



**CITY OF NEGAUNEE
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Adopted August 17, 1999

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City of Negaunee Planning Commission would like to express their appreciation to the many groups and individuals who have contributed to the development of this Comprehensive Plan, including the City of Negaunee Planning Commission, the Negaunee City Council, former Planning Commission members, City staff, and all the citizens who took the time to provide input to the planning process. Your input and support were invaluable to our efforts.

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1.0 OVERVIEW AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION

1.1 Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan contained in this document represents the culmination of months of discussion and study by the City of Negaunee Planning Commission, with technical assistance from the Central Upper Peninsula Regional Commission (CUPPAD). The plan also incorporates information from other planning efforts previously undertaken, including site-specific plans such as the Teal Lake Master Plan, and previous development of goals and objectives for the City. The document can be divided into two primary areas -- background information, and goals, policies and objectives which will guide the City's future development.

Background information on population trends, the local economy, land use, and community facilities, among other items, is useful in forming a complete picture of the community's growth and development over time -- in other words, "where are we now, and how did we get here?" Chapter 10 focuses on the City of Negaunee's future. Once the Planning Commission gained an understanding of the past and present situation and trends in the community, the question became "where do we want to go in the future, and what policies can help our community achieve those goals?" The last chapter of this plan builds on the first nine, and provides a framework for guiding the city's future development.

In addition to providing a general framework for development, the goals, policies and objectives articulated in this plan will assist the Planning Commission to update the zoning ordinance to reflect the desired future directions for the city, and to review proposed public improvements in accordance with Act 285 of 1931, the Municipal Planning Act.

The City or Village Zoning Act, Act 207 of 1921, requires that zoning regulations and districts be established "in accordance with a plan designed to promote or accomplish the objectives of this act" (MCL 125.581, Sec. 1(2)). This Comprehensive Plan meets this statutory requirement.

The Municipal Planning Act, under which the Planning Commission is established, states that "no street, square, park or other public way, ground, or open space, or public building or structure, shall be constructed or authorized . . . until the location, character, and extent thereof shall have been submitted to and approved by the commission." In other words, the Planning Commission is charged with reviewing public improvements to determine the consistency of such improvements with the City's Comprehensive Plan. Such review is not binding on the City Council; if the Planning Commission finds that a proposed public improvement is not consistent with the objectives of the plan, the Council can overrule the disapproval by a 2/3 majority vote of its entire membership. However, Planning Commission review provides a valuable tool for ensuring that public improvements promote the goals and objectives defined during this lengthy and exhaustive planning process.

1.2 Community Description

The City of Negaunee is located in central Marquette County, and is part of the urban area which includes the cities of Marquette and Ishpeming. U.S. 41 and M-28 run through the City from east to west, and M-35 intersects with U.S. 41/M-28 just east of the City, connecting the area to areas to the south. Negaunee is the third-largest local unit of government in the County in terms of population, behind the other two cities; a total of about 35,000 people live in the urban area, or about half of the County's 1990 population.

The first iron ore discovered in the Upper Peninsula was discovered in what is now the City of Negaunee in 1844. In 1845 the Jackson Iron Company was formed, and mining began in 1846. The settlement known as Negaunee was founded in 1846, although it would not incorporate as a village or city for several years.

Over the next few years, many more mines were established throughout the Marquette Iron Range. In addition to mining the raw ore, a forge on the Carp River and a charcoal blast furnace in what is now downtown Negaunee were developed to partially process the ore before shipping it out of the area. Ore was hauled by rail to Marquette or Escanaba, where it was then shipped to steel mills.

In 1858, Teal Lake Township was organized, and in 1865 the Village of Negaunee was established. In 1873 the first charter election for the City of Negaunee was held, and the community has been a city ever since. From a population of 124 in 1850, the City had grown to over 8,500 by 1900.

Negaunee's growth and development have been closely tied to the iron mining industry. By the mid 1860s, surface ore deposits were becoming depleted, and underground mining began. Underground mines required a greater investment of capital, and as mines grew larger so did the companies which operated them. Several smaller companies were eventually consolidated into the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company, which today operates the two remaining active iron mines in the Upper Peninsula. As employment and production at the mines dropped, many communities experienced economic hard times and a loss of population. In Negaunee, for example, the population has declined slowly but steadily since 1940, with the 1990 Census showing 4,741 residents, just over half the population at the turn of the century.

By the early 1960s, nearly 322 million tons of iron ore had been shipped from the Marquette Iron Range. Peak production occurred in 1929, when nearly 17 million tons was shipped, while in 1932 production dropped to less than one million tons. In the 1950s, mining operations began to shift from the production of raw ore to pelletized ore. By pelletizing the low-grade ores, a more concentrated product was produced, making shipping more cost-effective. From 1956 through 1998, a total of 400 million tons of pellets had been shipped from the Marquette Iron Range.

The relative share of employment provided by mining has dropped over the past 75 years. As of 1998, the Tilden and Empire mines employ a total of about 1,850, and produce a combined total

of just over 15 million tons of ore. Mining is still a significant employer in the area, but the economy has diversified, and communities are looking to other economic sectors for future growth.

While mining has declined, it still remains a part of Negaunee's past and present. The Michigan Iron Industry Museum, located near the site of the Carp River Forge, contains exhibits telling the story of iron mining in the area. The Negaunee High School's sports teams are known as the Miners, and many area residents worked in the mines at some point in their life. Physical evidence of mining in the area includes the two remaining active mines, many abandoned mines, and large expanses of caving grounds resulting from past mining activities.

Another large Marquette County employer which has suffered a decline in recent years is K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base near Gwinn in the southern part of the County. The base, once one of the largest employers in the Upper Peninsula, and home to 3,600 military personnel, closed in September, 1995. The City of Negaunee did not suffer much direct impact from the base closure, but has suffered some indirect effects. Rental housing at the former base is being offered at very attractive rates, resulting in some housing vacancies in the urban corridor, and the loss of population and payroll associated with the base has had an effect on the retail and service sectors throughout the County. In 1999, Marquette County plans to move the Marquette County Airport from its present location just east of the City to Sawyer. It is difficult to predict what the effects of this move may be, beyond causing local residents to drive farther for air travel.

As is the case with many other cities in the Upper Peninsula, Negaunee's population has been declining and growing older over the past 10-20 years, while there has been relatively little new development and investment. In Negaunee's case, the large expanses of caving grounds and mining company land ownership have placed constraints on growth due to a lack of available sites. The community has retained an attractive downtown area, and housing and commercial areas have not deteriorated or become blighted. In recent years, new commercial development has occurred along U.S. 41/M-28, infrastructure improvements have been made, and new subdivisions have been platted. It is hoped that the years to come will see the declining population trend reverse, and that there will be continued investment and growth in the community.