

**PARK RECREATION
OPEN SPACE
MASTER PLAN**

**2027
2031**

VILLAGE OF ROSCOMMON
ROSCOMMON AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY

PLAN ADOPTED BY:

VILLAGE OF ROSCOMMON:

ROSCOMMON AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY:

COMMUNITY ADVISORY

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ROSCOMMON AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY

- Sue Jock-Chair
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- Jim Fisher
- Steve Hinds
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Introduction



We have a vast number of natural resources, features and facilities to attract visitors and residents in the Roscommon area. Access to recreation is a top priority as it directly impacts our community economically.

This "Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan," was collaboratively developed by the Village of Roscommon (Council), Roscommon Area Recreation Authority (Board), along with the assistance of other area groups, councils, and individuals to meet the needs of the residents and visitors based on the recommendations and goals identified in our community planning process. This Master Plan was collaboratively developed to gather and develop recommendations and goals for our community.

The focus of this plan is to identify and examine all aspects of recreation within the community of Roscommon. This data compiled in the plan will guide the village and the Recreation Authority to prioritize planning and development for our parks and open spaces and allow us the ability to obtain grants from the State. It is to be noted that Higgins Township and the Village boundaries are at the northernmost border of Roscommon County. The "Roscommon Area" or 48653 zip code and the Roscommon Area School District venture west into the county and include the townships of Gerrish, Lyon, and Markey as well as the south end of Crawford County.

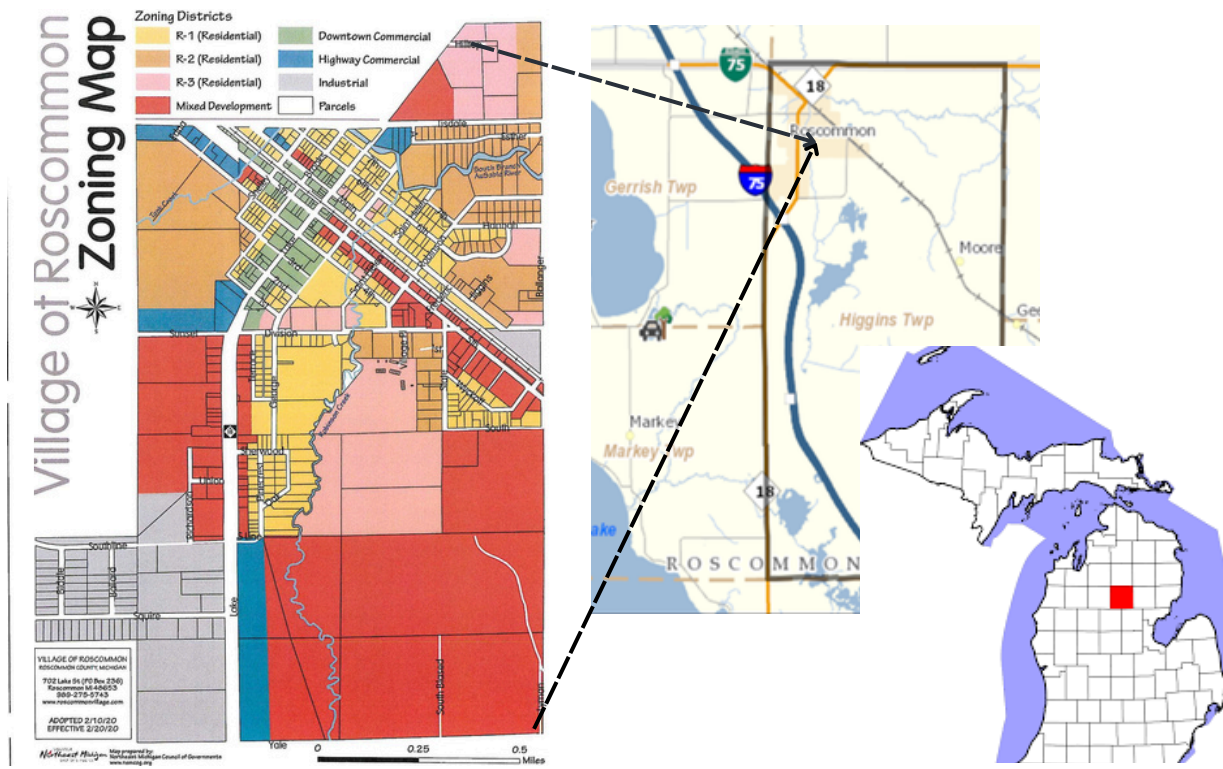
This plan is not an attempt to be all-inclusive, but rather to establish parameters from which scheduled improvements can take place. It is the intent of this plan to be flexible and to accommodate both active and passive recreational facilities. This document reviews the condition of existing recreation opportunities, enumerates the recreational goals of the community, and establishes a blueprint for future improvements.

Since Roscommon is a recreation destination, the plan considers the desires of tourists who visit the area. Much of the local economy depends on our natural resource amenities. The community also hosts numerous festivals and celebrations during the year that have a recreation component.

Community Description

Situated on the northcentral border in Roscommon County, Higgins Township is one of the top destinations for recreation activities in central Michigan. Covering a land mass of 70.4 square miles, it is the second largest township in the county holding 12.5% of the land. The township consists of 60% state land, 36% private, and 4% water. We have a vast number of natural resources, features and facilities to attract visitors and residents to the Roscommon area. The heart of our natural resources are three pristine hydrologically connected lakes featuring crystal clear turquoise waters, ample shoreline, world-class fishing, and protected wildlife. This area offers over 120 miles of motorized and non-motorized trails for recreation and exploration. The over 14 parks are inviting to all generations. Access to recreation is a top priority as it directly impacts our community economically.

According to the 2020 census, the township has a population of 2183. The village of Roscommon is in the northwest corner of Higgins Township. The Village has a total area of 1.6 square miles which is 2% of the township yet comprises 58% of the population at 1,075. Incorporated in 1885, it is the only incorporated city or village within Roscommon County and holds the county seat.



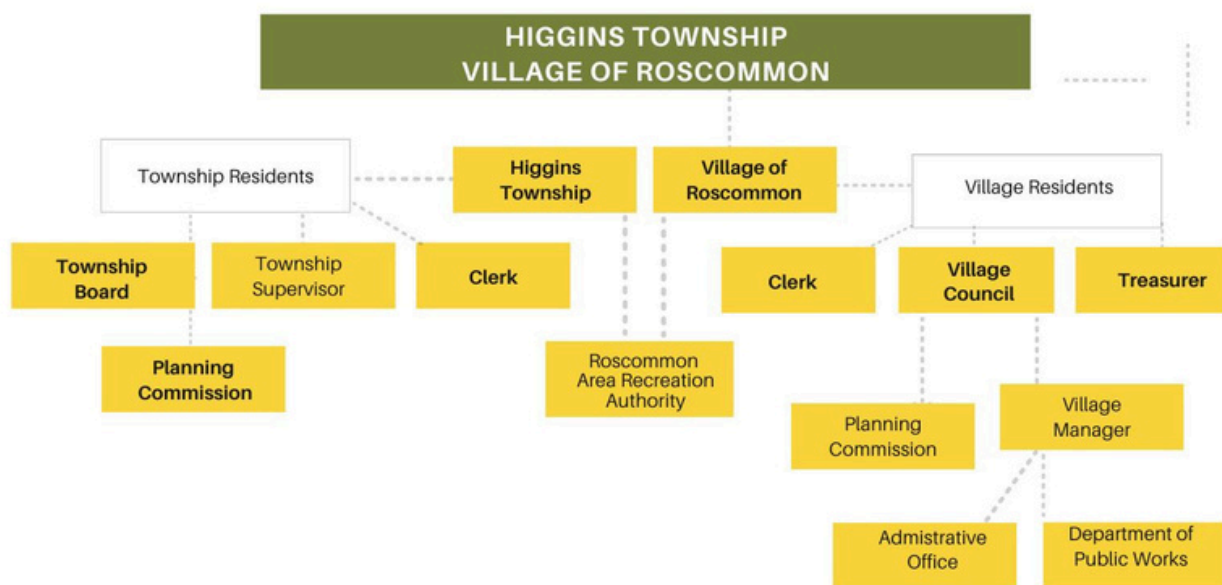
Two major thoroughfares, M-18 and M-76, intersect in the commercial district. History tells that Roscommon Village was a railhead. Excursions were by horse and buggy between the railroad, the plats, and small farms. The early construction of US-27, M-76, M-18, and M-55 provided excellent access to the area from the heavily populated areas of Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. The era of tourism and vacationing followed. With the rise of the automobile industry in Michigan, the opportunity for automobile-related industries was established in Roscommon. The Great Depression led to high local taxes and the loss of property through tax sales. This resulted in over 4,500,000 acres being deeded from private ownership to the State of Michigan. The land was subjected to this state takeover because of a lack of money by private owners to acquire it or the owners simply no longer wanted the land and abandoned the property. Over 60% of Higgins Township is state land to this day.

