



# **Burt Township Recreation Plan**

**2021-2025**

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Burt Township is located on Lake Superior's southern shores in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (see map in Appendix A). Most of the Township land area is part of the Pictured Rocks National Lake Shore that attracts thousands of visitors a year.

The northeast portion of the Township is where the unincorporated community of Grand Marais is located and where most of the Township's residents live year-round. Grand Marais is a charming settlement with attractive local small businesses and a deep sense of community.

The Township appreciates the natural beauty of the area and takes great pride in its parks and recreational facilities, such as the recently redeveloped Harbor of Refuge and Marina, their campground, the community building, and the many parks and beaches they maintain along the shores of Lake Superior.

Every five years, Burt Township updates its Recreation Plan to remain eligible for State of Michigan recreation grants and provide recreation planning, development, and maintenance guidance to the Township Planning Commission and the Township Board.

This document is the basis for implementing recreation improvements and new initiatives that will meet the Township's recreational goals and interests. It is also a document that articulates the economic benefit of recreation tourism alongside the desire to remain secluded from the disruptions that may occur from a strong tourist-based economy.



## 2.0 COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Burt Township is approximately 234 square miles with a population of about 522 (2010, US Census). The median household income is about \$26,667. The median age is 65.9 years compared to 39.7 years in the state of Michigan. (ACS 5-year estimates, 2018).

There are about 289 males and 233 females with the majority of the population between 50 and 79 years old. There are more males than females between the ages of 24 to 44 and more females than males between the ages of 44 and 84.

Since the end of the great lumber boom of the 1880s Burt Township has always been a small community. In 1950 the Township's population was 624. The population slowly declined to 480 by the year 2000 and increased to its present population of about 522. Nearly 90% of the population can be classified as either working age or retirement age, with only about 8.5 percent considered school age and younger. About 82.5% of the residents have a bachelor's degree or higher and the residents are about 96% white.

There are about 771 housing units in the Township, with nearly 54 units being seasonal rentals or Airbnb's and about 351 units used occasionally by property owners with a primary residence outside of Burt Township.

Weather and transportation considerations contribute to Burt Township's continued ruralness. The primary transportation route through Alger County is highway M-28. The Community of Grand Marias and the population center of Burt Township is located at the terminus of North highway M-77, about 28 miles off the highway M-28 in Seney Township.

Added challenges are the weather events that develop over Lake Superior which can be unpredictable, disruptive to everyday life, and even dangerous at times. All of these conditions help contribute to Burt Township's successful tourism-based economy and low year-round residency.

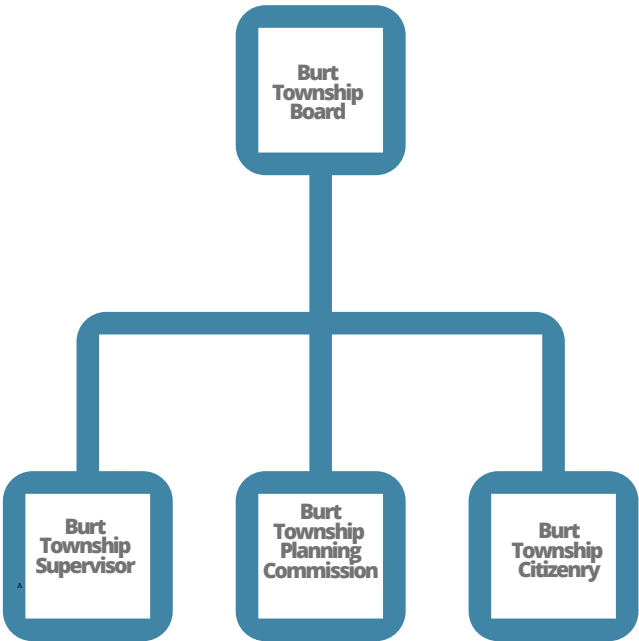
# 3.0 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

## 3.1 Authority

The Burt Township Board of Trustees are responsible for recreation development, programming, and maintenance of the Burt Township parks and recreation facilities. The Burt Township Planning Commission is responsible for developing and maintaining the Burt Township Recreation Plan.

The Burt Township Board of Trustees maintain financial authority over the Township's parks and recreation budget through recommendations from the Township Planning Commission and other Township departments. Below is an organizational chart of Burt Township's administrative structure.

