



Master Plan Update

February 2023





Master Plan Update

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1



INTRODUCTION

SE Group has been retained by the Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board (IRRR) to update the 2017 Core Area Master Plan and incorporate recent planning initiatives in a 2023 Master Plan Update for the Giants Ridge Recreation Area.

1.1 GIANTS RIDGE TODAY

The recreation facility consists of an alpine ski hill, a Nordic ski facility, two 18-hole golf courses (The Legend and The Quarry), and a significant lift-served and cross country mountain bike trail network. The resort includes a number of lodging properties that are privately owned and operated. Attractions may fall under the purview of the recreational facility, but they benefit the larger resort by attracting more guests to “stay and play”.

The “core area” of Giants Ridge encompasses:

- The recreational facility and all base area development:
 - » Event Center
 - » South Chalet
 - » Sports Pavilion
 - » The Lodge
 - » The Legend Golf Shop
 - » The Legend and ski area maintenance buildings
- Nearby residential areas, including:
 - » The Villas
 - » The Residence Club
 - » The Woodlands residential area
 - » Green Gate Guest Houses
 - » Voyageurs Retreat
 - » Other adjacent lakefront areas on Sabin and Wynne Lakes

1.2 PREVIOUS PLANNING

A master plan is not a static document, but rather a planning tool that evolves over time in response to changing operational and market conditions. This 2023 Master Plan Update builds upon previous planning for Giants Ridge:

- 2017 Core Area Master Plan (SE Group)
 - » Purpose: realize potential for additional winter business, increase summer business, and identify opportunities for future development and accommodations
 - » Scope: focused on the core area; built upon the near-term opportunities identified in the 2014 plan to include the long-term potential for the development of accommodations and real estate at Giants Ridge; included projects that may be realized in small, realistic, incremental phases
 - » Following this: the 2023 Master Plan Update was commissioned to incorporate recent planning initiatives and update the Master Plan concept
- 2014 Multi-Season Recreation Plan (SE Group)
 - » Purpose: identify opportunities for additional activities, programs, and facilities
 - » Scope: near-term, identified locations for suggested activities
 - » Following this: a committee was formed to coordinate continued investment in recreational attractions; the Event Center was constructed; three recommended activities were implemented (climbing wall, gravity bike trails, children's play area); subsequent planning was commissioned in 2017 to expand upon near- and long-term potential for the Giants Ridge core area

- 2010 Master Plan
 - » Purpose: real estate development to increase visitation
 - » Scope: envisioned a mixed-use, pedestrian village
 - » Following this: an 1,818-acre PUD was formed to encompass recreation area; additional planning was conducted in 2014 to break down the 2010 Master Plan into incremental, actionable solutions that acknowledge the circumstantial challenges Giants Ridge faces with respect to its limited marketplace

These three plans are the most recent and relevant roadmaps for Giants Ridge. The 2023 Master Plan Update builds upon them and incorporates the recent planning initiatives that will best serve Giants Ridge today.

1.3 GOALS

The 2023 Master Plan Update responds to two goals:

1) INCORPORATE RECENT PLANNING INITIATIVES

Since the 2017 Master Plan was completed, new capital improvement projects have been proposed and previously discussed capital improvement projects have been updated:

- Recreation Center (funded December 2022)
- Snowmaking Waterline (tentative funding 2023)
- Legend Maintenance & Irrigation
- Legend Nordic/Golf Plaza Area
- Lift Upgrade and Potential Terrain Expansion (details TBD)
- Campground

Varying degrees of planning, design, and analysis have been completed for these projects. Supplementary information is included as a digital appendix to this 2023 Master Plan Update.

2) UPDATE THE MASTER PLAN CONCEPT

The 2023 Master Plan Update also explores how additional activities and amenities may be added to the Giants Ridge base area to improve the destination resort experience, including:

Activities

- Summer Tubing
- Bike Pump Track
- Bike Wash/Self-Serve Bike Maintenance Area
- Putting Green Relocation/Expansion
- Golf Simulator
- Splash Pad
- Lawn Games
- Pickleball
- Skating Rink
- Waterfront Activities

Venues

- Large Event Venue
- Small Event Venue

Site Improvements

- Shade Structures for Patios
- Additional Wood Fire Pits and Seating Areas
- Landscaping and Pathways

For the 2023 Master Plan Update, general locations have been identified for each element. Additional design development for these base area improvement projects is required prior to their implementation.





2.



GIANTS RIDGE RECREATION AREA | CORE AREA MASTER PLAN
 2017 CONCEPT PLAN

2017 Core Area Master Plan: Program Summary

ACTIVITIES	
Kids jumbo games	
Fun zone	
Summer tubing	
Base area zipline	
Canopy tour	
Aerial adventure course	
Beach	
Dock	
Picnic area	
New putting green	
Relocated #1 Tee	
Relocated #10 Tee	
New putting course	

TRAILS	
Mountain biking	30.5 miles
Trail with boardwalk	0.25 mile

LANDSCAPING	
Base area	Planting, hardscape, banners, site furniture

STRUCTURES	
Lakefront pavilion	3,000 sf
Mountain-top pavilion	2,000 sf
Relocated golf maintenance facility	11,000 sf
Nordic Center/Golf Clubhouse	7,000 sf
Lodge-pool upgrade/expansion	5,000 sf (double existing size)

2017 Core Area Master Plan: Accommodations Summary

ACCOMMODATIONS						
UNIT TYPE	Description	# of units	Bedrooms per unit	Total bedrooms	Average number of guests per bedroom	Total pillows
Lakefront cabins/yurts	10 cabins (4 pillows/cabin)	10	1	10	2	20
On-mountain cabins/yurt	10 cabins (4 pillows/cabin)	10	1	10	2	20
Future accommodations	80 hotel rooms (450 sf)	80	1	80	2	160
Residence Club development	56 units (4 pillows)	56	2	112	2	224
Clubhouse lodging	80 hotel rooms (450 sf)	80	1	80	2	160
Group lodging	80 rooms (350 sf)	80	1	80	2	160
TOTAL		298		374		744



2.2 2023 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Building upon the 2017 Core Area Master Plan, the 2023 Master Plan Update highlights high-priority capital improvement projects and expands upon base area improvement recommendations. The plan continues to embody the character and scale of the recreation area, enhance its natural features, and build upon the existing facilities of Giants Ridge.