The closest communities to Roscommon are St. Helen, (12 miles), Grayling (15 miles), Prudenville (15 miles), and West Branch (29 miles). Some of the state's most sought after natural resources are the rivers and lakes. Just 14 miles away, Houghton Lake, Michigan's largest inland lake, is multi-use for boating, fishing and a variety of lakeshore activities. Located just eight miles from the village, Higgins Lake is one of Michigan's most beautiful inland lakes, renowned for its crystal-clear turquoise waters. Lake St. Helen (12 miles) is a shallow inland lake known for excellent fishing and surrounding ORV/ATV trails. The south branch of the AuSable River runs through the village of Roscommon and connects to the main branch continuing to Oscoda where it empties into Lake Huron. Recreation use for canoes, kayaks, and tubes is popular in the south branch. Further downstream from town, you enter the "Holy Waters" on the Mason Tract with the pristine natural beauty, world-class trout fishing, and protected wildlife.

Although the local population is small, seasonal tourism brings in many visitors to the Roscommon area. This population influx for our community's amenities, both natural and developed, is one of the primary economic drivers for the community. Higgins Township and the Village of Roscommon have many businesses that are tourist, recreational and seasonally related. They provide goods and services for activities including canoeing, hunting, fishing, boating, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, bird watching, cycling, camping, hiking, and ORV trails. The Roscommon community is also the home to many annual festivals and events celebrating our beauty and culture. Tourism and recreation have long been essential to the local economy. As a result of the increasing popularity of winter recreation, the area is a popular tourism destination year around.

Administrative Structure

The administrative structure of the township include positions that require election. These include the supervisor, clerk, treasurer and the board, which is elected every four years. The village has elected office for the village president, clerk and treasurer every four years, village council every 4 years, and the village manager is hired by the village council. The Roscommon Area Recreation Authority is comprised of seven board members, (3) members appointed by the Higgins Township Board, (3) appointments from the Village Council and (1) appointed by the RARA. Each member will fulfill a three-year term or until their successor is appointed.



Higgins Township budgets \$5,000 annually for recreation. The Village has an annual budget for parks and recreation of \$25,000 contractual, \$50,000 special projects, \$15,00 for maintenance, and \$10,000 utilities. This funding for Hiawatha, Wallace, the two pocket parks and miscellaneous open green space. RARA is funded \$20,000 annually according to their articles of incorporation. Other income for the RARA is secured by revenues gained from the CRAF Center memberships and rental income. RARA could also seek funding by millage as stipulated in their articles of incorporation. Other sources of funding exist specifically via special project grant requests and fundraisers.

RECREATION:

Recreation within the community of Roscommon is supported by a collaborative group of governmental entities, authorities and groups that keep an active schedule. The village participates and volunteers with local activities and maintains Wallace Park and Hiawatha Park, along with several open greenspace areas and pocket parks. The Roscommon Area Recreation Authority owns a grouping of four large properties that provide recreation and services to the community. A fifth piece of State owed land is maintained by the RARA.

- 1.The Community Recreation and Fitness (CRAF) Center operates a comprehensive fitness center, hosts several community-based fitness programs, community events, and room rentals.
- 2.Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve is a privately funded organization that hosts youth camps and programs focused on nature, conservancy, and environmental stewardship. Property also includes numerous walking trails including a barrier free paved trail.
- 3.The AuSable River Center was once a museum of canoeing history. The center is now an open building, available for community group utilization and public rental. It is also the site of the Roscommon Farmers' Market, which offers local produce and crafts weekly May–October.
- 4.Roscommon Community Park and Pump Track is the home to the community Little League, with concessions, bathrooms and a playground. In 2025, an \$820,000 LWCG funding was awarded to support new infrastructure, a pavilion, parking, universal access, paved perimeter walking path and pump track.

RARA has a land maintenance agreement with the mDNR to maintain Tisdale Triangle Pathway and the Mason Tract. Tisdale has eight miles of trails utilized for hiking, biking and cross-country skiing. The Mason Tract has over 10.42 miles for hiking and xc skiing. Summer mowing, trail clean up and winter grooming for cross country skiing is included in the agreement.



In addition to RARA other agencies, many of which are volunteer organizations, continually support recreation within the area include:

1. Higgins Lake Roscommon Chamber of Commerce
2. Roscommon St. Helen Little League
3. Roscommon North Youth Soccer Association
4. Roscommon Area Youth Football League
5. Roscommon County Canoe Race Association
6. Roscommon Area District Library
7. Roscommon Rotary
8. Rosco Higgins Trail Cruisers
9. Roscommon County Commission on Aging
10. MSUE 4H
11. The Lions Club

Local downtown business owners

Several commissions and organizations are engaged or oversee the development and expansion of parks and recreational facilities in the Roscommon area including:

The Roscommon County Board of Commissioners
The Roscommon County Planning Commission
The Roscommon County Road Commission
The Roscommon Area Public School District

The Five Year Open Space Master Plan and Recreation had a large, diverse group that represent many of these commissions, authorities, groups and residents within the community to develop this plan.

Recreation Inventory

An inventory of recreation activities is included and listed by classification. Properties owned by the village and recreation authority include an accessibility assessment for reference utilizing the DNR Accessibility Grading System.

DNR Accessibility Grading System for Parks and Recreation Facilities	
Accessibility Grade	Definition
1	None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
2	Some facilities meet accessibility guidelines
3	Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines
4	The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5	The entire park was developed using the principles of universal design

PARKS & NATURE AREAS

Wallace Park

104 N. Seventh Street

Accessibility Grade: 4

Wallace Park is located on the banks of the South Branch of the AuSable River within the village limits and close to downtown. The large pavilion was built by the Lions Club. There is a beautifully renovated dock that includes universal access to the park, fishing pier, and boat launch. The park has two bathrooms built by Roscommon Rotary, picnic tables, and grills, all with universal access.

Hiawatha Park

1113 Lake Street

Accessibility Grade: 4

Property situated across the river from Wallace Park was purchased by the Village of Roscommon in 2018. In 2024-25 this area was renovated by a MEDC Grant that incorporated a new paved parking, access area, universally accessible kayak launch, fishing dock, public bathrooms, sidewalk, benches and pavilion.

Roscommon Community Park and Pump Track (Metro Park)

208 George Street (between Division and Sherwood)

Accessibility Grade: 4

The 15.6-acre park is located two blocks from the Roscommon County Building in a residential neighborhood. It is home to local Little League with three baseball/softball fields. In 2014 the playground was renovated. A pavilion houses a sheltered picnic area as well as concessions during ball games. The area has municipal water and sewer on site, which supports two indoor bathrooms. A LWCG was awarded in 2023 that included development of 2,100 sq ft pump track, 0.3 mile perimeter walking trail, parking lot, infrastructure, and pavilion.

Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve
209 Maplehurst

Accessibility Grade: 2

Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve is a non-profit organization operated by volunteers, and funded by its members, generous donors and the endowment left by Marguerite. It provides environmental education for Roscommon County schools as well as many of the schools in the surrounding counties. The preserve is a 115-acre public wildlife sanctuary open 24/7 to the community for hiking, skiing, and sightseeing. Pets on a leash are welcome. A well-marked and maintained three mile trail network of walking paths wind through forested, creekside, and wetland habitats. A quarter mile wheelchair-accessible asphalt path and boardwalk allow universal access from the parking lot through the upland area to Tank Creek and to the pond.

South Higgins Lake State Park
106 State Park Drive

South Higgins Lake State Park is located nine miles southwest of Roscommon. It is a 1000-acre park that contains almost one mile of shoreline along Higgins Lake, which is a large spring-fed body of water known for its clarity and fishing. There are multiple trails (see Marl Lake Trail), a modern campground with 400 sites, a picnic area, a sandy beach, a boat launch, playground, and many other amenities. Both state parks host annual seasonal events.

North Higgins Lake State Park
11747 N. Higgins Lake Drive

North Higgins Lake State Park is located eight miles west of Roscommon. It features 175 modern campsites, picnicking, swimming, two mini-cabins, and a boat launch. Over eight miles of trails are available for hiking, cross-country skiing, and biking (See Trails).

