



RECREATION OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

2023
2027

HIGGINS TOWNSHIP
VILLAGE OF ROSCOMMON
ROSCOMMON AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY

PLAN ADOPTED BY:

HIGGINS TOWNSHIP:

VILLAGE OF ROSCOMMON:

ROSCOMMON AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY:

COMMUNITY ADVISORY

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Jory Klumpp-Director of Recreation
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HIGGINS TOWNSHIP BOARD

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COMMUNITY ADVISORY

ROSCOMM AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY

Sue Jock-Chair
Eric Hart-Vice Chair
Connie Allen-Secretary
Karrie Williams
Cheri Hutek
Derek Smitz
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.

In order to meet the needs of our community residents and visitors, Higgins Township (Board), Village of Roscommon (Council), Roscommon Area Recreation Authority (Board), along with the assistance of other area groups, councils, and individuals prepared this “Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan for Higgins Township, the Village of Roscommon and the Roscommon Area Recreation Authority”. This 2023–2027 Master Plan was collaboratively developed to gather data and develop recommendations and goals for our community.

In February of 2022, the Higgins Township and the Village Council formed a committee composed of representatives from the Village, RMRA, local recreation businesses and the school district to direct the development of this plan. The committee provided ample opportunity for local organizations and the general public to comment on the plan as it developed. It represents the Committee’s attempt to merge the recreational priorities of the community with the fiscal and personnel limitations of the Village.

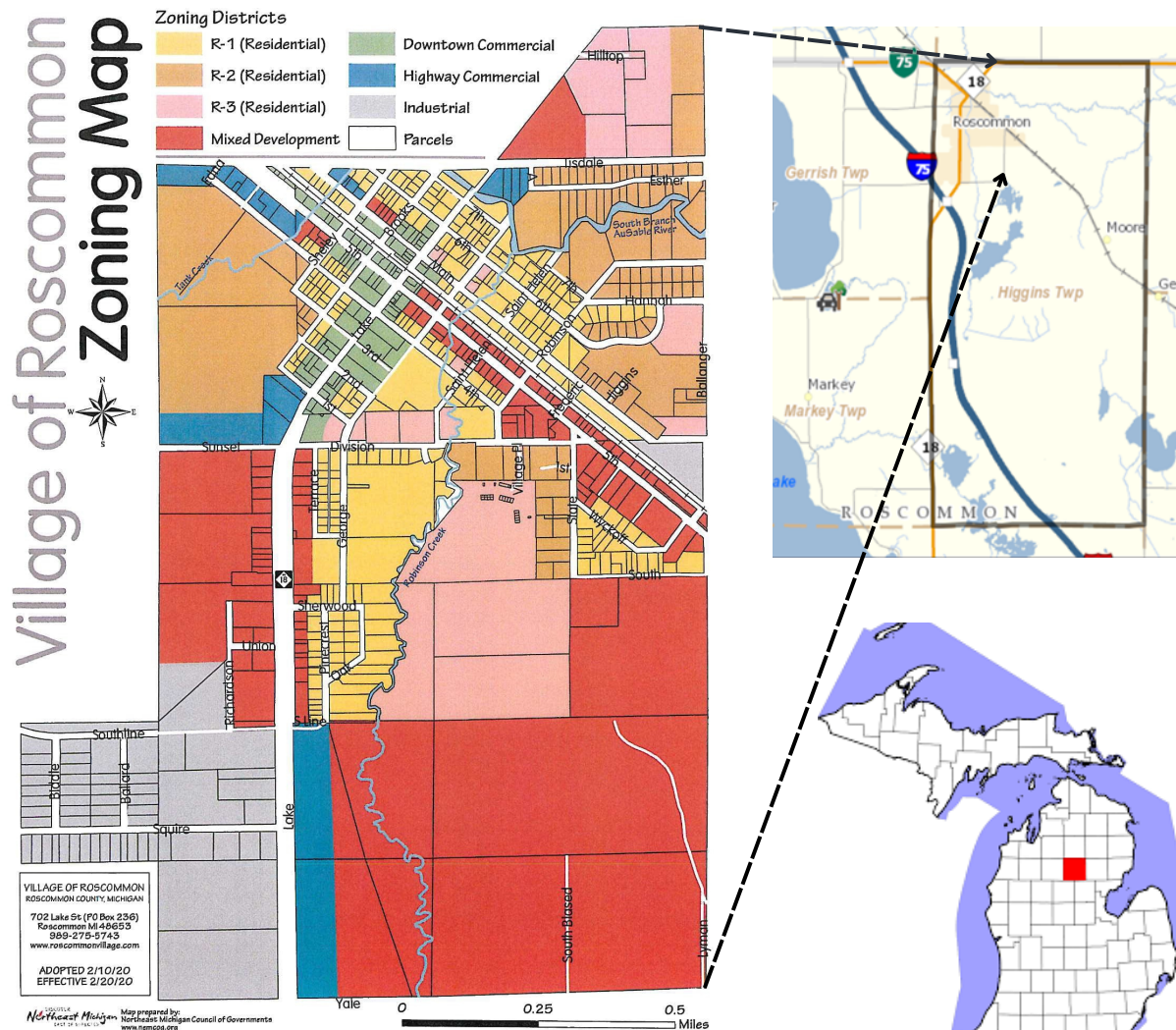
Since Roscommon is a recreation destination, the plan also considers the desires of tourists who visit the area. Much of the local economy depends on canoeing, snowmobiling, and other outdoor activities. The community also hosts numerous festivals and celebrations during the year that have a recreation component.



