

Iowa Cabins Task Force

The Cabins Book

Getting More People into More Parks More Often

First Edition: 2019

Iowa Parks Foundation
5905 Harwood Drive
Des Moines, Iowa 50312

First Edition

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Dedication

In recognition of bold, risk-taking, and forward-looking careers dedicated to advancing Iowa parks, public recreation, and the health and happiness of our families, this edition of *The Cabins Book* is warmly dedicated to:

Tom Hazelton

A leader who, over a decades-long public service career, planned, funded and executed a statewide county park information and web-based system to make county public recreation assets available to all Iowans.

Brian Lammers, Matt Cosgrove, and Mike Brandrup

Leaders who, over the span of several public service careers and decades, planned, funded and executed a county cabin system as a model for existing and potential public recreation cabin operations across Iowa.

Dave Heiar, Nic Hockenberry, and Mark Ackelson

Leaders who, over 5-6 years, planned, funded and executed a regional multi-park system approach to public recreation as a model for existing and potential regions across Iowa.

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Introduction

Offering diverse places to enjoy our outdoor recreational assets and nature is critical for our families and individual well-being. It is also increasingly critical to enhancing our economic attractiveness. These and other “why cabins” topics are addressed in more detail in Chapter III. The members of the Iowa Cabins Task Force believe there is an opportunity for Iowans to dramatically increase the quantity and quality of cabin experiences in our parks, thereby creating millions of hours of new family time and developing more economically sustainable park systems.

The purpose of this book is to inform and assist park managers and other local public recreation decision-makers (as well as providing useful feedback to cabin designers, contractors and other vendors). We anticipate use by state and county staff, elected officials, civic and business leaders, citizen groups, various funders, and park promoters with little or no experience providing full-service cabins. In particular, this book provides two key steps. First, it develops an investigative and analytical framework to help determine whether the effort is likely to succeed. Second, it outlines the steps needed to develop a year-round cabin project. We use forms and checklists throughout to offer clarity to decision-makers and to point out where there might still be gaps in the investigation or analysis used to consider an investment in cabins.

The number of subjects related to cabin design and construction are legion. Starting with a more focused, less detailed list may seem more manageable. If you are looking for a quick guide, we recommend reviewing the *At-a-Glance Checklist of Five Things to Consider before Diving into the Year-Round Cabin*, found in the Appendix #1. After that review, you can focus on whatever portions of this book that spark your interest or concern.

It is important to note what we don’t know in offering this investigative and analytical framework, and that large body of un-answered questions is captured in another publication, *What We Don’t Know*, found at www.iaparks.org/cabins-task-force. In addition, while this book discusses many things, it intentionally does not try to mandate or prescribe policy decisions.² Those decisions are best determined by each jurisdiction. Some of those policy considerations are separately discussed in another publication, *Public Policy Considerations*, found at www.iaparks.org/cabins-task-force.

By way of background, the Iowa Cabins Task Force was created by the Iowa Parks Foundation in 2018, working in partnership with multiple county conservation directors and state park managers. The Task Force includes representatives from hotel, apartment and office real estate development and investment, banking, residential construction and design, Iowa’s County Conservation System, the Parks Bureau, DNR, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and a variety of cabin construction vendors and private operators. The investigative process included interviews, presentations and research, as well as drafting and re-drafting, accomplished over almost a year.

2 We do offer one “ideal cabin” proposal for public recreation year-round cabins sleeping 4-6 persons to create a conversation. We know the proposal will change, and it is both just a start and just a suggestion. See Appendix #12 for more information.

This book is only a starting point for your consideration in constructing year-round public recreation rental cabins in Iowa parks. While **there is no currently known statistically valid analysis for occupancy drivers or success characteristics of public recreation cabins**, it is at least clear anecdotally that the trend towards offering cabin experiences is on the rise. Therefore, we are starting with an evaluation process based on anecdotal experiences from those parks that have already developed cabins in Iowa.

The exercises below are intended to supplement (not replace) further evaluation by local park personnel, civic leaders, and business leaders, as well as park professionals familiar with comparable public recreation cabin assets in Iowa. This book is for year-round cabins generally because we understand no camper cabins have been built in Iowa in the last five years. The contents of this book will evolve as we learn more over time.

The Iowa Cabins Task Force identified several existing cash-flow positive cabin operations in select county and state parks (the "Success Parks"), and conducted Cabin Case Studies to assist those considering a cabin project in their own risk evaluations. There is available also a tremendous amount of investigative materials from county and state park cabin managers, as well as cabin construction vendors, private operating vendors and park amenity funders. You are directed to those materials and Cabin Case Studies at www.iaparks.org/cabins-task-force.

Throughout your consideration of public recreation cabin investment options, there is an extraordinary amount of information available at the statewide cabin reservation system websites for both county and state parks, as well as individual websites for county parks. www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/Iowa-State-Parks/ParkDetails; www.mycountyparks.com. Talking to park managers (or better yet, visiting them) involved with cabin operations that you identify as comparable or worthy of emulation are among the best ways to succeed with your own cabin project.

The Iowa Parks Foundation would like to thank all of the individuals and organizations contributing their time and expertise to this year-long project. This was a team effort, populated by people who are passionate about Iowa, cabins, and our parks.

Chapter I: Readiness to Build Cabins

Are we ready? Do we do this or not? But the question(s) and the answer(s) are not quite that simple. And none are universal.

1. Readiness Tips from Iowa Cabin Operators

Dozens of public recreation cabin managers have contributed to this book, directly and indirectly. They have offered oral tips about their successes and failures. Those are included for whatever value readers ascribe. Some of these tips may apply to your situation and some may not. You may disagree with some tips or be aware of an alternative view from another cabin operator. These are organized in no particular order or category for your consideration and investigation. See also Cabin Case Studies design tips available at www.iaparks.org/cabins-task-force.

