



# **CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF PORTAGE**

## **2023 - 2027**

# **RECREATION PLAN**

Prepared By

**WESTERN UP  
PLANNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT REGION**



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## INTRODUCTION

The Charter Township of Portage, Michigan is located just south of the City of Houghton running along a large portion of the western shoreline of Portage Lake but is otherwise land locked in the center of the southern half of the Keweenaw Peninsula. This area is full of hiking trails, parks, forests, and other recreational areas that provide much needed space for the community and visitors to enjoy. Many of these activities stem from beautiful natural features, such as the Pilgrim River Watershed which runs through a large portion of the northern part of the township, and Otter Lake in the south of the township providing a recreation space for boaters and anglers alike.

The Township has a long history of adopting and implementing plans for recreation. A strong vision and sustained commitment by both community leaders, members, and volunteers have enabled the Charter Township of Portage to develop extensive and high-quality recreation areas. In that same movement, the Township is seeking to continue the development of its recreational programs and facilities, ensuring it can satisfy not only the community's current recreational demands, but those of the future as well.

The 2023-2027 Portage Township Recreation Plan (henceforth referred to as the Plan) has been developed to guide recreation improvements in the township over the next five years. The Plan provides an overview of the community, presents an inventory of existing recreational facilities, and provides a framework for continued improvement and development of recreation facilities in the Charter Township of Portage. The overall goal of the Plan is to establish a program of improvements that meet the recreational needs of the community. This Plan was written in accordance with the guidelines for *Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans* published by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources & Environment (MDNR). A five-year, MDNR-approved Recreation Plan is necessary for governmental entities to pursue MDNR-administered grants.

This Plan was developed by the Township's Recreation Committee on behalf of the Charter Township of Portage assisted by the Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region. Public comments, a community survey, and suggestions were also taken into consideration during the development of the Plan. The Plan will continue to be updated, as needed, to address the changing needs of the community and its residents. The Township Board adopted the Plan on February 13, 2023.

### **Portage Township Recreation Committee**

- Bruce Petersen – Township Supervisor
- John Ollila – Trustee
- Bill Fink – Trustee

## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

### Location

Portage Township, a Charter Township with a population of 3,189 (2020 census), is located in Houghton County, in Michigan’s western Upper Peninsula. The Township is bordered on the north and east by Portage Lake on the southeast by Chassell Township and Baraga Township, on the south by Laird Township and Baraga Township, and on the west by Elm River and Adams Townships (see Figure 1).

Within the boundaries of the Township there are several small unincorporated communities including: Hurontown, Dodgeville, Superior Location, Tapiola, Elo, and Askel. Immediately adjacent to the Township is the City of Houghton, which is the County seat, largest community in the County, and home of Michigan Technological University.

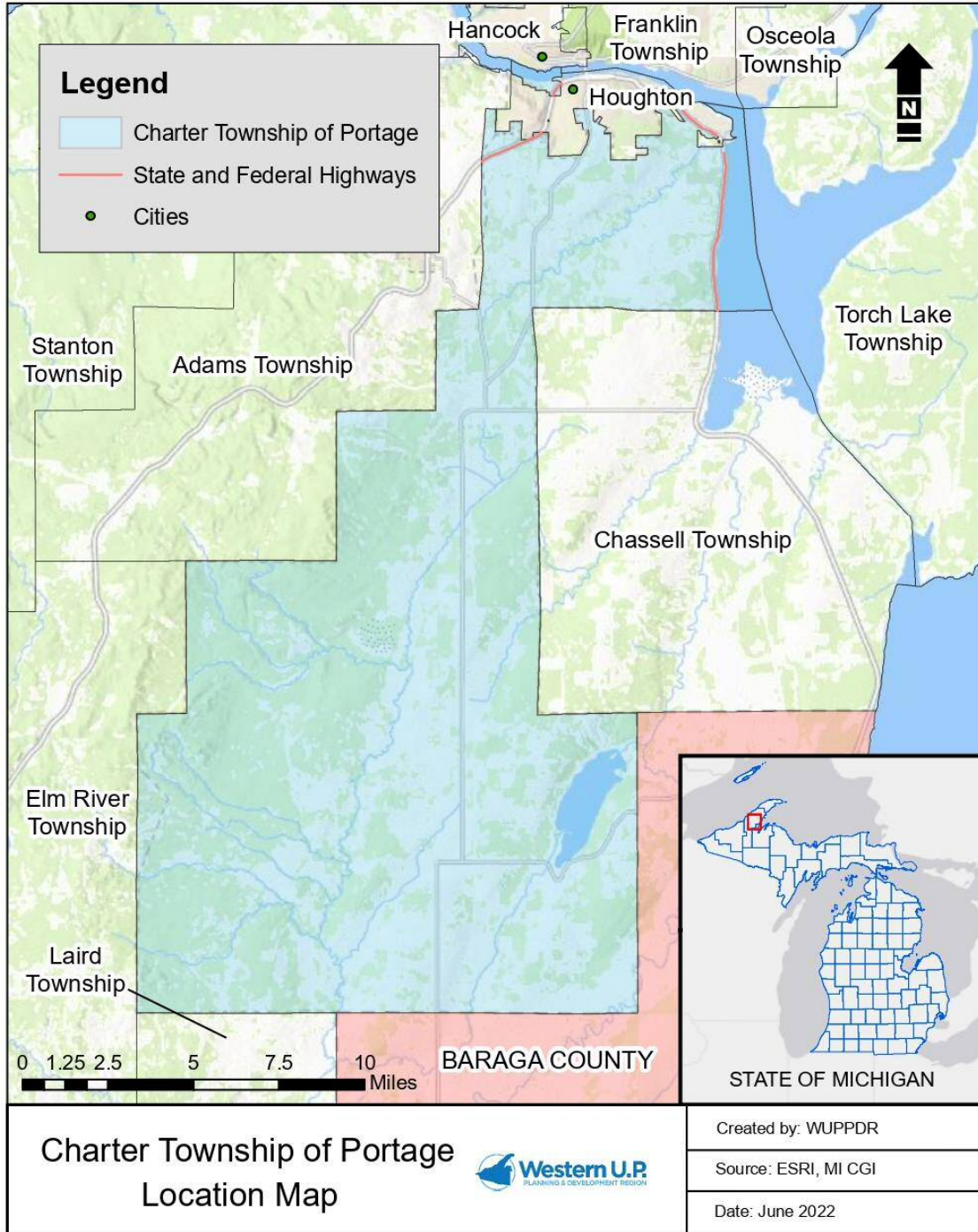
In recreation planning and programming, special consideration is given to the school age group (5-19 years old), as well as people over the age of 65 to address accessibility, but emphasis is also placed on the recreation needs of the general population. Portage Township boasts a wide range of age groups, all with differing recreational needs (Table 1) and hosts the highest percentage of people age 24-35 years old in Houghton County. Additional socioeconomic characteristics are identified in Table 2, including income and poverty levels. As of 2020, the Township has the highest median income and highest taxable value increase in the County from the previous census.

