



During the winter months, Escanaba continues to offer a multitude of recreational opportunities. Outdoor activities such as ice fishing, cross country skiing, dog sledding, and snowmobiling are enhanced in the bright dry sunny days and starlit nights. Escanaba is located within the “Banana Belt” of the U.P. and only receives an average snowfall of 66 inches per year.

Open Space and Recreation

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

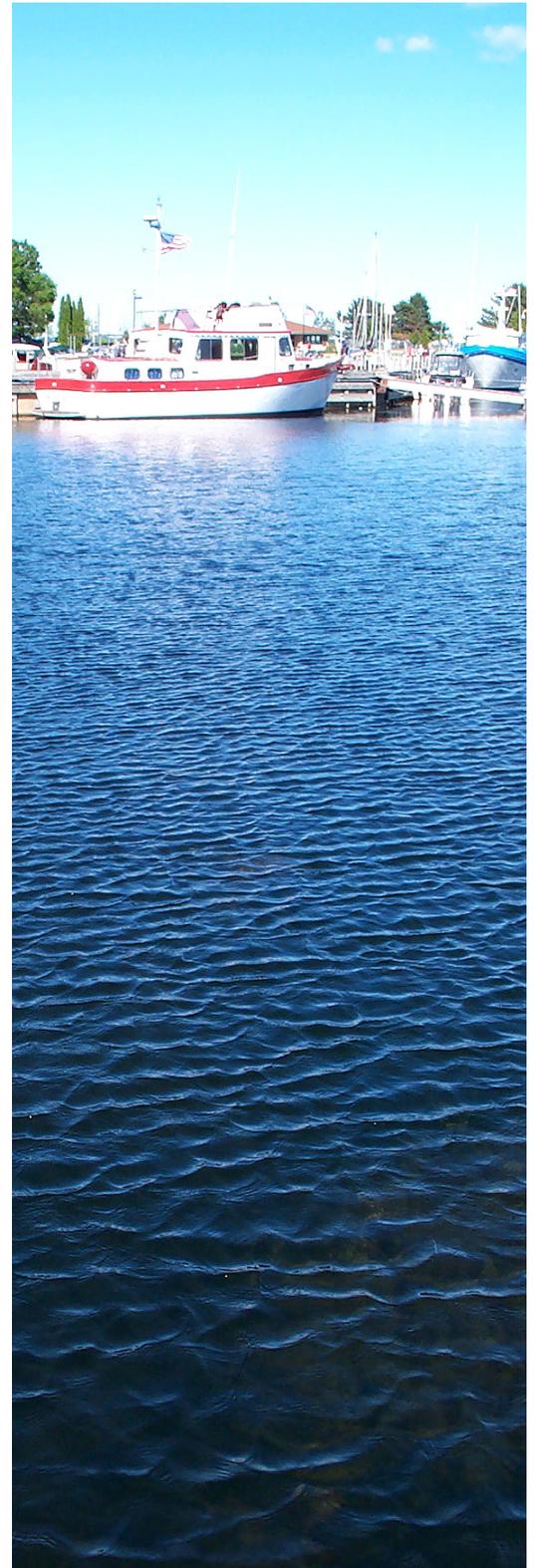
Escanaba is located in a region of the Midwest that offers many opportunities for outdoor recreation. The vast surrounding wilderness and large bodies of fresh water invite tourists and residents alike to experience all that the northern climate has to offer. With over 420 acres of park and recreation facilities, Escanaba offers a wide array of recreation and leisure opportunities to the residents.

Escanaba's location on the northern shore of Lake Michigan, provides it with a unique variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. Residents have voiced interest in enhancement of these recreational resources by implementing more parks and recreational facilities throughout the community. Preservation of open space not only creates recreational opportunities, but also improves the community quality of life, increases local property values, attracts more tourism investment, and sparks new life into less desirable neighborhoods.

RECREATION

Escanaba's waterfront provides many recreational opportunities. Fishing, boating, sailing, and many other water sports are easily accessible through the use of two primary access points at both the North Shore boat launch and the Ludington Park-municipal marina. The North Shore boat launch was the location for the 2004 Cabela's professional walleye tournament. Five hundred fishermen in 250 boats came to Escanaba to fish the waters of Little and Big Bays De Noc. Fishing tournaments generate a great deal of revenue for the community and have been widely supported by residents and business owners alike. Additionally, residents and tourists use the full service Ludington Park municipal marina and boat launch offering mooring and launching for motorboats and sailboats within the 165 available slips. The community regards Little Bay De Noc as a primary asset, simply because it offers such a diversity of recreational and scenic resources.