- All it takes is one, maybe two, park advocates or professionals to decide they want cabins and be determined. Then, it will happen. Just a matter of time.
- There are no guarantees of success; all you can do is your homework upfront, and then use your best judgment in deciding to go forward with cabins.
- No two parks with cabins will be the same, both in terms of how they get it done and what constitutes success. Follow your local instincts.
- The future for significant portions of our population using our parks is cabins.

2. Yes, No, Maybe Smaller, or Maybe Later

There are many possible answers to the question of whether a particular park or community is ready and willing to commit to planning, funding, designing, constructing, and operating public recreation cabins. We all want success (however that is defined upfront) and no one wants failure or second guessing about whether the project is “overbuilt.” Getting to that answer is what this chapter is all about. That decision is yours and it is local.

3. The Timeline

It is important to recognize that the likely time period between the day you first choose to seriously consider public recreation cabins, through investigating, planning, designing, funding, constructing and beginning operations, is as much as **five years**. This assumes that nothing about the project is made easy or simple at any stage. But even to satisfy a five-year timeline, start to finish, there must be a sense of urgency from the outset.

At the other end of the timeline spectrum are circumstances where there exists a single source, readily available and willing funder (i.e., generally, the County Conservation Board or Board of Supervisors offering a full one-time grant), reasonable road and utility access, and then cabin advocates choose either a pre-fab or cabin kit construction model. In those circumstances, a reasonable start to finish period is about **one-and-one-half years**. See Deep Lake Park, Muscatine County; and Bald Eagle (loft cabin), Scott County Park, Scott County. In at least one instance, where funding was already secure, an individually designed and constructed stick-built cabin project was completed in one-and-one-half years. See Oakland Mills Park, Henry County.

4. Market Size and Local Rental Environment

The best place to start is to understand your existing conditions and your local cabin rental environment. We don't have any reliable data on whether existing cabins drive more cabin demand (i.e., the proliferation of coffee shops), because people come to appreciate the experience and want more options, or whether there is some measurable cabin rental saturation point (or both can be true consecutively). At present, park personnel, civic leaders and cabin advocates will simply need to gather all information available and make a considered judgment. To start the process, please fill out Figure I-4.

Figure I-4: Market Size Worksheet

Fill out each box to help determine the market impacts in your region.

	Cabin Site #1	Cabin Site #2	Cabin Site #3
County Population			
Regional Population (within 60-mile radius of park)			
Number and location of existing private or public rental cabins within region			
Occupancy rates and rental rates of existing private or public rental cabins within region			
Existing regional motel or B&B facilities (number of rooms, occupancy rates and distance from cabin site)			
Public recreation amenities available at alternative private or public recreation rental cabins within region			
Existing park RV pad rental occupancy rates and fees			
General complementary or parallel county, region and state economic development initiatives			

5. Existing Site and Park Amenity Drivers

Experienced park professionals remind us that the value of the park is derived from the outdoor amenities, and cabins are a huge bonus. To help evaluate your site, please check the boxes below if the description matches your site. The number of checkmarks assigned to each item reflects collective anecdotal judgment about what factors impact cabin occupancy rates in Iowa.

- The cabin(s) will have lakefront access (lake is 50+ acres, cabin within 500' of the lake edge) (x4 checks)
- The cabin(s) will utilize a statewide web-based reservation and payment system (i.e. mycountyparks.com) (x3 checks)
- The cabin(s) will have riverfront access (cabin within 500' of river edge) (x3 checks)
 - The park is a participant in an existing county, city or state marketing program (x2 checks)
 - The park offers hard-surface multi-use trails (mainly road-bikes) (1+ mile of trails) (x2 checks)
 - The park offers high quality family shoreline fishing (x2 checks)
 - The cabin(s) will have a lakefront view (lake is 50+ acres, cabin within 1,000' of lake edge) (x2 checks)
 - The cabin(s) s will be adjacent to a 9 or 18 hole public golf course (x2 checks)
 - The cabin(s) will be adjacent to 10-mile equestrian looped trail system (x2 checks)
 - The park is within 30 miles of a regional/destination park (park with a measurably high visitor volume) (x2 checks)
 - The park has trail connectivity to an adjacent town with a convenience store (x2 checks)
 - The park offers panoramic natural views (x2 checks)
 - The cabin(s) will be adjacent to a rent-able lodge facility for events (cabin within 1,000' of lodge, and capacity of 100+ users)
 - The park is larger than 100 acres
 - The park offers rent-able canoes, kayaks, fishing boats or pleasure boats
 - The cabin(s) s are on a lake with a full public marina
 - The park offers wildlife viewing facilities (bird blinds, butterfly gardens, etc.)
 - The park offers intra-park soft-surface hiking/walking trails (1+ mile of trails)

- The park offers mountain biking trails (0.5+ mile of trails)
- The park offers a dedicated playground (natural or traditional play)
- The cabin(s) is located in "natural setting" near mature trees and away from high traffic roadways
- The park is adjacent (within 20 miles) to known historical, artistic, cultural or retail assets
- The park offers a marked nature trail, with explanatory signs and exhibits for trees, plants, birds, bugs and animals
- The park includes and/or is adjacent to (within 2 miles) RV camping or tent camping facilities
- The park includes a publicly-available nature center
- The park offers hard-surface access roads or sidewalks adjacent to roads
- The park offers or is adjacent to (within 10 miles of) extensive snowmobile trails
- The cabin(s) will have a riverfront view (navigable river within 1000' of cabins)
- The cabin(s) will have dock access (cabin within 50' of dock)
- The cabin(s) have access to a beach on the lake (cabin within 500' of beach)
- The cabin(s) will have access to an adjacent fishing/discovery pond (pond is 2+ acres)
- The cabin(s) will have adjacent parking (cabin within 500' of dedicated parking lot)
- The area around the cabin(s) includes a significant amount and availability of well-known high-quality public hunting for waterfowl, deer, pheasants or turkeys (within 10 miles)
- The cabin(s) are adjacent to a horse coral and hitching posts (cabins within 500')
- The cabin(s) and park amenities are generally ADA accessible
- The park and/or cabin(s) will have other novel amenities (describe; one check per unique amenity):