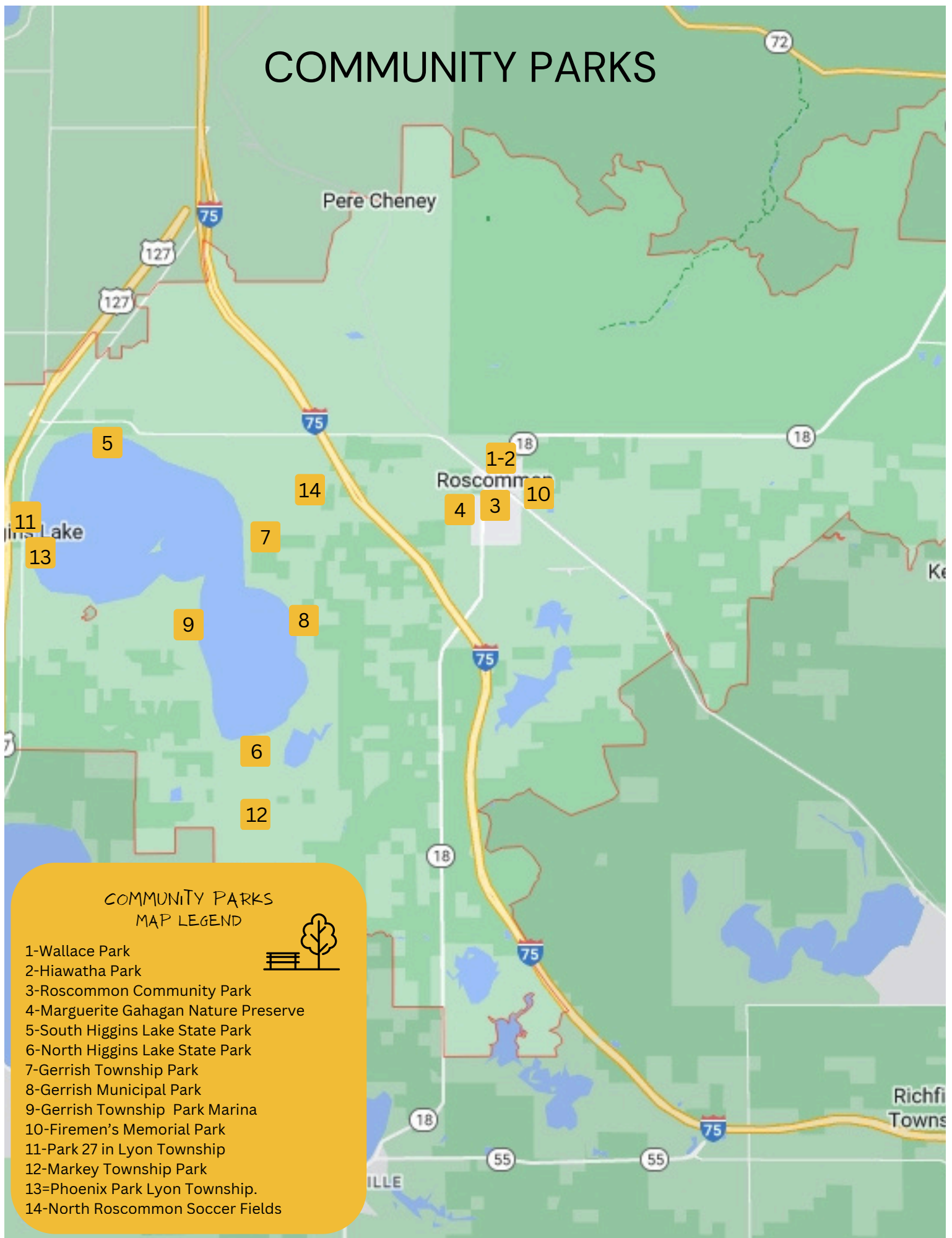
Gerrish Township Park
109 Carlos Avenue

This lakefront park, with approximately 400 ft of public beach, offers public swimming access, a gazebo, picnic areas, grills, restrooms with bathhouse, children's play equipment, universally accessible boardwalk, tetherball, and paved parking.

Gerrish Municipal Park
2997 E. Higgins Lake Drive

This park is adjacent to the township hall and has a pavilion, picnic tables, grills, restroom facilities (inside the hall), tennis courts, pickleball courts, children's play equipment, basketball court, tetherball and paved parking.

COMMUNITY PARKS



Gerrish Township Community Park Marina **103 Mill Road**

This lakefront park area currently operates a 133 slip marina facility and offers marina gas sales, fishing, grills, boating and lake access. Winter activities include ice fishing and ice skating.

Michigan State Firemen's Memorial Park **1295 E. Robinson Lake Road**

The park is two miles from the downtown area and is approximately four acres in size. Michigan Firemen's Memorial Festival committee provides all maintenance for this site that contains the memorial, a small playground, restrooms, and a walk-through artifact site of fire equipment and memorabilia. The project has become immensely popular with visitors and draws many people throughout the year, as well as during the Michigan Firemen's Memorial Festival, held in September.

Other Notable Nearby Parks:

Park 27 in Lyon Township

Sam O Set Park in Lyon Township

Markey Township Park and Dog Park in Markey Township

Phoenix Park Lyon Township.

North Roscommon Soccer Association Field: has 10 soccer fields and one football field and a snack shack that were built and funded by the Rotary Club of Roscommon and owned by C.O.O.R. Intermediate School District. The soccer association and football league operate and maintain the fields. This sports complex was dedicated in 1990 and continues to welcome other teams to play and compete in Roscommon.

RIVERS and LAKES

South Branch of the Au Sable River

The South Branch of the Au Sable River, flowing through the Village of Roscommon, is one of the finest trout streams in the country. Anglers and canoeists are taken back in time when following this meandering river through pristine wilderness as it flows from Lake St. Helen towards the mainstream of the Au Sable. Kayakers and canoeists enjoy the relatively flat waters. Roscommon is the host for the annual Pro Am Canoe Classic Race in early May featuring C2 and C1 races held at Wallace Park.

Cut River

Higgins Lake connects and drains into Marl Lake by way of the Cut River, which runs into Houghton Lake and eventually to Lake Michigan. The distance between Houghton and Higgins Lakes is about 10 stream miles. The river's unique flow provides nonmotorized experienced water craftsmen to enjoy a mix of river and lake recreation in one trip including ample unique fishing opportunities.

Higgins Lake

Eight miles west of Roscommon, Higgins Lake is a large recreational and fishing lake in Roscommon County. The 9,900-acre lake is known for its deep, clear waters and is the 10th largest in Michigan with a shoreline of 21 miles. The Cut River connects Marl Lake to Higgins Lake giving ample opportunity to fish for perch, trout and pike. Two state parks and public access points provide excellent beach facilities, camping, launch sites, hiking trails and cross-country skiing.

Boat Launches

There are public launch sites at the State Parks, Gerrish Marina and the West Higgins Lake Boat Launch off County Road 200. These four launches include large parking lots. A fifth launch, Townline launch is small with limited parking.

TRAIL SYSTEMS

MOTORIZED & NON-MOTORIZED SYSTEMS

Snowmobile/ORV Trails

Geels Trail is a 55.93-mile ORV, motorcycle Route 69, with the trailhead south of Roscommon at Federal Highway, which extends south to Saint Helen. In 2014, the Village of Roscommon re-routed the trail access down Ballenger, then left down Main Street, extending north out of town to the Billman Road area. There is a disconnect from that point to the Grayling trail head (route 489) in Crawford County. The trail was recognized by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in April 2011. Roscommon allows ORV/ATVs on the shoulder of all village maintained streets.

Tisdale Triangle Pathway

Tisdale Road and Wisner Road

This trail, located one-half mile east of Roscommon via M-18, consists of 8.1 miles of multiple loops. It is a non-motorized trail where cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, biking, and equestrians are permitted. The terrain is relatively flat with a few rolling hills. The Trail is maintained by the Roscommon Area Recreation Authority.

Cross Country Ski Headquarters Trail Network

This is a 9.39 mile trail system groomed for cross country skiing that is available as walking paths in the summer. Maintained by a privately owned facility.

Fresh Water Trail

This trail of five fresh water fish are found connecting the communities within Roscommon County. Fish are located in St. Helen (downtown), Roscommon (Wallace Park), Houghton Lake (Lakeview Park), Prudenville (Sullivan Beach), and Higgins Lake (Phoenix Park).