**Table 1:** Portage Township Population Distribution, 2020

| Population Distribution |               |                  |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------------|
|                         | Total Persons | Percent of Total |
| Male                    | 1,761         | 56.1%            |
| Female                  | 1,380         | 43.4%            |
| Under 5 Years Old       | 148           | 4.7%             |
| 5 to 19 Years Old       | 499           | 15.8%            |
| 20 to 34 Years Old      | 829           | 26.4%            |
| 35 to 64 Years Old      | 1,116         | 35.5%            |
| 65 Years and Over       | 549           | 17.6%            |
| Total Population        | 3,141         | 100.0%           |

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

Figure 1: Charter Township of Portage Location Map





**Table 2:** Charter Township of Portage Income Distribution and Poverty Level, 2020

| Income Statistics           |                             |                     |                 |                     |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
|                             | Charter Township of Portage |                     | Houghton County |                     |
| Median Household Income     | \$67,813                    |                     | \$48,623        |                     |
| Median Family Income        | \$100,966                   |                     | \$74,367        |                     |
| Nonfamily Households Income | \$30,651                    |                     | \$25,402        |                     |
|                             | Total                       | Percentage of Total | Total           | Percentage of Total |
| Persons Below Poverty Level | 497                         | 15.2%               | 5,948           | 17.2%               |

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

**Land-Use**

Portage Township’s major land use is predominantly forest and farmland. The northern part of the Township is more urbanized near the City of Houghton and the communities of Dodgeville and Hurontown. The central and southern portions of the Township are rural farmlands with some residential development. Forest lands make up the major land-use in the Township. Somero Enterprises, Valley View Quarry, LJJ Construction LLC, and Great Lakes Sound and Vibration, Inc, are the only industrial sites in the Township, and there is continuing strip commercial development adjacent to the City of Houghton extending out along M-26 south of Houghton. An ongoing land-use trend is large lot residential development adjacent to more populated areas that were traditionally agricultural and forest lands. This development pressure not only increases the need for recreational opportunities, but it also puts pressure on other lands that have traditionally been used for hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife habitat and other activities.

**Economy**

Portage Township residents are largely dependent on employment opportunities located in the communities of Houghton-Hancock and Baraga-L'Anse. Michigan Technological University is the largest employer in the area with over 1,500 jobs and an enrollment of more than 7,000 students. Other major employers in the area include Somero Enterprises, local schools, UP Health System - Portage, Aspirus Keweenaw, Walmart, Copper Country Mental Health, and miscellaneous Local Units of Government. Recreational pursuits, including motorized and non-motorized activities, exist throughout the Township and County and have a large economic impact on the region. Agriculture and forestry are also important to the Township's economy.

**Transportation Systems**

Portage Township is served by two major highways, US-41 and M-26. These highways merge at the Portage Lake Lift Bridge, which connects the northern half of the Keweenaw Peninsula to the rest of the Upper Peninsula. Thus, all tourist traffic flowing into the Keweenaw Peninsula must pass through the Township to reach Houghton and communities to the north. This provides the Township an opportunity to attract tourist dollars through improved lodging facilities, commercial establishments, and recreational opportunities. Locally, the Township is primarily served by one major north-south County Road. County Road (P651), named Tapiola Road, connects the rural southern communities in the Township and provides access to water-based recreational opportunities provided by the Otter River and Otter Lake. This road is also important as a market access route for both agricultural and forestry products.

The area is served by the regional-based SkyWest Airlines with service through United Airlines providing service to Chicago. Indian Trails Bus Service is available daily, and the City of Houghton, City of Hancock, and Baraga-Houghton-Keweenaw County Community Action Agency operate local bus transit systems which serve several adjacent areas of the Township. Taxi services from various companies are also available.