Community Description

Situated on the northcentral border of 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 4% covered by water.

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 and 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 US27, M76, M18, and M55 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 advent of the automobile industry in Michigan, the opportunity for automobile-related industries was established in Roscommon. The "Great Depression" brought about high local taxes and the loss of property at tax sales. This resulted in over 4,500,000 acres being deeded from private ownership to the State of Michigan. The land in Higgins Township was subjected to this State takeover because of the lack of money by private owners to either retain it or purchase it or the owners simply no longer wanted and abandoned the property. To this day over 60% of Higgins Township is state land.

The closest communities to Roscommon are Saint Helen, (12 miles), Grayling (15 miles), Prudenville (15 miles), and West Branch (29 miles). Some of the State's most sought offer natural resources are the rivers and Lakes. Houghton Lake, Michigan's largest inland lake, is multi-use for boating, fishing, and general lakeshore enjoyment and is 14 miles southwest. Higgins Lake, ranked the second most beautiful lake in Michigan, is the closest to the Village at about 8 miles. Lake St. Helen (12 miles) is a shallow inland lake known for excellent fishing and surrounding ORV/ATV trails in the area. The South Branch of the AuSable River runs through the Village of Roscommon and connects to the North Branch and continues to Oscoda where it empties into Lake Huron. Recreation use for canoes and kayaks is popular upstream. Further downstream you enter the "Holy Waters" offering world-class fishing on the Mason Track.

Although the local population is small, tourism generates many visitors to the Roscommon area. This population influx for our community's amenities, both natural and developed is one of the primary economic drives 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, natural areas 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 in that season as well.

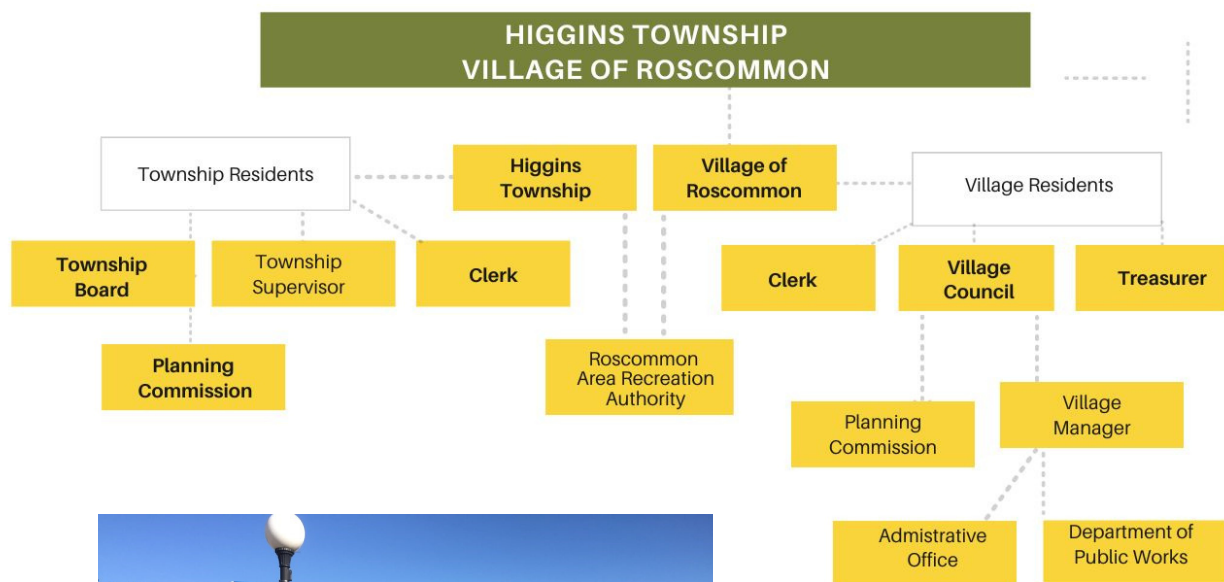
The focus of this plan is to identify and examine all aspects of recreation in Higgins Township and the community of Roscommon. The committee will use this updated plan to recommend improvements to our park and recreation system. Improving our park facilities and equipment and securing grant funding are the primary goals of this planning process.