The Mason Tract Chase Bridge Road

From Chase Bridge near Roscommon to Smith Bridge in neighboring Crawford County, there is a special place in the annals of fly fishing, the Mason Tract. The associated hiking trail is 10.42 miles utilized for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and hiking, and is maintained by the Roscommon Area Recreation Authority. The Mason Tract is a section of undeveloped land that was conveyed to the State of Michigan in 1955 by the late George W. Mason, in a perpetual trust to ensure it remains undeveloped. It includes 1500 acres bordering the stream and an additional 1330 acres acquired from the U.S. Forest Service in 1957 that extended its borders. This special tract is also known as the Mason Retreat.

Red Pine Natural Area County Road 603 and F-97

The trail, located 15 miles east of Roscommon near the original Kirtland Community College campus, covers 164 acres. There are 34 acres of virgin pines, most of them red pine. Winding through this stand of 200-year old trees is a 1.5-mile interpretive trail with sixteen stops and an accompanying brochure.

Marl Lake Trail (South Higgins Lake State Park)

Just off County Road 100, south of South Higgins Lake State Park, is Marl Lake. It has trail loops of 2.0, 3.5 and 5.5 miles for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. It is a quiet wooded path that wraps around the shoreline and through treed areas. There is a small boat launch with vault toilets.

North Higgins Lake State Park Trail:

Across from North Higgins State Park, the eleven-mile trail system consists of three trails: A 6.5-mile North Higgins-Beaver Creek Trail; the 3.8-mile North Higgins-Bosom Pines Trail; and the 1.5-mile North Higgins-Upland Nature Trail that is also enhanced with fitness stations. All trails are usable for hiking and cross-country skiing. Trails are groomed in the winter and are well-marked state forest-managed land.

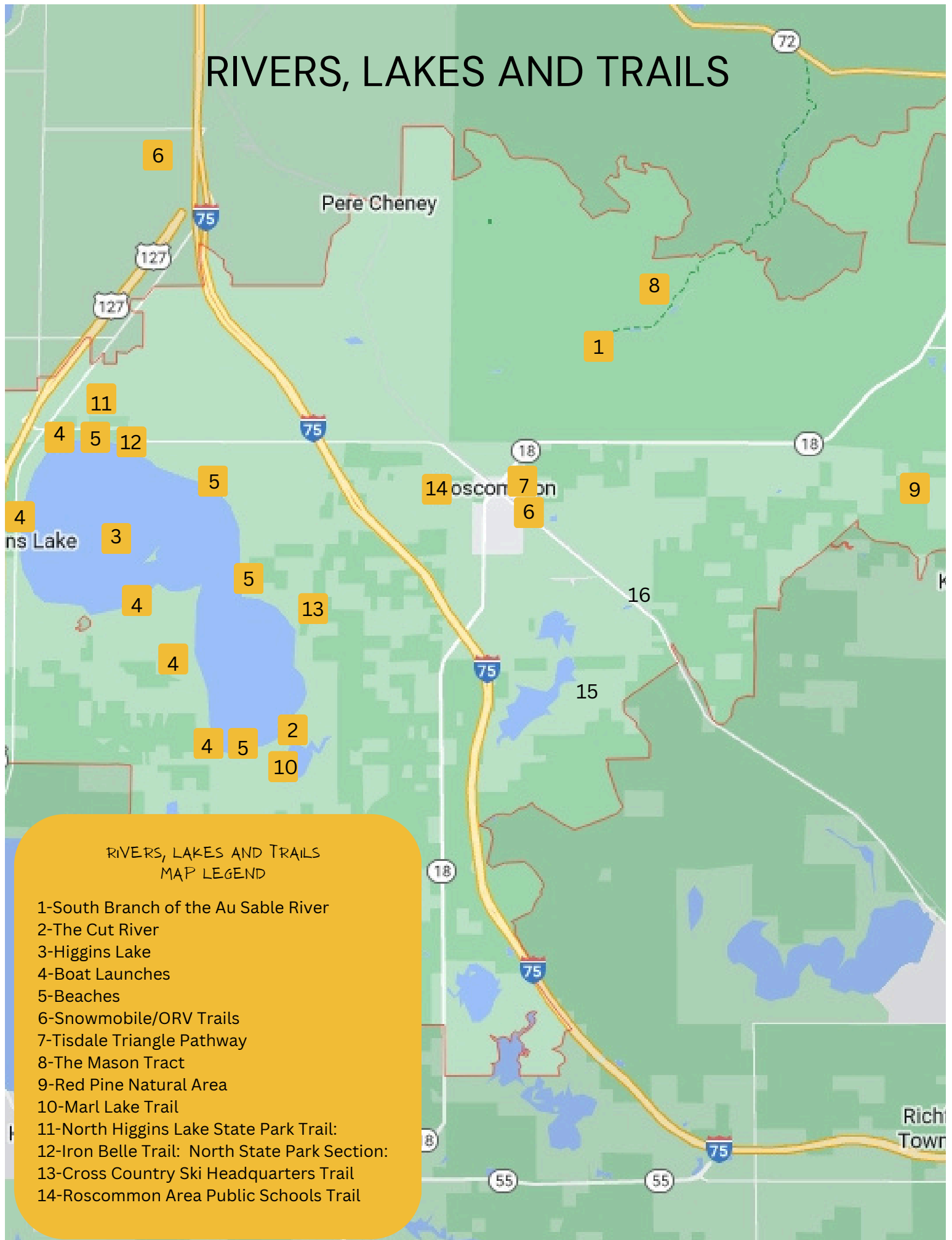
Iron Belle Trail: North Higgins Lake State Park Section:

Along the north side of North Higgins Lake State Park is a two-mile section of the Iron Belle Trail. This paved path is a seasonal walking and biking trail that extends from the northwest side of the park and finishes at Forest Avenue and North Higgins Lake Drive. In addition connection to the north route to Grayling initiates at the CCC Museum.

Roscommon Area Public Schools Walking Trail

The paved two mile walking path is located on the campus of the Roscommon Area Schools. This trail now connects the Safe Walk to School Trail that runs along County Road 100.

RIVERS, LAKES AND TRAILS



HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS

Roscommon Historic Model Train Museum

815 Lake Street

Come and see the trains of years past and learn about their importance to Roscommon and the surrounding area. The train club operates an eighth-scale passenger train next to the River Center every Saturday during the summer as well as a clubhouse that exhibits displays of N, H.O., S, O, and G scale trains.

Roscommon Area Historical Society

404 Lake St.

The Roscommon Area Historical Society preserves and protects artifacts and archives from the Roscommon and Higgins Lake Areas. The society maintains its museum in the 1880s era Gallimore Boarding House which operated from 1904–1931. The rooms are furnished in period style, and exhibits depict the history of the area. Richardson School House served the community from 1914–1955 and now displays an interior setting with many artifacts. The Silsby–Jacobson Building was built in the 1880's and currently houses historical documents and pictures.

The AuSable River Center–Pavilion

211 North Main Street

The AuSable River Center and Museum have evolved from near destruction to one of Roscommon, Michigan's most beautiful and active places. The two-story structure was built in 1936 during the Great Depression as a Michigan Department of Conservation administrative building utilized for 40 years. Then it housed the County Health Department. The building was set to be demolished but was saved by a group of community members. Once maintained as a museum, it was filled with historic artifacts, but is now utilized for special events, party room rentals and the new 50x80 pavilion is home for the farmers market and Rock-tober-fest.

The Civilian Conservation Corps Museum:

11747 N. Higgins Lake Drive

The CCC Museum is part of North Higgins Lake State Park and is located across the street. More than 100,000 young Michigan men were enrolled in the federal Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, performing a variety of conservation and reforestation projects around the state. Onsite is the Historic Higgins Lake Nursery and the museum.

Mason Tract Attractions

An hour and a half float down the AuSable River from Chase Bridge, you will come to the landing at Durant Castle. This 42-room mansion was built in 1931 for \$500,000. The castle was adorned with eight gables, seven fireplaces, and a two-story tower entrance. The basement had a gym, recreation room, bar, barber shop and vault. Sadly, the uninsured mansion burned to the ground the day after it was completed. The foundation area, along with interpretive signage and pictures, are on the bank of the river along with a public toilet.

The Chapel is further downriver and the only structure that exists in the Mason Tract, and was dedicated in 1957 to George W. Mason. He bequeathed this vast tract of wilderness to the people of the state so it could be enjoyed for many generations to come. A portion of the AuSable South Branch is also known as the Holy Waters by trout fishermen where there is fly fishing only. They journey from all around the world to fish here. It can be accessible by water or ORV and is a popular destination for weddings, private prayers, and local landmarks.