**Topography**

Portage Township has a variable topography with ridges and valleys which run southwest to northeast, like the rest of the Keweenaw Peninsula. The ridges vary in height from 800 to 1,000 feet above sea level, while the valleys are drained by the river systems of the Otter and Pilgrim. The Pilgrim River Watershed is located near the Michigan Technological University Trails System and the Cities of Houghton, and this proximity makes the Pilgrim an attractive recreation area for both residents and visitors. These watersheds and their

characteristics have set the area apart from much of the rest of Michigan with its rugged terrain, superb views, and natural beauty.

### **Climate**

The climate of the area can be characterized as having short, cool summers, and long winters. Total annual rainfall precipitation averages about 27.8 inches, with an average annual snowfall in the Calumet/Houghton areas of 208 inches. Average temperatures for the coldest month (January) are about 9° Fahrenheit low and 22 ° Fahrenheit high: temperatures for the hottest month (July) average about 54° Fahrenheit low and 75 ° Fahrenheit high. The prevailing winds are southerly during warm weather and northwesterly the remainder of the year. The proximity of the Township to Lake Superior and Portage Lake results in a moderating effect on temperature extremes and contributes to the unusually high amounts of winter lake effect snowfall. The Township usually experiences its first freezing temperatures between September 20-30 and last freezing temperatures between May 20-30. The growing season is roughly 102 days.

The diverse weather conditions result in a need for a variety of indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities in Portage Township. Due to the long winter months, skating, cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and ice fishing are popular among township residents.

### **Water Resources**

The lakes, rivers, and streams in and around Portage Township are the most prominent of its natural features, particularly Portage Lake. With nearly five miles of shoreline on the Lake, the Township has unique opportunities for residential and recreational development. Portage Lake, which bisects the Keweenaw Peninsula, is significant in that it receives, either directly or indirectly, most of the surface water drainage from the Township.

The Pilgrim River drains directly into Portage Lake. As it flows in a southwest to northeast direction across the upper quarter of the township, it collects surface water from a relatively small but important drainage basin and deposits it in Portage Lake at Pilgrim Point just south of Houghton. There is an active movement originating within the Pilgrim River Watershed, which is 15,544 acres in size, to set aside many acres for non-motorized public use immediately adjacent to the City of Houghton and the Michigan Technological University ski trails. Grants, land donations, conservation easements, etc. are all being used to procure these valuable river resource recreational areas.

In addition to the Pilgrim River, there are two other river systems in the township (besides numerous small streams which lead directly into Portage Lake). A relatively small stream

begins in the marshy areas west of Dodgeville and gradually drains northward through Huron Lake then along the east side of M-26 and into the ship canal on the west side of the city. Further south, in the rural balance of the township, the many arms of the Otter River generally flow southeasterly until they converge with the North Branch. This branch, in turn, heads south, flows out of the township, meets the West Branch of the Otter (north of Limestone Mountain, Baraga County), then heads northeast and empties into Otter Lake on the south shore. Otter Lake is part of the Sturgeon River drainage system which outlets into Portage Lake, near Chassell. Otter Lake with 935 acres of surface area, is substantially larger than Mud Lake, Pine Lake, Huron Lake, and other small natural and man-made “ponds” scattered throughout the Township.

### **Vegetation and Wildlife**

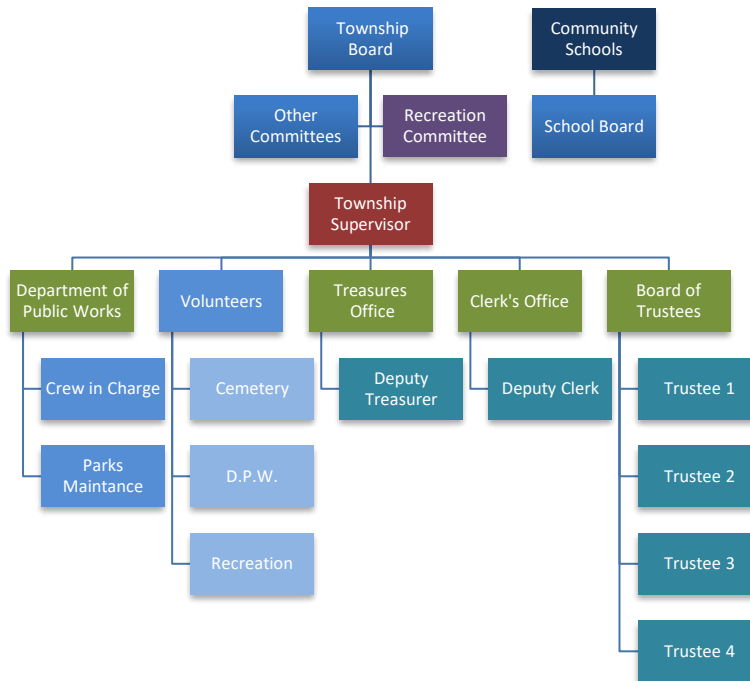
Northern hardwoods characterize the predominant forest type in Houghton County covering approximately 338,155 acres or about 82 percent. These forest lands are located primarily in the south, central, inland area of the County. Some wildlife species found in the county include whitetail deer, black bear, coyote, occasional wolves, fox, otter, bobcats, weasels, ermines, fishers, beaver, ruffed grouse, and a large variety of bird species.

## ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The Portage Township Board established the Township Recreation Committee to coordinate the management and development of recreational facilities found within the Township. This permanent committee is made up of three individuals appointed every four years or whenever a vacancy may occur and is responsible for identifying recreational needs, obtaining public input into the planning process, obtaining volunteer assistance, and advising the Township Board on the Township’s recreation facility development and management. The Houghton Portage Township School Board provides information to the Township Board on educational recreation programming administered by the school system.

