the county has a mutual aid agreement with at least one other fire department.

A number of townships in the county have formed multi-jurisdictional fire departments, some crossing county lines. The Tri-Township Fire Department joins Turin and Ewing Townships in Marquette County with Maple Ridge Township in Delta County. Michigamme Township and Spurr Township (Baraga County) have a joint fire department. The Skandia-West Branch Fire & EMS joins with the Forsyth Township Fire Department to provide emergency services at KI Sawyer.

Emergency Medical Service

[Emergency Medical Services \(EMS\)](#) are another vital community service in Marquette County. EMS goes beyond ambulances – it is a complex system of different

services that combine together to provide timely, high-quality care to those experiencing medical emergencies. In Marquette County, EMS is heavily dependent on volunteer EMS first responders. There were approximately 120 EMS volunteers and personnel in the County as of 2021, and in recent years there are fewer people entering the EMS field and volunteer recruitment has fallen significantly. Most EMS agencies in Marquette County are in need of multiple additional volunteers and personnel, but are struggling just to maintain their already shorthanded rosters. The shortage of EMS first responders is especially acute in the Moose Hills region. Residents of this region often need to wait for an ambulance from the hospital in Ishpeming; a round trip from Ishpeming to Michigamme or Republic can take nearly an hour depending on traffic or weather.

Garbage and Recycling Collection

Townships and cities take a variety of approaches to garbage collection. All municipalities in the county participate in the Intergovernmental Agreement establishing the Marquette County Solid Waste Management Authority, and send their waste exclusively to the Marquette County Landfill in Sands Township. The method of delivery, however, varies from community to community and includes providing garbage collection themselves, contracting with a private hauler, establishing their own transfer stations, or requiring residents to contract or provide their own hauling. Increased coordination in garbage collection could lead to better organization of routes and more efficient, less costly collection.

Many municipalities also provide for the collection and delivery of recycling to [Recycle 906](#), the Materials

Materials Management in Marquette County

The municipalities of Marquette County established the [Marquette County Solid Waste Management Authority \(MCSWMA\)](#) in 1988, and the Marquette County Landfill opened in 1989. There are only a few government-owned landfills in Michigan. In 1999, the County Board adopted the Marquette County Solid Waste Plan. In addition to on-site solid waste disposal and storage, the County Landfill offers many other services to Marquette County residents, including drop-off recycling, household hazardous waste collection, and a drug take-back program. All 22 municipalities in Marquette County are part of the MCSWMA, but it is up to each municipality to determine how they want to manage materials collection and removal from residential areas. Commercial entities are responsible for making their own collection and hauling arrangements.

The County is in the process of developing a [Materials Management Plan](#). This plan will replace the existing Solid Waste Plan and has an expanded scope to now include recycling and composting. Marquette County is participating in a multi-county plan with Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Menominee, and Schoolcraft counties. CUPPAD is coordinating the update. The proposed plan will be finalized in late 2026 and the adoption process will continue until mid-2027.

Recovery Facility at the Marquette County Landfill. The recycling facility provides single-stream recycling, meaning the materials do not have to be sorted before reaching the facility. Recycle 906 can also take glass. Check out the Recycle 906 website for complete details on what they recycle.

Partridge Creek Compost (PPC) offers [residential compost collection](#) for the City of Marquette, City of Negaunee, City of Ishpeming, Trowbridge Park, and Harvey. It also offers [commercial compost collection](#) in the cities of Marquette, Negaunee, and Ishpeming. The PPC compost site in Ishpeming was the [first, fully permitted compost facility under Part 115](#), the updated state law for solid waste.

Water Service

Four systems cross political boundaries: The Marquette system (City of Marquette and Marquette Township), Ishpeming-Negaunee Water Authority (City of Ishpeming and City of Negaunee), Kl. Sawyer's water system (Forsyth Township and West Branch Township) and the Skandia water authority (Skandia Township and West Branch Township). Water systems can be expensive to maintain over time. In addition to water extraction and treatment, the mains require continual maintenance.

Sanitary Sewer Service

Three systems cross political boundaries: the Marquette Area Wastewater Authority (City of Marquette, Marquette Township, and Chocoy Township), the Ishpeming Area Wastewater Treatment (City of Ishpeming, Ishpeming Township) and Kl Sawyer's wastewater system (Forsyth Township and West Branch Township). Sanitary sewer service, like water service, is provided mainly in the urban corridor. It is even more expensive to maintain a sanitary sewer system than a water system, because while delivery costs (pipes) are similar, the treatment costs are much higher, particularly when secondary treatment is needed.

Public Transportation

Countywide bus service is provided through Marq-Tran, which is funded by a countywide tax. Transit service has been provided in Marquette County since 1985. [The Marquette County Transit Authority \(Marq-Tran\)](#) offers a variety of services including fixed and feeder routes, curb-to-curb service, special contract runs, and specialized service runs. Marq-Tran cannot provide service to all corners of the County given its size. Their fixed routes reach south to Gwinn and west to Ishpeming daily. Efforts to coordinate bus routes with carpool lots, trailheads and other regional transit are improving this mode of transportation.

Survey Snapshots

Suggested areas of improvement in Marq-Tran service are:

- improved marketing,
- ease of access, and
- updated information on the Marq-Tran website.

Several fixed routes run within the urban areas to link the three cities in the County and connect residential areas to retail and commerce centers. The Ishpeming-Negaunee route runs hourly to and from Marquette. Likewise, the Sawyer route connects the Kl. Sawyer and Gwinn communities to Marquette. Fixed-route buses are equipped with racks that can hold bicycles, improving the level of service for destinations too far to walk to, but close enough to cycle to. Marq-Tran also has a transfer station located at the intersection of Spring Street and Third Street in the City of Marquette.

Beyond local transit, Indian Trails offers long-distance bus service along the [Hancock to Milwaukee route](#) daily. This route picks up from the Marq-Tran depot in Marquette Township.