Pere Cheney Cemetery

Pere Cheney was a village in Beaver Creek Township in Crawford County, north of Roscommon. Established by lumberjacks in the 1870s it was wiped out by disease in the early twentieth century. Said to be "cursed" from its start because it was built on Native American land, all that is left is its cemetery, which is considered haunted by many.

COMMUNITY ATTRACTIONS

CRAF Center

Community Recreation, Activities and Fitness Center

606 Lake Street

The CRAF Center's Mission is to enable a healthier community by implementing effective programs, and providing facilities to enhance levels of fitness, recreation, and leisure satisfaction. The facility, a school building repurposed in 1994 is fully renovated and occupied. The CRAF Center offers a full fitness center, group classes, and personal trainers. Rooms are available to rent for meetings and accommodate the space and needs of the community.

Village Farmers Market

211 North Main Street

This open market features local produce and various other Michigan-made products from the surrounding area. The market is one of the largest of the area with 40-50 vendors a week and is open Saturdays, from May through September.

Roscommon Community Center

510 South Street

The Community Center is located on the east side of the Roscommon and is a focal point for several public programs. A very active senior group has the daily meal program there followed by recreational activities such as cards, bingo, dance, arts, and crafts. Various public meetings for planning purposes are also conducted in the Community Center.

Roscommon County Fire Training Grounds

290 Ballanger Road

The 20 acre Fire Training Grounds are located just east of Roscommon. Firefighters from around the state use the facility for training at various times throughout the year. There is a large parking area, two buildings, bathrooms and a large pole building constructed by the Michigan Firemen's Memorial Festival Committee for use during their annual event. Various public functions use the grounds annually and Fourth of July fireworks are shot off there.

Roscommon Area District Library

106 Lake Street

The library provides free services to all residents living within the library district, which includes Gerrish, Higgins and Lyon Townships as well as the Village of Roscommon. The library holds more than 35,000 materials including books, movies, magazines, music CDs, and audio books. Their patrons enjoy downloadable audiobooks, eBooks & magazines. Mango Languages & Ancestry.com (Library Edition) is also available for use. The library offers activities for all ages, visiting authors, and music programs throughout the year.

Roscommon Community Garden was as established in 2015 by the Crawford-Roscommon Conservation District as a green space for the community. The garden's mission is to provide food to local food banks and families in need while offering educational, family, and social events. Currently, the garden has 56 beds for planting with leasing options for a small fee. The donation program grows, harvests, and donates produce from designated community plots. In addition to gardening, the site is a certified Waystation for Monarch butterflies and offers a butterfly education and release program. The garden partners with 4H, ROOC, Roscommon Elementary School, and Roscommon High School to provide a space for planting, volunteering, and learning.

Birdwatching

The once endangered Kirtland's warbler is one of the rarest members of the wood warbler (Parulidae) family. It is a bird of unusual interest for many reasons. It nests in just a few counties in Michigan's Northern Lower and Upper peninsulas and Roscommon County has an abundant population for your viewing pleasure. In addition, Roscommon County hosts a variety of trails through area habitats that provide abundant opportunities for birdwatching of many species.

AuSable Birding Trail:

The heavily forested Crawford and Roscommon counties in the heart of northern Michigan have long been a delight for birders and a haven for endangered and migratory species. The AuSable Birding Trail takes you through the woods and into the wetlands, from the protected nesting of the Kirtland's Warbler to the towering aeries of the populous Bald Eagle. Birders, novice to expert, are invited to bring their eyes and ears (and binoculars and cameras) to the trails, woods, and waters of the AuSable Birding Trail for a rewarding birding experience.

The Ralph A MacMullan Conference Center

Located within the boundaries of the North Higgins Lake State Park. This educational center serves state and federal agencies, educational groups and other nonprofit organizations in a natural setting away from the distractions of home and the workplace.

Kirtland Community College

4800 West 4 Mile Road, Grayling MI 49738

Kirtland Community College provides open access to education, as well as cultural opportunities, to enrich the lives of the people in Northern Michigan. Kirtland Community College offers 39 degrees and certificates including three transfer associate degrees.

Bambi Lake Conference Center

3468 East Robinson Lake Road

Bambi Lake Baptist Retreat and Conference Center, commonly referred to as "Bambi Lake" is a 240 acre site owned by the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. There are many recreational activities such as boating, swimming or fishing in the private 20-acre lake, putt-putt golf, walking the wooded hiking trails and winter sledding down Monster Hill.

Camp Westminster

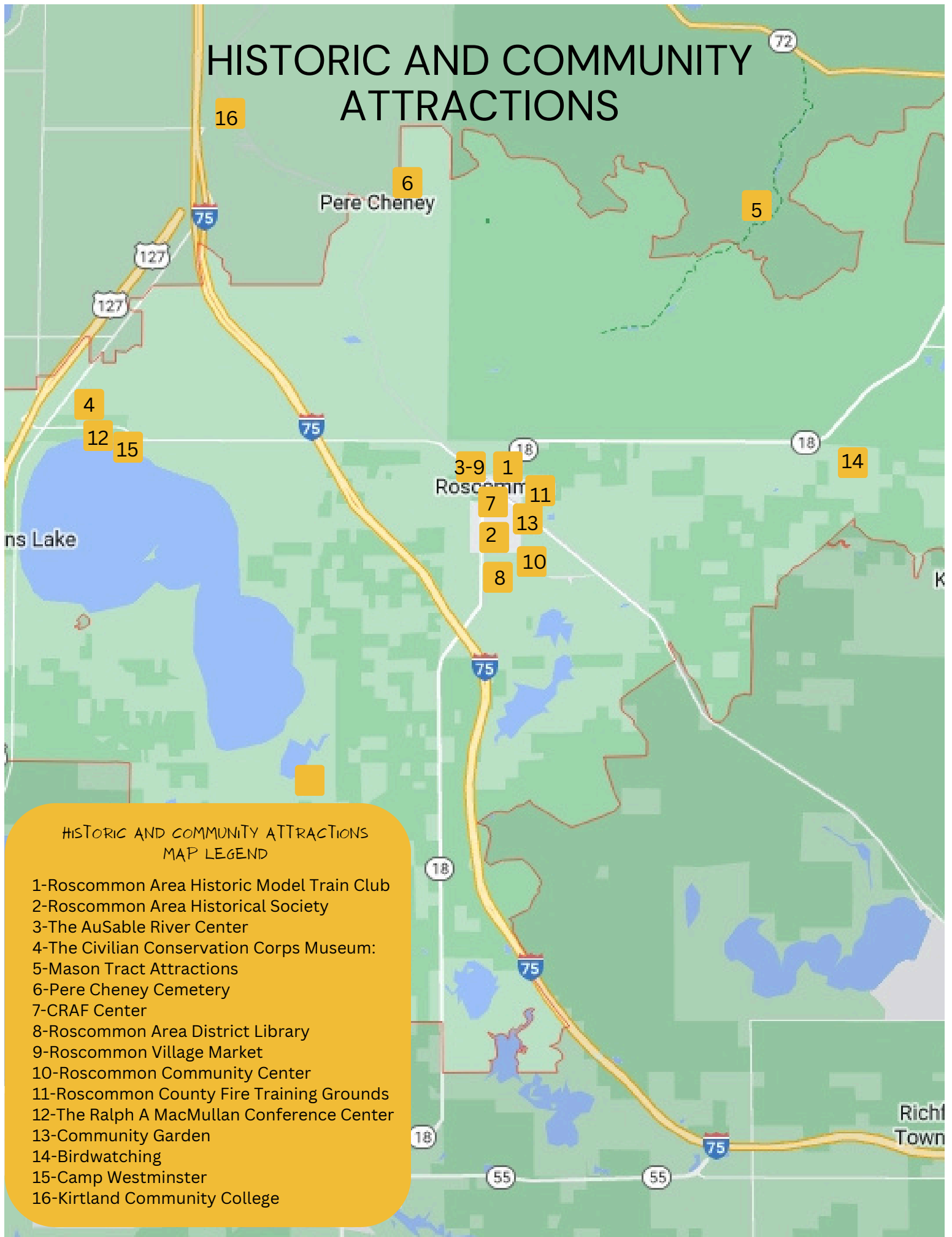
116 Westminster Drive

Camp Westminster provides a setting for Christian summer camps, retreats, mission trips and outdoor summer worship in northern Michigan on beautiful Higgins Lake.

Privately Owned Recreational Public Facilities

In addition to the listed recreational opportunities in Higgins Township, the Village of Roscommon and areas within the community boundaries, there are an abundance of other assets. Included in the other private opportunities or facilities are a zoo, bowling alley, numerous golf courses, shooting range, canoe liveries, and amenities for a large range of sport orientated hunters, fishermen and outdoor enthusiasts.