The Township Supervisor is responsible for coordinating recreation development and directs the Department of Public Works staff in maintaining recreation facilities. For 2022, the Township has budgeted \$30,000 towards recreation including maintenance/utilities, small improvements, and a small contingency fund. The Township also designates funds for matching monies as needed to complete recreational projects funded by recreational grant projects. The Township also can supply labor, materials, and equipment to assist in recreation project completion. Following is an organizational chart for recreation within the Township:

**Figure 2:** Charter Township of Portage Recreation Administrative Structure



## RECREATION INVENTORY

Portage Township maintains access to several recreation facilities for residents and tourists. The following recreation inventory describes the types and location (See Figure 3) of recreation facilities currently available in the Township and nearby. In addition, accessibility assessments and rankings are provided for each site based on the parameters outlined in the “DNR Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans” as follows:

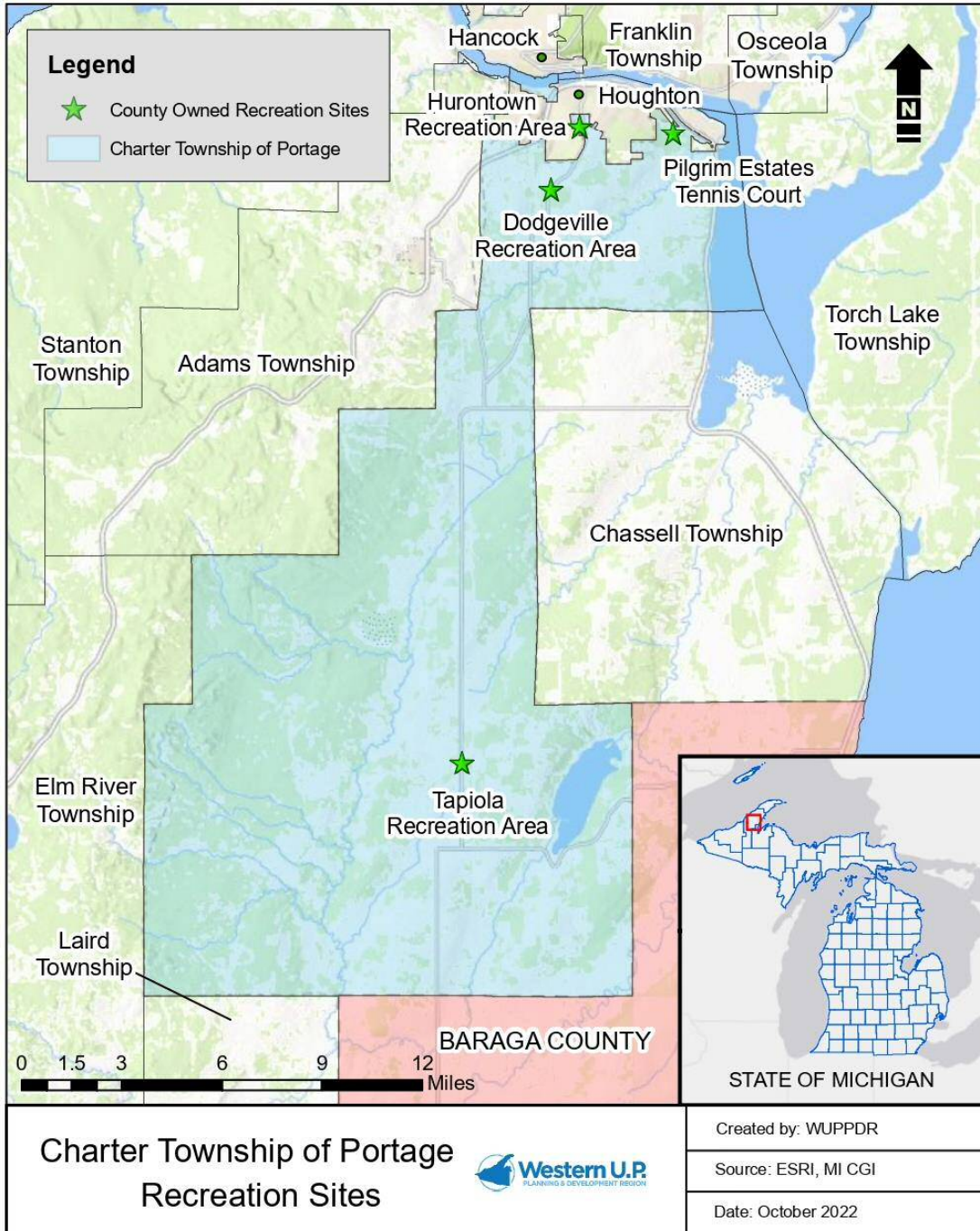
- 1=none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 2=some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 3=most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4=the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5=the entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design

Based on this inventory the need for improvements and additional recreational facilities can be fully evaluated. The map in Figure 3 identifies the locations of Portage Township recreation sites.

### Seven Principles of Universal Design

1. **Equitable Use:** The design is useful and marketable to any group of users.
2. **Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
3. **Simple and Intuitive Use:** Use of the design is easy to understand.
4. **Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user.
5. **Tolerance for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintentional actions.
6. **Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably.
7. **Size and Space for Approach and Use:** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach and use

**Figure 3: Portage Township Recreation Sites**



**Township Owned Recreation Facilities**

**Hurontown Recreation Area**

*Type of Park:* Neighborhood Park

*Size of Park:* ~6 acres

*Service Area:* Residents of Hurontown/Dodgeville, the Copper Country Soccer Association, and the Copper Country Slow Pitch League.



