UTILITIES/INFRASTRUCTURE

Vision Statement:

Iron County supports and maintains a modern, sustainable, technologically advanced infrastructure devoted to a healthy population, economy and environment. Iron County also provides residents and guests access to innovative and diverse educational, recreational and cultural opportunities.

A. Improve telecommunications infrastructure

1. Support the work of the broadband committee. (Policy)
2. Extend broad band coverage to all full time and seasonal residents by 2019. (Objective)
3. Achieve universal cell phone coverage in the county by end of 2019. (Objective)

B. Transportation system is multi-functional

1. Expand rail infrastructure and multi-modal connectivity. (Objective)
2. Develop a rail hub. (Action)
3. Expand and improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. (Objective)
4. Add signage and lanes where possible. Specifically County Roads C, G, H, J, and FF. (Action)
5. Improve road capacity and safety on U.S. Highway's 2 and 51. (Objective)

C. Redevelop Saxon Harbor

1. Engage stakeholders and create a committee. (Action)
2. Expand services. (Objective)
3. Improve accessibility. (Objective)
4. Increase user opportunities (diversification of opportunities). (Objective)
5. Explore options to develop interpretive facility such as a National Marine Sanctuary Visitor Center. (Action)

D. Promote and encourage "best management practices" (BMP's) to enhance water quality
1. Promote and encourage the use of multi-dwelling (instead of clustered) sanitary systems. (Policy)
2. Obtain and budget for and develop a workable enforcement plan for monitoring septic pumping by end of 2017. (Action)
3. Obtain grant funding to assist homeowners in removing unused or abandoned, potential harmful septic and well systems by 2020. (Action)
4. Work with ICLRA to improve shoreline management through education. (Policy)

5. Work with agriculture to ensure that fertilizer (i.e., manure) and pesticides are properly managed and plan for runoff events. (Policy)

E. Develop energy efficient infrastructure

1. Convert all county and town street lights to halogen, low energy units by 2021. (Action)
2. Develop funding to encourage solar power installations for residences and business. (Action)
3. Create more non-motorized transportation opportunities. (Objective)

F. Improve and enhance the county's recreational trail system

1. Improve land markers and trail signs to facilitate guidance and drivability by vehicle type: e.g. Geo-location numbers at all trail intersections; by spring 2018. (Objective)
2. Build additional places of interest on snowmobile and ATV trails. (Objective)
3. Work with area clubs to add rest areas and interpretive sites along the trails. (Objective)
4. Support the goals of the outdoor recreation plan. (Policy)
5. Utilize modern mapping tools and promotional tools to enhance our tourist activities (i.e. MTBproject and similar utilities for other activities). (Objective)
6. Connect regional trail to Mercer/Boulder Junction Trail network. (Action)

G. Filling Existing Infrastructures - Existing underutilized infrastructure

1. Develop a conference space. (Action)
2. Renovate an old building into a health club for Hurley and Mercer. (Action)
3. Develop a job training and resource center. (Action)
4. Designate a dog park. (Action)
5. Develop youth centers in Hurley and Mercer. (Action)
6. Develop a community commercial kitchen. (Action)

HOUSING

Vision Statement:

Iron County accommodates residents and guests of all income levels, ages and needs, by offering a wide range of quality housing options that are accessible, affordable and diverse.

A. Promote innovative housing and neighborhood design

1. Identify methods and opportunities for creating diverse senior citizen housing. (Objective)
2. Encourage walkability. (Policy)
3. Form a county-level housing committee. (Action)
4. Identify possible locations for housing development. (Action)
5. Visit other communities in the region to examine facilities available. (Action)
6. Seek investors or other funding sources to create diverse senior housing. (Objective)
7. Develop and offer at least 1,000 new, quality, affordable, and creative housing options to accommodate all ages and economic levels. (Objective)
8. Develop detailed countywide housing plan in collaboration with local governments by the end of 2021. (Action)
9. Support the development of housing options which connect each community to the area's natural resources. (Policy)
10. Promote creative support and collaboration from state, county and local governments, the Economic Development Council, various agencies, realtors, numerous committees, investors, and developers. (Policy)
11. Develop a new senior apartment complex in Mercer by 2020. (Action)
12. Identify areas for multi-family housing in Hurley and Mercer. (Action)
13. Modernize regulatory framework to support alternative building design and construction. (Objective)