Economic Development

Numerous organizations are involved in economic development in Marquette County. In recent years, the [Lake Superior Community Partnership \(LSCP\)](#) has taken a leading role in encouraging economic development in the county. The newly formed [Forsyth Forward](#) is acting as a blend of a chamber of commerce, a visitor's bureau, and an economic development organization for Forsyth Township. DDAs in Marquette, Ishpeming, Negaunee, and Michigamme have also played similar roles, but specifically for downtown districts and the businesses located within them. The County of Marquette has also played an active role in economic development, both through the [Marquette County Economic Development Corporation](#) and Marquette Sawyer Regional Airport. Various County-wide and regional authorities (the County Land Bank, Brownfield Authorities, CUPPAD, etc.) have also played important roles in economic development in Marquette County in recent years. Invest UP serves as a regional economic development organization for the entire Upper Peninsula.

Investors are more likely to put their money in an area where cooperation and regional integration are themes. Development in one township or city often has spillover effects into neighboring communities, and as a result regional and intergovernmental partnerships are critically important to promote economic development. Similarly, public-private partnerships can also lead to economic growth and opportunities that would have otherwise been impossible through public or private action alone,

and can promote greater mutual understanding and cooperation between the public and private sectors.

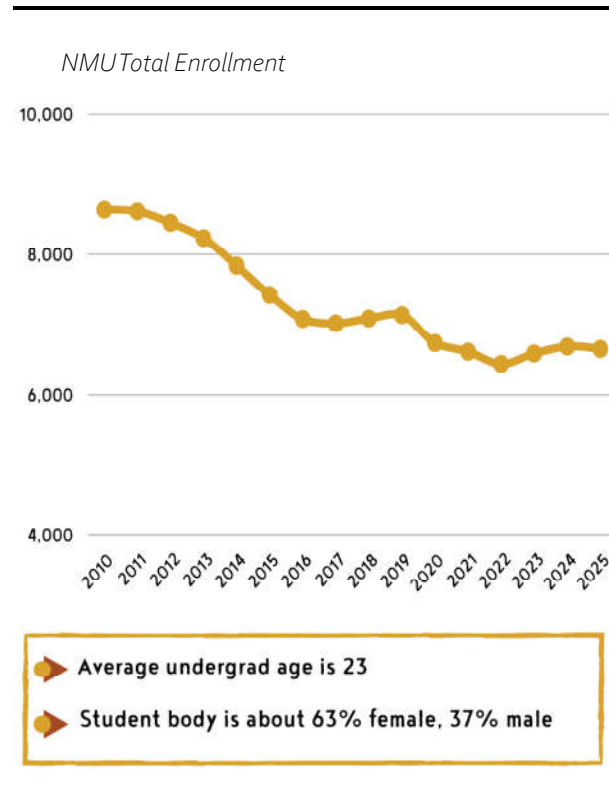
Libraries

The core function of libraries is to provide free access to books and educational resources. The libraries of Marquette County also provide a variety of services beyond book borrowing including community space, art exhibitions, computer access, document services, seed libraries, and more. [The Peter White Public Library](#) serves the City of Marquette, Chocolay Township, Ewing Township, Marquette Township, Sands Township, Skandia Township, Turin Township, Wells Township, and West Branch Township. [The Ishpeming Carnegie Public Library](#) serves residents of the City of Ishpeming, Champion Township, Ely Township, Humboldt Township, Ishpeming Township, and Tilden Township. Other libraries include the [Negaunee Public Library](#), the [Forsyth Township Public Library](#), the [Republic-Michigamme Public Library](#), the [Michigamme Community Library](#), the [Powell Township School Library](#), and the [Richmond Township Library](#).

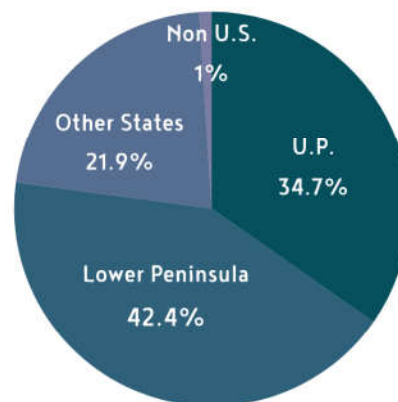
Education

Education is one of the most important community services provided in Marquette County. Northern Michigan University was founded in 1899 as Northern State Normal School. Over time, it evolved from a center for teacher training to a comprehensive regional university. In the Fall 2025 semester, NMU hosted 7,386 undergraduate and graduate students, substantially lower than the more than 9,000 students NMU boasted 15 years ago.

The [NMU student body](#) has gradually become more diverse, with the percentage of NMU undergraduate students identifying as people of color growing from 8% in



NMU Undergrad Enrollment by Region, Fall 2025



2010 to 13% in 2025. There are also more students coming from outside the UP. In 2006, there were more than twice as many NMU undergraduates from the Upper Peninsula (54%) as from downstate Michigan (25%). By 2025, 35% of undergraduates were Yoopers, compared to 42% from downstate, 22% from other states, and 1% from other parts of the world. The number of undergraduates from Marquette County has fallen by 53% since 2005 and the number of undergraduates from the Upper Peninsula has similarly fallen by 53%. The [percentage of NMU freshmen](#) who identify as “first generation” college students (i.e., the first member of their family to attend a four-year college) has stayed fairly steady going from 34.4% in 2015 to 34.2% in 2025. NMU participates in [articulation agreements and other similar programs](#) to partner with other educational institutions throughout the state and provide students flexibility to fulfill their educational needs.

NMU is very important in attracting new residents who come to get an education and decide they want to stay in Marquette County after graduation. Of course, the success of this strategy for attracting new residents will depend on there actually being good-paying, attractive jobs available for these NMU graduates.

Marquette County is also home to six public K-12 school districts and two public K- 8 districts. In addition, Turin, Ewing, and Wells Townships send many of their K-12 students to the Mid-Peninsula and Escanaba districts in Delta County, and a small number of students attend local charter or parochial schools in Marquette. Marquette County is also home to North Star Montessori Academy, a K-12 charter school, and Father Marquette Catholic Academy, a K-8 Catholic parochial school. Most school districts in Marquette County have struggled with declining enrollment or are heavily reliant on school of choice. For example, Marquette Area Public Schools

shuttered five of its eight elementary schools in the first decade of the 21st century after the closure of K.I. Sawyer AFB in 1995. As of 2021, MAPS operates four elementary schools and relies heavily on school of choice students from neighboring school districts. Homeschooling is also an important component of K-12 education in Marquette County. Other educational service providers include the [Marquette Alger Regional Education Service Agency \(MARESA\)](#) who provides special and vocational education to both K-12 and adult students in Marquette and Alger Counties.