**Hurontown Recreation Area Bathrooms & Ballfield**

Township-owned neighborhood park including softball diamond with dugouts and bleachers, public restrooms, playground equipment, park benches, 10 ft. chain link fence on four sides of softball diamond, gravel off-street parking lot, 2 tennis courts, and soccer fields.

**Accessibility Assessment:**

3 = most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines

**Dodgeville Recreation Area**

*Type of Park:* Neighborhood Park

*Size of Park:* ~5 acres

*Service Area:* Residents of Dodgeville and all local residents



**Dodgeville Recreation Area Ice Rink**

Township-owned neighborhood park with lighted covered pavilion with a cement floored ice rink, warming/changing building, playground equipment, basketball court, horseshoe pits, and parking area.

Ice surface is maintained by volunteers during the winter months. The cement-base ice rink can be used during the summer months for skate boarding, laser tag, in-line skating, biking, large family meetings, reunions, and other special events. The cement base also has painted lines for pickleball.

**Accessibility Assessment:**

3 = Most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines



**Tapiola Recreation Area**

*Type of Park:* Neighborhood Park  
*Size of Park:* ~15 acres  
*Service Area:* Residents of Otter Lake and Tapiola, Events



**Tapiola Recreation Area Ballfield, Concessions, and Pavilion**

Township-owned neighborhood park with pavilion/ice rink, changing room for winter activities, ballfield with bleachers and two dugouts, vaulted toilets, Senior Citizen Center meeting facility, and playground equipment. Park facility is used 2-3 times a week for baseball tournaments, fundraisers, reunions, multi-family rummage sales, and neighborhood gatherings. Site is monitored and maintained by volunteers.

**Accessibility Assessment:**

2 = some of the facilities / park area meet accessibility guidelines

**Pilgrim Estates Tennis Court**

*Type of Park:* Mini Park  
*Size of Park:* less than 1 acre  
*Service Area:* Portage Township Residents






**Pilgrim Estates Tennis/Pickleball/Basketball Court**

Township-owned mini-park with fenced tennis court including basketball nets and parking area. Recreation opportunities include tennis, basketball and pickleball. Pickleball being an emerging sport within the community and played by all age groups.





**Accessibility Assessment:**

2 = some of the facilities / park area meet accessibility guidelines





**Non-Township Owned Recreational Facilities Within the Township**





| Establishment                                      | Ownership                                                             | Type/Facilities                                                                                                                                    | Image                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pilgrim River Watershed Corridor                   | Multiple owners (Michigan Tech University, City of Houghton, Private) | Over 50 miles of trails for hiking, running, biking, skiing, and snowshoeing                                                                       |   |
| Pilgrim Community Forest                           | Keweenaw Land Trust                                                   | Hundreds of acres of protected land accessible for hunting, education/research, and also has 3.5 miles of trails for biking and hiking             |   |
| Houghton - Portage Township High and Middle School | Houghton and Portage Township Board of Education                      | Baseball field, football field with track, indoor pool, two gymnasiums with basketball courts, sports deck, elevated walking track and concessions |  |


Charter Township of Portage Recreation Plan | 2023-2027

|                                                          |                                                                 |                                                                  |                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Houghton –<br/>Portage Township<br/>School Forest</p> | <p>Houghton and Portage<br/>Township Board of<br/>Education</p> | <p>Walking trails connecting to Michigan Tech Trail System</p>   |    |
| <p>North Coast<br/>Soccer Park</p>                       | <p>Houghton Football<br/>Club</p>                               | <p>Soccer Fields</p>                                             |    |
| <p>Otter Lake Boat<br/>Ramp</p>                          | <p>MI DNR</p>                                                   | <p>Public access to Otter Lake with hard surface boat launch</p> |   |
| <p>Portage Lake<br/>Golf Course</p>                      | <p>Michigan<br/>Technological<br/>University</p>                | <p>18-hole Golf Course with clubhouse and driving range</p>      |  |

Charter Township of Portage Recreation Plan | 2023-2027

|                                                              |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Portion of the Baraga State Forest Area</p>               | <p>State of Michigan</p>                                                                                  | <p>Forest areas for hiking, biking, and similar recreation activities</p>                                             |    |
| <p>River Bend Nature Sanctuary</p>                           | <p>Michigan Nature Association</p>                                                                        | <p>Class C Nature Sanctuary that can only be visited with the assistance of the Michigan Nature Association (MNA)</p> |    |
| <p>Sally M. Ollila Memorial Woodland</p>                     | <p>Keweenaw Land Trust – Donated by John Ollila in memory of his mother Sally who grew up on the land</p> | <p>Nature area for public access low-impact use. Part of the Pilgrim River Watershed Project</p>                      |   |
| <p>Sarah Catherine Rockafellow Memorial Nature Sanctuary</p> | <p>Michigan Nature Association</p>                                                                        | <p>Class C Nature Sanctuary that can only be visited with the assistance of the Michigan Nature Association (MNA)</p> |  |

| Trails                            |                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Houghton County Rail Trail System | MI DNR                  | A portion of the Rail Trail System extends into the township for motorized and non-motorized use                                                                                                                                            |    |
| Boundary Road Trails              | Pilgrim River Watershed | Free, public, dog friendly trails for all seasons of non-motorized sports including cross country skiing, snow-shoeing, fat tire biking, mountain biking, and hiking.                                                                       |    |
| Keweenaw Water Trail              | Various                 | A portion of the Western U.P. Water Trail (network of launch and landing sites for paddle sports) enters portage township                                                                                                                   |   |
| Nara Nature Park                  | City of Houghton        | The Nara Nature Park is linked to the Michigan Tech Trails with a combination of over 50 miles of trails for hiking, running, biking, skiing, and snowshoeing. It also includes a kayak/canoe launch and river access of the Pilgrim River. |  |