Total checkmarks for Existing Park and Site Amenities: _____

6. Proposed Cabin Amenity Drivers

What are the amenities that you envision including in your cabins? The number of checkmarks assigned to each item reflects collective anecdotal judgment about what factors matter for cabin occupancy rates in Iowa and to what degree, rather than being based upon some direct reliable data collection and analysis. Again, we must start somewhere. Please check the boxes based on what you intend to include.

- Cluster cabins (3+ cabins within 500' of each other) (x2 checks)
- Cluster cabins are adjacent to larger gathering cabin (min. of 900 sq. ft.) (x2 checks)
- Sleeps 4-6 comfortably (x2 checks)
- Sleeps 10-15 comfortably (x2 checks)
- Pet-friendly policies and accommodations (x2 checks)
- Fireplace (gas or wood-burning, not electric) (x2 checks)
- Covered front porch (x2 checks)
- Wi-Fi, Streaming and TVs (x2 checks)
 - Uncovered front porch or deck
 - Sleeps 7-9 comfortably
 - Loft sleeping opportunity for kids
 - One parents or "master" bedroom
 - Vaulted ceilings and bigger windows to access light
 - HVAC system (heat/air conditioning units)
 - Bathroom facilities (minimum of walk-in shower, sink, toilet)
 - Kitchen facilities (range, full-sized refrigerator, pantry, microwave, dishwasher)
 - The cabins have "rustic décor" inside (i.e., homey, cozy, lived in)
 - Combined dining room, kitchen, and family room (minimum of 250 sq. ft.)
 - Comfortable lounging furniture inside and outside (overstuffed chairs and couch inside, Adirondack chairs outside)
 - Knotty Pine interior walls or ceiling
 - Screened-in porch
 - Outside fire-ring and/or grill
 - Outside picnic table

Total checkmarks for Proposed Cabin Amenity Drivers: _____

7. Site Selection and Preparation

Anecdotally speaking, in-park site selection and preparation is often the single greatest cause of construction delays and cost over-runs. Road access, parking, site grading, utility installation and sewage treatment facilities comprise the site preparation component. Pre-fab cabin and kit cabin providers both list the site preparation component as the piece of the process to focus on first. Site selection is often a blend of practicality (i.e., existing utilities and roads, and access in winter weather) and “public appeal.” Cabin site selection ties into the proximity of some park amenities listed in Chapter I(5) as well.

- The cabin(s) face the southern exposure or southeastern exposure (x2 checks)
- A semi-truck and trailer, forklift, and/or heavy-duty crane can readily access the site (x2 checks)
- There is space at the proposed site to expand to accommodate a cabin cluster and gathering cabin (x2 checks)
- There is reasonable walking distance or proximity of the proposed site to the major outdoor amenities in the park (x2 checks)
 - The cabin(s) are somehow sheltered from high winds
 - The cabin(s) have natural shade, whether geologic formation or mature trees
 - There is no new road construction required for the proposed site
 - No existing roads must be paved (they can be gravel)
 - There is adequate electricity already available at the proposed site
 - There is no need to drill a new water well and monitor that well
 - There is an adequate existing water main accessible for current plans, as well as future expansion
 - There are existing sewer facilities at the proposed site that need not be expanded or completely re-built, but that are also susceptible to future expansion
 - There is natural gas (or LP facilities) already available at the proposed site
 - There are no applicable easements or real estate restrictions or contract requirements that would prevent or impinge upon the cabin site
 - There are no risks of serious erosion or earth sinking or moving related to the proposed site
 - Even though there are mature trees on the cabin site, there are minimal risks of trees or limbs falling on cabin in the near-term
 - The site does not adjoin or look upon a busy roadway or commercial operation that detracts from the experience
 - There is no unavoidable steep grade that discourages renters from walking once they arrive at the cabin site

- There are no concentrated animal confinement or other agricultural production facilities nearby that might detract from the renter experience
- There is no waterway, river or stream that might be subject to seasonal flooding, denying access to the site or causing damage
- There is no substantial nearby commercial light source that distracts from nighttime sky viewing

Total checkmarks for Site Selection and Preparation: _____

8. Additional Factors

To help identify your potential risk, review the questions below and check the appropriate box(es). The number of checkmarks assigned to each item reflects collective anecdotal judgment about what factors matter for cabin occupancy rates in Iowa and to what degree, rather than being based upon some direct reliable data collection and analysis.

- Your county has a population of 12,000+ (x4 checks)
- Your region has a population of 80,000+ (region = 60-mile radius of park location of proposed cabin site) (x4 checks)
- Your subject park has RV camping pads with an average annual occupancy rate of 31% to 42% (x2 checks)
 - There are six (6) or fewer existing public recreation cabins available for rent in the counties surrounding your own
 - The contiguous counties with available public recreation cabins have the same as or fewer park and cabin amenity checkmarks as the subject county and proposed cabin
 - There are one or fewer existing motels or B&Bs available per county in the counties surrounding your own
 - Your county's unemployment rate matches or is better than the current State of Iowa unemployment rate

Total checkmarks for Additional Factors: _____

9. Comparison Parks

It is always wise to model good ideas that have been implemented elsewhere. Doing so allows you to not only understand existing facilities, it allows you to learn from others' mistakes too. Think about which park you would like to emulate, whether here in Iowa or across the Midwest. Describe the locations below, then check the applicable boxes (to the best of your knowledge) to help evaluate each site's success.