Key concepts of the plan include:

- Updating aging resort infrastructure;
- Building new indoor facilities that provide “weather-proof” resort recreation;
- Improving and expanding upon existing outdoor gathering spaces; and
- Adding activities, venues, and site improvements that will improve both the summer and the winter destination resort experiences.



CORE COMPONENTS

INDICATED BY RED TEXT, AS SHOWN BELOW

**2023 MASTER PLAN UPDATE
PLANNED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT**

BASE AREA IMPROVEMENTS

TO BE LOCATED WITHIN THE RED "BASE AREA" BOX

SUMMER TUBING
BIKE PUMP TRACK
BIKE WASH & MAINTENANCE
PUTTING GREEN
GOLF SIMULATOR
SPLASH PAD AT PLAYGROUND
LAWN GAMES
SKATING RINK
PICKLEBALL
LARGE EVENT VENUE
SMALL EVENT VENUE
FIRE PITS & SEATING
SHADE FOR PATIO
LANDSCAPING & PATHWAYS

2.3 CORE COMPONENTS

A. RECREATION CENTER



The Recreation Center is a community space that would serve local residents, Giants Ridge homeowners, and guests of the recreation area. This facility was originally recommended in the 2005 Master Plan, and its potential to benefit Giants Ridge has become increasingly evident since.

In December of 2022, IRRR approved the Recreation Center's program for \$8,254,581. As outlined in the 12/21/22 IRRR Meeting Packet, these funds will be used to design and construct an indoor facility that will help support the overall recreational experiences at Giants Ridge. Benefits of the proposed center include:

- » Adds indoor spaces and healthy indoor activities for local residents, tourists, children and families.
- » Provides an indoor recreational experience that is currently missing at the facility.
- » Offers indoor facilities and recreation to guests during inclement weather conditions such as rain, below freezing temperatures, and storms.
- » Creates additional programming, packaging, and revenue opportunities.

- » Retains existing and attracts new customers.
- » Supports regional economic impact of Giants Ridge.
- » Attracts additional private sector development.

PROGRAM

The building will include approximately 12,000 square feet of indoor recreation space:

Indoor Recreation Spaces

1. Swimming Pool
 - » Multi use pool for lap swimming, aquatic fitness, and related structured offerings
 - » Kids and young adult splash and recreation pool with small water slide and related amenities
 - » Hot tub
 - » Barrel sauna/hot tub (Nordic spa experience)
2. Fitness Center
 - » Adaptable multi-use area/sports court
 - » Non-stationary exercise equipment
 - » Multi-use area for yoga and floor offerings
 - » Small multi-use court for volleyball and related activities requiring high ceilings, such as pickleball
 - » Fitness on demand studio space
3. Game Room
4. Party Room for special event

Outdoor Park and Connections

1. Walking and bike trail to connect to existing trails, lodging, recreation, and housing
2. Access to lake for beach and yurts
3. Wilderness hiking trail
4. Picnic tables, grilles, outdoor fire pits
5. Dog park

LOCATION

The Recreation Center will be constructed at the northeast corner of Wynne Creek Drive—a central site that does not interfere with ski operations. The area is presently used for overflow ski parking and maintenance/construction staging.

In the 2017 Core Area Master Plan, this site was designated for future accommodations. While lodging would still be a valuable addition to the area, the 2023 Master Plan Update recognizes the importance of multi-season weather-proofing for Giants Ridge, as well as the centrality of this site within the broader recreation area. This building will meet these weather-proofing objectives by including indoor space for community-oriented activities and events.

Though parking will be provided for guests who wish to arrive via vehicle, trails are envisioned to connect the Recreation Center to the Giants Ridge base area and each of its surrounding residential developments. These trails may be used by Recreation Center patrons or by passers-by; for both groups, the Recreation Center will serve as a central node in the trail network and the broader recreation area.

TIMING

RECREATION CENTER PROJECTED TIMELINE

PHASE	BEGIN	COMPLETE
[Predesign]	October 2023	Mid-January 2024
[Schematic Design]	Mid-January 2024	Mid-February 2024
[Design Development]	Mid-February 2024	Mid-March 2024
[Construction Documentation]	Mid-March 2024	Mid-May 2024
[Bidding]	Mid-May 2024	Mid-June 2024
[Construction]	September 2024	January 2025
[Commissioning]	February 2025	February 2025

ESTIMATED COSTS

Expenses that were estimated on 12/12/22 include design, construction, contingency, and inflation: \$8,254,581. In December of 2022, the IRRR approved funding for the program. This sum includes the site work as well as construction for a parking lot, landscaping, and walking paths to the facility.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- » “Giants Ridge Rec Building_Budget 12.12.22_Final” PDF
- » “Giants Ridge Rec Center Resolution 23-018” PDF
- » “Giants Ridge Recreation Center Pre Design 10.12.2022” PDF

B. LEGEND MAINTENANCE BUILDING



The new maintenance facility for the Legend Golf Course will improve operational efficiency and the quality of working conditions for The Legend's maintenance team. It will also free the portion of the base area that is currently occupied by The Legend's maintenance facilities for public-facing uses.

PROGRAM

Design development plans for the new facility include the following:

- » Offices – 1,856 SF
- » Service/Maintenance Bay – 2,123 SF
- » Storage – 6,011 SF

LOCATION

The new maintenance facility will be located behind the tee boxes on Hole 11 of the Legend Golf Course—the same location for the facility that was recommended in the 2017 Core Area Master Plan. This location is ideal because it is adjacent to the Legend Golf Course and proximal to Giants Ridge Road.