HISTORIC AND COMMUNITY ATTRACTIONS





Higgins Lake-Roscommon WinterFest (February)
 Annual Roscommon Business Expo (May)
 Pro Am Canoe Race (May)
 Village Vault Concert Series (May-Sept)
 Kirtland Warbler Festival (June)
 Sunrise Run (June)
 Kids Block Party (August)
 Annual July 4th Fireworks and Parade (July)
 Annual Roscommon Art Festival (July)
 Roscommon Rotary Annual Duck Race (July)
 Annual Meals on Wheels Car Show (August)
 Michigan Firemen's Memorial Festival (September)
 Conservation Expo (September)
 Rock-tober-fest (October)
 Hunt, Sip & Shop (November)
 Shop Small Saturday (November)
 Christmas in the Village (December)
 Reindeer Run (December)



Resource Inventory

The recreation committee and the Roscommon community have identified open space in and around the village that they desire to preserve because of the properties' natural features. This chapter also lists existing natural areas that should be protected for future recreation opportunities.

Currently protected land:

- South Branch of the AuSable River-Natural Resource
- 055-759-001-0000/055-105-010-0020-Wallace/Hiawatha Park
- Roscommon Community Park and Pump Track-RARA Property
- Tisdale Triangle Trail-State Property
- Michigan Fire Training Grounds-100 year Land Lease
- DNR Airport-DNR Property
- Michigan Firemen's Memorial Park-
- Village property between Seventh St. and South Branch, southeast of M-18- Village Property 055-758-001-0000 1 acre
- Small park area on Main Street across from old Village Hall-Village Property

Open Space Areas:

- 055-105-012-0110: 10 acres bounded by Main, Robinson, Hannah, and Ballanger 11 acres was an old ballfield, Privately Held (Grover)
- M-18 South of Village limits to Firemen's Memorial
- North of DPW property to Tisdale Trail
- 055-105-007-0270: Private Property-M-18 and Tisdale, 12 acres Rosco Property Holdings
- 055-775-009-0000: Private Property adjacent to RCPP on Division by bridge
- 055-108-006-0160: Village property behind RCPP behind baseball field
- 055-607-006-0000 & 055-607-003-0000: Brooks & N Main: Frontier Communications Building and adjacent lot
- 055-761-001-0000: Undeveloped corner 500 Lake Street 4th St & George (County Parking lot)
- 055-107-013-0022: State land off Southline Road corner

Private properties adjacent to Gahagan that continue to be of interest in acquiring:

- 055-107-002-0060: Bower-(west of Post Office) Private
- 055-107-003-0020: Bendict-(South of Wyckoff, SW M-18) Private
- 005-107-005-0020: Kalthoff-Wetland (CR 100 or East Sunset) Private
- 005-107-010-0020: State Property- 121 acres Southline/Wheeler Road
- 005-106-012-0021 - Smith: E SUNSET DR-20 acres adjacent to Gahagan 34 acres
- 005-106-012-0041 - Marsh: E SUNSET DR-13 acres adjacent to Smith/Gahagan
- 055-106-014-0210 - N THIRD ST-9 acres Village of Roscommon

DNR RECREATION GRANT INVENTORY

In 2001, the Village of Roscommon received a MDNR Grant to improve the accessibility of Wallace Park. The program was funded through the Clean Michigan Initiative Recreation Bond Program (Project Number CM 99-217), and had a final construction cost of \$10,135. The village constructed a 3,540 square foot barrier-free park walkway from Seventh Street to the major features of the park. The walkway is used frequently and remains in good condition. In 2015, the Village of Roscommon received a MDNR Recreation Passport Grant for further improvements in Wallace Park. The program funded \$45,000, and with additional money from the village of \$54,529 and DDA of \$8,262 the \$107,792 project was completed in the fall of 2016. These improvements included universal accessibility into the park, canoe and kayak launch with fishing dock and replacement of the deteriorating retaining wall. New amenities of picnic tables, benches and grills were added to accommodate persons of all functional capacities



DNR RECREATION GRANT INVENTORY

In 2023 the Roscommon Area Recreation Authority was awarded a \$820,000 Land Water Conservation Fund Grant from the State of Michigan. This grant, 50% match, renovated the 15.6 acres of Metro park. The park renovation included relocating of parking, infrastructure, ADA accessible sidewalks and 0.3 mile perimeter walking path. A 35-foot sail shade structure for gatherings, with amenities that include tables, benches and trash throughout the park. A 21,000 sq ft. pump track was constructed on the north side along with a half court basketball court.



Evaluation of Past Plans

The 2023–27 Recreation Plan was evaluated to assess effectiveness, credit projects that were completed and reevaluate those that still exist. For those projects that were not completed, we took the opportunity to follow up to see if they are still an active desire of the community and what barriers exist to get the projects completed. Below are the items that were noted to be the priorities of the Roscommon community and surrounding area in 2023 noted with the evaluation and outcomes.

PARTIALLY COMPLETED & ONGOING

Create, expand and connect with existing non-motorized trail system in and around Higgins Township and the Village of Roscommon that can be used safely by residents and visitors.

Noted completion is the Hilltop into town paved pathway, routine grooming and maintenance of Tisdale Pathway and a barrier free 0.3 mile perimeter trail at Roscommon Community Park. Non motorized trails still trend as a top amenity in our current assessment. Division Street Bridge pending along with alternative safe walking trails.

Visitors as well as community members are unaware of area activities and recreation offerings within our community

ONGOING: The challenge is to increase knowledge and awareness of existing area recreation opportunities. According to 2026 survey data, there is still a disconnect in disseminating events and information out to area residents and visitors. This will be a top priority planning forward.

Develop, renovate or replace an avenue for recreation within the community as well as promotion of events to the community and out-of-town visitors.

COMPLETED AND ONGOING: Two large park projects were completed in 2024–25. RARA's \$820,000 Community Park and Pump Track was completed with a LWCGrant from the State, addressing needs outlined in the 2023–27 Five Year Open Space Master Plan.

Hiawatha Park was completed with a MEDC \$1.2 million dollar renovation addressing further needs listed in the villages 5 year plan.

To preserve sufficient open space that will provide opportunities for recreation now and in the future.

RECOGNIZED AND ONGOING: Future population growth will place increasing demands on recreational land in the Roscommon area. Gahagan Nature Preserve gained three parcels close to 50 acres with the focus on maintaining recreation open space.

ORV, ATV and snowmobile users avoid Roscommon due to incomplete, non-connecting access.

RECOGNIZED BUT NOT PRIORITIZED: Networking needs to be established with area snowmobile clubs and townships to help achieve these goals.

Initiate assessment and planning for area accommodations for year-round use such as camping/RV park, small cabins, bed & breakfast, hotels or hostel.

RECOGNIZED AND ONGOING: Initial measures taken by economic development as lodging accommodations for year-round visitors do not meet the needs for area tourism. Initial planning and contracting is currently underway for expansion of these needs.

Description of Planning Process

Roscommon Village Council and the Roscommon Area Recreation Authority selected individuals for the Recreation Committee to direct the development of this plan. The committee implemented a multi-step process to gather information with the goal of involving as many segments of the community as possible.

Review of the 2023–27 Recreation and Open Space Master Plan:
Was the plan effective? Was the community able to implement and complete portions of the goals highlighted in the current plan? Are there remnants or unfinished objectives of the plan that should be incorporated into the 2027–2031 Master Plan?

1. Update the community's description and recreation inventory.
What are the major features of the Roscommon area? What is the impact of recreation on the residents and visitors? What recreation resources currently exist in Roscommon and surrounding area?

2. Determine the community's recreation needs and desires with plan of action.
What improvements are necessary to the current recreation infrastructure? What other opportunities does the public want?

3. Initiate a plan of action to meet the needs of the community.
This program prioritizes broad based goals from community input and identifies specific objectives necessary to accomplish them. Data was collected by open meetings and public gathering sessions. In addition, public input was gathered using a survey. 320 community members took the survey with 84% being full time residents of the 48653–area code. This process identified community topics that need to be addressed and prioritized over the five-year period to make each item a reality. These groups include the Village, DDA, Higgins Township, RARA, and several local service organizations.

4. Draft the Recreation Plan.
Using the guidelines from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, complete a plan that will guide the community in reaching the identified goals.

5. The 2027–2031 Recreation Plan:
Once the plan was drafted it was available for public input, presented to the community, village council and county meetings and subsequent approval was obtained by the Village Council and RARA Board.