Comparable Park #1

Identify County and Park: _____

What makes you want to emulate their cabins?

Personal Visit to Comparable Park #1: Yes _____ No _____ Visit Date: _____

Check the appropriate boxes for the comparative park's occupancy rates and revenues:

- The annual occupancy rate of year-round cabins in Comparable Park #1 is greater than 42%. (x3 checks)
- The gross annual rental revenues from each year-round cabin in Comparable Park #1 is greater than \$22,500.00 annually. (x3 checks)
- The annual occupancy rate of year-round cabins in Comparable Park #1 is between 30%-41%. (x2 checks)
- The gross annual rental revenues from each year-round cabin in Comparable Park #1 is between \$14,000.00 and \$22,500.00 annually. (x2 checks)

Total checkmarks for Comparable Park#1 rates and revenues: _____

Now, go through the above checklists again [Chapter I(5) - (8)], only tally the marks based on the Comparison Park #1. Add the totals below:

Comparison Site #1: Existing Site and Park Amenity Drivers [Chapter I(5)]: _____

Comparison Site #1: Cabin Amenity Drivers [Chapter I(6)]: _____

Comparison Site #1: Site Selection and Preparation [Chapter I(7)]: _____

Comparison Site #1: Additional Factors [Chapter I(8)]: _____

Total checkmarks for Comparable Park #1: _____

Comparable Park #2

Identify County and Park: _____

What makes you want to emulate their cabins?

Personal Visit to Comparable Park #2: Yes _____ No _____ Visit Date: _____

Check the appropriate boxes for the Comparable Park’s occupancy rates and revenues:

- The annual occupancy rate of year-round cabins in Comparable Park #2 is greater than 42%. (x3 checks)
- The gross annual rental revenues from each year-round cabin in Comparable Park #2 is greater than \$22,500.00 annually. (x3 checks)
- The annual occupancy rate of year-round cabins in Comparable Park #2 is between 30%-41%. (x2 checks)
- The gross annual rental revenues from each year-round cabin in Comparable Park #2 is between \$14,000.00 and \$22,500.00 annually. (x2 checks)

Total checkmarks for Comparable Park #2 rates and revenues: _____

Now, go through the above checklists again [Chapter I(5) - (8)], only tally the marks based on the Comparison Park #2. Add the totals below:

Comparison Site #2: Existing Site and Park Amenity Drivers [Chapter I(5)]: _____

Comparison Site #2: Cabin Amenity Drivers [Chapter I(6)]: _____

Comparison Site #2: Site Selection and Preparation [Chapter I(7)]: _____

Comparison Site #2: Additional Factors [Chapter I(8)]: _____

Total checkmarks for Comparable Park #2: _____

To aid your comparison, a proposed list of existing parks and space for their respective comparison checkmarks has been provided below. Review your parks results from above to help evaluate your potential success.

Figure I-9a: Comparative Park Checklist

Column A: Benchmark Parks with Cabins (date built) Bedroom Count

Column B: Existing Site Amenity Drivers (number of checkmarks)

Column C: Proposed Cabins Amenity Drivers (number of checkmarks)

Column D: In-park Site Selection and Preparation (number of checkmarks)

Column E: Additional Potential Factors (number of checkmarks)

Column F: Total Checkmarks

Column G: Number of nights rented in 2018, averaged across all year-round cabins in the park

Column H: Construction Type. Codes: SB: Stick Built, KB: Kit Built, PF: Pre-fabricated, SL: Stacked-log Built, ST: Stone Built

A Benchmark Parks	B Site Amenities	C Cabin Amenities	D Site Selection	E Add'l Factors	F Total Checks	G % Nights Rented	H Const. Type
Cordova Park Marion County (unknown) 2 bedroom							SB
Cordova Park Marion county (unknown) 3 bedroom							SB
Oakland Mills Park Henry County (2019) 3 bedroom							SB
Oakland Mills, Park Henry County (2006) 2 bedroom							KB
Lake Belva Deer Park Keokuk County (2007) 1 bedroom							SB

Figure I-9a: Comparative Park Checklist (continued)

A Benchmark Parks	B Site Amenities	C Cabin Amenities	D Site Selection	E Add'l Factors	F Total Checks	G % Nights Rented	H Const. Type
Lake Darling State Park Washington County (2016) 2 bedroom							SB
Jester Park Polk County (2014) 2 bedroom							SB
Lake Icaria Park Adams County (2018) 2 bedroom							SB
Deep Lakes Park Muscatine County (2019) 1 bedroom							PF
Deep Lakes Park Muscatine County (2019) 2 bedroom							PF
West Lake Park Summit Cabins Scott County (2016) 2 bedroom							PF
Scott County Park Scott County (2019) 2 bedroom							PF
Willow Lake Recreation Area Harrison County (2012) 3 bedroom (King)							PF
Willow Lake Recreation Area Harrison County (2002) 2 bedroom (White Pine)							KB
Tower Rock Park Hardin County (2015) 1 bedroom							PF

Figure I-9a: Comparative Park Checklist (continued)

A Benchmark Parks	B Site Amenities	C Cabin Amenities	D Site Selection	E Add'l Factors	F Total Checks	G % Nights Rented	H Const. Type
Briggs Woods Park Hamilton County (2014) 2 bedroom (Oak)							SL
Briggs Woods Park Hamilton County (2012) 2 bedroom (Legacy)							SL
Briggs Woods Park Hamilton County (2016) 1 bedroom (Hickory)							SL
Pine Lake State Park Hardin County (1930s, CCC era) 1 bedroom							ST
Lelah Bradley Park Appanoose County (unknown) 2 bedroom							KB/SB
Averages:							

Figure I-9b: Comparative Park Checklist – Your Info

Below, please insert the information from your comparison parks, as well as the information from your park.