The existing maintenance facility is located near the heart of the Giants Ridge base area. Removing this structure will free the space it currently occupies to be used for a Legend Nordic/Golf Center, which will add to the overall vibrancy of the Giants Ridge base area.

TIMING

Projected for 2026/2027.

ESTIMATED COSTS

A cost estimate was prepared on 12/01/20 that amounts to \$2,699,950. Projected costs will likely change due to this unique inflationary environment.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- » “GiantsRidgeMaintenanceFacility_2020_11_30_DD” PDF
- » “Legend Maintenance Building - Loeffler DD Cost Estimate 12.01.2020” PDF

C. LEGEND IRRIGATION SYSTEM



The irrigation system for the Legend Golf Course is nearing the end of its useful life. Prolonging its operation has become cumbersome and costly, with reliability issues becoming increasingly frequent. Replacement parts are difficult to obtain, and some crucial upgrade components are unavailable. Replacing the irrigation system will improve the quality of the Legend Golf Course turf and reduce the operational difficulties associated with maintaining the current system.

LOCATION

The new irrigation system will primarily occupy the location of the existing system, with a few changes to improve the efficiency of the system, the cost effectiveness of the operation, and the quality of the golf turf. Minor changes will include more sprinkler heads and different layouts to accommodate improvements to drainage and other golf infrastructure components. Major upgrades will include an upgraded power and pump station, as well as a potential new irrigation lake.

TIMING

Projected for 2026/2027.

ESTIMATED COSTS

In May of 2022, all-in costs were estimated at \$5,000,000. This includes the upgraded power and pump station, a main line (HDPE in rocky conditions), and a 12,000-sprinkler system.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- » “Golf Course - GRMP-LEGEND SUBMITTED DESIGN REPORT 2020 04 09 08” PDF

D. NORDIC CENTER/GOLF CLUBHOUSE



Nordic skiing and golf are integral to the Giants Ridge experience. The Legend Golf Course has an award-winning reputation, and the local Nordic terrain attracts races and special events. As recommended in the 2017 Core Area Master Plan, dedicated indoor space for both functions should be provided: it is important that the support facilities for these activities reflect the premium caliber of the golf/Nordic experiences at Giants Ridge!

Despite having extensive, high-quality Nordic trails, Giants Ridge has not been able to leverage Nordic skiing as a driver for visitation. Improving the Nordic facility by providing designated guest service space in a Nordic Center that is separated from the alpine facility will make this aspect of the Giants Ridge winter experience more attractive and saleable.

Similarly, the quality of the current golf shop is not on par with the quality of the award-winning Legend Golf Course. Providing a high quality Golf Clubhouse with an upscale outdoor gathering space will elevate the Legend Golf Course experience and increase the revenue it generates.

PROGRAM

Schematic design plans for the new facility include the following:

Indoor Program

- » 2,000 sf dedicated golf space, including golf simulators
- » 2,000 sf dedicated Nordic space
- » 4,000 sf of “function” space
- » 2,000 sf of back-of-house space

Outdoor Program

- » Large outdoor gathering space—the “Nordic/Golf Plaza”
- » Expansion of the existing putting green
- » New putting green
- » New entry drive
- » New landscaping, public walks, and trails

LOCATION

The proposed Nordic Center/Golf Clubhouse will occupy the area of the existing Legend Golf Course maintenance facility. This maintenance facility is in a prominent location in the Giants Ridge base area, and it is recommended to be moved to a less visible/public area that is still convenient for servicing golf infrastructure. Once the maintenance facility moves, this prime real estate will become available to serve Nordic and golf patrons.

A Nordic Center/Golf Clubhouse in this location will anchor the Giants Ridge base area, expand indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, and create another dynamic outdoor space for gathering and special events. It will add to the overall vibrancy of the Giants Ridge base area and create a smoother interface between the existing putting green, the 1st and 10th golf hole tees, and the northern base area parking lot.

TIMING

Projected for 2027.

ESTIMATED COSTS

A cost estimate was prepared on 3/29/18 that amounts to \$6,089,000. Projected costs will likely change due to this unique inflationary environment.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- » “Legend Golf GR - EXEC SUMMARY DRAFT - 2020 04 30”
- » “Nordic - Golf GR Design Deck 11.16.2018” PDF
- » “Nordic - Golf Predesign” PDF

E. SNOWMAKING WATERLINE



Upgrades to the Giants Ridge snowmaking system are designed to provide a more consistent snow surface, cover ski terrain faster so trails may open sooner, and save operating labor and power. These upgrades were recommended in the 2017 Core Area Master Plan and have increased in urgency since.

Presently, the snowmaking system at Giants Ridge covers 95 acres of terrain and operates an average of 700 hours per season at a flowrate of 1,430 GPM. With the proposed upgrades, the Giants Ridge snowmaking system could cover the same 95 acres of trails by operating an average of 385 hours per season at an average flowrate of 2,600 GPM. These upgrades would reduce the snowmaking system's average operating hours by 45% and increase the system's average flowrate by 80%.

LOCATION

Upgrades cover all ski trails at Giants Ridge, as well as the base area and the Nordic stadium. They are grouped into "Priority 1" and "Priority 2" upgrades.

TIMING

Projected for 2024.

ESTIMATED COSTS

In early 2023, \$16,614,000 was recommended for the 2023 Governor's Capital Budget to upgrade, construct, and support new infrastructure for the snowmaking system at Giants Ridge.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- » "Waterline Iron Range Resources 2023" PDF
- » "Giants Ridge Waterline IRRR Capital Request - Legislative Presentation 2023" PPT

F. LIFT UPGRADE AND POTENTIAL TERRAIN EXPANSION

Once chairlifts reach a certain age, their maintenance becomes difficult and expensive due to frequent mechanical issues and expensive replacement parts. Thus, the replacement of the Giants Ridge's older lifts is recommended. When considering a lift's replacement, capacity upgrades and alternative alignments should be evaluated. Potential terrain expansions and reconfigurations should also be explored to improve circulation and the overall guest experience.