### Burt Township Organizational Chart



### 3.2 Budget

The Burt Township Recreation Budget is reflective of the Township's commitment to developing and maintaining high-quality recreation facilities for residents and visitors. Funding for the Township's parks and recreation projects and facilities comes from Woodland Park's campground revenues, donations and contributions, and the general fund. The 2020 - 2021 budget for Woodland Park Campground, the Harbor of Refuge and Marina, and other parks owned by Burt Township are detailed below.

The Burt Township Woodland Park is located on the shores of Lake Superior and is easily within walking distance to the business district of Grand Marias, the Grand Marais Harbor of Refuge and Marina, quality sandy beaches, whitefish sport fishing, and the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Park (PRNLS). The campground is open from late April to mid-October and features over 100 camping sites from lakefront prime to primitive and many offer electricity, water, and cable TV. Other park amenities include a bathhouse/restrooms, a playground, a picnic area, a pavilion, and direct access to Lake Superior. Specific information is available at <https://www.burttownship.com/recreation/woodland-park-campground/>.

#### Woodland Park Campground Budget 20/21

Salary and wages	\$100,000
Payroll Taxes	\$20,000
Workers Comp Ins.	\$ 3,500
Benefits (Retirement/Hospital)	\$1,000
Office Supplies	\$ 1,000
Postage	\$50
Operating Expense	\$30,000
G/F Administration Fee	\$10,000
Septic and Port-A-John Service	\$10,000
Telephone	\$ 2,500
Mileage	\$ 100
Fuel Purchases	\$2,000
Utilities	\$57,000
User Fees	\$15,000
Cable	\$ 3,000
Repairs and Maintenance	\$30,000
<u>Credit Card Fees</u>	<u>\$ 7,500</u>
	\$294,250



The Burt Township Harbor of Refuge and Marina was recently reconstructed to restore and protect the Bay. It is located on Coast Guard Point in Grand Marias and is also the location of the Grand Marias Light. The Marina offers a safe harbor for boaters in need and also offers a boat launch, a fish cleaning station, showers, transient dockage, gasoline and diesel fuel, electric outlets, water hookups, and a pump-out station. More specific information is included by clicking the link below. <https://www.burttownship.com/recreation/marina/>. Funding for the Mariana is transferred from the general fund as needed.

**Harbor of Refuge and Marina Budget 20/21**

Operating Supplies            \$25,000

Other parks and recreation facilities are combined and include the Burt Township Frank Mead Community Center, Agate Beach, and Bayshore Park. Funding for these parks comes from the campground revenues and the general fund.

**Other Parks Budget 20/21**

Operating Supplies            \$300  
Utilities                         \$700  
Repairs and Maintenance     \$25,000



### 3.3 School and Volunteers

The Burt Township Planning Commission and the Burt Township School District have a long history of collaboration and cooperation. The school is a source of pride in the community and together they seek opportunities to create or improve recreational facilities that will have a direct positive impact on the students' access to recreation. Recent discussions include the development of an interpretive nature trail on the school's property.

Volunteerism is a virtue followed by many of the residents of Burt Township. With only a population of about 522, Burt Township still gets things done. This is a direct result of the pride the residents have for their community and their willingness to devote their personal time to accomplish the tasks as needed.

## 4.0 INVENTORY OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The following section describes each of Burt Township's recreation facilities and assigns an accessibility score between 1 and 5 based on criteria established by Michigan Department of Natural Resource (MDNR). Below describes the numeric system:

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



Burt Township is committed to providing its residents and visitors with the highest level of accessibility to their recreation facilities. To ensure the Planning Commission has a clear understanding of the specific elements that will need to be corrected to meet the 2010 ADA Standards for accessibility, the Township secured the expertise of Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL) and its certified ADA Coordinator, Lucy Wilcox.

On September 29, 2020 Lucy Wilcox and another member of SAIL staff traveled to Burt Township to perform an ADA accessibility evaluation of the Township's parks. The evaluation focused on the ADA's four important priorities: parking and approach, entrance to the parking facility, circulation, seating, and restrooms. The full report is located in Appendix B.