Column A: Existing Site Amenity Drivers (number of checkmarks)

Column B: Proposed Cabins Amenity Drivers (number of checkmarks)

Column C: Site Selection and Preparation (number of checkmarks)

Column D: Additional Factors (number of checkmarks)

Column E: Total Checkmarks

Column F: Number of nights rented in 2018, averaged across all year-round cabins in the park

	A Site Amenities	B Cabin Amenities	C Site Selection	D Add'l Factors	E Total Checks	F % Nights Rented
Comparison Park #1 (location and date cabins constructed)						
Comparison Park #2 (location and date cabins constructed)						
Proposed New Cabins and Park						
Variance to the Average (plus or minus)						
Variance to Comparison Park #1 (plus or minus)						
Variance to Comparison Park #2 (plus or minus)						

10. Community Surveys and Park User Feedback

One market evaluation approach that has not been tried in Iowa (to our knowledge) is statistically reliable polling or a (less reliable) targeted survey within a defined geographic area. For instance, doing an informal poll based upon a local newspaper article or multiple timed and spaced articles (with a printed website to comment or vote), might generate early enthusiasm, a contact list and maybe some indication of the likely occupancy rates in the early years of operation. It might also generate a private donor. Posting multiple opportunities for existing park users to provide feedback could provide similar marketing support. Doing multiple presentations and surveys in your local school system might have the same effect: kids talk to parents about things that excite them, like cabins in the parks. Of course, you could pay for a formal, statistically valid poll or survey, but the efficacy of that approach has not been tested here.

Chapter II: Operational Considerations

When first considering an investment in public recreation cabins, it seems like common sense to consider what will be required from the park staff and others to sustain rental cabin operations. To aid in this effort, a Cabin Development Checklist has been added. See Appendix #3. In the broadest sense, park staff often ask where they want to fall on the spectrum between the rustic cabin experience and the motel/resort experience. The cost, level of staffing and service varies a great deal between those two ends of the spectrum. Each park will find a different place.

1. Operational Tips from Iowa Cabin Operators

Dozens of public recreation cabin managers have contributed to this book, directly and indirectly. They have offered oral tips about their successes and failures. Those are included for whatever value readers ascribe. Some of these tips may apply to your situation and some may not. You may disagree with some tips or be aware of an alternative view from another cabin operator. These are organized in no particular order or category for your consideration and investigation. See also Cabin Case Studies design tips available at www.iaparks.org/cabins-task-force.

- In the off-season, over a year or two, take time to write down what you do operationally and who you rely upon for help or work. Otherwise, if you get sick or leave suddenly, the park you care about will maybe not work like you want it to.
- Cabin lovers are park lovers; you want more cabin lovers in your park
- Try some new stuff with your cabin; what can it hurt?

2. Marketing Plan

Park managers point out that one of the main things they might do differently next time is to create and implement a marketing plan months before the first day a new cabin is occupied by a renter. It impacts occupancy rates, and therefore, cash-flow. We know of no sample marketing plan specifically directed towards public recreation cabins in Iowa today. We need one. That said, park managers worry about: (a) the measurability of marketing plan results; (b) the accountability of money spent on marketing to county boards of supervisors; and (c) the ease of use of any technology-based tools associated with marketing.

Write down a marketing plan, even if it feels incomplete or uninformed. Start with something. Getting listed on the statewide reservation websites and advertising on your own county/ state websites are an essential beginning. Getting a more sophisticated marketing plan will come with some time. Consider some “hooks” or marketing gimmicks, such as:

- Using local lumber for floors or interior trim to make the cabin “local”
- Recruiting the local scouts or 4-H Club to help with the landscaping phase of the cabin construction
- Doing elementary school pre-construction “surveys” to see if kids want cabins
- Work with local newspaper editors to draft a timed series of articles on cabins and parks

- Solicit civic groups to sponsor a cabin or certain cabin amenities, maybe including naming rights and encouragement for their members to use the cabins
- Consider “cabin cards” at the cash registers of local grocery or convenience stores to advertise amenities and rates
- Ask the INHF, Trees Forever, or TNC to email their local membership about cabin availability
- Offer a free cabin night to Pheasants Forever, Turkeys or Deer Hunting groups for their annual fundraiser
- Approach the local church groups or other civic youth groups for group off-season discounts
- Do an aggressive digital marketing campaign within 60 miles
- Offer cabin “gift cards” either for pre-reserved dates or just credit on the next reservation made
- Consider “Airbnb” or “TripAdvisor” for your cabins

The 41-42% annual occupancy rate for the “kit/stick-built” cabins at Lelah Bradley Park in Centerville, Appanoose County, reflect some creative marketing approaches. For instance, there, the park manager conducts an annual “radiothon” to raise about \$15k for the cabins, and gave credit on cabin rental fees for all donations during the first year to bolster occupancy and public awareness. He also specifically markets to funeral homes (for the extended families coming in for funerals) and attendees at high school athletic events held nearby. Until we can offer some concrete, data-tested marketing approaches, we just need to be creative and risk-taking. And then measure (if we can) and remember the results of our efforts.