B. Separate housing from conflicting land uses

1. Encourage use of Industrial Parks for industrial based businesses. (Policy)
2. Enact screening requirements in the land use ordinance that better protect residential areas. (Action)
3. Encourage conservation design to create more green space to separate conflicting uses. (Policy)

C. Maintain and improve existing housing

1. Encourage housing rehabilitation and redevelopment. (Policy)
2. Address blight. (Policy)
3. Create or find grant opportunities for removal of dilapidated buildings. (Action)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Vision Statement:

Iron County's economy focuses on sustainably utilizing the area's natural resources, creating valuable products and services, and highlighting the abundant outdoor recreation/tourism opportunities available. Sound infrastructure supports a diverse range of businesses, while downtowns and communities are creative, healthy and vibrant.

A. Strengthen Iron County's Brand for a progressive pro-business climate

1. Market business opportunities for the County's industrial parks. (Objective)
2. Promote arts related businesses including public and private exhibition, sales and tours. (Policy)
3. Enhance our downtowns as a place for business, arts, culture and recreational opportunities. (Policy)
4. Market opportunities for telecommuting and micro business start-ups especially in the lake areas. (Objective)
5. Promote the diverse for a wide range of available recreational opportunities. (Policy)
6. Continue to invest in outdoor recreation infrastructure to create a community that will attract businesses and telecommuters. (Policy)

B. Build capacity to promote economic development

1. Create a coalition of outdoor recreation businesses and groups (motorized and silent sports) to work for shared goals and objectives. (Action)
2. Develop an Iron County Arts Board to promote arts related business and tourism, including public and private exhibition and sales venues, art tours, etc. (Action)
3. Create business incubator spaces to help support small business start-ups in a variety of locations. (Action)
4. Increase access to Broadband in the industrial parks. (Objective)
5. Encourage economic development groups to collaborate with local and regional units of government. (Policy)
6. Collaborate with Copper Peak to support business needs for the events at the hill. (Policy)
7. Develop collaboration with neighboring communities to link recreational trail systems and encourage businesses to serve those networks. (Policy)
8. Work with other cultural groups such as the Ironwood Theatre to bring events to recreational venues. (Policy)
9. Develop a plan in conjunction with Ironwood Theater to bring a counterpart to Bayfield's Big Top Chatauqua to our area using existing space such as one of the ski hills by end of 2020. (Action)

C. Utilize Iron County's natural and human resources to retain, expand and develop business ventures

1. Work with regional and state agencies to expand opportunities for wood manufacturing and processing. (Policy)
2. Create new markets for wood products such as biofuels, niche markets, and underutilized resources. (Policy)
3. Support workforce development through Northwoods Manufacturing and encourage entrepreneurial efforts. (Policy)
4. Work with the ICRDA and City of Hurley to expand business opportunities in the new section of the industrial park. (Policy)
5. Work with the Mercer Town Board and Chamber to revitalize the marketing and promotion of the business park. (Policy)
6. Develop a business incubator for start-up businesses in the Hurley Industrial Park. (Action)
7. Work with LaPoint Iron and potential mining companies to develop the iron ore resource. (Policy)
8. Develop a collaboration of stakeholders to research and educate on mining opportunities. (Action)
9. Develop a plan to promote sports-related retail and production businesses to the county. (Action)