Recently [education funding has been increasing](#) but over

[the decades it has struggled to keep up with inflation](#). Years of underinvestment and declining student numbers have contributed to continuing financial challenges. Many districts have struggled to maintain school buildings and infrastructure, advanced academic coursework, arts and music, career and technical education, and sports programs. The future of public K-12 education in Marquette County remains murky, but there is still hope that great educational opportunity can be offered to local students in the coming years. Making this hope a reality will be crucial to the future sustainability and prosperity of Marquette County.

Marquette County also hosts a variety of trade and apprenticeship programs. The training centers within Marquette County include [Bricklayers & Allied Craftworkers Local 2 – Michigan](#), [Northern Midwest Regional Council of Carpenters/Millwrights Local 1510](#), [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 906](#), [Ironworkers Local 8](#), and [Sheet Metal Workers Local 7 Zone 5](#). NMU and Bay College support a [Middle College program](#) that allows high school students to take college classes and receive an associate or technical certificate at no cost by adding an extra year during high school. The Upper Peninsula Construction Council offers [Construction Connect UP](#) an earn-and-learn program to support high schoolers and other aspiring tradespeople with the transition from school to a career.

There is a major [shortage](#) of affordable, licensed child care options in Marquette County. The shortage of infant care and before-and-after-school care for school-age children is especially severe. Most child care providers in Marquette County have waiting lists, and it can take up to a year to get through some local child care centers' waiting lists. This means that an expecting mother in Marquette County would potentially need to register for

child care immediately upon learning of her pregnancy (and perhaps even earlier).

Child care is also increasingly unaffordable. In fact, according to a 2017 study by the Michigan Dept. of Education, Marquette County has the 5th-highest child care market rate for infant care (\$5.67/hour) among all 83 counties in Michigan, the 6th-highest toddler care rate (also \$5.67/hour), the 12th-highest preschool rate (\$4.53/hour), and the 17th-highest for school-age care. This shortage of affordable child care options is not reasonable or sustainable, and is hurting Marquette County families.

Over the last couple of years new programs have started to address these issues. The County, LSCP, and the Community Foundation developed [Childcare SPARK](#), a program that provides resources and advice to assist with launching new childcare centers. The State of Michigan also has a program called [Tri-Share](#) which allows the cost of childcare to be shared evenly between the employee,

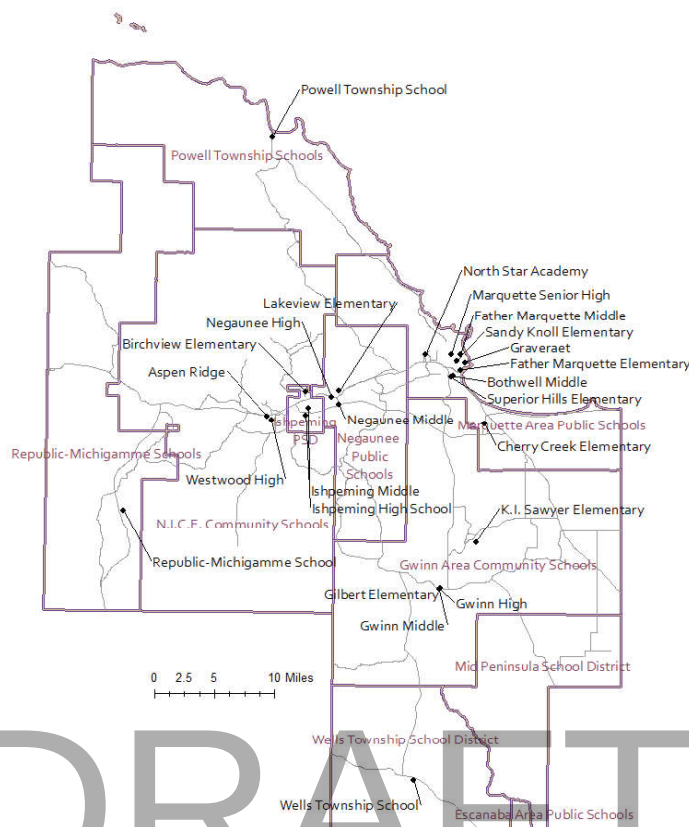
Level of Internet Service 2026	Download Speed	Upload Speed
FCC Minimum Definition of Broadband Internet	100 Mbps	20 Mbps
NMU EAN Plan One	25 Mbps	1-5 Mbps
NMU EAN Plan Two	25 Mbps	1-5 Mbps
NMU EAN Plan Three	25 Mbps	1-5 Mbps

the employer, and the State of Michigan.

Internet Access & Cellular Service

In the next 20 years, one Gbps broadband will become the new baseline level of internet service required by businesses and residents, and will become a utility as

Public Schools and Districts



crucial as electricity and phone service. Access to one Gbps download and upload speeds would allow Marquette County to attract remote workers and technology and manufacturing firms, while also improving the local quality of life and opening up new opportunities for current residents and businesses. Over 73% of Marquette County now meets this one Gbps speed baseline. This is a massive improvement from five years ago when almost no part of Marquette County had that level of broadband service.

Many counties and municipalities that are underserved by internet providers have provided public broadband internet service themselves. Many communities (for example, the Village of L'Anse and Gwinn) are also now providing free public Wi-Fi in their downtown districts or parks. These successful municipal internet services could eventually be replicated by local units of government in Marquette County. The COVID-19 pandemic forced many schools to resort to full-time or part-time virtual learning, revealing just how crucial it is for students to have access to reliable, high-speed internet in the 21st century. Students and schools without access to broadband will face increasingly severe educational disadvantages over the next 20 years.

Improving cell service is in some ways an even more difficult challenge for the County of Marquette and municipalities. Cell service is currently available in most of Marquette County, but it is often unreliable or very low-quality, especially in rural areas.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Coordination of Services

Local governments have worked together in Marquette

Interlocal Agreements

Agreements between local units of government must be mutually beneficial to be sustainable in the long term. The following factors are critical to the success of any interlocal agreement:

- Cooperating units must feel that they have a say in the process.
- Everyone must feel that they are getting their money's worth.
- Services provided to each agency should be commensurate with financial or time contributions.
- Agreements should start with things that are easy to agree on; trust must be built before the tougher issues can be tackled.
- The agreement should have support both from leadership (both administrative and legislative) and from the constituents.
- Customers should be satisfied with the level of service.
- Working together should cost less than working separately, unless a new service is created that would not have been available otherwise.