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.



Administrative Structure

The Higgins Township and the Village of Roscommon are unique communities. State land makes up a majority of square miles in Higgins Township with the bulk of population and recreation amenities close to or within the Village limits. The building assets for recreation are owned and operated by the Roscommon Area Recreation Authority. The administrative structure of the Township are positions that require election. These include the Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and the board which is elected every two years. The Village has elected office for the Village President, Clerk and Treasurer every two years, Village Council every 4 years, and the Village Manager is hired by the Village Council. The Roscommon Area Recreation Authority is comprised of 7 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 a small amount for revenues but has no formal recreation budget or liabilities. The Village of Roscommon's annual budget has funding for recreation in the Village including expenditures for park maintenance, general equipment and employees. The RARA is funded annually by the Township and the Village according to their Articles of Incorporation. Other income for the RARA is secured by revenues gained from the CRAF Center from its memberships and rental income. The RARA could also seek funding by millage as stipulated in their Articles of Incorporation but this has not been attempted. Other sources of funding exist specifically via special project grant requests and fundraisers.

BUDGETS GO IN HERE

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 and Hiawatha Park along with several open greenspace areas and pocket parks. The Roscommon Area Recreation Authority owns a grouping of 4 large properties that provide recreation and services to the community.

- The Community Recreation and Fitness (CRAF) Center operates a fitness center, hosts several community-based fitness programs, community events, and room rentals.
- Gahagan Nature Preserve is a privately funded organization that hosts school and summer programs on nature and conservancy.
- The AuSable River Center was once a museum of canoeing history. Renovated and reorganized artifacts are on display. 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.
- METRO Park is the home to the community Little League fields and a newly constructed playground in 2014 with plans for additional development in the near future.
- Tisdale Pathway is a state property that holds 8 miles of trails utilized for hiking, biking and cross-country skiing. The RARA has a land maintenance agreement with the mDNR for summer mowing, trail clean up and winter grooming for cross country skiing.

Other agencies involved with area recreation, many of which are volunteer organizations, that continually support recreation within the area:

1. Higgins Lake Roscommon Chamber of Commerce
2. Roscommon St. Helen Little League
3. Roscommon Soccer
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. Kirtland Community College

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 5 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 construct this plan.

Recreation Inventory

An inventory of recreation activities is included and listed by classification. 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.

PARKS, NATURE AREAS, TRAIL SYSTEMS

Wallace Park

104 N. Seventh Street

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. Frontage along the South Branch of the AuSable River provides public and commercial launching of canoes, kayaks, and tubes. The park has two bathrooms built by Roscommon Rotary, picnic tables, and grills all with universal access.

Hiawatha Park

113 Lake Street

Property situated across the river from Wallace Park at 113 Lake Street, which will be noted as Hiawatha, was purchased by the Village of Roscommon in 2018. The property consists of a small peninsula with a house, pond, two-car setback garage and parking lot. This property is currently being assessed for future development for public use.

Metro Park

208 George Street (between Division and Sherwood)

The eight-acre park is located two blocks from the Roscommon County Building in a residential neighborhood. It is home to Roscommon / Saint Helen Little League with three baseball/softball fields. In 2014, the aged playground was replaced with a new 12,000 sq. ft. footprint. There were two tennis courts and two basketball courts, all of which were removed with upcoming plans for the open area. 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.

Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve
209 Maplehurst

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 62-acre public wildlife sanctuary open 24/7 to the community for hiking, biking, 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 the pond.

South Higgins Lake State Park
106 State Park Drive

South Higgins Lake State Park is located 9 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 boasts 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.

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.

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. A local firemen's Memorial Committee provides all maintenance for this site which 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 in a year's time as well as during the Firemen's Memorial Festival, held in September each year.

Other Notable Parks:

Park 27 in Lyon Township

Markey Township Park in Markey Township

Phoenix Park Lyon Township.

Roscommon North Youth Soccer Association and

Roscommon Youth Football League Fields

Pinewood and County Road 100

Five soccer fields and one football field 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 its headwaters 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.

The 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 flow is unique where non-motorized experienced water crafts can enjoy a mix of river and lake in one trip and gives ample opportunity to fish.

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.

There are public beaches at the North and South Higgins Lake State Parks, Gerrish Park and Gerrish Marina.

Kelly Beach off of Kelly Ave. (off Flag Point Dr). It hosts a swimming area and association maintained boat launch and dock. There is no public parking within two blocks.