G. CAMPGROUND

Opportunities to develop a campground at Giants Ridge should be evaluated. Such an asset would expand the recreation area's amenities, and it may also increase its visitation and revenue. To preserve valuable real estate, the campground would be located outside of the Giants Ridge core area. Partnerships with the City of Biwabik or another third-party entity should be explored.

2.4 BASE AREA IMPROVEMENTS

For the 2023 Master Plan Update, Giants Ridge has identified the following activities and amenities to be included in and around its base area. Some activities were included in the 2017 Core Area Master Plan, and others have emerged as the base area has evolved. These additions were grouped into three categories: 1) activities, 2) venues, and 3) site improvements.

ACTIVITIES

- Summer Tubing
- Bike Pump Track
- Bike Wash/Self-Serve Bike Maintenance Area
- Putting Green Relocation/Expansion
- Golf Simulator
- Splash Pad
- Lawn Games
- Pickleball
- Skating Rink

VENUES

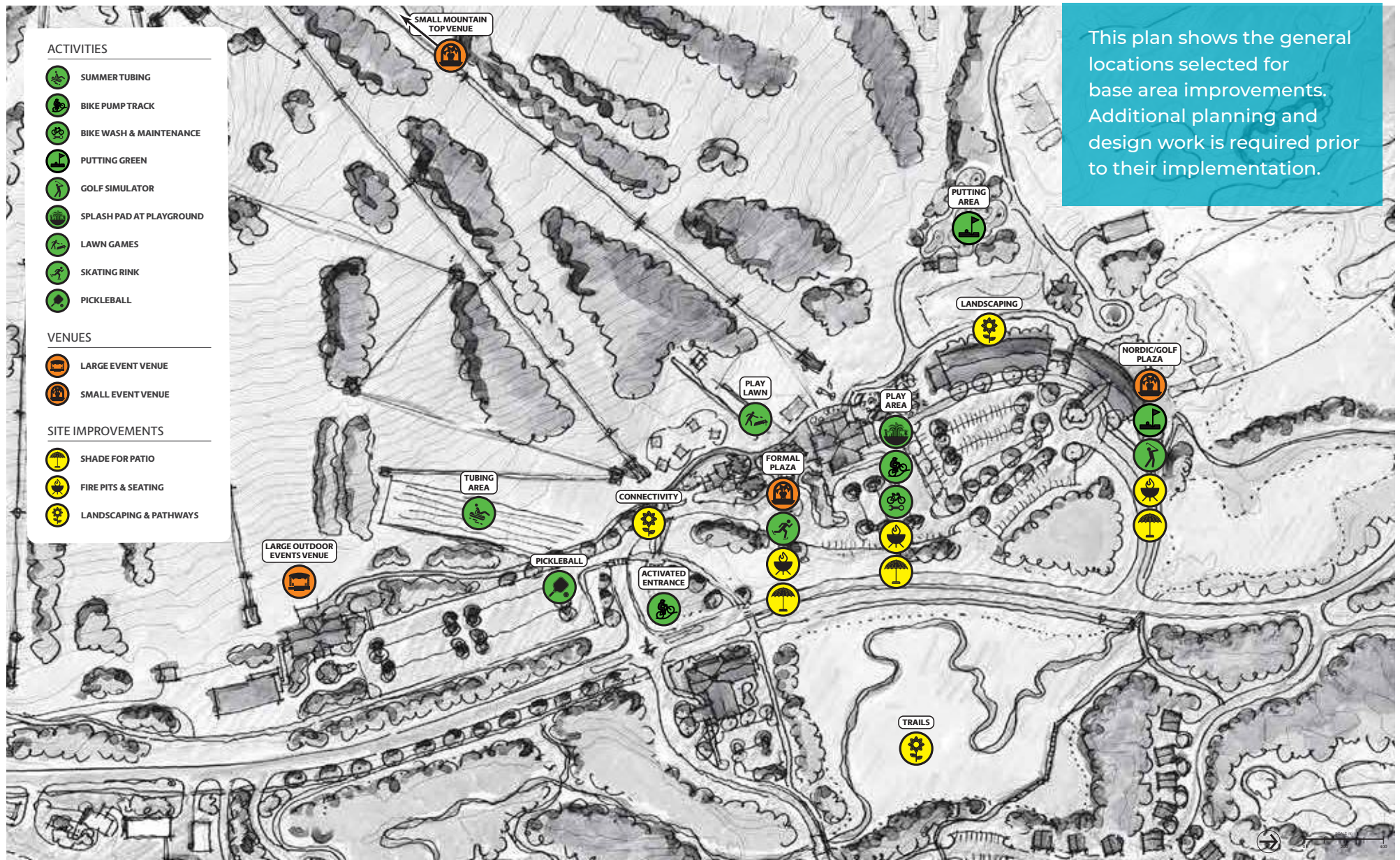
- Large Event Venue
- Small Event Venue

SITE IMPROVEMENTS

- Shade Structures for Patios
- Additional Wood Fire Pits and Seating Areas
- Landscaping and Pathways

These proposed base area improvements consider both customer and operator experience. Some are intended to drive visitation, whereas others aim to increase the resort's overall value proposition. These "magnet" attractions that drive visitation tend to be unique and cost money, often catalyzing a guest's visit to the recreation area. The "supplementary" offerings are less novel and often free, but they elevate the overall guest experience, lengthen the average guest's stay, and increase the odds that a visitor will participate in paid activities.

The blend of proposed improvements cater to guests of varying ages, abilities, skill levels, and desired experiences. Though they have no formal implementation plan at present, the order and/or grouping of their execution may affect their success. All proposed improvements require some degree of guest services, which may include restrooms, food & beverages, ticketing space, and other facilities.



GIANTS RIDGE RECREATION AREA | CORE AREA MASTER PLAN
 2023 MASTER PLAN UPDATE | BASE AREA IMPROVEMENTS



GIANTS RIDGE RECREATION AREA | CORE AREA MASTER PLAN
2023 MASTER PLAN UPDATE | BASE AREA IMPROVEMENTS

2.4.1 ACTIVITIES

The recommended activities are anticipated to enliven the base area, give guests more to do during their visit, and increase the appeal of Giants Ridge as a destination. They will draw additional guests to the recreation area year-round, though most will be used primarily during the summer and early fall.