Planning Methods

The Recreation Committee was charged with the task of drafting a new Recreation Plan for the Village of Roscommon and the Roscommon Area Recreation Authority, guiding it through the approval process and submitting it to the State of Michigan. This involved a multi-step process.

1. The existing recreation facilities and programs were evaluated by collecting the relevant data.
2. Community needs were established by several means of collecting recreation priorities of residents.
3. Community priorities and existing facilities were assessed.
4. Identified deficiencies were addressed through broad recreation goals.
5. An Action Plan was developed to identify specific projects as a way of reaching those goals.
6. Budgetary and scheduling components were added to that plan.
7. Community residents and stakeholders reviewed the completed Recreation Plan and gave input regarding the plan details.
8. The committee made revisions to the plan based on the public input.

Public Input Process

The Recreation Committee decided to utilize two forms of input to gather public opinion in an attempt to address all age groups within the community.

INPUT METHOD #1: Community Input Meetings

These meetings were well publicized as part of public input sessions for the Village of Roscommon, and Roscommon Area Recreation Authority's meetings. Attending the meetings were community members, business owners and the media. The meeting was an open forum where residents gave their priorities for community infrastructure improvements. Two primary questions were asked: How do you view recreation in your community? What avenues do we need to develop or steps to improve existing recreation opportunities? Most everyone agreed that the natural resources are the items that draw people to our community. Frequently voiced, the groups were in agreement that they are not aware of specific amenities, attractions and events in our surrounding area. Top themes that were gained from the public input:

1. Hiking and biking trails
2. Pickleball courts, events and activities and park completion
3. Improving marketing and awareness of amenities and activities going on within the community.

INPUT METHOD #2: Community Questionnaires

This method was used to determine the interests from a broad age range of residents. A survey utilizing SurveyMonkey was designed utilizing similar questions from the past two recreation surveys. The survey link was distributed by email, social media, group email from the CRAF Center, DDA, and village. A copy of questions and results are included in the appendix. In order of priority, the survey results are of the facilities or activities the community could consider developing or enhancing:

PICKLEBALL 37
BIKING TRAILS 28
KIDS ACTIVITIES 23
EVENTS-NEW-ENHANCED 14
POOL 12
PAVED TRAILS 10
CONCERTS-MUSIC 8
SPLASHPAD 8
DISC GOLF 7
HIKING TRAILS 7

The top activities are consistent with the prior recreation needs of the community.

Goals and Objectives

The Recreation Committee evaluated the issues, and redeveloped goals and objectives from the 2023-27 Recreation Plan. The changes were based on the results of the community input meetings, community questionnaire and presentations to local organizations. The Village Council and the Roscommon Area Recreation Authority will use this information as it works on its economic development and capital improvement plan.

VISITORS AS WELL AS COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE UNAWARE OF AREA ACTIVITIES AND RECREATION OFFERINGS.

Goal:

- To increase knowledge and awareness of existing area recreation opportunities and community events.

Objectives:

- Develop a master plan to problem solve how our community disseminates information.
- Take into consideration generational differences and how they obtain information.
- Mastery of new platforms and marketing techniques.
- Network with local governmental units, business and community groups to promote local activities and events.

ENHANCEMENT OF ROSCOMMON'S PARKS AND GREENSPACE.

Goal:

- Preserve, renovate or develop amenities and identifies additional opportunities to provide an avenue for recreation within the community.

Objectives

- RARA will utilize data gathered to plan Phase 2 of Roscommon Community Parks completion. Implement accessibility improvements with new projects or renovation.
- Identify appropriate potential areas for pickleball courts near the Roscommon Central District.
- Gahagan Nature Preserve are planning acquisitions and protection of adjacent properties and wetlands. Documented plans highlight park and trail enhancement, addition to their educational center, as well as develop and maintain outdoor environmental education within the schools and community.
- Greenspace protection and acquisitions.
- Identify area funding partners and volunteers to complete renovation projects.
- Identify threats to individual safety and put in place measures to make the community a safe place to live, work and play.

ROSCOMMON AREA RESIDENTS RANK TRAIL SYSTEMS/SAFE WALKING PATHS ALONG WITH SAFE BIKE PATHWAYS AS A TOP REQUEST OF THE PAST DECADE.

Goal

- Continues to create and develop routes that connect with existing non-motorized trail systems in and around Higgins Township and the Village of Roscommon that can be used safely by residents and visitors.

Objectives

- Identify existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to pathways' access in the community factoring in all safety concerns of the public.
- Continue to expand a pathway system that provides safe walking or biking to neighborhoods, parks and businesses within Roscommon community and beyond. Implement accessibility improvements with new projects or renovation.
- Primary non-motorized traffic from Hilltop and north of Roscommon utilize the newly developed Hilltop to Tisdale section of the pathway into Roscommon. There are safety concerns with narrow/no shoulders where the pathway cross the bridge over the AuSable River. Plans for an extended walkway over the river have been engineered since 2015 and with Roscommon now owning both sides of the river make this a workable goal.
- Plan, engineer and develop walking path/boardwalk at Gahagan Nature Preserve. Connection of current trail systems within the preserve extended north along Tank Creek 005-107-005-0022 & 005-107-005-0023 (Kaltoff) across Sunset into available suitable land in parcels 055-106-015-0021 (34 acres), 005-106-012-0021 (Smith private) and 005-106-012-0041 (Marsh private).
- Involve community groups to fund, develop, promote and maintain the trail systems.
- Increase awareness of area trails.

FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH WILL PLACE INCREASING DEMANDS ON RECREATIONAL LAND IN THE ROSCOMMON AREA.

Goal

- Community sustainability to preserve sufficient open space that will provide opportunities for recreation now and in the future.

Objectives

- Preserve current public land that is suitable for recreation in quantities adequate to meet the existing and future recreation needs of the population.
- Protect the natural resources and identity of the community and surrounding area.
- Secure donations, endowments and corporate partnerships to maintain and develop the recreation system necessary to meet the goals of this plan.

THE ROSCOMMON COMMUNITY PROVIDES LIMITED GROUP ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE AGE SPECTRUM.

With 13.4 percent of the population under the age of 14 and another 24.7 percent above the age of 65, it is necessary to plan improvements to accommodate every age group. More age-related activities were cited as a priority in the data collection process for the recreation plan.

Goal

- To provide community activities to increase recreational activities and socialization for all ages and abilities.

Objectives

- Identify and create activities that are suitable to the community and offer age-appropriate recreational activities.
- Provide opportunities to promote a healthy lifestyle and, in turn, a healthy community.
- Promote and market the parks, recreation programs, facilities and the benefits that are provided to the public.
- Plan and execute the continued presence of music, public events, festivals, volunteer services and activities that cross generations.

ORV, ATV AND SNOWMOBILE USERS AVOID ROSCOMMON DUE TO INCOMPLETE NON-CONNECTING ACCESS.

There are state recognized trails on three sides of Roscommon, yet there is limited ability to gain access into and through the Village. This limits the economic impact that local businesses could benefit from for food, gas and services. It also is a barrier for the user to plan routes that circumvent Roscommon.

Goal

- To work with area ORV/Snowmobile groups, local units of government, the DNR and road commissions to evaluate and plan a route that goes from the 69 trailhead south of Roscommon north to the connectors.

Objective

- Establish a multidisciplinary group of ORV/Snowmobile members, local governmental, DNR, township, village, and road commissions to work through a process to plan a functional route.
- Develop a well-marked, clear pathway at trailheads and through Roscommon.
- Work with DNR, local governmental agencies, and user group clubs on a general maintenance trail program.
- Market area assets and businesses that would benefit from riders to the area.
- Collaborate with enforcement agencies on ORV routes.
- Recognize and address that increased trail development impacts ATV/ORV traffic and may disrupt residents and change the current dynamics of our village atmosphere.

Action Plan

The Roscommon Recreation Committee, in cooperation with Roscommon community members, compiled a prioritized list of projects for implementation from 2027–31. The committee based this list on the various public input sessions and surveys, as well as the collaborative work with township and village staff and demographic data. This Action Plan was developed to carry out the goals and objectives set forth in the previous chapter. These projects are subject to availability of funding through village and township funds and grant acquisition.

Past recreation plans have had items, activities or upgrades for recreation within the community. Many of those items have been accomplished and several are in process. It is noticeable that along with a “list” of items for recreation, that we lack the infrastructure or organization to market, secure, and manage recreation opportunities.

Recreation and planning for the future of recreation is an ongoing process. We have compiled several action items that will meet the majority of current recreational needs and desires of a community. We believe the mix of projects that are included in this plan will accomplish most of the goals. The following section describes those projects in some detail and gives their locations when appropriate.