Boat Launches

There are public launch sites at the State Parks, Gerrish Marina and the West Higgins Lake Boat Launch off County Road 200. This launch also is a public boat launch with parking. 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 extending 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. The Village allows snowmobiles 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 and biking 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 XC Skiing that is available as walking paths in the summer. Maintained by a privately owned facility.

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 trail is 10.42 miles utilized for XC skiing, snowshoeing and hiking and is maintained by Friends of the Mason Tract. 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 (South Higgins Lake State Park) Trail

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. The lake is designated for non-motorized watercraft.

North Higgins Lake State Park Trail:

Across from the North 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 State Park Section:

Along the front of the North 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.

Roscommon Area Public Schools Walking Trail

The paved 2-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 Co.Rd. 100.

HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS

Roscommon Area Historic Model Train Club

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 1880's 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 from Roscommon and surrounding areas. The Silsby-Jacobson Building was built in the 1880's and currently houses historical documents and pictures.

The AuSable River Center

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 as County Health Department. The building was set to be demolished but was saved by a group of community members. Currently maintained as a museum, it is filled with historic artifacts, utilized for events, meetings, and home of the farmer's market.

After years of dedicated service, the AuSable River Center group retired leaving a building filled with memories. The building was partially renovated, moving the museum artifacts to the wall for better viewing. The fireplace room was renovated and the entire lower level can now be utilized for community meetings, special events, and classes. The upstairs holds an office, open space, and workshop that is available for classes.

The Civilian Conservation Corps Museum: 11747 N. Higgins Lake Drive is part of North 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. The AuSable South Branch is also known as the Holy Waters by trout fishermen. 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

If you believe in the paranormal realm, there's nothing more exciting than checking out a supposedly haunted cemetery. Michigan is home to plenty of spooky destinations, but there's one historic spot here in the Great Lakes State that some claim is teeming with ghosts, spirits, and other entities. When you're ready to explore one of Michigan's eeriest destinations, head to this unique cemetery.

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 rescued school building in 1994, fully renovated and occupied. The 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

AuSable River Center

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 25-35 vendors a week and is open Saturdays from May through October.

Roscommon Community Center**510 South St.**

The Community Center is located on the east side of the Village 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 the Village. Firemen 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 Firemen's Memorial Committee for use during their annual festival. Various public functions use the grounds annually and Fourth of July fireworks.

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. Our patrons enjoy downloadable audiobooks, eBooks & magazines. Mango Languages & Ancestry.com (Library Edition) is also available for your use. The library offers activities for all ages, visiting authors, and music programs throughout the year.

Community Garden

The Roscommon Community Garden is located in the Village of Roscommon at the corners of Main and George Streets. Produce grown at the garden is available to the community as it ripens. This project was headed by the Crawford-Roscommon Conservation District, community volunteers with funding from Rotary, grants and private donations. In collaboration with community service groups and the Village of Roscommon, the garden was completed for the 2016 season.

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 is located adjacent to the North 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. Whether you're starting your college career, returning to college to change careers, or looking for classes to enrich your life, Kirtland Community College is the place for you.

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 lay an abundance of assets. Included in the other private opportunities or facilities include a zoo, bowling alley, numerous golf courses, shooting range, canoe liveries, and amenities for a large range of sport orientated hunters, fishermen and the like.

FESTIVALS

Higgins Lake-Roscommon WinterFest (February)

Annual Roscommon Business Expo (May)

Pro Am Canoe Race (May)

Kirtland Warbler Festival (June)

Summerfest Burnt Rubber Car Show and Cornhole (June)

Sunrise Run (June)

CRAF Center Gazebo Concert Series (June through August)

Annual July 4th Fireworks and Parade (July)

Aluminum Canoe Race Classic (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)

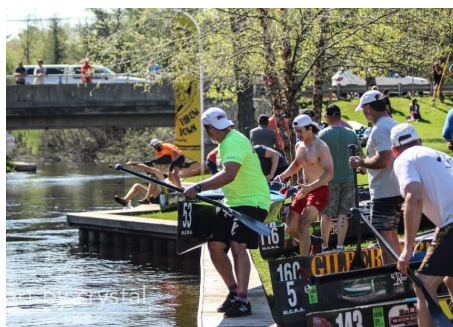
Conservation Expo (September)

Girls' Night Out in Roscommon (October)

Christmas in the Village (December)

Reindeer Run (December)

Lions Club Annual Ski for Light: Cross Country Ski Event for the blind (3rd Weekend in January)



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
Wallace Park–RARA Property
Metro Park–RARA Property
Tisdale Trail–State Property
Michigan Fire Training Grounds–50 year Land Lease
DNR Airport–DNR Property
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 to Protect:

10 acres bounded by Main, Robinson, Hannah, and Ballanger 055-105-012-0110 11 acres, Private Held (grover).(old ballfield)
M-18 South of Village limits to Firemen's Memorial
North of DPW property to Tisdale Trail
Private Property: M-18 and Tisdale 055-105-007-0270 12 acres Rosco Property holdings
Frontier Communications Building: Main and Brook Street

Private properties adjacent to Gahagan that continue to be of interest in acquiring:
Loughrey (west of Post Office) Private: 055-107-002-0060
Wyckoff (South of Loughrey–west of M-18) Private: 055-107-002-0080
Bendict (South of Wyckoff, SW M-18) Private: 055-107-003-0020
Kalthoff : Private Wetland CR 100 or East Sunset: 005-107-005-0020
State Property: 121 acres Southline/Wheeler Road 005-107-010-0020
34 acres wetland DNR parcel number 055-106-015-0021. North Of County Road 100 and bordering Brooks Street

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), 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 landing and replacement of the deteriorating retaining wall. New amenities of picnic tables, benches and grills were added to accommodate persons of all functional capacities



Evaluation of Past Plans

The 2013 to 2017 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 that 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 2013 noted with the evaluation and outcomes.

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

To reevaluate an avenue for funding for recreation within the Village and Township.

In 2019 recreation was evaluated and results presented to Village and Township. The AOI and Bylaws were rewritten and submitted to the State with approval. The name was changed to Roscommon Area Recreation Authority and according to Legislature Act 321 of the Public Acts 2000 currently incorporated by the state. The Village and Township committed to specific funding according to bylaws and a Director of Recreation was created.

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.

Walking opportunities have been enhanced with the completion of the Hilltop to Tisdale pathway, routine grooming and maintenance of Tisdale Pathway and completion of Division Street bridge. Alternative walking options have been promoted by the RARA on social media and shared with area agencies. Progress is difficult within the community due to county and state road intersections with limited ability to add safe biking paths.

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

To increase knowledge and awareness of existing area recreation opportunities. Increased use of social media, networking with area tourism bureau, chamber of commerce, along with an addition of digital sign downtown for events has been very beneficial. According to 2022 survey data there is still a disconnect in disseminating events and information out to area residents and visitors.

To finish development of connections for current motorized trails on the north end of town and to establish a snow maintenance path along that roadside trail.

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 initial measures taken by economic development. Lodging accommodations for year-round visitors do not meet the needs for area tourism.

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.

IN PROGRESS: Amenities in Roscommon's parks need to be assessed planned and completed. The RARA is currently in the planning process for completion phases for Metro Park. The Village has purchased the Hiawatha property on the NE side of the river and is in the idea and design phase. Economic development has also increased awareness of the importance of greenspace and preservation and together working to achieve this goal.

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.

Description of Planning Process

Higgins Township Board, Roscommon Village Council and the Roscommon Area Recreation Authority selected individuals for Recreation Committee, comprised of the following members 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 2018–2022 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 2023–2027 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 Higgins Township, Village, 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 the community input and identifies specific objectives necessary to accomplish them. This data was gathered by multiple open meetings and public gathering sessions. A second avenue of information was gathered utilizing a survey tool gathering data from 541 community members, with 84% being full time residents of the 48653–area code. This process identified the key players must accomplish 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 Recreation Plan:
Once the plan was drafted it was available for public input, presented at Township, Village and County meetings and subsequent approval was obtained by the Village Council, Township Board and RARA Board.

Planning Methods

The Recreation Committee was charged with the task of drafting a new Recreation Plan for Higgins Township, 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 of Higgins Township, 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 agrees 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. ATV/snowmobile trailhead connecting existing trails
3. Finishing Metro Park and Hiawatha Park as public space and greenspace.
4. 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 2012 and 2018 recreation survey. The survey link was distributed by email, social media, group email from the CRAF Center, DDA, Village and Township board members, and two classes in each of the elementary, middle and high school. It is of note that a better representation of results was gathered from the school age population which changed the outcome of the survey results as it has to do with

kids and activities they would prefer. 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:

1. Hiking/walking paths
2. Bike paths
3. Kids activities
4. Basketball Courts
5. Pickleball
6. Ice rink
7. Splashpad
8. Dog Park
9. Movie Theater
10. Pool
11. Skateboard Park
12. Volley ball

The top activities are consistent with the prior recreation needs of the community. It is to be noted that most activities or amenities are currently in the pipeline for development. Much of 2018–2022 was spent on restructuring of the RARA, building relationships with the Township and Village and loss of time with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Goals and Objectives

The Recreation Committee evaluated the issues, and redeveloped goals and objectives from the 2018–2022 Recreation Plan. The changes were based on the results of the community input meetings, community questionnaire and presentations to local organizations. Higgins Township, 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.