County for many years. Fire departments long ago realized that some fires would be too big for one department to handle alone. Mutual aid agreements provided a legal framework for one department to help out another during an emergency. Adjacent jurisdictions have also cooperated on the purchase and maintenance of expensive capital projects like utility systems and roads. In the face of declining local tax revenue and reduced revenue sharing from state and federal sources, local governments have been forced to focus on making the operation of government cheaper and more efficient. After decades of continual “fat-trimming” by local governments, opportunities for making community services more cost-effective are certainly limited, especially if current levels of service are to be maintained, but increased cooperation between local governments is one way of doing so.

Regional Planning and Coordination

The Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Regional Commission (CUPPAD) serves the central six counties of the central Upper Peninsula (Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee, and Schoolcraft). The mission of CUPPAD is to foster cooperative analysis; planning and action for economic, social and physical development; and conservation within the central Upper Peninsula. CUPPAD offers a variety of services including local technical assistance, transportation planning, community and economic development, grants and

Best Practices for Intergovernmental Cooperation

- Adjacent local governments can make things easier for residents and businesses by adopting consistent standards in their ordinances. A good example of this process in Marquette County is the adoption of access management standards for the US-41/M-28 corridor between Harvey and Koski Corners. After meeting with MDOT and other concerned parties, several townships have adopted standard access management ordinances for the corridor. This reduces confusion and helps local governments manage growth along the corridor.
- Regular intergovernmental meetings. For example, the Marquette County Administrator meets regularly with counterparts from cities and townships in an “Idea Exchange” to discuss issues of common interest. Another example is the Marquette County Township Association holds regular meetings between the 19 townships in Marquette County.
- Shared government services of various kinds.



The KI Sawyer Community

The community of KI Sawyer is a perfect case study of both the great potential benefits of intergovernmental coordination and the potential harm that can result from ineffective cooperation between local governments, especially for vulnerable populations. KI Sawyer was established in 1955 after Marquette County signed a 99-year lease with the U.S. Air Force to construct KI Sawyer Air Force Base (AFB). KI Sawyer AFB housed thousands of military personnel and their families for decades, until being shut down and mostly abandoned in the 1990s as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process that began at the end of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. However, over the last 20-30 years, KI Sawyer has gradually recovered, becoming an important source of affordable rental and owner-occupied housing despite its remote location. By 2019, KI Sawyer's population had rebounded to approximately 3,000, and most of the largest employers and tax-paying entities in Forsyth Township were located at KI Sawyer. Despite this, blight, concentrated poverty, and a lack of access to vital services have remained persistent problems at KI Sawyer.

Cooperation from multiple governmental entities and service providers is the key to improving the many unique circumstances borne to KI Sawyer. KI Sawyer is divided between two townships, Forsyth and West Branch. In addition, Marquette County owns and operates Marquette Sawyer Regional Airport, provides water and sewer service to KI Sawyer residents, and operates Little Trout Lake Park.

Sawyer Village, a low-income housing complex consisting of 200-300 units, is an enterprise of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, and a large number of tribal members live in KI Sawyer, meaning that tribal governments are also vital stakeholders. Finally, the Sawyer Operations Authority (SOA) and Sawyer Community Alliance (SCA) are both quasi-governmental local entities dedicated specifically to KI Sawyer and its needs which operate side-by-side.

KI Sawyer is a strong community composed of many passionate residents who care deeply about their neighbors and the needs of the community. If greater intergovernmental coordination can be united with the strong purpose and work ethic of KI Sawyer residents themselves, KI Sawyer can continue to grow and make progress as a community and become an even better place to live for local residents.

In order to adequately address the challenges and opportunities facing KI Sawyer in the next 20 years, all of these local governmental stakeholders should work together, listen to, and understand the needs of KI Sawyer residents. The Marquette County Planning Division and other regional planning entities, like CUPPAD, can play a vital role in this effort, including by facilitating the creation of a KI Sawyer Strategic Plan. The creation of the KI Sawyer Strategic Plan is on-going with Sawyer Community Alliance leading its development.

funding, and mapping and GIS. Current initiatives lead by CUPPAD include the [Central UP Materials Management Plan](#), the [Regional Housing Partnership](#), and the [Central UP Comprehensive Economic Development Plan](#).

The Superior Trade Zone is a multi-governmental partnership between units of government in Delta and Marquette Counties. The Superior Trade Zone helps to establish and implement programs which encourage regional economic growth, development, investment, job creation and retention.

Local Service Coordination: Challenges & Opportunities

The geography, development pattern, and local political realities of Marquette County often combine to make it challenging for local governments to deliver efficient and effective local services. In some regions of Marquette County, most notably the Borealis Beach and Iron Core regions, a relatively large and compact population and development pattern makes services relatively cost-effective to deliver. However, the extremely rural parts of the County in the Blueberry Farms and Moose Hills regions must contend with a very low-density population, small local tax bases, and additional challenges such as the conversion of isolated secondary residences (i.e., “camps”) into permanent residences in many rural townships, and dramatic variations in community needs even within the same municipality, for instance in West Branch Twp., where a stark divide exists between the higher-density, high-poverty Sawyer community in the southwest of the township and the rest of the township, which is mostly composed of rural farms and homesteads.

To address these challenges, local governments should consider collaborating to provide services across municipal boundary lines on a regional level. These

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collaborative efforts can include sharing emergency services (like Skandia and West Branch Twps. and many other rural townships), parks and recreation staff and resources, utility delivery systems such as water and sewer pipes and treatment facilities (like the City of Marquette and Marquette Twp.), and transfer stations (like the West End Transfer station and the Skandia/West Branch Transfer Station). Public-private partnerships also play a major role in providing services to residents and visitors to Marquette County and can be a more efficient way for local governments to provide quality public services, create a stronger economy, and improve the quality of life for local residents – for instance, the [County Housing Rehabilitation Program](#) has a strong partnership with [Habitat for Humanity](#). Similarly, partnerships between different levels of government are very important – for example, [Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development \(CUPPAD\)](#), the central UP’s regional planning agency, often assists Marquette County townships with drafting recreation plans, while the County Planning Division frequently assists the County Land Bank, local municipalities, and other public entities in Marquette County with planning, policy formulation, and community development projects.

