

# Planning, Community Development, Forestry & Recreation Division

Resource Management & Development Department



*Silver Lead Creek Greenway, KI Sawyer*

## 2024 Annual Report



# Message from the Manager

In 2024, the Planning Division effectively carried out goals of the County's strategic and master plans. The Division secured significant grant funding to expand capacity, foster community investment, strengthen partnerships, and implement impactful projects. This report highlights some of the activities and achievements of our dedicated, community-focused team over the past year reflecting our commitment to collaboration, innovation, and service to the residents of Marquette County.

We hold tremendous gratitude and appreciation for those who have trusted and partnered with us. We achieve more united together and in humor.

*Thyra W. Karlstrom*

## Planning Team

**Thyra Karlstrom**, Manager

Celebrated 17 years of employment with Marquette County

**Emily Leach**, Senior Planner

Celebrated five years of employment with Marquette County

**Sven Gonstead**, Recreation Specialist

Celebrated two years of employment with Marquette County

**Amy Stephens**, Planner

Celebrated one year of employment with Marquette County

**Quinn Thibault**, MI Healthy Climate Corps Member Cohort #1 (March-November 2024)

**Nico Vermaat**, MI Healthy Climate Corps Member Cohort #2 (November-October 2025)

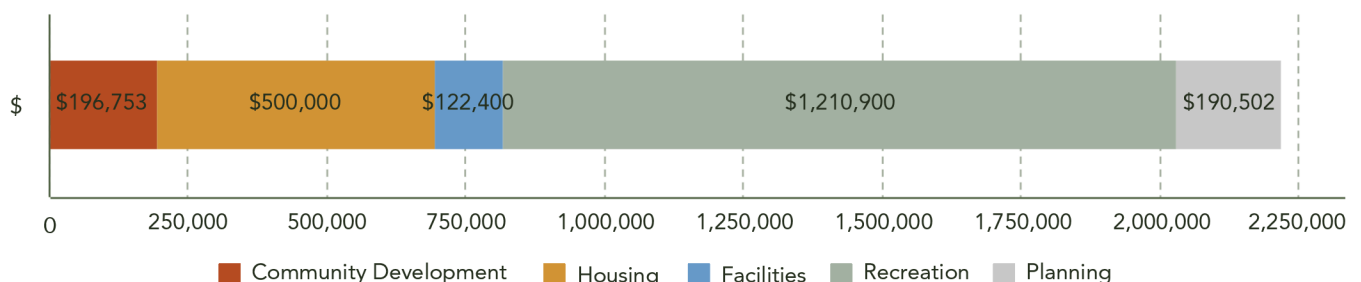
**Kurt Bates**, North Star Academy High School Intern (January 2024- May 2024)

1. Planning
2. Community Development
3. Forestry
4. Recreation



Halloween 2023: Parks & Recreation Characters

## Grant Funding Received- \$2.2M





# 1. Planning

The Division provided assistance and guidance to County departments and supported local and regional community planning efforts

The *Marquette County 2040 Master Plan*, grounded in extensive community input, directs the Division's activities. It outlines 10 goals and 100 strategies, offering a broad range of activities and topics for community engagement and development.

## MP Strategy Themes



## Activities

**www.mqtccoplan.org:** Maintained the County's master plan site

**Airport Zoning Ordinance Administration:** Reviewed projects and staffed Airport Zoning Board of Appeals

**Planning Commission:** Attended regular meetings, reviewed and prepared reports on 17 zoning ordinance and plan amendments

**Capital Improvements Planning:** Administered call for projects, scored 23 project requests totaling \$31.4 million and prepared information for County Administration

**Marquette Sawyer Regional Airport Signage:** Prepared and implemented a directional signage plan to reduce confusion and establish consistency in the vicinity of the airport, replacing 15 signs

**K.I. Sawyer Operations:** Responded to map and data requests, assisted in golf course planning and initiation of ALP removal