Despite utilizing variety of media and marketing techniques there is still a disconnect between area amenities and activities and those that visit or live here.

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

Objectives:

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

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

There are state recognized trails on three sides of the Village, yet there is limited ability 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, and road commissions to evaluate and plan a route that goes from the 69 trailhead south of town north to the connectors.

Objective:

- A. Establish a multidisciplinary group of ORV/Snowmobile members, local governmental, township and village, and road commissions to work through a process to plan a functional route.

- B. Develop a well-marked, clear pathway at trailheads and through the Village.
- C. Work with local governmental agencies on a general maintenance trail program.
- D. Market area assets and businesses that would benefit from riders to the area.
- E. Collaboration with enforcement agencies on ORV routes.

Enhancement of Roscommon's parks and greenspace.

Greenspace and playgrounds are highly sought-after amenities in communities

Goal: Preserve, renovate or replace amenities and opportunities to provide an avenue for recreation within the community.

Objectives

- A. The RARA will utilize data gathered to plan and engineer Metro Park completion.
- B. Hiawatha Park is vacant greenspace with preliminary plans for development for river access, greenspace for residents and visitors alike.
- C. Gahagan Nature Preserve plan acquisitions and protection of adjacent properties and wetlands. Documented plans highlight park and trail enhancement, addition to their educational center and develop and maintain outdoor environmental education withing the schools and community.
- D. Greenspace: See Open space
- E. Identify area funding partners and volunteers to complete renovation projects.
- F. Identify threats to individual safety and put in place measures to make the community a safe place to live, work and play.

Higgins Township and Roscommon area residents rank trail systems/safe walking paths along with safe bike pathways as the top request for the past decade.

Goal: Continues to work to 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.

Objectives

- A. Identify existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to pathways' access in the community factoring in all safety concerns of the public.
- B. Continue to expand a pathway system that provides safe walk or bike to neighborhoods, parks and businesses within Higgins Township/Village of Roscommon limits.

- C. Continuation of expanding the roads shoulders or marked roadways within Higgins Township/Village of Roscommon to create a safe passage for non-motorized use.
- D. Primary traffic from Hilltop and north of town utilize the newly developed Hilltop to Tisdale section of the pathway into town. Safety concerns have presented with narrow to no shoulders crossing the bridge over the AuSable River. Plans for extended walkway over the river have been engineered since 2015 and with the Village now owning both sides of the river make this a workable goal.
- E. Acquire necessary land or obtain easements for pathway development.
- F. Involve community groups to fund, develop, promote and maintain the trail systems.
- G. Increase awareness of area trails

Future population growth will place increasing demands on recreational land in the Roscommon area.

Goal: Community's sustainability. Steps to preserve sufficient open space that will provide opportunities for recreation now and in the future.

Objectives

- A. Preserve current public land that is suitable for recreation in quantities adequate to meet the existing and future recreations need of the population.
- B. Protect the natural resources and identity of the community and surrounding area.
- C. 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. Due to the current economic climate, spending on recreation by governmental agencies has been reduced or eliminated.

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

Objectives

- A. Identify and create activities that are suitable to the community and offer age-appropriate recreational activities.
- B. Provide opportunities to promote a healthy lifestyle and, in turn, a healthy community.

C. Promote and market the parks, recreation programs, facilities and the benefits that are provided to the public.

D. The Roscommon Area Recreation Authority, using the priorities collected for this recreation plan, will annually develop or provide new programs, events and community enhancements that cross the age span to address the needs of socialization, exercise and activities for the community at large.

Action Plan

The Roscommon Recreation Committee, in cooperation with Roscommon community members, compiled a prioritized list of projects for implementation from 2023–2027. 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.

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.

Utilize Community Natural Resources

With the AuSable River flowing through the Village, and nearby fresh water lakes, canoeing, kayaking and fishing are popular recreation activities with residents and visitors. A plan needs to be put in place to promote activities within Wallace/Hiawatha Park and surrounding properties to promote what we have naturally.

Safe Passage for Non-Motorized Use-continued and ongoing

Continued open communication and planning with the Roscommon County Road Commission and Village of expanding 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 and past plans of a walking bridge will reduce potential for harm and provide an appealing safe pathway for pedestrians in and out of the Village.