Wayfinding Information–2027, 2028, 2029

With diverse recreation opportunities in the Roscommon area, it is important for visitors to have easy access to information. Installing way-finding information boards and development of community apps or printed media within the community will help area residents and visitors locate areas of recreation, businesses and local attractions. Develop a multidisciplinary approach from Chamber, Economic Development, governmental offices and agencies to develop a broader base of community knowledge. Budget funds, acquire local and regional grants as needed.

Utilize Community Natural Resources–Ongoing

With the South Branch of the AuSable River flowing through Roscommon, and nearby fresh water lakes, canoeing, kayaking, boating and fishing are popular recreation activities with residents and visitors. A plan needs to be put in place to promote activities within our community to promote what we have naturally.

Generational Related Community Activities–Ongoing

There is a large request for music venues, outdoor programs and events, kid and senior programs as outlined in the survey “what activities or programs would you like to see in your community”.

Pathway development for trail walking/hiking/safe passage

- Continued open communication and planning between the Roscommon County Road Commission and Village to expand the road shoulders or enhanced signage within the area to create a safe passage for non-motorized use.
- We have access to many trails but non-obstructed, well-groomed areas are not well developed or marked.
- Currently there is no safe access across the AuSable River on M-18 for non-motorized travel. A walking bridge would reduce potential for harm and provide an appealing safe pathway for pedestrians in and out of the village: **Planning and grant submission 2027-31.**
- Develop plans for trail and boardwalk at Gahagan Nature Preserve: **2027-2031 grant submission**
- Future development will require accessibility improvements. Budget funds, acquire local and regional grants as needed.

Park Planning and Development

- Roscommon Community Park and Pump Track plan on park completion with of phase two renovation of open space. Further evaluation of information gathered and open meetings to discuss opportunities and direction to be determined with a **2027-2031 completion goal utilizing a Recreation Passport Grant (RARA)**
- **Develop pickleball courts near the Roscommon central district: 2027-2031 completion goal utilizing a Recreation Passport Grant (Village),**
- Identify appropriate potential areas for possible pickleball courts near the Roscommon Central District
- Leverage existing land area for better recreational use
- Support area businesses with more customers, especially lunch and beverage establishments that would benefit from more activities
- Provide residents with more local recreational activities
- Future development will require accessibility improvements. Budgeting funds, acquire local, regional and state grants as needed.

Complete Snowmobile / ATV Trail Connection Plan

Network with area organizations and agencies to work mutually to achieve well planned, marked, developed trail system. The common goal is to join incomplete trail systems providing access for safe passage in and round the community. This will help trail usage from north to south, increasing tourism and economic impact within the region. This will require a multiorganizational-agency approach and is set at a lower priority.

VILLAGE OF ROSCOMMON ROSCOMMON AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY

RECREATION SURVEY

This survey is designed to assess recreation opportunities for the Roscommon community residents and visitors

- How would you rate OVERALL recreation opportunities in our community?
- How do you learn about community activities?
Social Media/Facebook, ChatGPT, Tik Tok
Newspaper/published media
Public postings/signs
School, social settings
Verbal, word of mouth
- What do you do for recreation and how often?
- Do you use the CRAF Center? Provide comments or recommendations:
- Do you use the Wallace/Hiawatha Park? Provide comments or recommendations:
- Do you use the Roscommon Community Park (Metro Park)? Provide comments or recommendations:
- Do you use the Gahagan Nature Preserve? Provide comments or recommendations:
- Do you use the AuSable River Center? Provide comments or recommendations:
- Do you use the Tisdale Pathway/Area Trails? Provide comments or recommendations:
- Activity Programming: List your top programs or activities you would like to see developed further in our community?
- Where did you find this survey?
- Which of the following best describes your position in our community? Full Time
Resident-Seasonal Resident-Visitor
- What is your age?

under 12

13-20

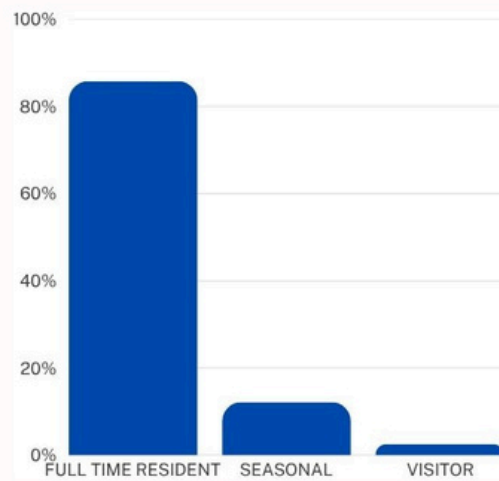
21-40

41-65

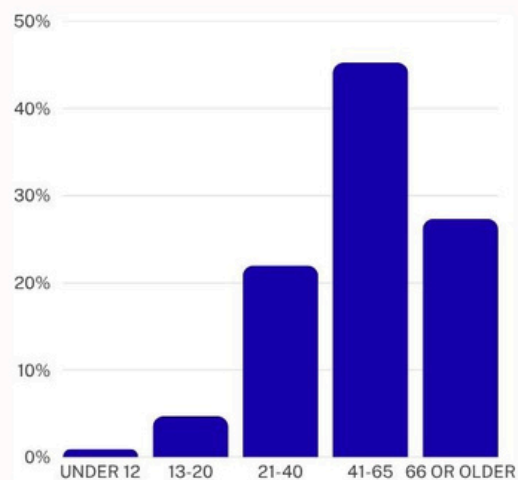
66 or older

RECREATION SURVEY

COMMUNITY POSITION

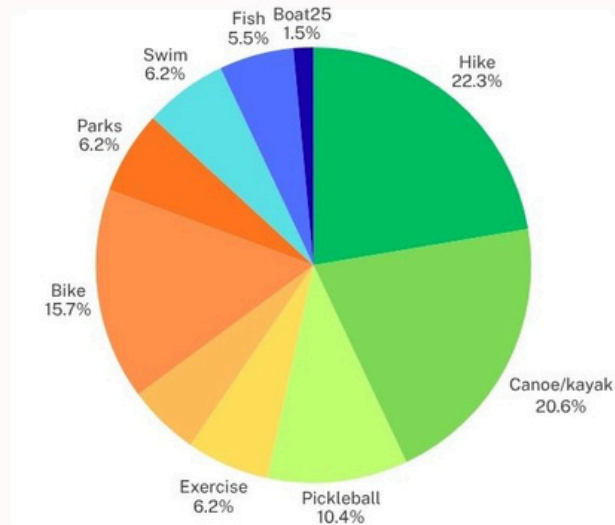


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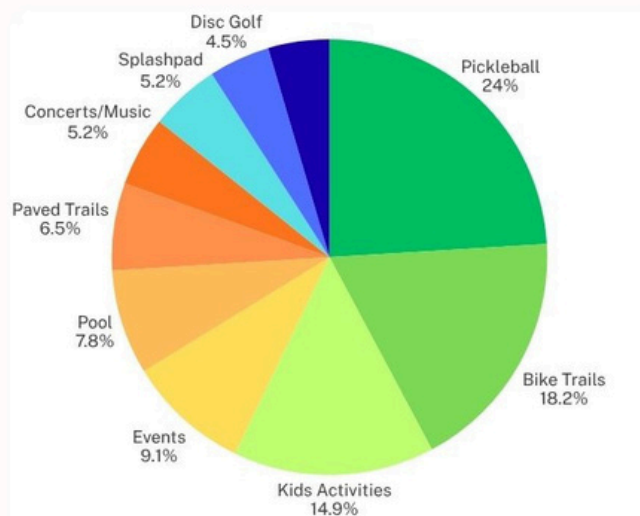


RECREATION SURVEY

WHAT ACTIVITIES DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN



WHAT ACTIVITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE DEVELOPED



Recreation Plan Data Gathering Public Notice

NOTICE

**VILLAGE OF ROSCOMMON
ROSCOMMON AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY
Public Meeting Posting
June 8th, 2026**

The Roscommon Village Council will hold a PUBLIC INPUT meeting on June 8th @ 7:00 PM at Village of Roscommon at 702 Lake Street, Roscommon.

This meetings purpose is to gather data for the Village of Roscommon and the Roscommon Area Recreation Authority. Public input is needed in regards to recreation within the community to then be utilized when drafting The Park, Recreation, and open Space Master Plan 2027-2031.

Posted: 5/28/26

This notice is posted in compliance with PA 267 of 1976 as amended (Open Meetings Act), MCLA 41.72a (2)(3) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Signed: Sammy McKi Date 5/28/26