In the final chapter of this Plan, we will discuss the specific strategies that can be implemented in each planning region to meet the needs of all Marquette County residents and communities over the next two decades. Intergovernmental cooperation, service coordination, and a need for regional planning and problem-solving will be major themes in this chapter.

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Explore more data, tools, and information at www.mqtcoplan.org

Where We're Going

The previous comprehensive update to the Marquette County Master Plan was completed in 2021. It was the first complete re-write since 1982. Marquette County, and the world, were very different in the 1980s – it would be years before the Internet had a meaningful impact on most peoples' lives; cell phones had just been invented; the world was still in the icy grip of the Cold War, and not coincidentally K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base was still operational and Marquette County's population was significantly larger than it is today; Michigan was in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Our County and our world have seen many changes since 1982, some foreseeable and some completely unpredictable, and much will surely change between 2026 and 2040. The goal of this five-year update is to do a check-in on the 20-year vision outlined in the Plan and make small updates. There have been some changes in the world since 2020, although not as transformative as from 1982 to 2020, but the world has emerged from COVID, the state and federal landscape continues to shift, and AI and data centers have become everyday topics. The Plan cannot predict everything that will happen or prescribe everything that must be done over the next two decades. This section outlines a vision for Marquette County's next 20 years, using the extensive input we have gathered from experts, residents, stakeholders, and other communities to answer the question posed in the very first paragraph of this Plan: What do we want Marquette County to be like in the year 2040?

2040 Vision

Marquette County in 2045 will be a place where its people enjoy natural areas and rural character, feel safe, and celebrate culture. A stable and diverse economy empowers residents to live in thriving communities with a clean environment, good education, valuable job opportunities, and affordable quality housing.

Goals

1. A community resilient to climate change through mitigation, adaptation and coordinated public policy
2. A stimulated, sustained and diverse regional economy achieved through collaboration, economic growth and prosperity
3. Marquette County is a regional recreation hub where residents and visitors experience the natural environment and recreational assets without ecological degradation
4. Land within existing communities has been redeveloped, protecting natural areas and prime farmlands for the benefit of the region
5. Access to diverse educational opportunities for all, especially youth
6. A mix of high-quality affordable housing types located in places that adhere to the tenets of smart growth
7. Marquette County remains someplace special through celebration and promotion of culture and heritage unique to our area
8. Residents, especially vulnerable populations, feel safe, healthy, happy and secure
9. Governmental agencies, public and private service providers, and the public work together respectively to coordinate public services and utilities and address challenges faced by the community
10. Continued expansion of access to affordable assets including clean water, healthy food, medical services, broadband, cellular service, utilities and transportation

How We'll Get There

In this final chapter of this Plan, we will chart a course to the vision for Marquette County's future from the previous chapter. This chapter has specific, concrete strategies that can be used by the County of Marquette, local municipalities, community organizations, and stakeholders to achieve the goals of this Plan. Some strategies are "low-hanging fruit" and can be achieved fairly quickly and easily; others are urgent tasks that may be difficult to achieve, but must still be top short-term priorities; still others are long-term projects that may not yet be fully achieved by the time of the next comprehensive update to this Plan a generation from now. Taken together, these strategies will serve as the blueprint for building a better future for all Marquette County residents by the year 2040.

Throughout the planning process and this Plan, four **planning regions** have been considered, recognizing that although the communities throughout Marquette County have similarities, they also have varying challenges and

opportunities. The strategies account for this and identify which planning region(s) the strategy applies to. The key identifies the name, color, and municipalities of each planning region.

Seven main themes were derived from the results of the community survey, interviews, and dialogue with local planning commissions. The strategies are further categorized by over thirty sub-themes, which can be viewed on the Plan's website.

Seven Strategy Themes

1. Economy,
2. Environment,
3. Health & Human Services,
4. Housing,
5. Recreation,
6. Transportation, and
7. Government Operations

A general timeline is also included with the strategies.

- Short– less than five years
- Long– more than five years

A more detailed explanation of each strategy is housed on Planning's website, www.mqtcoplan.org. The detailed strategy can be considered the strategy with "cliff notes" of background information. It is highly recommended that you visit the website for additional information about each strategy.

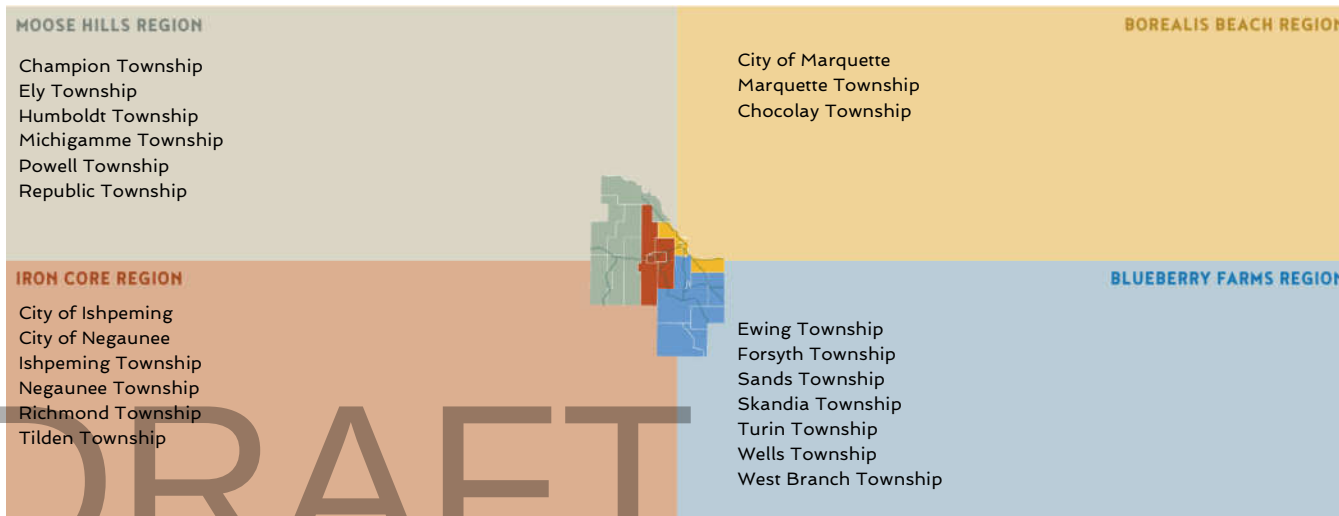
A list of responsible parties for each strategy is also included. There are generalized and specific responsible parties and likely many who were not intentionally left off the list. This Plan asks the identified responsible parties to consider how they can achieve, or assist in achieving, these strategies collaboratively with others.