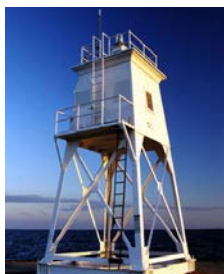
## **4.1 Township Owned Parks and Recreation Facilities**

### **Bayshore Park - Accessibility Score of 4**

Located in the town center of Grand Marais, this 5-acre park is the gem of the community with open access to a beautiful horseshoe swimming beach on Lake Superior where the water is calmed by the natural bay. Kayakers also appreciate the more protected waters in the bay. Bayshore Park is where Township residents and visitors gather all summer long and host celebrations for the 4th of July, Memorial Day, and other events throughout the year. The park also includes a playground, a volleyball court, restrooms, a bathhouse, and a pavilion/bandstand.

### **Grand Marais Municipal Docking Facility - Accessibility Score of 3**

This marina is located within a 61 acre Harbor of Refuge that recently received major reconstruction. This is also the location of the Grand Marais Light. The marina is a popular destination for boaters during the summer months. It is equipped with a restroom, boat launch water and electric hookups, and fuel for boaters. The marina is open to boaters from May through October.



### **Woodland Park Campground - Accessibility Score of 3**

The Woodland Park Campground offers over 100 camping sites that range from prime sites for larger campers to primitive sites for tent campers. Sites are provided on a first-come basis from April through October. Park amenities include a fish cleaning station, laundromat, bathhouses, a playground, and a basketball court. The campground is ideally located next to the library, Agate beach, and the Grand Marais town center.

### **Frank Mead Community Center - Accessibility Score of 3**

The Community Center is where the Township Board and Planning Commission meets to conduct official township business and where the community gathers for weddings, potlucks, and exercise classes during the winter months. The recreation barn is often used by vendors during the annual Great Lakes Sea Kayak Symposium and for sled dog racers and their dog teams during the U.P. 200 Sled Dog Race. The community center building also houses a library.

### **Donahey Woods - Accessibility Score of 1**

This is a 25-acre wilderness area along Lake Superior located at the western edge of Woodland Park Campground. There is a self-guided nature trail through the woods.

### **Agate Beach - Accessibility Score of 3**

A public beach on Lake Superior that is popular with rock and agate collectors. The only infrastructure in the park is a boardwalk built in 2005. Township residents and visitors gather in the evening to watch the spectacular sunsets over Lake Superior.

### **Edward Street Beach Access Site - Accessibility Score of 1**

Includes 350 feet of lakefront access.

### **Carpenter Creek Beach Access - Accessibility Score of 1**

Includes 100 feet of lakefront access.

### **Edmund T. Warren Park - Accessibility Score of 1**

This park overlooks the harbor and serves as a public green space for the Township. A small pavilion is located there.

## 4.2 Area Park and Recreation Facilities Not owned by Burt Township

### Superior Pines Disc Golf Course

An 18-hole disc golf course is located within the school's forest and maintained by the Burt Township School. The project was funded in part by the Sault Tribe.

### Lighthouse Keepers Museum

Owned and operated by the Historical Society and is open during the summer months. The museum is located in a restored lighthouse keeper's house at the end of Coast Guard Point Road.

### Pickle Barrel Museum

Owned and operated by the Historical Society and is open during the summer months. The museum is located in Grand Marais at the corner of Lake Avenue and Randolph Street. The building is an actual 16-foot tall barrel built in 1926 by the Pioneer Cooperage Co. of Chicago.

### Coast Guard Point Park

Includes the Grand Marais Historical Museum housed in a former Coast Guard housing building. The Historical Society operates it.

### Gitchee Gumee Museum

This is a privately owned museum dedicated to agates, minerals, and earth science.

### Post Office Museum

Owned and operated by the Historical Society and is open during the summer months. An heirloom rose garden is maintained on the grounds.



## **Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Park**

Grand Marais is on the eastern edge of PRNLS, which is run by the National Park Service. The park is a significant tourist attraction in the region. It continues to grow in popularity due to its unmatched scenic beauty with 200 - foot high Pictured Rocks cliffs rising perpendicular to Lake Superior, miles of pristine dunes, and bedrock geology and glacial landforms marked by streams, inland lakes, and diverse vegetation.

During the summer months, Alger County Public Transit agency, or ALTRAN, provides service for hikers. There are campsites located along trails every 2-5 miles. Park activities include picnicking, boating, kayaking, canoeing, swimming, hiking, fishing, and hunting. Winter activities include cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and ice-climbing.

## **Bicycle Pathway and Walkway**

This pathway begins on Lake Street and goes to Coast Guard Point.