**Climate Action Plan (CAP):** Staffed the CAP Subcommittee; hosted 12 community events, 3 employee events, stakeholder interviews; conducted 2 surveys; and drafted the plan

**Facility Energy Audit:** Secured and administered an EGLE Community Energy Management Grant (\$100K) to complete an ASHRAE Level 2 Energy Audit, greenhouse gas emissions inventory, and fleet review of five County facilities and obtained an additional \$22.4K SEMCO incentive

**Materials Management Planning (MMP):** Facilitated the County in the implementation of the updated Part 115 of NREPA; the CBOC accepted the role as County Approval Agency, worked with CUPPAD to be our Designated Planning Agency, executed a six county interlocal agreement, and coordinated appointments to the MMP Committee

**Emergency Management:** Supported damage assessment process review, plan updates, training site identification

**Local Support:** Assisted county operations, municipalities, and organizations with maps, data, and letters of support including Republic, Forsyth, Ishpeming C, MDOT, MCRC, Forsyth Forward, NMU, Partridge Creek Farm, Superior Watershed Partnership, and the Lions Club

**Strategic Plan:** Managed implementation of the Plan including development of the Intranet

**Workforce Development:** Provided opportunities to experience government as a career

## Regular Meetings

- Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee
- US41 Corridor Advisory Group
- Climate Adaption Task Force (CATF), Chair
- UP Clean Energy Task Force
- MI Climate Action Network (MICAN) Steering Committee
- MI Green Communities (MGC) Steering Committee
- Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development (CUPPAD) Regional Commission, Chair
- UP Food Exchange (UPFE) Food Policy Committee
- NMU Sustainability Advisory Council
- MI Materials Management Statewide/ Regional Meetings
- Remonumentation Committee

## Community Outreach

- Eight CATF Marquette 2049 Learning Circles with approximately 200 attendees
- Four CAP Dialogue Dinners organized using funds raised
- Coordination of recreational activities

## Professional Development

- MI Healthy Climate Conference
- MI Communities Association of Mapping Professionals Conference
- Direct Pay Webinars
- MGC Accelerator Cohorts; Materials Management & Sustainable Purchasing Policy
- Lake Superior Leadership Academy – Mrs. Leach
- Continuing Education, MSU Cartography Class – Ms. Stephens

## 2040 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.



## 2. Community Development

The Division manages a Housing Repairs Programs and assists other housing-related initiatives in the County

### Activities

#### Attainable housing regional collaboration:

Facilitated monthly Housing Coalition meetings, participant on the Intergovernmental Housing Task Force, and a member of the newly formed Housing Now Steering Committee

#### Lead Supervisor Contractor Training:

Assisted to set up one DHHS sponsored Lead Supervisor training and set up a second training for January 2025 to build the qualified contractor pool for CDBG funded projects

#### Brownfield & Land Bank Authorities:

Attended regular meetings and provided support for numerous grant and program implementation including Target Market Analysis review

#### Rural Land Bank Network Learning Exchange:

Successfully applied to send a delegation of four to join other rural land banks in Charleston, WV and the Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference in St. Louis, MO

### Emergency Repairs Program



Projects included: restoring water and heat, foundation repairs, drain tile, new exterior steps and a well installation

In 2024, the Division applied for and acquired a \$500,000 grant- the Michigan State Housing & Development Authority (MSHDA) Community Development Block Grant Housing Improving Local Livability (CHILL)

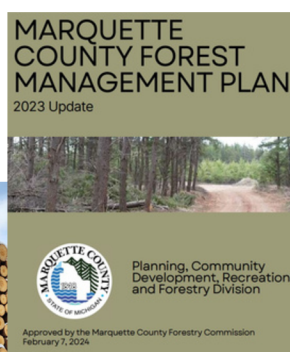
### MSHDA CHILL Home Rehab Program

- Program Guidelines approved
- Tier 1 Environmental Review approved
- 11 Tier 2 (site specific) environmental reviews and income verifications approved
- Monthly check in meetings with MSHDA and numerous program training sessions
- Communicated with over 150 interested households