D. Expand opportunities for outdoor recreation

1. Extension of non-motorized trail network that connects Hurley, Montreal, Mercer and Upson. (Action)
2. Create recreational trails that spur off of the regional trail system for mountain biking, cross country skiing, equestrian, and hiking. (Action)
3. Support the Copper Peak project. (Policy)
4. Develop and enhance partnerships to support mutual goals. (Policy)
5. Collaborate with Copper Peak Mgmt. to identify support and ancillary business needs to underpin the growth of the ski hill by summer 2017. (Action)
6. Link communities and businesses to the recreational trail system. (Policy)
7. Encourage new businesses and expansion of existing businesses that support recreational users. (Policy)
8. Research or develop a marketing plan for services that are used by the recreational community. (Action)
9. Create opportunities for adventure-based outdoor recreation (i.e. ice climbing, rock climbing, zip lining, etc.) (Objective)

TRANSPORTATION

Vision Statement:

Iron County's transit system provides safe, reliable and attractive multimodal options for residents and visitors. An efficient and well-maintained system allows people the freedom of movement and accessibility between the vibrant downtown business centers, surrounding neighborhoods, and scenic rural routes in the region, enhancing the health and well-being of all.

A. **Expand and develop a multi modal transportation system that considers capacity, safety, and efficiency**

1. Develop a transportation plan for non-drivers and senior citizens. (Action)
2. Enhance the transit system to cover more locations with community-to-community routes. (Objective)
3. Purchase and maintain vehicles for Hurley and Mercer to transport elderly and disabled citizens to medical facilities, cultural events, etc. (Action)
4. Provide weekly low cost bus service to Hurley/Ironwood for residents who live in other communities. (Objective)
5. Collaborate regionally to make U.S. 2 four lane. (Policy)
6. Work with the state to develop passing lanes on U.S. 51. (Policy)
7. Establish a five-year rolling repair and improvement plan and publicize locally. (Action)
8. Coordinate county and town transportation planning. (Policy)

A. **Develop or expand network of trails that connect communities.**

1. Develop bicycle routes to Montreal from the Michigan line. (Action)
2. Develop a bicycle route from Hurley to Mercer. (Action)
3. Create recreational spur trails for non-motorized use. (Action)
4. Connect motorized trails to neighboring county's trails. (Action)
5. Develop points of interest on all recreational trails. (Example: interpretive sites like the crash site). (Action)
6. Develop a maintenance plan for all recreational trails. (Action)

B. **Improve access to the airport and expand service options**

1. Improve signage to the airport. (Objective)
2. Develop a marketing plan to promote available services. (Action)
3. Expand services to regional hubs like Madison and Duluth. (Objective)

C. Increase telecommuting opportunities and improve broadband access to allow people to work from home

1. Work through Broadband Committee to increase existing carrier service. (Policy)
2. Work with new carriers to expand service in the County. (Policy)
3. Increase broadband coverage to allow citizens to work from home. (Objective)
4. Increase workable wireless cell coverage. (Objective)

COMMUNITY DESIGN

Vision Statement:

Iron County's approach to community design showcases and embraces the heritage, arts, culture, and natural environment of the region, with an overall focus on safety, accessibility, and advanced technology. Community design connects residents and welcomes visitors to safe, unique and thriving downtowns, vibrant neighborhoods, and nature-based outdoor recreation.

A. **Build and implement an overarching collective brand based on community assets.**
1. Work with community organizations and the general public to incorporate branding into all aspects of the community. (Policy)
2. Focus community design on enhancing our brand around becoming a trail-based outdoor recreation community. (Policy)
3. Attract businesses which support the brand (variety of restaurants, breweries, coffee shops, outdoor stores). (Objective)
4. Identify ways to apply the branding theme to existing public, private and planned structures and spaces in towns. (Objective)
5. Collaborate with surrounding communities to create regional brand. (Policy)

B. **Create beautiful, healthy, vibrant downtowns at a variety of scales.**
1. Promote downtown amenities such as community garden spaces and outdoor eating areas. (Policy)
2. Create secure locations for bike storage or encourage businesses to create inside space for temporary bike placement. (Objective)
3. Create safe streets for pedestrians and cyclists. (Objective)
4. Develop plans for a community creative arts cooperative. (Action)
5. Encourage utilizing the original architecture on commercial buildings. (Policy)
6. Develop additional green spaces. (Objective)
7. Obtain grant funding to purchase and clean up abandon timber mill in downtown Mercer. (Action)
8. Encourage second story housing on commercial buildings. (Policy)
9. Develop walkable routes to neighborhoods. (Objective)
10. Attract more people to downtowns. (Objective)
11. Develop way finding signage on U.S. 2. (Action)