SUMMER TUBING

DESCRIPTION

Summer tubing functions similarly to winter tubing but occurs on a synthetic surface that remains functional throughout varying weather conditions. Participants ride a conveyor to the top of the tubing hill, then travel back down in an inflatable tube. Necessary infrastructure includes the synthetic surface and a conveyor. Necessary equipment includes special summer tubes. Excluding any ticketing staff, a minimum of two employees are required to operate the infrastructure. Sessions are typically sold in timed increments, ranging from 30 minutes to two hours. Since summer tubing infrastructure can be removable, it is common practice for ski areas to hold their winter and summer tubing in the same area.

LOCATION

At Giants Ridge, summer tubing is recommended in the existing winter tubing area. It would elevate the appeal of Giants Ridge as a summer destination and generate revenue for the resort, since guests would pay to participate.



BIKE PUMP TRACK

DESCRIPTION

A pump track is a continuous bicycle loop with dirt berms and rollers. Riders aim to navigate the track without pedaling by gaining momentum from an up-and-down pumping motion. This experience can be fun for riders of any skill level.

Pump tracks are ideal practice grounds for mountain biking, and they also provide an effective workout for other sports, such as skiing and snowboarding. Mountain bikes, BMX bikes and other types of bicycles can be used on a pump track for training, especially to increase bike handling skills for younger and beginner riders. Pump tracks may be oriented toward adults or young children on “strider” bikes.

Pump tracks can be operated during the summer, spring, and fall, as long as trails are relatively dry. They may be constructed out of portable elements instead of dirt, if soil conditions are uncooperative. Typically, full-sized pump tracks can host between 75 to 100 people per day. Operators may charge riders on a pay-per-use or a season pass basis; however, at ski areas, pump tracks are usually a free “value-add” to the downhill mountain biking experience.

LOCATION

Since pump tracks are both animated and contained, a pump track is recommended at the northwest corner of the entrance to the Giants Ridge base area. This lively attraction will signal to visitors and passers-by that fun happens at Giants Ridge! A “strider” pump track is recommended near the existing playground, where parents may watch their young riders from the comfort of nearby patio seating.



BIKE WASH/SELF-SERVE BIKE MAINTENANCE AREA

DESCRIPTION

Bike wash stations help users clean their dirty bikes—a process that is important for maintaining a bike's condition and prolonging its lifespan. Some riders clean their bikes after each ride, and others are prompted to so do after riding wet, muddy trails. The “wash” part of a bike wash station may consist of a regular hose or a power hose.

Many bike wash stations also have basic bike maintenance tools. These are typically secured to the station with cables. Tools may include brushes, screwdrivers, Allen wrenches, box wrenches, tire levers, and other instruments.

Bike wash stations are typically free for users, complementing the nearby pump track and pay-to-play lift-served mountain biking. They increase the recreation area's value proposition to mountain bikers, and in doing so, they increase the appeal of Giants Ridge as a mountain biking destination.

LOCATION

The bike wash/self-serve bike maintenance area at Giants Ridge may be located between the Events Center and the Lodge. A splash pad is also recommended for this area; co-locating the two activities that require outdoor plumbing will create cost savings.



PUTTING GREEN RELOCATION/EXPANSION

DESCRIPTION

Putting greens are a valued tool for golfers who want to practice their short strokes. Individuals and groups who don't have the time or energy for a full game of golf may enjoy this activity. Putting greens may be free or cost money for guests who partake; their greater purpose is to develop new golfers and add to the value proposition of the primary golf courses at Giants Ridge.

LOCATION

The existing putting green at Giants Ridge is located north of the existing golf shop and The Legend's maintenance building. It will be expanded to create another high-quality golf activity for the property, with the potential to host events and keep golfers engaged before and after their rounds. This before and after-golf lingering is anticipated to generate food and beverage sales for the new Golf Clubhouse. Having more space here will also create a better short game area for The Legend, which has been lacking such an amenity since it opened.

The new putting green at the 1st and 10th tees will become the primary warm-up/practice area for golfers before starting a round. The views overlooking the 1st and 10th holes will make it a natural gathering point for groups before play. Presently, this area is underutilized.



GOLF SIMULATOR

DESCRIPTION

Whereas putting greens allow golfers to practice their short strokes, golf simulators allow players to practice entire holes. Individuals and groups who don't have the time or energy for a full golf game may enjoy this activity. Since a maximum of four players can use a simulator at once, multiple units are recommended. Space for spectators should also be provided since this is a popular activity to watch.

Though Giants Ridge plans to charge for use of these simulators, their primary purpose will be to elevate the Legend Golf Course value proposition and drive food & beverage sales. Unlike the full golf course or the outdoor putting greens, the simulators may be used in summer or winter.

LOCATION

Golf simulators are recommended for the new Nordic Center/ Golf Clubhouse. Since this building will contain other golf resources and a potential venue for food & beverages, it is well-suited to this activity.



SPLASH PAD

DESCRIPTION

Splash pads are designed for water play and are often located in public parks. Like swimming pools, they have all the benefits of getting wet that kids and parents appreciate on a hot day. Unlike swimming pools, they have no standing water, which significantly reduces their capital and operational costs.

Typically, ground nozzles spray water upward from the splash pad's surface, which is textured in non-slip concrete or crumb rubber. The water sprayed is either freshwater or other water treated to swimming pool standards. Splash pads often have special features designed for play, such as arched or mushroom-shaped showers. Some have interactive features, such as motion sensors or nozzles that allow users to spray others.

LOCATION

A splash pad is recommended to be built next to the existing playground at Giants Ridge. The existing playground is popular with young families, and this addition will solidify this area as the “kid zone”. Co-locating this activity with the bike wash station will consolidate outdoor plumbing, resulting in cost savings.