|                                      |     |                                                                                                      |                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Portage/Chassell<br>Recreation Trail | N/A | A 5.75-mile non-motorized trail that goes from the Pilgrim River Bridge to Chassell Centennial Park. |  |
|--------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Regional Recreation Sites Outside of the Charter Township of Portage**

| Establishment                      | Ownership         | Type/Facilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bridgeview Park                    | City of Houghton  | Park with pavilion, Kayak/SUP launch, picnic areas, gardens, fire pit, viewing areas and interpretive information                                                                                                                      |
| Bugni Park                         | City of Houghton  | Little league and softball fields with restrooms                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Chassell Township Waterfront Park  | Chassell Township | Park with playground, beach access, basketball and volleyball courts, fish cleaning station, restrooms, pavilion and event space                                                                                                       |
| City of Houghton RV Park           | City of Houghton  | Modern campground with 25 sites                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| College Avenue Park                | City of Houghton  | Deck and Seating area to view Keweenaw Waterway                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Copper Country State Forest Park   | State of Michigan | Multiple recreational uses such as hiking and biking (mainly managed for timber production)                                                                                                                                            |
| Dee Stadium                        | City of Houghton  | Community center with ballroom, ice skating/hockey rink (October-April). Home to the Copper Country Junior Hockey, Houghton High School, and the Portage Lake Pioneers. Offers free public skating weekly and private ice time rentals |
| East Houghton Waterfront Park      | City of Houghton  | Park with pavilion, picnic area, restrooms, and showers                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Emily Lake State Forest Campground | State of Michigan | Campground with 9 rustic sites for tent and small trailer use, vault toilet and potable water, access to Emily Lake with ramp for fishing, access to Bill Nicholls Trail.                                                              |
| Garnet Street Park                 | City of Houghton  | Tennis court, playground, picnic area, horseshoe pits                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Hancock Beach & RV Park            | City of Hancock   | 28-acre recreation area with swimming beach, fishing pier, boat ramp, volleyball courts, playgrounds, non-motorized trails and a campground with; 72 campsites, restrooms, showers, laundry, firewood and ice                          |
| Houghton City Boat Launch          | City of Houghton  | Boat launch access to portage canal                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Houghton Greenspace Park           | City of Houghton  | Undeveloped natural setting with walking paths                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|                                           |                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Houghton Skate Park                       | City of Houghton                  | Skatepark designed for boards, scooters, and BMX                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Houghton Waterfront Trail                 | City of Houghton                  | Non-motorized trail use in the warmer months and snowmobile use in the winter months                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Kestner Park and Chutes and Ladders       | City of Houghton                  | Pavilions, band shell, swimming beaches, picnic areas, playground, ice skating ribbon in the winter months                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Marsin Nature Area and Retreat            | Keweenaw Land Trust               | 40-acre nature area with hiking, picnic area, boardwalk, canoe/kayak access, fire ring, and retreat center for year round rental                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Mason Nature Area                         | City of Houghton                  | Native/natural area adjacent to Houghton Greenspace Park                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| McLain State Park                         | State of Michigan                 | State Park with 103 modern campsites, cabin rentals, modern handicap accessible restrooms and showers, three playgrounds, dog beach, swimming beaches, two pavilions available for day rentals and camp store                                                                                                              |
| Michigan Tech Student Development Complex | Michigan Technological University | Multipurpose facility with challenge course, classrooms, climbing wall, disc golf course, fitness center, fitness studio, tennis center, ice arena, multipurpose room, softball fields, sand volleyball court, racquetball courts, football, and soccer fields, shooting range, skate rental center and swimming pool      |
| Michigan Tech Trails                      | Michigan Technological University | 35 km of nationally recognized skiing, biking, and hiking trails connecting to the Nara Nature Trail Network                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Twin Lakes State Park                     | MI DNR                            | 175-acre State Park and campground with 62 modern sites and a mini cabin for rent, handicapped accessible shower/toilet building, day use area, beach access, boat launch, playground, horseshoe pits, volleyball net, beach houses, picnic area, nature trail and access to ORV trails including the Bill Nicholls Trail. |
| Veteran’s Park                            | City of Houghton                  | Memorial Park with seating area, gardens, and monuments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| West Houghton Park                        | City of Houghton                  | Outdoor ice hockey and skating rink, basketball nets, warming house, tot-lot playground                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |



|                                           |                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Woodhaven Park                            | City of Houghton                           | Playground, play field and basketball court                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Trails</b>                             |                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Chassell Ski Trails                       | Chassell Township                          | Ski, Snowshoe and Fitness trail                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Churning Rapids Snow Bike and Ski Trails  | City of Hancock & Keweenaw Nordic Ski Club | Connected to the Maasto Hiihto trails, offers cross country ski trails, snowshoeing, hiking, biking, snow biking and dog walking                                                                                     |
| Hancock to Lake Linden Snowmobile trail 3 | Various                                    | Motorized trail connecting Hancock to Lake Linden. Suited for snowmobiles, ATVs/UTVs, walking and biking                                                                                                             |
| Jack Steven’s Rail Trail                  | Various                                    | 13.5 mile motorized and multiuse trail from Hancock to Calumet. Suited for walking, running, biking and motorized use                                                                                                |
| Maasto Hiihto Trails – Hancock, MI        | City of Hancock & Keweenaw Nordic Ski Club | Silent sport recreation area around the Swedetown Creek Gorge offering groomed cross country ski trails, snowshoeing, hiking, biking and dog walking                                                                 |
| Swedetown Trails – Calumet, MI            | Calumet Township & Swedetown Trails Club   | 25 miles of all purpose-built single track mountain biking trails also used for, hiking, running, and dog walking. 26 km of groomed cross country ski trails, 4.5k of lighted trails, 10 miles of snow bike trails . |