Park Planning, Development and Completions:

Metro Park on George Street currently has 3 ball fields, newly renovated bathrooms and a new playground in 2014. Open space is available and a top priority for development of the RARA. Data over the decades repeats the results. Safe hiking and biking opportunities, water feature, kids' activities, skateboard park, dog park and pickleball and basketball courts are the items to be evaluated for future development. Hiawatha Park is also open green space, borders the AuSable River and is adjacent to Wallace Park. The options are broad for usage and planning amenities that can include greenspace, launch, pavilions, parking, universal access to the water and surrounding areas and bathrooms.

Trailhead and Wayfinding Signage for ORV/Snowmobile

Trailhead at the north and south end of the Village lacks wayfinding signage to area amenities and visible markers. This is due in part lack of connection between the two trailheads. A trail connection plan needs to be put in place.

Wayfinding Information

With diverse recreation opportunities in the Roscommon area, it is important for visitors to have easy access to information. Installing way-finding information boards, development of community apps or printed media within the community will help area residents and visitors locate areas of recreation, businesses and local attractions.

HIGGINS TOWNSHIP-VILLAGE OF ROSCOMMON ROSCOMMON AREA RECREATION AUTHORITY

RECREATION SURVEY

This survey is designed to assess recreation opportunities for the Village of Roscommon, Higgins Township and the Roscommon area residents

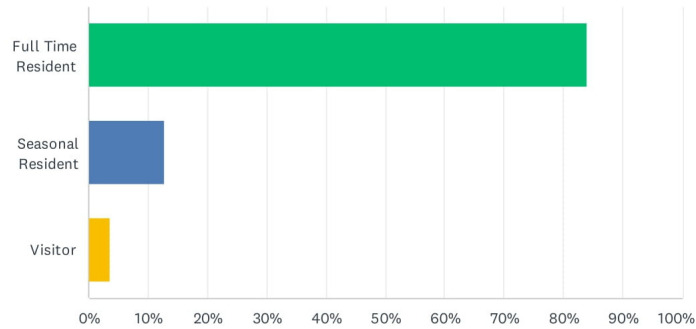
1. COMMUNITY
 - a. Full time resident
 - b. Seasonal resident
 - c. VisitorZIPCODE:
2. What is your age group
 - a. Under 12
 - b. 13-19
 - c. 20-40
 - d. 41-65
 - e. over 65
3. What is your favorite recreation activity in this community?
4. What are your barriers to enjoying recreation in this area?
5. What recreation activities do you LEAVE this community for?
6. Rank the top 10 items you would like to see developed or improved.
7. Activity Programming:
List YOUR top programs or activities you would like to see developed.
8. How would you rank the CRAF Center.
_Never Visited _Needs Work _ Good _Excelent
9. How would you rank Metro Park.
_Never Visited _Needs Work _ Good _Excelent
10. How would you rank Gahagan Nature Preserve.
_Never Visited _Needs Work _ Good _Excelent
11. How would you rank AuSable River Center.
_Never Visited _Needs Work _ Good _Excelent
12. How would you rank the care and maintainance of Tisdale Pathway.
13. How would your rank overall recreation in your community.



RECREATION SURVEY

Q1 Community

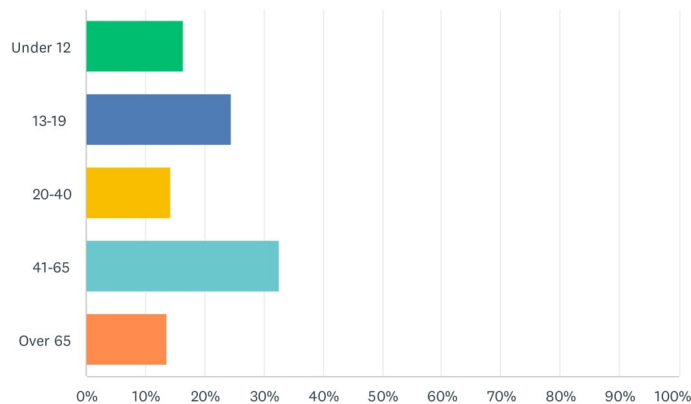
Answered: 538 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Full Time Resident	84.01%	452
Seasonal Resident	12.83%	69
Visitor	3.53%	19
Total Respondents: 538		

Q2 What is your age grouping?

Answered: 539 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 12	16.33%	88
13-19	24.49%	132
20-40	14.29%	77
41-65	32.65%	176
Over 65	13.54%	73
Total Respondents: 539		

RECREATION SURVEY

Favorite Recreation Activity in Community

Water-34%

It comes to no surprise that water is overwhelming favorite resource of our community. This entails both motorized and non-motorized boating and swimming. Higgins Lake nearest public access is 6.5 miles away from the Village of Roscommon. The South Branch Au Sable River runs right through the Village and is bordered by Wallace Park and Hiawatha.