## **Hiawatha Water Trail**

This is a 120-mile kayaking pathway along Lake Superior from Grand Marais to Big Bay. Kayakers can enter the water from the Grand Marais Boat ramp.

## **North Country Trail**

This multi-use, non-motorized trail extends over 4,600 miles from North Dakota to Vermont. In Alger County, the trail stretches from the Big Two-Hearted River's mouth to the Pictured Rocks National Shoreline.

## **Snowmobile Trails**

Snowmobiling is a popular activity in Burt Township, where several popular State maintained snowmobile trails intersect. The trails are groomed regularly by the local grooming club, and up-to-date trail conditions are reported on their website.

## 5.0 DNR RECREATION GRANT HISTORY

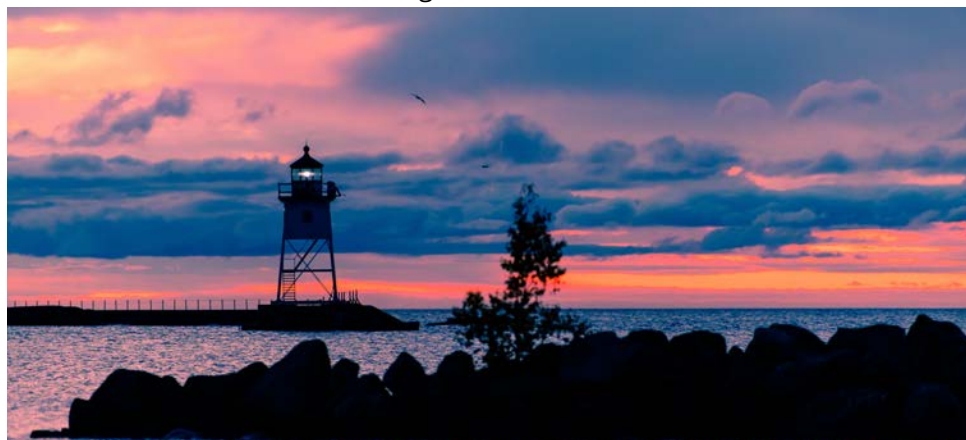
**In 1968**, Burt Township applied for and received a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant for \$22,000. The grant was used to develop Woodland Park with campsites and utilities, renovate existing buildings, add picnic tables, new playground equipment, and benches.

**In 1975**, Burt Township applied for and received a Land Acquisition grant for \$27,210 and a donation to purchase 25 acres known as Donahey Woods.

**In 1984**, Burt Township applied for and received a LWCF grant in the amount of \$10,500 to develop sports and play fields that included a basketball court, parking area, softball outfield fence, stairways, steps and ramps.

**In 1987**, Burt Township applied for and received a Natural Resources Trust Fund Land Acquisition grant for the amount of \$7,900 to purchase a one-acre parcel of land that would add access to the West Bay with frontage on Carpenter Creek.

**In 2016**, Burt Township applied for and received a Natural Resources Trust Fund Development grant for the amount of \$289,400 to expand the marina's facilities with a public restroom and shower building, a fish cleaning station. Prior to this grant, there were no facilities at the marina. The project continues to serve visitors to the marina, swimmers from the public beach, hikers of the North County Trail, and boaters following the Hiawatha Water Trail, fishermen, and visitors to Grand Marias. Trailhead signage for the water and hiking trail were also included in the grant.