**Other Recreational/Historic Sites** – Outside of Houghton County are numerous nearby facilities that allow for any number of recreational pursuits, most notably Isle Royale National Park (City of Houghton hosts the park headquarters), Keweenaw National Historical Park, Porcupine Mountain, FJ McLain’s, and Twin Lakes State Parks, Ottawa National Forest, and Fort Wilkins State Park. The western Upper Peninsula also has countless sites offering recreational opportunities such as the museums, mine tours, and scenic drives.

## RECREATION GOALS

The Township Recreation Committee has identified the following goals to be accomplished by the Charter Township of Portage Recreation Plan:

**Goal 1:** Provide recreation facilities, programs, and opportunities to sufficiently meet the recreational needs of the Township residents and its visitors.

**Goal 2:** Provide accessible recreation opportunities for all community members and visitors.

**Goal 3:** Support the Houghton County Recreation Authority to ensure continued public access to trails, plus pursue needed enhancements to the County and Township’s non-motorized trail system.

**Goal 4:** Continue developing a network of motorized and non-motorized four-season accessible pathways to connect and serve the Township and the adjacent communities.

**Goal 5:** Work to conserve land and water resources within the Township for future generations, preserve open spaces, and improve public access to the waterfront, watercourses and all other water resources and other natural resources.

**Goal 6:** Promote healthy lifestyles and attitudes of all ages by supporting community recreation activities and facilities.

**Goal 7:** Promote its recreation facilities and a network of four-season pathways to attract visitors and residents to the region as a strategy for economic development.

**Goal 8:** Support Complete Streets Principles and consider these concepts in all federal and state roadway projects.

**Goal 9:** Support the use of public lands within the township for outdoor recreation.

**Goal 10:** Spend and use recreation funds, materials, labor and equipment as efficiently as possible and consider match whenever possible.

**Recreation Activities Identified through the Recreation Survey:**

| Interest Level                                                            | Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Very High Interest Activities (60+% of total survey respondents answered) | beach activities, hiking, and walking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| High Interest Activities (50-59% of total survey respondents answered)    | leisure bicycling, canoeing, kayaking, other non-motorized boating, playgrounds, soccer, and swimming                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Moderate Interest Activities (40-49% of total respondents answered)       | mountain biking, fishing, gardening, ice skating, trail running/jogging, cross country skiing, sledding, snowshoeing, and yard games (cornhole, bags, ladderball)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Lower Interest Activities (30-39% of total respondents answered)          | baseball, softball, boating (motorized), camping (tent), hockey, picnicking, and visiting historical sites                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Lowest Interest Activities (Less than 30% of total respondents answered)  | ATV/off road vehicles, basketball, bicycling – road, bicycling - snow/fat tire, bird watching, camping (RV), climbing, dancing, disc-golf or frisbee, exercise classes, foraging, geocaching, horseback riding, horseshoes, hunting, indoor recreation, kite flying, pickleball, photography, quilting, rockhounding, roller-skating, roller-blading, road running/jogging, sailing, shuffleboard, skateboarding, downhill skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, tennis, volleyball, yoga, dog walking, football, hacky sack, camping (pop-up camper), stargazing |

**RECREATION NEEDS - BASIS FOR ACTION PROGRAM**

Portage Township is active in pursuing recreational goals as shown through completed capital improvement activities.

**Table 3:** Completed Capital Recreation Projects

| Year | Project Number | Project                                                                                                                                                      | Cost        | Funding Source                                    |
|------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1977 | 26-01023<br>Y1 | <i>Hurontown Recreation Area</i><br>Purpose: Baseball and soccer field construction                                                                          | \$33,004.12 | Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund             |
| 1989 | BF89-116       | <i>Tapiola Recreation Area</i><br>Purpose: Development of softball field, picnic pavilion/ice rink, picnic area, parking lot, restrooms and storage building | \$53,662.00 | Michigan DNR Bond Fund                            |
| 1998 | BF98-115       | <i>Dodgeville Recreation Area</i><br>Purpose: Additional of playground equipment, restrooms, and paved parking                                               | \$16,000.00 | Michigan DNF Bond Fund                            |
| 2011 | RP11-442       | <i>Hurontown Recreation Area</i><br>Construction of a restroom facility, access route, and signage                                                           | \$30,000.00 | Recreation Passport                               |
| 2015 | RP16-0012      | <i>Dodgeville Recreation Area</i><br>Development to extend the existing warming house to add two unisex accessible bathrooms.                                | \$39,700.00 | Twp., Donations & Portage Health Foundation Grant |

To determine the recreational needs in the Township, key elements were analyzed to formulate an action plan including public review of the current recreation inventory, as well as a public recreation survey. Additional details of the survey are provided in the Description of the Planning Process part of this plan.