LAWN GAMES

DESCRIPTION

Lawn games come in all shapes and sizes. Popular examples include big checkers, chess, corn hole, and Jenga. These games are highly flexible and can typically be set up and put away in a matter of minutes. Because they are relatively low-cost, they can be easily upgraded and/or retired. Space-wise, they require a venue for storage (can be outdoor or indoor, depending on the equipment) and a grassy lawn for outdoor play.

As a “supplementary” offering to the Giants Ridge summer/early fall experience, these games would be free to visitors. Their purpose is to elevate the overall guest experience, lengthen the average guest’s stay, and increase the odds that guests purchase food & beverages or participate in paid activities. An ideal way for visitors between activities to “pass the time,” these activities would activate the base area and entertain kids while parents relax. They can also be used for family fun, either during a casual summer day at Giants Ridge or during a formal event, such as a wedding.

LOCATION

The recommended area for lawn games at Giants Ridge is due west of the Event Center. In the winter, this area is part of the “snowfront”; in the summer, it is a large, gently sloping lawn that is currently underutilized. This area is close to two action hubs—the “Formal Plaza” and the “Play Area”—creating convenient adjacencies with food & beverages.



PICKLEBALL

DESCRIPTION

In recent years, pickleball has been heralded as the fastest growing sport in America. In addition to providing a good workout for participants, it is easy to learn, social, and relatively low-impact. Using a paddle, players hit a whiffle ball back and forth on a badminton-sized court over a tennis-style net. Games are played in doubles or singles and may take place on indoor or outdoor courts. Revenue generation potential exists with paddle/ball rentals and ancillary food & beverages.

LOCATION

At Giants Ridge, seasonal pickleball courts are recommended in the northern end of the southern parking lot (which is adjacent to the ski maintenance building). This area is spacious and secluded, so pickleball games won't disrupt activities taking place in the main base area during the spring, summer, and fall. This parking lot location is also advantageous because the ground is cleared and level, which are necessary conditions for court set-up. Players would have convenient parking options here.



SKATING RINK

DESCRIPTION

Ice skating provides a compelling alternative to downhill and Nordic skiing that is fun for the whole family. Systems exist that make it easy to transform summer patios and/or lawns into winter ice rinks with relatively little visual disturbance and operational complexity. Equipment needs include a small Zamboni and gear for rent/play. Spatial needs include an enclosed area to store the gear and the ice maintenance equipment. Revenue generation potential exists with ticketing, skate rentals, and ancillary food & beverages.

LOCATION

A skating rink is recommended for the Formal Plaza in the winter. This area conveniently abuts indoor spaces that could be used for ticketing and/or skate rental, as well as a food and beverage operations—hot chocolate pairs well with this activity! Co-locating this activity with fire pits and seating areas will enhance the rink's charm and add animation to the base area after the ski day ends.





GIANTS RIDGE RECREATION AREA | CORE AREA MASTER PLAN
2023 MASTER PLAN UPDATE | BASE AREA IMPROVEMENTS

SE GROUP
FEBRUARY 2023

2.4.2 VENUES

Special events benefit Giants Ridge by driving destination visits. In addition to generating revenue, they expose guests who otherwise wouldn't visit the area to the unique scenery, amenities, and activities offered at Giants Ridge. Recommended venues have the capacity to host both large events and intimate gatherings. Giants Ridge is presently experiencing demand for these spaces, so the proposed upgrades and additional venues are anticipated to be well-used. Food trucks may be present at events of any scale.



LARGE EVENT VENUE

DESCRIPTION

Large event venues for up to 2,500 attendees may host concerts, festivals, and more throughout the summer and early fall. Typically, seating occurs on the grass; a gentle slope toward the stage can be helpful for views and acoustics. The stage and event staging area are usually at the bottom of the gentle slope, adjacent to base area infrastructure. Temporary structures and vehicles for food & beverages, restrooms, etc. are often confined to a large, flat area between the venue and a parking lot, or even in the parking lot, if ample parking space is available.

LOCATION

At Giants Ridge, the lawn directly west of the ski area maintenance building is ideal for large events, such as outdoor music and mountain bike festivals. This area is informal, unbounded, and far from existing base area activities. It is also adjacent to the southern skier parking lot, which currently receives little use during the non-winter months.