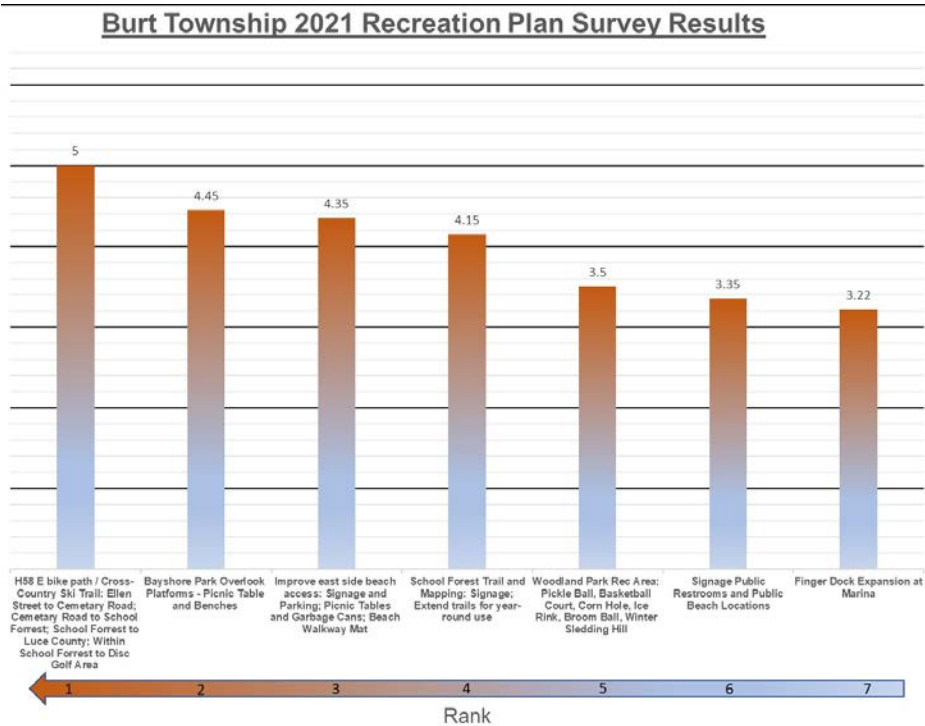


# 6.0 PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Public input was gathered early in the planning process through discussions with the Planning Commission, and a public survey was conducted through the distribution of summer tax bills.

Community participation in the survey exceeded expectations with 283 responses or about a 54% participation rate. The survey asked the community to rank how they felt about various recreation projects previously discussed as desirable for the Township.

The survey ranking results plus the open-ended responses provided valuable insight into what many residents were feeling about projects designed to enhance the visitor's experience versus projects that improve the residents' quality of life. A copy of the recreation survey and the results are located in Appendix C.



## 7.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are a statement of community values. Objectives articulate the means and methodologies of achieving stated goals within a defined schedule. Goals and objectives state what the community wants to be in the future and the actions they are going to take to get there.

A goal is an intentionally broad vision or idea that takes the information gathered through the community survey, local population demographics, and social conditions, budgets, and organizational capacity. Goals makes statements about what the community desires to achieve in recreation development, programming, and recreation facility maintenance in the future and who will benefit from those decisions.

Objectives identify the specific activities a community will undertake to achieve its goals. Objectives also require a defined schedule. As such, the attainment of a goal relies on accomplishing several objectives. Objectives are also developed through the understanding of budgets, community composition, and organizational capacity. Ideally, an objective should be specific, measurable, achievable, and have a timeline associated with it.

Burt Township is a year-round tourist destination. Thousands of campers, snowmobilers, ORV operators, kayakers, hikers, bicycle enthusiasts, sports fishing devotees, birders, rock hunters, long haul lake sailors, seaplane fans, hunters, music lovers, dog sledding mushers and those who simply love the quiet, majestic beauty of Lake Superior flock to Burt Township.

Burt Township strives to balance the economic needs of the community with the needs of community members that also desire a quiet, small town with less traffic. Burt Township intends to generate greater economic benefits for the local businesses and enhance the well-being of the year-round residents by supporting tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and cultural impacts by addressing the needs of the visitors and the local residents.



**Goal 1: Burt Township is a location where tourism is abundant year-round. Tourists are welcome because they are respectful of the community and want to protect the natural areas and support the high quality of life in Burt Township.**

**Objective 1:** Burt Township will promote itself as an authentic tourist destination that offers quality recreational experiences to those who want to experience the natural and human-made amenities available.

**Objective 2:** Burt Township will consider local policies that contribute to high-quality tourist experiences by adopting policies that seek to avoid over-tourism.

**Objective 3:** Burt Township will work with local businesses to develop strategies that support local commerce through tourism and support the resident's quality of life.

**Objective 4:** Burt Township will communicate to all tourists the importance of not overburdening sensitive natural areas.

**Goal 2. Burt Township is a location that promotes health and wellness for its citizens and visitors through facility development and programming that allows for access to fresh, healthy food, year-round exercise opportunities, and access to health care.**

**Objective 1:** Burt Township will seek opportunities to promote access to fresh, healthy food by promoting farmers' markets, community gardens, and pot luck gatherings that emphasize heart-healthy dishes.