A variety of recreation deficiencies and potential improvements were identified based on the survey results and from discussions within the Recreation Committee. The following list identifies some of the current needs at the Township recreation facilities:

- Aging recreational infrastructure and equipment at all the Township’s recreation areas.

- Expansion and coordination with regional trail initiatives such as the Houghton County Recreation Authority and development of additional non-motorized recreation trails within the Township.
- Facilities for storage, concessions, expansion of facilities and restrooms.
- Need to focus on collaborative partnerships within and outside of the Township for recreation development

**ACTION PLAN**

The capital improvement plan provides for the most imminent needs. The plan is not intended to be all inclusive, but rather used as a flexible guide for recreation development.

The following table lists future projects prioritized by year to meet the recreation goals and needs of the township. The Recreation Committee prioritized the projects based on results from the survey and community input.

**Table 4: Five Year Action Plan**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Project</b>                                                                                                         | <b>Cost</b> | <b>Funding Source</b>                                             |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2023</b> | Hurontown Recreation Area:<br>Install batting cages and playground upgrade                                             | \$30,000    | DNR/Township/<br>Local                                            |
|             | Pilgrim Estates Tennis Court: Paving and resurfacing courts for tennis and pickleball                                  | \$2,000     | Township/Local                                                    |
| <b>2024</b> | Hurontown Recreation Area:<br>Installation of two new security gates at the soccer field                               | \$25,000    | Copper Country Soccer Club,<br>match for a larger Hurontown Grant |
|             | Dodgeville Recreation Area:<br>Purchase adaptive equipment to increase opportunities for skaters with additional needs | \$3,000     | Township/Local                                                    |
| <b>2025</b> | Houghton Canal Road:<br>Planning pedestrian underpass development and culvert replacement                              | Variable    | DNR/Township/<br>Local                                            |
| <b>2027</b> | Tapiola Recreation Area:<br>Parking area planning and development                                                      | \$25,000    | Township/Local                                                    |

**Sources of Funding**

Several possible sources of funding for recreation projects within Portage Township are available and include the following:

**Table 5: Possible Funding Sources**

| Description                                                             | Match       | Source         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Local Funds                                                             | —           | Township       |
| Community Foundation/Other (local service organizations and businesses) | —           | Local          |
| Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)                           | 75/25 grant | DNR            |
| Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)                                   | 50/50 grant | DNR            |
| Recreation Passport Program                                             | 75/25 grant | DNR            |
| Boating Infrastructure Grants (BIG)                                     | 75/25 grant | DNR            |
| Off Road Vehicle (ORV)/Snowmobile Grants                                | —           | DNR            |
| Coastal Zone Management (CZM)                                           | 50/50 grant | DNR            |
| Miscellaneous Grants                                                    | —           | Unknown        |
| Material Donations                                                      | -           | Business/TWP   |
| Portage Health Foundation                                               | 75/25 grant | Local          |
| Doppelt Family Trail Dev. Grant                                         | grant       | Washington, DC |
| Rails-to-Trails Conservancy                                             | grant       | Washington, DC |

## DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

The Recreation Committee reviewed recreation goals and made project recommendations for the Recreation Plan. Members of the committee included Bruce Petersen—Township Supervisor, John Ollila – Trustee and Bill Fink - Trustee. On June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the Recreation Plan Committee held a meeting to review materials and develop survey questions for a print and on-line survey. The on-line survey was posted on the Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region’s (WUPPDR) website, the Township’s website, and paper copies of the survey were available at Township Hall, the Portage Lake District Library, and a number of local businesses. A link to the online survey was also included in the Township’s winter tax bill notifications and posted on WUPPDR’s Facebook page. The survey period from July 20, 2022, to August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022. In total, 145 survey responses were returned by mail or online. Survey results are provided in the Appendix section.

The Recreation Committee met on September 7, 2022, to review the survey results. WUPPDR staff presented a summary of the survey’s results, reviewed the recreation plan’s goals and objectives, and discussed individual recreation projects, project timelines and potential funding sources. A preliminary capital improvement plan was developed based on project prioritization data derived from the survey results.

The Portage Township Five-year Recreation Plan was made available for 30-day public review and inspection on January 13, 2023 and received through February 12, 2023. Copies of the plan were made available on-line at [www.wuppdr.org](http://www.wuppdr.org) and at [www.portagetownship.info](http://www.portagetownship.info) while print copies were made available at the Township and Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region’s Offices. Written comments received during this period included:

A Public Hearing, held on February 13, 2023, allowed citizens the opportunity to review and comment on the Portage Township Five-Year Recreation Plan. Comments from the hearing include:

- A request to change the community description, to highlight the county’s advantages in demographics data including age groups and taxable value for homes



- A request to change various diction to better reflect descriptions of locations and other topics that describe the township
- A request to add McLain State Park, Marsin Nature Area and Retreat Center, and Copper Country State Forest to the recreation plan

The public comment hearing was adjourned with no further comment.

The 2023-2027 Portage Township Recreation Plan was adopted at the subsequent specially scheduled Township Board meeting held on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

All notices of hearings were publicized to invite citizen comment and review of the new recreation plan. The Township's Resolution of Adoption, meeting notices and minutes are included in the Appendix.

## **APPENDICES**

- A. Recreation Survey
- B. Recreation Survey Results
- C. Press Release Announcing Survey
- D. Press Release Announcing 30-Day Public Review of Plan
- E. Summary of Written Comments Received
- F. Daily Mining Gazette affidavit for Public Comment Period & Public Hearing
- G. Minutes from Public Hearing
- H. Resolution for Adoption