SMALL EVENT VENUE

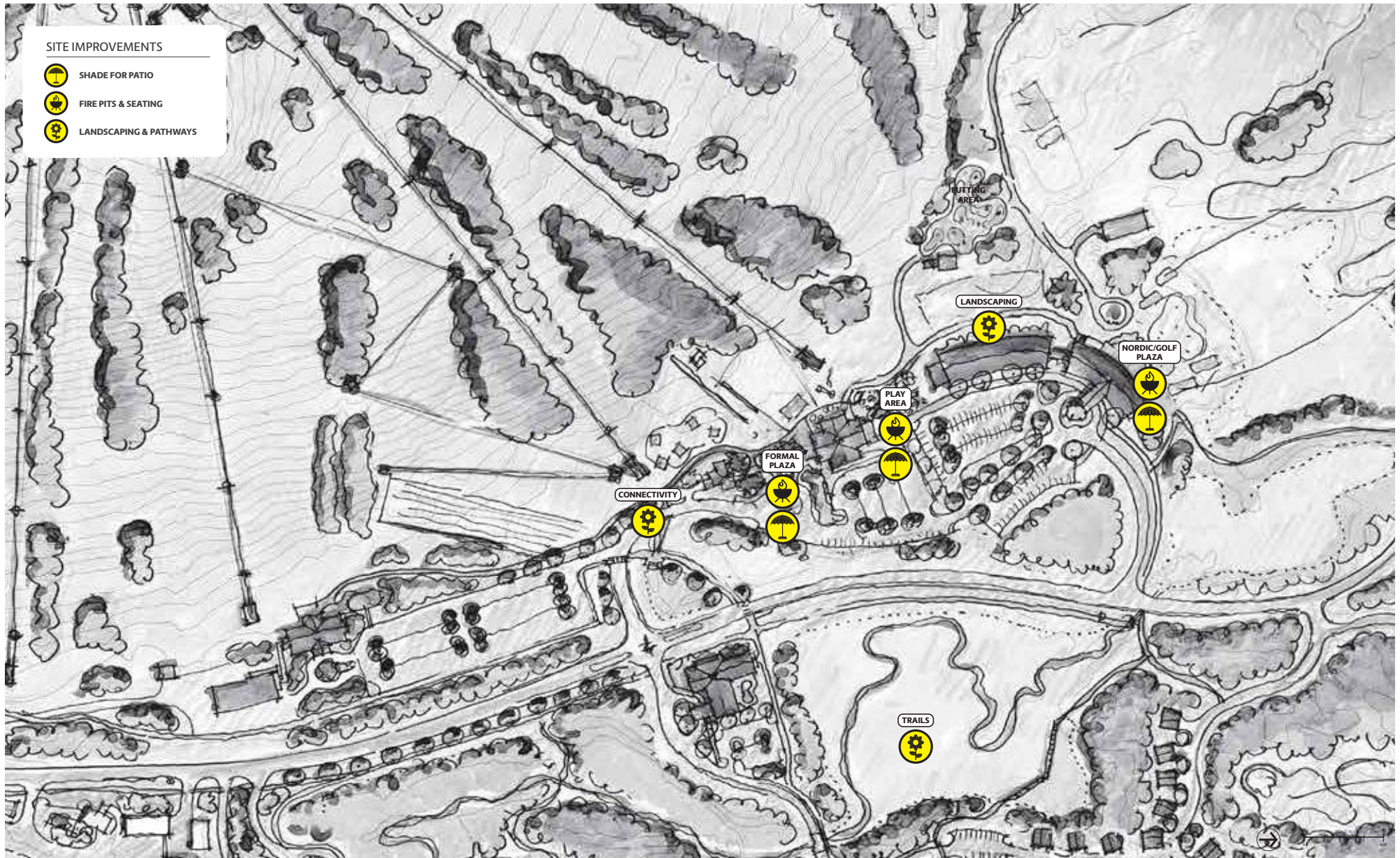
DESCRIPTION

Venues for smaller events may host weddings, conferences, retreats, and similar gatherings at Giants Ridge. Presently, the resort has a healthy wedding business that has the potential to expand. Updating the resort's small venues would improve its standing in the local wedding venue market, which would likely grow the wedding business at Giants Ridge and increase its appeal for other small events. Small event venues and their support spaces should be designed to accommodate up to 350 guests.

LOCATION

The Formal Plaza, South Chalet, and Events Center are currently used for weddings, as well as the Wacootah clubhouse at The Quarry Golf Course. Improvements to the wedding spaces in and adjacent to the Formal Plaza are recommended, and additional venues on the mountain top and at the Nordic/Golf Plaza should be considered, once the Nordic Center/Golf Clubhouse is complete. Developing these spaces as wedding venues will position them well to host a variety of small events, and upgrading their adjacent outdoor plazas will elevate the quality of any event hosted in the summer or early fall.





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2.4.3 SITE IMPROVEMENTS

Site improvements are recommended throughout the Giants Ridge base area, near the planned Recreation Center, and in its adjacent wetlands. These elements will improve the recreation area experience, increasing its appeal and overall value proposition to guests.

SHADE STRUCTURES FOR PATIOS

Summer shade structures are recommended to increase the appeal of lingering in the three base area gathering spaces. Shade is most recommended for areas that receive afternoon sun during the summer.



ADDITIONAL WOOD FIRE PITS AND SEATING AREAS

Additional fire pits and seating areas are recommended for the three base area gathering spaces: the Formal Plaza, the Play Area, and the Nordic/Golf Plaza. These elements will increase the appeal of lingering in the base area and add to the broader Giants Ridge experience. Specific benefits to each area include:

Formal Plaza

- » Provide a great outdoor space to elevate the experience of an indoor event, such as a wedding
- » Create a pleasant ambiance to complement regular activities, such as ice skating

Play Plaza

- » Encourage guests to hang around the Burnt Onion
- » Create more comfortable areas for parents to watch their children on the playground, splash pad, strider pump track, etc.

Nordic/Golf Plaza

- » Compliment the nearby putting greens, elevating the Legend Golf Course experience
- » Host events, especially those of the “sip & putt” variety

Fire pits are recommended for the southern end of each base area gathering space to provide warmth where shade from adjacent buildings is likely to deter visitors during cooler months. Seating may be flexible and should be arranged to provide views of activities (some of which require parental supervision) and scenery.



LANDSCAPING AND PATHWAYS

As noted in the 2017 Core Area Master Plan, the Giants Ridge base area would benefit from additional landscaping to improve the human scale environment. In all four of its implementation phases, the 2017 plan recommended planting, hardscape, banners, and site furniture to enliven the Giants Ridge base area. The initial implementation phases included additional pathway development to increase mobility throughout the core area. The 2023 Master Plan Update recommends these same improvements.

Specific pathways recommendations include creating a trail network through the wetlands north of the planned Recreation Center and improving pedestrian pathways near the entrance to Giants Ridge. Specific recommendations for landscaping include the area adjacent to the Lodge, though landscaping will increase the appeal of any space in which visitors may gather.





3.



SUMMARY

The 2023 Master Plan Update builds upon previous planning and incorporates new plans that will serve Giants Ridge for years to come. Its recommendations aim to:

- Update aging resort infrastructure;
- Build new indoor facilities to provide weather-proof resort recreation;
- Improve and expand existing outdoor gathering spaces; and
- Add activities, venues, and site improvements that will improve both the summer and the winter destination resort experiences.

The recommendations in this plan continue to embody the character and scale of the recreation area, enhance its surrounding natural features, and build upon the existing Giants Ridge facilities to continue the economic impact to the region.

3.1 NEXT STEPS

As funding and community support are secured, an implantation plan should be created to guide these capital improvements of large and small scale. Recommendations that are not implemented in the coming years should be reevaluated in future planning as infrastructure needs evolve, economic circumstances change, and visitor expectations shift the resort's priorities. All recommendations require additional planning and design prior to their implementation.