Sports-18%

Community members love using sport to get moving and to be active. According to the survey the activities have differing ideas in what they enjoy from one generation to the next. The under 20 group prefer basketball, soccer, baseball and softball. The favorite for the over 50 community members would be pickleball.

Hiking/Walking-15%

Higgins Township consist of about 44 square miles of state land, and the consensus is that people prefer to take in all the natural scenery on foot. Hiking and walking have been a high priority for the past 15 years on our recreation surveys. Not only do the residents wish for hiking trails but the ability to walk on a more stable surface without worrying about barriers or traffic is of importance for their safety.

Biking 14%

Biking spans all ages and skill levels, so whether you are just learning or training for your next competition biking is a top favorite. Our respondents repeatedly list a deficiency in safe bike routes or spaces for both children and adults.

Outdoor Recreation 12%

Our natural resources, parks, and recreation opportunities make Roscommon a top visitor destination year around. Outdoor recreation is also one of the top five reasons families relocate to live and raise families.

ATV/ORV 7%

A growing pastime, hitting the trails on a quad, side by side, or snowmobile has increasing popularity. Having the trails in close proximity to communities for food, gas and social time spent is a necessity to capture the economic impact that this recreational business brings.

Barriers to Enjoying Recreation

Trails-36%

Hiking and biking combine for 29% of the activities that people like to do. According to our survey results a lack of awareness of trails and groomed ski trails hinder people for enjoying this pastime more.

None-28%

Over a quarter of responses said they don't have any barriers to enjoying recreation in our community.

Accessibility-21%

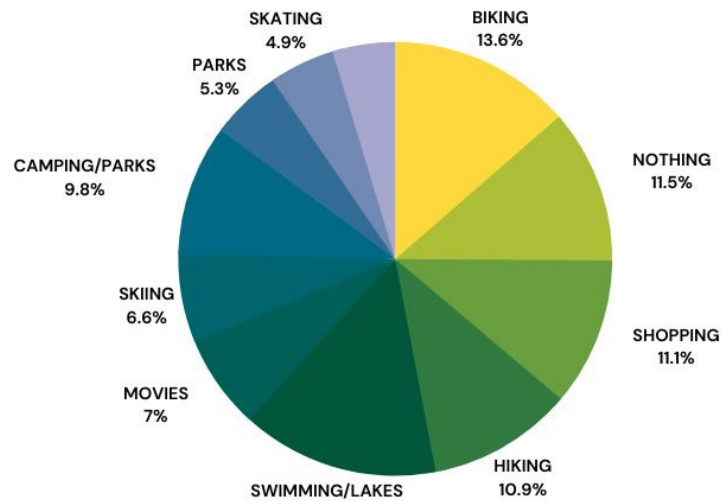
Our woods and waterways are what residents and visitors seek. According to the responses there is a disconnect between what is perceived accessibility and what is actually available, this includes anything from a trail to boat launches. Living in a rural area travel is required for many destinations and not always an option. According to the survey a lack of activities for the kids, parks, and programs has been a topic in our recreation plan over the past 15 years.

Courts-15%

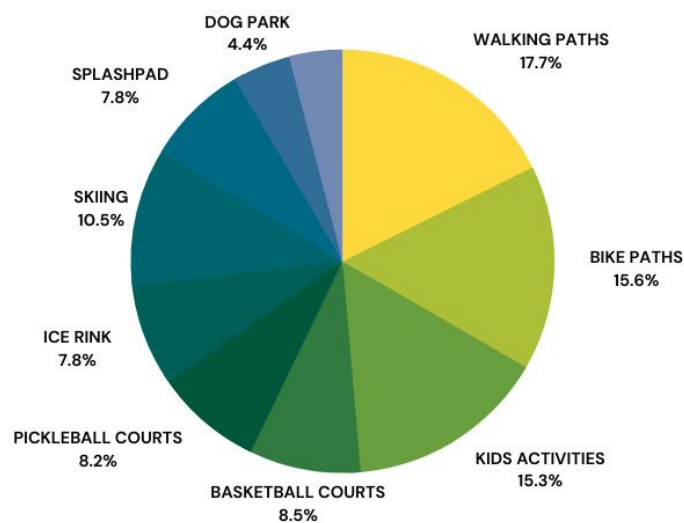
Outside basketball and pickleball courts weigh in on community wants and needs. Both are available inside at the CRAF Center within the Village limits, but many enjoy playing outdoors during the summer months. The closest courts are in Gerrish Township within five miles of the Village, Lyon Township is 10 miles, or Denton Township, about 14 miles away.

RECREATION SURVEY

WHAT RECREATION ACTIVITIES DO YOU **LEAVE** THE COMMUNITY FOR



TOP TEN PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS WOULD LIKE TO SEE DEVELOPED



RECREATION SURVEY