C. **Build, enhance and expand, Cultural, Arts and Heritage opportunities**
1. Construct or use existing facility to create a community creative arts facility. (Action)
2. Promote and enhance historical sites, museums, cultural events and activities. (Policy)

D. **Improve navigation and connectivity**
1. Develop wayfinding signage on U.S. Highway 2. (Action)

2. Develop electronic way finding utilizing technology to connect visitors to the community. (Objective)
3. Develop informational kiosks in communities. (Objective)

E. Develop community assets which promote economic growth and tourism
   1. Develop leisure and recreation facilities such as a "splash pad", community pool, miniature golf and ice skating rink. (Objective)
   2. Invest in regional trails. (Policy)
   3. Coordinate with other communities to create region wide events. (Policy)
   4. Create a winter silent sports event that happens during the week leading up to SISU Skifest. (Objective)

F. Create a redevelopment strategy that is consistent with the county's vision.
   1. Develop destination places for visitors. (Objective)
   2. Plan for additional commercial space and zone it accordingly. (Objective)
   3. Encourage design standards on new construction that fit the brand. (Policy)

CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Vision Statement:

Iron County invests in its economy by conserving, and sustainably utilizing its cultural and natural resources to their fullest potential. Residents and visitors of all ages and activity levels can experience unique local culture, history, and art and enjoy the diverse outdoor recreational opportunities found in Iron County's pristine, natural environment.

A. **Preserve, showcase and educate the public regarding cultural and natural resources.**
   1. Collaborate with the Hurley and Mercer schools to integrate programs on the area. (Action)
   2. Collaborate with Chambers of Commerce to integrate interpretation of the area. (Action)
   3. Utilize the resources of the UW Extension, WDNR, Historical Societies and Land and Water Conservation. (Policy)
   4. Collaborate with the Native American community. (Policy)
   5. Establish the Lake Superior Research Center in Saxon Harbor. (Action)
   6. Develop volunteer programs for citizen science projects. (Action)
   7. Develop a natural resource museum for wood, rocks and water. (Action)
   8. Develop interpretive signage. (Action)
   9. Create a countywide guide to natural assets. (Action)

B. **Provide a connected system of recreational trails**
   1. Complete a bike trail between Mercer and Hurley to link trail systems. (Action)
   2. Connect into the Iron Belle Regional Trail in Michigan. (Action)
   3. Create spur trails to connect to smaller communities. (Objective)

C. **Prioritize and develop silent sports opportunities**
   1. Plan and construct mountain bike trails in county public lands. (Objective)
   2. Create a point to point cross country ski trail system. (Objective)
   3. Encourage the construction of yurts or small cabins along trails. (Policy)

D. **Invest in area youth.**
   1. Work with GCC to develop curriculum that meets the needs of our local economy (natural resources, recreation). (Action)
   2. Create youth recreation programs that match our assets (cross country ski teams, mountain bike teams, and downhill ski team). (Action)
   3. Expand natural resource curriculum at Hurley and Mercer schools. (Objective)
   4. Bring the Mercer School Environmental Tourism Charter School and the Hurley wood products school groups together to form a larger vision and partnership with area youth. (Objective)
   5. Connect youth with natural assets. (Objective)
   6. Promote and support youth entrepreneurial businesses. (Policy)

E. Improve access to natural and recreational resources
1. Continue to improve Saxon Harbor. (Policy)
2. Improve access to waterfall sites. (Policy)
3. Preserve access to natural resources that are on private and public property. (Policy)
4. Develop Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant access to natural and recreational resources. (Policy)