The 120-Acre Ludington Park extends north and south, parallel to the lakeshore, encompassing the municipal marina along Lakeshore Drive and Loren W. Jenkins Memorial Drive. Ludington Park includes the site of a variety of community activities as well as a pedestrian/bicycle pathway. Open 7:30 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. daily, Ludington Park is an active area with picnic areas, the Harbor Hideout Playground Complex, open greenspace area, four lighted tennis courts, six sand volleyball



courts, one outdoor basketball court, a fitness circuit, a public pavilion, and public restrooms.

Musical performances can be seen from the lawn or outdoor seating at the Karas Memorial Bandshell, in Ludington Park, each week throughout the summer. Additional recreational facilities of Ludington Park include the municipal beach coupled with the scenic vista of Lake Michigan. Additional parks and sports facilities are located throughout Escanaba providing a variety of opportunities for residents to enjoy the community through leisure activities. Table 5.1 represents the park and recreation facilities located throughout the city.

Table 5.1: Outdoor Recreation Facilities

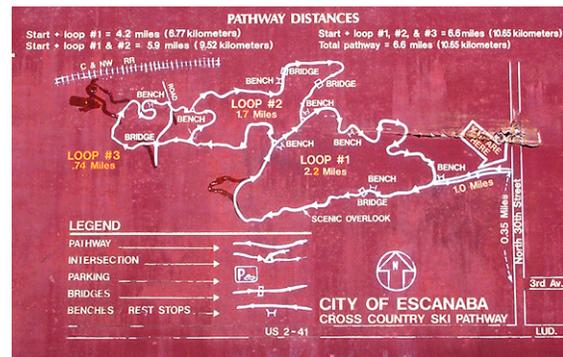
Feature Name	Acres
Webster Park Children’s Pool	0.48
Rose Park Playground	0.96
Stephenson Park	2.49
Royce Park	3.30
East Jefferson Field	4.70
Jefferson Football Field	4.93
West Jefferson Field	5.18
Open Space/Recreational Uses	17.11
UP State Fairgrounds	85.98
Escanaba Country Club	103.05
Ludington Park	120.00
Rod & Gun Club	241.38

Data Source: Beckett & Raeder Inc. 2004

Each summer, Escanaba hosts the Upper Peninsula State fair at the fairgrounds located on Lincoln Avenue. Community members voiced interest in using these facilities for other activities throughout more of the year, to optimize the use of the land. Events such as snowmobile races and horse racing were two suggested uses.

Recreational opportunities of Escanaba are not only limited to the water and park resources found throughout the city. The Escanaba Civic Center offers programs for all ages running throughout the year. The center provides classes for seniors along with weekly meals and gatherings. Additionally, the center’s gymnasium facilitates community sports leagues for all ages.

During the winter months, Escanaba continues to offer a multitude of recreational opportunities. Outdoor activities such as ice fishing, cross-country skiing, dog sledding, and snowmobiling are enhanced in the bright dry and sunny days and starlit nights. 7 Miles of public cross-country ski trails are maintained throughout the area along N 30th Street. This area has experienced some pollution problems due to public dumping and misuse. Therefore, the community would like to see the area cleaned, maintained, and fully utilized as a skiing and hiking facility. Escanaba residents would like to enhance the downtown and city to become more of a winter destination and attraction.





OPEN SPACE

Open space preservation is crucial to maintaining the immense recreational opportunities available in region in and around Escanaba. Setting aside new areas for public use or wildlife protection enables the city to limit growth and manage development throughout the community.

Escanaba has maintained open space through parks and undeveloped areas. The community has voiced interest in continuing to preserve open space for public use in parks and common areas. One of the areas, which many residents felt would be an optimum location for such land use, would be the area depicted in the photo above, north of 3rd Avenue along the railroad right-of-way. This site represents a large parcel of land which could provide an area or areas for open space preservation and recreational uses in conjunction with other redevelopment activities. The other site that community members would like to see preserved for public use is the land directly behind City Hall. This lakefront parcel is of strong interest to the community due to the location and current usage. The parcel is privately owned, has deep water and is zoned light and heavy manufacturing. The parcel is currently being used as a commercial marine construction, repair and long term storage and vessel lay-up facility. During visioning, participants strongly encouraged the city to obtain this property, remove the shipping vessels, clean up the parcel and redevelop the area with a higher density of mixed-use development that focuses on commercial, entertainment and residential components.

Whether land is used as open space for public use or wildlife protection, such areas may impose difficulties due to private ownership or contamination issues. These issues should be considered when the locations for open space, parks, and recreation facilities are determined. It's worth the effort to determine an area's potential as open space as this is a valuable resource that will continue to enhance and support Escanaba's vast recreational opportunities.