## 3. Forestry

The Division manages the County Forest under the direction of the Forestry Commission



### Activities

- Finalized the Forest Management Plan, adopted 2.7.24
- Hired American Forest Management (AFM) as the 2024-2025 Consulting Forester
- Administered two active harvests: 1-22 Sale [125 acres] & 1-24 Sale [113 acres]
- Reforestation- natural regeneration [177.5 acres]
- Conducted a Fire Break Analysis
- Illegal Dumping: 8 site clean ups
- Reviewed multiple easement & conveyance requests
- Coordinated with the NMU Conservation Data Lab to conduct a vegetation assessment of the central UP



## 4. Recreation

The Division coordinates regionally on recreation-related activities and manages county-owned recreation facilities



PERKINS PARK AND BIG BAY HARBOR

**\$5K** DAY & SEASONAL LAUNCH SALES

**\$221K** CAMPING & RETAIL REVENUE

**2,076** CAMPSITE RESERVATIONS

**80%** JULY PEAK OCCUPANCY

SUGARLOAF MT

**77K** ANNUAL VISITORS

### Recreation Coordination

**Trails Sustainability Coalition:** As a steering committee member, guided the public outreach and development of the *Greater Marquette Region Strategic Trails Plan* and continue to collaborate on implementation

**Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Tourism Management:** Collaborated with the BB Stewardship Council on annual festivals, programming, and a resident sentiment survey

**Recreation Planning:** Engaged with the community through meetings and a survey to update the County's Recreation Plan. Reviewed multiple municipal plans for consistency

**Donation System:** Implemented a QR donation system so visitors can easily donate to the upkeep and maintenance of recreation sites

**Big Bay Harbor:** Attended the MI Harbormaster Summit and coordinated with the US Army Corps of Engineers about sediment build-up and need for a redesign of the Harbor break wall

**Respect Marquette County Coalition:** As a partner, collaborated on outdoor tourism messaging and data to inspire respect of local culture and natural resources. Hosted and presented to partners about county recreation projects in KI Sawyer

**Sugarloaf Mt. Natural Area Enhancements:** Completed a MDARD grant (\$85k) to prioritize critical safety projects. Coordinated with GLCC and MARESA for trail improvements, erosion control, and structure repair

**Little Trout Lake Park Enhancements:** Acquired a \$1M DNR Spark grant, developed construction plans, researched past use, hosted community engagement, and removed multiple blighted structures in coordination with the Land Bank

### Silver Lead Creek Greenway Project

Project Goal:

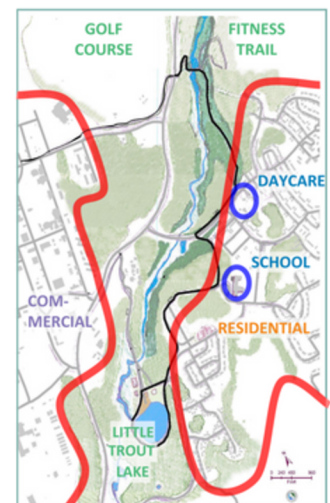
To create a **community wellness corridor** connecting **KI Sawyer residents** to **NATURE**, **school**, **parks**, **work**, **HOME**, & **each other**.



Intentional Community Development- a plan to establish a public greenway, a backbone for a safe non-motorized transportation network in KI Sawyer

- Secured funding for engineering and design (\$100k)
- Secured funding and negotiated the acquisition of 126 acres of land to complete a public greenway (\$114k)
- Successfully applied for two grants to construct a non-motorized trail (\$700k)
- Developed an application for an EPA Community Change Grant with partners including but not limited to: LSCP, Community Foundation, Mqt. Co. Road Commission, & Forsyth Township
- Continuous communication with project partners

#### SLCG OVERVIEW:



**Construction in 2025!**