**Objective 2:** Burt Township will provide additional opportunities for winter fitness by developing a walking and exercising location.

**Objective 3:** Burt Township will pursue information from the Alger County Road Commission to discuss regulatory authority over ORV's on county roads.

**Objective 4:** Burt Township will adopt policies that promote walkability in the community of Grand Marais by adopting an ordinance that regulates ORVs and snowmobiles from riding on the roads or parking within the town's center.

**Objective 4:** Burt Township will seek opportunities to provide transportation to their elderly and disabled population for their non-emergency medical needs.

**Goal 3: Burt Township is an inclusive community where people of all abilities are welcome and have easy access to all public recreation facilities in the Township.**

**Objective 1:** Burt Township will implement the ADA standards identified in the Superior Alliance for Independent Living evaluation (Appendix B) when pursuing recreation development projects.

**Objective 2:** Burt Township will promote itself as being inclusive to people of all abilities by promoting accessibility to recreational facilities and promoting local businesses that incorporate accessibility in their business strategy.

**Goal 4: The Burt Township Parks and Recreation facilities are easily identified through consistent signage, and all elements of the parks and recreation facilities are clean and well maintained.**

**Objective 1:** Burt Township will select a signage vendor to design signage that is consistent and visually reflects the brand of Burt Township. New signage will be installed as parks and recreation facilities are upgraded.

**Objective 2:** Burt Township will establish consistent branding and signage when promoting itself, reflecting the residents' and businesses' values.







**Objective 3:** Burt Township will develop a maintenance plan that set specific annual goals for recreation facility maintenance.



# 8.0 ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan is an implementation schedule for the Planning Commission and the Township Board over the next five years. Projects included in the Action Plan were determined by the Burt Township recreation survey results, goals and objectives in chapter 6, and the Township's annual maintenance schedule. The projects are also identified as economic development advantages to the community, quality of life for the residents, and many projects fulfill both categories' intent.

The Burt Township Planning Commission is committed to the implementation of the recreation plan's goals, objectives, and action plan and will submit an annual report to the Burt Township Board at the end of each fiscal year. The annual report will detail actions the Planning Commission has taken that directly relate to specific projects in the plan and actions that are intended to further the goals and objectives of the plan.

PROJECTS	ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE	LOCAL QUALITY OF LIFE
<b>H58 Bike Path and Cross Country Ski Trail</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Ellen Street to Cemetery</li><li>◦ Cemetery Road to School Forest</li><li>◦ School Forest to Luce County</li><li>◦ Within School Forest to Disc Golf Area</li><li>◦ Coordinate H58 bikepath with the Alger County Road Commission and the National Parks Service.</li></ul>		
<b>Bayshore Park Overlook Platforms- Picnic Tables and benches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Provide accessible parking, marked by the international symbol</li><li>◦ Provide accessible pathways to picnic tables and select picnic tables that are designed for accessibility</li></ul>		
<b>Improve east side beach access</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Signage and Parking (ADA)</li><li>◦ Picnic tables &amp; garbage cans</li><li>◦ Beach Walkway Matt (Mobi Matt)</li></ul>		

## PROJECTS

### ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE

### LOCAL QUALITY OF LIFE

#### School Forest Trail & Mapping

- Signage
- Extend for year-round use
- Trail development for biking, hiking, and cross country skiing



#### Woodland Park Campground and Recreation Area

- Pickle Ball
- Basketball court
- Corn Hole
- Ice Rink
- Broom Ball
- Winter Sledding Hill



#### Signage for Public Restrooms and Public Beach Locations

- Will meet ADA requirements
- Will be visually consistent



#### Finger dock expansion at Marina



#### Frank Mead Center, Barn

- Replace the barn to include a structure that provides a safe place to walk in the wintertime.
- Repair entry threshold to be accessible to the Frank Mead Center and library



PROJECTS

ECONOMIC  
ADVANTAGE

LOCAL  
QUALITY OF  
LIFE

Walkability in Grand Maris Town Center

- Provide pathways through the town center that are limited to pedestrian use only
- Provide parking areas for snowmobiles and ORV outside of the town center
- Regulate where snowmobiles and ORVs are allowed to go through signage and potential ordinance.
- Expand bike path from Coast Guard Point to Agate Beach and up the hill down Brazel St. to the Frank Mead Community Center



# APPENDIX A

# APPENDIX B



# APPENDIX C