3. Access and Use Policy Considerations

Occupancy rates, pricing and annual revenue goals are all issues that are tightly tied to park manager philosophy and park governing body policy decisions. In Iowa, with 99 county park systems and 80-some state parks, we have a broad spectrum of policy positions already in place. Generally speaking, one end of the spectrum is focused almost exclusively on accessibility and affordability of cabins to the entire public, regardless of the economic circumstances of the renter, and taxpayer subsidies for cabin amenities are expected—just like other park amenities. So (possibly) below-market pricing takes precedence, on the presumption that the lower the cost the broader the spectrum of renters. The other end of the spectrum views cabins as one of the few opportunities in parks to generate positive cash flow that can support not only cabins themselves, but also other park amenities, now and in the future. And by any measure, the park amenities are basically free, and the cost of renting a cabin is marginal relative to the availability of those park amenities. Therefore, charging something like market rates for actual cabin rentals is appropriate. And then there are many park systems that determine cabin pricing (and occupancy rates and annual revenue) somewhere in the middle of these different philosophies.

In this book, we don’t take sides for that philosophical debate. But the information we present and the decisions we suggest that need to be made presume that the park seeks positive cabin cash flow and all of the attributes that follow from positive cash flow. If negative cabin cash flow is an option for a particular park for philosophical reasons, then most of the

information and choices reflected in this book still apply, but the choices are also different (and probably much broader).

Let us suggest a few of the (unresolved) policy issues that arise when access, occupancy rates, pricing and annual revenue goals are first considered. It becomes evident quickly that philosophical issues permeate funding, design, construction and operational issues surrounding public recreation cabins.

- **Cabin Funding:** If there is a full government grant to fund cabin construction, then cash flow may well be less of a concern. Intra-governmental loans, private loans, private donors or a combination of governmental and private sources probably means that cash flow matters and will impact, if not drive, several key decisions.
- **Design and Construction:** The best illustration of this factor is the conscious decision of several county parks to maintain a mixture of year-round and pre-existing camper cabins. Camper cabins cost a fraction to construct and maintain relative to year-round cabins, so the rental rate is often considerably less, as are the occupancy restrictions. Hence, a broader socio-economic spectrum of park users might consider using camper cabins, forgoing year-round cabins altogether. There is no definitive data on this point. Even with only year-round cabins, the number and quality of cabin amenities can impact pricing; it's a choice.
- **Operations:** State parks are now subject to "dynamic pricing," which reflects some market-driven factors within a 60-mile radius of the cabins. County parks are free to determine how close to true market pricing they wish to come. Likewise, some parks only rent by the week during the peak June-August period, and then default to 2-day minimum rentals during the remainder of the year. There are valid operational reasons to use one-week minimum rental periods, but that is a direct form of market-driven pricing that may impact access. Some parks vary rental pricing by the size (i.e., the number the cabin "sleeps"), and that may impact access.

Typically, parks try to strike some localized balance. And that balance is different for every park.

A. Occupancy and Revenue Expectations

Mike Brandrup, retired forester and lifelong cabin advocate from Hamilton County, did some research years ago on cabin development and financial viability. His conclusion then, based upon an intra-governmental loan or outside funder loan, was that a cabin, on average over a year, needed 150 nights of rentals (or about 42%) at about \$150 per night. These are averages, so a cabin cluster may have slightly different cash flow characteristics between cabins, but as a group they meet or exceed the standard, year in and year out. And some years, the standard will not be met, but changes can be made in marketing to meet the goal the following year. Also, park manager may increase prices on some cabins to make up for lower occupancy rates in other cabins. The important goal is the overall annual revenue. Essentially, Mike was intent on generating about \$22,500.00 in gross revenue per cabin each year to meet projected loan payments, general operations, short-term maintenance, and possible long-term maintenance needs.

Brian Lammers, Director, Hamilton County Conservation, confirms that these are his goals and he goes a little high or a little low, depending on the year. Additional experience and research in this area is needed. There are other successful county cabin operations that have

Figure II-3: Anticipated Cabin Use Based on User Groups—Your Info

Think about the first three years of cabins use. What are your goals and thoughts about who will be using your cabins? In the chart below insert the number of nights you target to have each group use your cabins.

Column A: Month Range

Column B: Family Groups (general families, family reunions, funerals, weddings)

Column C: Non-Family Groups (church events, class reunions, corporate events)

Column D: Active Users (bikers, hikers, boaters, dog owners)

Column E: Sportspeople (hunters, fishers)

Column F: Other Users (birders, naturalists, tourists of historical or cultural sites)

Column G: Local Users (in-county)

Column H: Regional Users (out-of-county but within 60 miles)

Column I: National Users (outside of 60 miles)

A Month Range	B Family Groups	C Non- Family Groups	D Active Users	E Sports- People	F Other Users	G Local Users	H Regional Users	I National Users
Jan - Mar								
Apr - May								
Jun - Aug								
Sept - Oct								
Nov - Dec								

year-round cabins costing in the neighborhood of \$140,000, who plan on 100 rental nights a year at about \$140 per night, so \$14,000 per year in annual revenue per cabin. Lake Belva Deer Park, Keokuk County, takes yet another approach with its five cabins, offering a flat \$60 per night rental, minimum two nights, and averaging 185.8 nights annually (50.9%) per cabin in the last twelve month, July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018, season, totaling approximately \$11,148 in revenue per cabin in that same period.

If the governing body for the park has non-financial goals that necessitate rental rates that are artificially low to accommodate economic diversity goals, then cash flow and the budget must also undergo adjustment.

B. Access Factors

The issues surrounding reservations, pricing, rental period minimums and cancellations are also basically public policy decisions best made locally.

Reservation Systems, Walk-ins, and Payment

Most state and county parks still take cabin renter walk-ins, especially during times when there are sudden cabin vacancies or it is the off-season. Locals will sometimes keep an eye on the reservation website and wait to see if a cabin is not rented during peak season and then offer to rent a cabin for one or two nights, but not a week. That conversation often occurs in person with a park manager. Some park managers accommodate local, last-minute demand in order to bolster occupancy and customer demands. Sometimes, older renters simply are not comfortable with web-based reservations (or computers generally), or they use checks or cash only, and not credit cards for payments. In these instances, park staff must either answer the phone or sit in an office, or both, and that is an expense that some park systems cannot support. Times are changing, however. There are a few county parks that are starting to enforce web-based reservations only payment and only by credit card. The feedback and impact of the latter policy is still too new to evaluate. State parks in 2018 still accommodate walk-ins, but they subsequently place the reservation on the web-based system as well.