A comprehensive table of strategies is available for viewing, sorting and downloading on our master plan website. Sorting or filtering by planning region, main theme, sub-theme, timeline, and/or responsible party, is available.

Finally, it is the intent of the Marquette County Planning Commission and Division that this Master Plan, its strategies, and the Marquette County Planning website be a resource for the community. We hope they provide valuable information and will serve as a common blueprint for you to be part of achieving this vision:

Marquette County in 2040 will be a place where its people enjoy natural areas and rural character, feel safe, and celebrate culture. A stable and diverse economy empowers residents to live in thriving communities with a clean environment, good education, valuable job opportunities, and affordable quality housing.

Strategy Color-code Key for Planning Regions





	STRATEGIES	LOCATION					RESPONSIBLE PARTIES																			
	STRATEGY	COUNTY-WIDE	BLUEBERRY FARMS	IRON CORE	BOREALIS BEACH	MOOSE HILLS	TIMELINE	Businesses	Business/Economic Community Organizations	County	County Planning	Local Units of Government	Developers & Investors	Downtown Dev. Authorities	Federal Government	Higher Education (NMU)	Land Bank/ Brownfield	Organized Labor	Recreation Organizations	Regional Planning	Sawyer Operations	School Districts	State Government	Transportation Agencies	Tribal Governments	ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBLE PARTIES
1	ECONOMY																									
1.1	Identify prime farmland and develop a plan to preserve and make available for farmers.				x		L	x	x		x	x	x			x				x						Upper Peninsula Food Exchange, Farmers, Land Conservancies, MSU Extension, NMU Center for Rural Health
1.2	Promote coordinated planning among U.P. Energy Providers.	x	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	x							x			x				Utility Providers
1.3	Expand Opportunities for Energy Waste Reduction in the U. P.	x	x	x	x	x	L	x	x	x	x	x				x		x		x		x		x		Lake Superior Community Partnership
1.4	Assist municipalities in planning for eventual mine closures.			x		x	L	x	x		x	x						x		x			x			Lake Superior Community Partnership, Marquette Co. Community Foundation
1.5	Support the responsible expansion of new industries in the region.	x	x	x	x	x	S	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x				Lake Superior Community Partnership, Innovate Marquette
1.6	Conduct a land value assessment to guide future decisions about development to assure that new infrastructure pays for itself and existing infrastructure is maintained.	x	x	x	x	x	S				x	x								x						
1.7	Create a redevelopment strategic plan to guide sustainable development at K.I. Sawyer.		x				S	x	x	x		x	x			x		x			x				x	Sawyer Community Alliance, Lake Superior Community Partnership, InvestUP, MSU Extension
1.8	Maintain and expand Career Technical Education (CTE) opportunities.	x	x	x	x	x	S	x		x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	Michigan Works
1.9	Improve access to free high speed WiFi.	x	x	x	x	x	S	x		x	x	x		x	x								x			
1.10	Improve high speed broadband services throughout the County.	x	x	x	x	x	L	x		x	x	x		x	x	x							x		x	
1.11	Improve cell phone access throughout Marquette County.	x	x	x	x	x	L	x		x	x				x					x			x			Lake Superior Community Partnership



	STRATEGIES	LOCATION					RESPONSIBLE PARTIES																				
	STRATEGY	COUNTY-WIDE	BLUEBERRY FARMS	IRON CORE	BOREALIS BEACH	MOOSE HILLS	TIMELINE	Businesses	Business/Economic	Community Organizations	County	County Planning	Local Units of Government	Developers & Investors	Downtown Dev. Authorities	Federal Government	Higher Education (NMU)	Land Bank/ Brownfield	Organized Labor	Recreation Organizations	Regional Planning	Sawyer Operations	School Districts	State Government	Transportation Agencies	Tribal Governments	ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBLE PARTIES
1.12	Redevelop vacant and/or blighted commercial properties in areas with existing infrastructure utilizing grants, Brownfield Plans, tax incentives, etc. (including for non-commercial uses and mixed uses).	x	x	x	x	x	L	x	x			x	x	x	x	x		x						x			
1.13	Consider repurposing and rezoning vacant commercial properties for non-commercial use (i.e., residential or light industrial) or mixed use.	x	x	x	x	x	L					x	x		x			x									
1.14	Promote the development of well-located commercial centers near the most densely populated areas in local communities. Minimize unsustainable commercial "sprawl" development.	x	x	x	x	x	L					x	x		x												
1.15	Connect entrepreneurs with existing business education and support services.	x	x	x	x	x	S		x			x	x		x						x			x			Lake Superior Community Partnership, Invent@NMU, Innovate Marquette
1.16	Encourage efforts to revitalize downtowns.			x			L	x	x			x	x	x	x	x		x						x			
1.17	Work with local organizations to use Opportunity Zones.				x		S		x			x	x	x		x					x			x			Innovate Marquette, Lake Superior Community Partnership
1.18	Support local and state-level efforts to modernize mining regulations and address safety issues of abandoned mines.	x	x	x	x	x	S		x		x	x	x						x		x			x			Mine Inspector
1.19	Support and encourage aesthetically pleasing use of vacant lots in blighted neighborhoods.		x	x		x	S			x		x	x		x			x			x						Farmers, Marquette Co. Community Foundation, Service Clubs