3.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

On November 18th, 2022, SE Group engaged two groups virtually to provide input on the 2023 Master Plan Update. For both sessions, SE Group reviewed the 2017 Core Area Master Plan, presented the status of the 2023 Master Plan Update, and solicited input from participants. In the first session, the Giants Ridge Operations Team recommended locations for each base area improvement. In the second session, a group of committed Giants Ridge Stakeholders reviewed the recommended base area improvement locations and provided direction for the broader planning process. Participants in each session were as follows:

GIANTS RIDGE OPERATIONS TEAM

Giants Ridge

- Fred Seymour
- Benji Neff
- Kelly Hunter
- Steve Rahkola
- Jeannine Mogan
- John Kendall
- Krysta Miller

IRRR

- Linda Johnson

DSGW Architects

- John Gerzina
- Katherine Gerzina

Spruce Creek Partners

- Dave Despres

GIANTS RIDGE STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders

- Doug Gregor, City of Aurora Mayor
- Jim Weikum, City of Biwabik Mayor
- Jeff Jacobson, City of Biwabik Administrator
- Jim Plummer, Economic Development Coordinator
- Kurt Bergquist, The Lodge at Giants Ridge
- Desiree Bergquist, The Lodge at Giants Ridge
- Dee Eisenach, Villas
- Shawn Callahan, Biwabik Resident and Owner/Operator of Green Gate Guest Houses
- Marjory Wood, Biwabik Resident and Woodlands Homeowners Association
- Dave Richter, Villas Unit Owner and Giants Ridge Masters Association
- Kevin Riess, Biwabik Resident and Giants Ridge Masters Association

IRRR

- Linda Johnson
- Sean Peyla

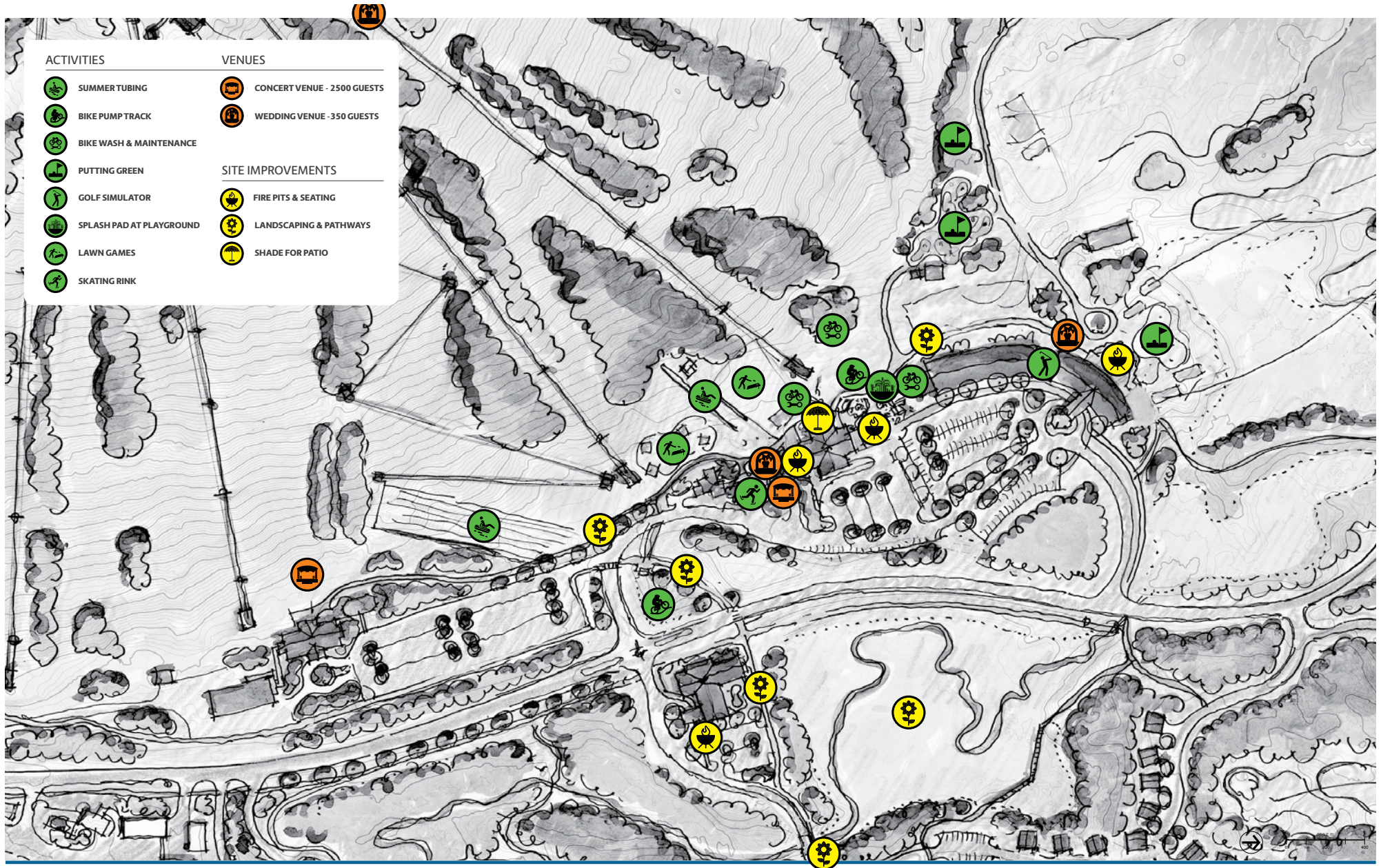
Giants Ridge

- Fred Seymour

DSGW Architects

- John Gerzina
- Katherine Gerzina

This plan shows the locations selected for base area improvements. Following the workshops, new versions of the plan were created to increase its readability. The intended locations of the icons have not been changed. Pickleball was added after the workshops.



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