One-year vs. Two-year Reservations

The dominant county and state operational trend is for a maximum of one-year advance reservations, starting January 1st, 12:01 am. Park managers comment that it is common for them to have the same families rent the same cabins during the same time period year-after-year, and to make reservations just after midnight on January 1st. Some county park systems, notably Polk County Conservation, Jester Park, permit two-year reservations, and their experience is that they will be virtually full during peak season for two years out. On the one hand, two-year reservations allow the county to use the cash from the credit card transaction for two years, not one. On the other hand, with limited cabin facilities available, it can be difficult for new cabin users to gain the experience. Having the fastest internet connection, or just being lucky to connect first, may not be the most desirable way to determine who enjoys the most rental options. This is a policy question best left to each park.

Pricing

Some parks take the position that the nightly or weekly pricing model is most appropriately based upon what the local and/or applicable market will bear, thereby maximizing revenue with a target occupancy rate. What the market will bear might be a function of park amenities, proximity to population, cabin amenities, cabin sleeping capacity or seasonality. The logic of this approach is that maximizing cabin revenue, through market rate pricing, supports

cabin construction and maintenance, but also possibly supports other park amenities and conservation generally. Nightly rates (with some discount for weekly rentals or other multi-night options) generally fall between \$120 and up to \$350 per night for year-round cabins, depending upon all of the above factors. Most nightly rates are in the \$90-\$150 range, A significant portion of Iowa parks follow this model, most obviously in county parks without state regulatory restrictions on rental rates.

A second parks approach adopted by some is that access and affordability trump raw economics, and that cabins are a “public service”, rather than a revenue producing recreational asset. Under this model, there might be some underlying market pricing, but the rental rates never test the limits of market demand and annual revenue results do not dictate rental rate changes. Nightly rates (with some discount for weekly rentals or other multi-night options) generally falls between \$60 and up to \$90 per night for year-round cabins. A minority of park jurisdictions take this approach, although it probably most approximately reflects state park policy.

A third approach allows for market demand pricing, but differentiates on pricing by the quality, design, amenities and sleeping capacity of the available cabins in more obvious ways. These parks (and there are not many), maintain older (usually one-room) camper cabins with electricity, but no plumbing or heat/AC, that might rent nightly for between \$40 to \$90, and then full amenity year-round cabins that track full market rates.

We have found no parks that price differentiate based upon some category of cabin renter; for example, families, schools, churches or non-profits versus corporations.

Single Night, Two-Night, and/or One Week Minimums

Most county parks have a two-day minimum rental period policy, certainly on weekends but often during the week as well. A few have week-minimum rental period polices, even during the busy May through August period. Most, if not all, state park cabins have week-long minimum rental period policies during the May through August period, and then the two-day minimum applies during the remainder of the year. There is no single night rental policy but it happens when park managers want to fill in blank spots on the reservation schedule at the last minute. Which policy or combination of policies are adopted depends on the strength of demand during the peak season, as well as realities of available park staff to accommodate more frequent renter changes during the week. More staff probably means more flexibility. Of course, local custom or political pressures may also impact the minimum rental period policies, as well as the per night rental rate.

Cancellations and Refunds

There is a fairly uniform practice among state and county park systems when it comes to cancellations. Generally speaking, cancellations are allowed based upon a varying number of days from the reservation date and that date triggers a full or partial refund. And there is generally a cancellation date from the reservation date that results in no refund at all. At least two parks will not allow any cancellation after the reservation funds are received, but will work with the renter to identify new dates for rental during the same calendar year. See Lake Belva Deer Park, Keokuk County; and Briggs Woods Park, Hamilton County.

C. May-August Season

For most parks, the 100 days or so during the May-August cabin rental season is the overwhelming source of annual revenues and cabin use. A few parks with either extraordinary

amenities (Backbone State Park) or largely unchallenged access and proximity to large population centers (Jester Park, Polk County) can count on very significant rental and occupancy rates throughout the year. To the extent parks choose to use variable pricing and rental period minimums, this is the period when it most often occurs (and probably other major holiday weeks or weekends as well). State parks use weekly minimums during this period. Some county parks also use weekly minimums, but at least two-night minimums. It is also not uncommon for higher rental rates to apply during this period. We are not aware of any multiple cabin rental requirements or multi-cabin rental discounts. For park managers this busy season also coincides with the availability of seasonal and contract labor.

D. September-April Season

With the advent of the school year and the cooler, cloudier weather, the September-April season is generally the extended period when cabins experience relatively sparse occupancy rates. It also coincides with the unavailability of seasonal and part-time labor in parks. This is when more repairs are done. There is generally a sense that no one has really deciphered how to dramatically alter these non-peak season occupancy experiences; admittedly, very little additional off-season cabin marketing has historically been put forth by any of Iowa's park systems. This is the clearest opportunity to increase park usage and cabin cash flow. Experimenting with marketing techniques and other inducements and/or amenities is the future for the off-season occupancy rates.

Weekdays

For the off-season, weekday occupancy rates are the most challenging. We are not aware of the use or any parks measuring the effectiveness of specialized walk-in policies, single night rental policies or rental rate discounts that have impacted off-season mid-week occupancy rates. This is a very significant under-used park resource just waiting for solutions (or at least experiments).