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	STRATEGIES	LOCATION					RESPONSIBLE PARTIES																				
	STRATEGY	COUNTY-WIDE	BLUEBERRY FARMS	IRON CORE	BOREALIS BEACH	MOOSE HILLS	TIMELINE	Businesses	Business/Economic	Community Organizations	County	County Planning	Local Units of Government	Developers & Investors	Downtown Dev. Authorities	Federal Government	Higher Education (NMU)	Land Bank/ Brownfield	Organized Labor	Recreation Organizations	Regional Planning	Sawyer Operations	School Districts	State Government	Transportation Agencies	Tribal Governments	ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBLE PARTIES
2	ENVIRONMENT																										
2.1	Adopt zoning practices or amend current policies to encourage renewable energy development.	x	x	x	x	x	S		x			x	x								x						MSU Extension
2.2	Increase the recycling rate in Marquette County.	x	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							x	x	x	x		x	Solid Waste Haulers
2.3	Increase electric vehicle charging infrastructure.	x	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x				x			x	x		Travel Marquette
2.4	Incorporate measures to preserve and maintain groundwater quality and levels in local zoning ordinances.	x	x	x	x	x	L					x	x				x										Michigan Technological University
2.5	Support water monitoring efforts to ensure local water resource quality.	x	x	x	x	x	L			x		x	x			x	x							x		x	Marquette Co. Health Dept., Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, Superior Watershed Partnership, Michigan Tech. University
2.6	Implement the Marquette County Climate Action Plan to prepare for and address impacts of climate change.	x	x	x	x	x	S	x	x			x	x			x	x		x		x			x		x	Utility Providers, Climate Adaption Taskforce, Superior Watershed Partnership
2.7	Preserve and enhance public access, public ownership, and public views of the lakeshore.				x		L			x		x	x														
2.8	Support and expand efforts to control invasive species.	x	x	x	x	x	S			x		x	x			x	x		x					x		x	Superior Watershed Partnership, Marquette Co. Conservation District
2.9	Manage coastal development through zoning policies like shoreline and riparian overlay districts and waterfront districts.				x		L					x	x								x						
2.10	Conduct Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAs) testing and remediation to known areas of concern.		x	x			S					x	x	x							x	x		x			
2.11	Support sustainable forest management and long-term forest health and resiliency.	x	x	x	x	x	L	x				x	x	x										x			Dept. of Natural Resources



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2.12	Implement the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and incorporate wildfire risk into future land use and development decisions.	x	x	x	x	x	S					x	x	x									x			Dept. of Natural Resources	
2.13	Provide waste collection service at the municipal level. Determine feasibility of county-run waste collection in areas where waste collection is not provided at the municipal level.		x			x	L			x	x	x									x						

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3	Health & Human Services																										
3.1	Create a public inventory of licensed child care and pre-kindergarten service providers in Marquette County that includes availability and waitlist times.	x	x	x	x	x	S		x	x							x							x		Child Care/Pre-K Providers, Community Action Alger Marquette	
3.2	Create more family-friendly workplaces in Marquette County through education and positive social pressure to persuade employers to implement a list of best practices.	x	x	x	x	x	S		x	x									x							Child Care/Pre-K Providers, Major Employers, Business Organizations	
3.3	Promote the county's rich cultural and historical assets throughout the county.	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x		x		x			x	x		x		x	MSU Extension, Marquette Regional History Center, NMU Center for Native American Studies, the Marquette Arts and Culture Center and the Upper Peninsula Arts and Culture Alliance	
3.4	Promote the arts throughout the county.	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x		x		x			x	x		x		x	MSU Extension, Marquette Regional History Center, NMU Center for Native American Studies, the Marquette Arts and Culture Center and the Upper Peninsula Arts and Culture Alliance	
3.5	Collaborate with local agencies to address vector-borne diseases such as Lyme's disease.	x	x	x	x	x	S		x		x	x				x					x			x		Dept. of Natural Resources, MSU Extension	
3.6	Develop more supportive housing to address homelessness in our region.				x		L			x	x	x	x		x	x								x	x	Superior Housing Solutions, Religious Organizations	
3.7	Support the continued operation of Room at the Inn's permanent shelter and future expansion.				x		L			x		x	x		x	x								x	x	Religious Organizations	



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3.8	Expand or create programs that assist with aging in place.	x	x	x	x	x	S		x		x	x			x								x		x	Habitat for Humanity, Nonprofits, Superior Alliance for Independent Living, Community Action Alger Marquette, Service Clubs
3.9	Increase access to healthy, affordable food.	x	x	x	x	x	L	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x			x			x	x	Grocers, Marq Tran, Upper Peninsula Food Exchange, Farmers, NMU Center for Rural Health
3.10	Ensure all areas of the County have adequate emergency response services.		x			x	S		x			x						x								
3.11	Develop a long-range plan for the county jail including the consideration of physical spacing and use of technology.	x	x	x	x	x	L				x	x														Courts, Co. Sheriff
3.12	Expand access to mental health care and treatment for substance use disorders.	x	x	x	x	x	L		x	x	x					x				x						Marquette Co. Health Dept., Pathways
3.13	Support educational opportunities that teach farming and the importance of the local food system, and promote land-leasing and land sharing opportunities for use as farm incubators and food production.	x	x	x	x	x	L		x	x	x	x				x										MSU Extension, Farmers, Upper Peninsula Food Exchange, NMU Center for Rural Health
3.14	Continue to build on the work of the Regional Childcare Coalition and Childcare SPARK.	x	x	x	x	x	L	x	x		x	x				x										Major Employers, Health Care Providers, MSU Extension, Community Action Alger Marquette
3.15	Encourage collaboration between local businesses and food pantries to develop a regional food bank.					x	S		x		x	x				x										Grocers, Farmers, Upper Peninsula Food Exchange, Nonprofits, Service Clubs, Religious Organizations, NMU Center for Rural Health



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3.16	Seek funding and resources to reestablish the K.I. Sawyer Community Center.	x					S		x		x	x				x					x			x	Sault Tribe, Sawyer Community Alliance, Service Clubs, Religious Organizations	
3.17	Seek out funding to resume community policing program at K.I. Sawyer.	x					L		x		x	x			x						x		x	x		
3.18	Improve the accuracy of mapping and addressing data to direct first responders, especially in rural communities.	x				x	S				x	x								x			x			
3.19	Improve cyber security and provide educational opportunities to individuals on cyber safety.	x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x				x						x				
3.20	Support the implementation of the Michigan Tri-Share program for child care.	x	x	x	x	x	S	x	x	x								x					x			