F. Celebrate cultural and natural history
1. Develop a venue to hold events such as music in the park. (Action)
2. Develop arts center. (Action)
3. Develop arts facilities which could provide space for exhibits and workshops. (Objective)
4. Develop a business incubator for artists. (Action)
5. Develop a web site on Iron County artists. (Action)
6. Collaborate with schools and infuse a youth component into arts and cultural programming. (Objective)
7. Establish guided tours and programs for residents and visitors. (Objective)

G. Maintain and enhance natural resource quality
1. Expand water quality monitoring on lakes and rivers. (Policy)
2. Create Zoning and development standards to protect resources. (Objective)
3. Promote sustainable forest management practices. (Policy)
4. Promote ecosystem management. (Policy)

H. Create an adventure sports destination.

1. Encourage businesses that cater to adventure sports (i.e. ice climbing, rock climbing, whitewater kayaking, mountain biking, etc.) (Policy)
2. Create spur trails from the Gateway Regional Trail that access adventure sport activities throughout the Iron County Forest. (Action)
3. Develop adventure sport activities at Saxon Harbor (paddle boarding, scuba diving, sail boat racing) (Objective)
4. Create a man-made ice/rock climbing facility at Eagle Bluff. (Action)
5. Develop a network of mountain bike trails through the Iron County Forest. (Action)
6. Create point to point bikepacking opportunities with yurts or cabins for overnight stays. (Action)
7. Create zip lining facility (Potential locations: Whitecap, Saxon Harbor, Penokees, and Eagle Bluff). (Action)
8. Create downhill mountain biking course with lift service at Whitecap Ski Area. (Action)
9. Create a web-based county recreation information portal. (Action)

10. Encourage the development of ATV, snowmobile and mountain bike terrain parks. (Policy)

I. Connect to Lake Superior resources.

1. Develop facilities for overnight anchorage of cruising vessels. (Action)

PEOPLE

Vision Statement:

The population of Iron County is comprised of a collaborative mixture of educational levels and age groups involved in fostering community leadership and positive relationships and who exhibit a deep connection to the land and culture that guides their lifestyles and occupations.

A. **Collaborate with neighboring Native American communities.**
    1. Reach out to tribal neighbors to develop cultural exchanges and improve cross cultural understanding and appreciation. (Policy)
    2. Determine present interactions and partnerships between Iron County and neighboring tribal communities (i.e., Bad River & Lac du Flambeau) by surveying county departments and schools, and begin to record network map and current projects. (Action)

B. **Improve community relationships**
    1. Create a series of events where people come to share a meal or social time. The goal is to create a safe space to encourage friendships between people from different parts of the county and across the political spectrum. Programs could focus on ways communities can work together and shared perspectives, positive approach. (Action)
    2. Determine Iron County organizations, groups, and individuals who are the same goal and propose a meeting to collaboratively create series. (Action)

C. **Utilize and enhance the talents and skills of local residents**
    1. Engage community members in plan implementation. (Policy)
    2. Develop a Human Resource Directory of individuals in the county with special skills that could be made available assist in plan implementation. (Action)
    3. Continue and expand FE University. (Objective)
    4. Create opportunities for locals to participate in outdoor recreation activities so they become advocates for the community vision. (Objective)

D. **Engage and partner with the business and health services sectors**
    1. Explore matching grant possibilities for health related services and economic development with the Grand View/Aspirus Hospital Foundation and others. (Action)

E. **Promote collaboration**
    1. Explore shared services with county neighbors. (Objective)
    2. Create a series of events to encourage friendships between people from different parts of the county and political spectrum to work together in a positive way. (Policy)

3. Engage local organizations to help fulfill goals and tasks identified in the planning process. (Policy)
4. Partner with civic groups, Iron County UW-Extension and libraries to create and expand on education opportunities such as lectures, film series, exhibits, etc. (Policy)

F. Invest in area youth
1. Make training available for them to work in the area. (Objective)
2. Encourage entrepreneurship with the youth. (Policy)
3. Collaborate with educational institutions to enhance educational opportunities. (Objective)

G. Address community unemployment.
1. Connect unemployed people with educational opportunities that match them with area employment vacancies. (Objective)