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4	HOUSING																									
4.1	Encourage municipalities to be proactive about policies pertaining to short term rentals.	x	x	x	x	x	S				x	x								x						Michigan Assoc. of Planning, MSU Extension
4.2	Support existing and new housing rehabilitation programs.	x	x	x	x	x	L		x	x	x	x	x		x		x						x	x		Habitat for Humanity, Community Action Alger Marquette, Service Clubs, Marquette Co. Community Foundation
4.3	Encourage energy efficiency in new residential construction and retrofit existing homes to be more energy efficient.	x	x	x	x	x	L		x		x	x	x		x								x	x		Superior Watershed Partnership, Community Action Alger Marquette, Utility Providers, Homebuilders Assoc.
4.4	Continue or expand County Land Bank housing related redevelopment efforts and enhance partnerships.	x	x	x	x	x	S				x	x	x	x		x							x			
4.5	Consider forming a local or regional Community Land Trust (CLT) focused on affordable and workforce housing development, redevelopment of vacant properties, and blight elimination.	x	x	x	x	x	L		x	x	x	x				x										
4.6	Expand the supply of affordable rental housing in the County, particularly in high-demand areas with low rental vacancy rates. Remove barriers in zoning code and consider potential public-private partnerships.			x	x		L				x	x	x	x		x	x		x							Housing Commissions
4.7	Consider amending zoning ordinances to promote affordable housing options.			x	x		L				x	x							x							
4.8	Support the development of additional off-campus student housing by NMU or private developers.				x		L				x	x	x		x											
4.9	Work with existing institutions, like housing commissions, to expand the supply of subsidized low-income housing near jobs and existing commercial centers.			x	x		L		x		x	x	x													Housing Commissions



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4.10	Encourage the development of quality, affordable, accessible housing for seniors and those with disabilities.	x	x	x	x	x	L			x		x	x	x		x					x			x		x	Superior Alliance for Independent Living, Community Action Alger Marquette

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5	RECREATION																										
5.1	Develop more motorized and non-motorized trails in Marquette County.		x				L					x	x							x	x			x		Marquette Co. Forestry Commission, Trail User Groups, Dept. of Natural Resources, Motorized Trail Groups	
5.2	Promote tourism and recreational assets throughout Marquette County.	x	x	x	x	x	L	x	x	x		x	x		x											Travel Marquette, Lake Superior Community Partnership	
5.3	Encourage municipalities to complete and update 5 year recreation plans in order to qualify for funding opportunities.	x	x	x	x	x	S					x	x							x	x			x			
5.4	Seek funding and resources for the development and maintenance of recreational assets at K.I. Sawyer.		x				S			x		x	x									x			x	Marquette Co. Community Foundation, Sawyer Community Alliance	
5.5	Support the creation and expansion of multi-use recreation areas where suitable.	x	x	x	x	x	S					x	x								x						
5.6	Partner with Delta County and LSCP to establish trail connecting Marquette and Delta counties.	x	x				L		x		x	x	x							x				x			
5.7	Continue to assess the impacts of tourism and work to establish a mechanism to offset the costs of tourism.	x	x	x	x	x	L		x		x	x	x							x				x			
5.8	Support and coordinate regional trail development and maintenance.	x	x	x	x	x	S		x	x		x	x							x	x						

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6	TRANSPORTATION																									
6.1	Increase passenger air traffic at Sawyer Regional Airport to justify more frequent and affordable passenger air service.	x					L	x		x	x										x					Airlines
6.2	Encourage alternative modes of freight transport to diversify options and reduce cost and carbon footprint.	x	x	x	x	x	L	x			x		x							x						
6.3	Invest in public transportation and walkability/bikeability improvements in both urban and rural areas. Update zoning codes to encourage walkability.	x	x	x	x	x	L				x	x		x					x	x			x	x		Marq Tran, Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority
6.4	Develop a bus rapid transit loop connecting NMU's campus, hotels, and local neighborhoods to downtown Marquette and other key assets like the hospital.					x	S	x	x			x		x		x								x		Hotels, Marq Tran, Upper Peninsula Health System
6.5	Encourage policies that ensure communities remain walkable during winter.	x	x	x	x	x	S					x		x									x	x		
6.6	Encourage pedestrian safety improvements particularly along highways and in neighborhoods where little pedestrian infrastructure exists.	x	x	x	x	x	S					x	x							x	x	x	x	x		Marquette Co. Road Commission, Michigan Dept. of Transportation, Corridor Advisory Group
6.7	Improve the existing road system and develop long term maintenance plans to ensure assets are in good safe quality.	x	x	x	x	x	L					x	x											x	x	Marquette Co. Road Commission
6.8	Expand public transit hours of operation and service area. Develop defined bus stop locations.	x	x	x	x	x	S		x			x									x	x		x	x	Marq Tran, Dept. of Transportation, Marquette Co. Road Commission
6.9	Facilitate discussions on commercial truck routes.				x	x	S					x	x								x				x	Marquette Co. Road Commission
6.10	Continue US 41 Advisory Group review of access management and developments.	x	x	x	x	x	S	x				x	x											x	x	Marquette Co. Road Commission, Dept. of Transportation
6.11	Support efforts to increase public transit ridership by NMU students.					x	S		x			x					x							x		Marq Tran



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7	GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS																										
7.1	Develop and maintain community data and make available to the public.	x	x	x	x	x	S		x		x	x	x								x						
7.2	Encourage communication between adjacent local units of government when drafting new plans, ordinances, and policies to help create consistency.	x	x	x	x	x	L					x	x								x						
7.3	Pursue grant funding to help offset infrastructure maintenance costs and fund major reconstruction projects.	x	x	x	x	x	L					x	x		x						x	x		x			
7.4	Encourage municipalities to be proactive about policies pertaining to emerging industries, such as data centers, utility scale batteries, and small modular nuclear reactors.	x	x	x	x	x	S						x														
7.5	Encourage all LUGs to participate in the County's Hazard Mitigation Planning process.	x	x	x	x	x	S				x	x	x														

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