Weekends

Weekends during some parts of the Fall and late Spring do offer some hunting and fishing marketing opportunities. And for some areas, the Fall foliage change creates occupancy opportunities. But in most rural park systems, according to park manager feedback, the weekends are not markedly better in terms of occupancy than the weekdays during the off-season.

Holidays

The off-season holidays are often the source of short-term relief from an otherwise sparse occupancy experience for park cabins. The holidays that draw renters are not surprising, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, Valentine's Day and sometimes school Spring Break in mid or late March. Super Bowl weekend and March Madness are not mentioned as often. During these holiday periods, some parks institute higher rental rates or longer rental period minimums to take advantage of the demand and compensate for the off-season slowness.

4. Short-term Maintenance

Short-term cabin maintenance is a catch-all term that reflects random demands on park staff time. It may include something as simple as fixing a broken TV reception or Wi-Fi system or any of the other appliances or fixtures. It may mean there is something temporarily amiss with the HVAC or water. The lock on the door may be broken (or a renter may have locked

themselves out somehow). Snow-shoveling for cabin roads, parking spaces and sidewalks is a common additional obligation. Anecdotally speaking, few parks out-source these maintenance issues for reasons of readily available staff expertise and cost-savings. None of these things are really predictable, but they will happen. Having a plan on who and when these things are addressed will boost the renter experience and ultimately improve the occupancy rate and cash flow.

Short-term maintenance also ties back to cabin construction selection, because different types of cabin construction can limit (or increase) your exposure to the presence of night-time critters under your foundation or flooring (i.e., raccoons, opossums, woodchucks), bats or birds in your ceiling, wasps in your soffits, bugs in your walls or floors (or worse, bedbugs), or mice everywhere. Planning up front is the best medicine. Regardless, there will always be maintenance associated with these natural co-habitants.

5. Long-term Maintenance

Long-term cabin maintenance is one of the most important planning opportunities, and often most over-looked and under-appreciated. In the plainest terms, non-metal roofs will need to be materially repaired or replaced every 20-30 years; cabin furniture generally lasts about 9 years; wooden porch railings last about 15 years depending upon material and finish; wood (great variance by type and frequency of use) or linoleum floors must be refinished or replaced every 10-20 years; natural wood siding (or logs) need re-staining every 3-5 years; wood porch floors or decks must be materially repaired or replaced every 15-20 years; a refurbished kitchen or bathroom is inevitable, at least every 15-20 years; there may be an insect infestation; the sewer system fails for some reason; and the list goes on. Parks deal with this generally predictable budgetary and staffing issue in several different and creative ways. It need not be daunting. Some parks just depend on using their highly skilled park staff and then buying the necessary raw materials. Some parks use only outside contractors for major long-term maintenance issues. Many parks use a combination of approaches.

Some parks deal with long-term maintenance issues as they arise and build the cost into annual budgets (or emergency contingencies funds). A more re-assuring approach used by some parks is to consistently set aside small amounts of money from each cabin rental payment for long-term maintenance, say \$5 per rental night, generally called "capital accounts". Those funds are deposited and segregated in a specific bank account for long-term maintenance. And it is simply a matter of mathematics that the year-round cabin may last 25 years, maybe 50 years, or maybe 75 years, depending on construction, design, materials and degree and "hardness" of cabin use.

6. General Operations

Developing a plan for general cabin staffing and cleaning, starting as early as the planning and construction phase, will impact to some extent how you plan and construct the cabin. (For example, in terms of site selection, most cabins in Iowa are located in parks with the primary park office on-site, often within a line-of-sight. This provides the most convenient general cabin staffing option.) But addressing these issues early-on will also help you if one goal is to have the new cabin operational (and leased via website) by May 1st, as the generally busiest rental season begins.

General cabin staffing issues include addressing how deposits are managed (i.e., no deposit, mailed and returned deposit checks, cashed and then remitted deposit amounts), how you

communicate with potential and actual renters (i.e., introductory emails, off-hours park staff cell phone access and personal park staff visits), and how you handle cabin access (i.e., delivered metal keys, lock-box metal keys, punch access codes, remote electronic access codes). Policing functions seem to be minimal. There is overlap between general cabin staffing needs and short-term maintenance and operational planning, as described above and below.

There is no currently identified ideal ratio of park staff to the number of rental cabins in terms providing general cabin staffing and short-term maintenance, but an initial rule-of-thumb until reliable data becomes available might be a ratio of two park staff to three cabins. Some park managers describe staff involvement generally as there being one staff visit per cabin once a week (generally related to door locks) and then cleaning personnel may make more frequent visits.

A. Miscellaneous

This section is dedicated to the nitty-gritty, day-to-day operation of public recreation cabins. Park managers already know this is where the whole thing gets very practical. The information and observations below are just a start; we would really prefer to expand this section, but a good deal more investigation and information is required. Maybe next time.

Cleaning

Anecdotally speaking, most parks contract-out cabin cleaning responsibilities to a local part-time person, who is compensated based upon each cabin cleaning, often in the \$20 per cleaning range. There may be “deep” cleans, costing in the \$50 per range per cabin once a month, especially during the busiest rental months. Park managers educate themselves on the independent contractor versus employee issues, as is often faced with seasonal personnel. Parks also vary in how much they demand from each renter (often tied to the deposit) in terms of cleaning. Some parks require renters to conduct a thorough cleaning before the deposit is returned. Cleaning expectations and instructions are provided at the time of rental, so no one is surprised by these expectations.

Security/Locks

Parks have been using a number of different lock systems; some as old as “bolting the door” and some completely electronic, and some in between. At least one county park uses a generally available “key locker” maintained in the cabin area for renters to obtain and return keys. Another county sets and changes the cabin locks remotely and electronically, with a new code for each renter, communicated by email or text. Several counties either have the renter pick up and drop off the cabin key at the park office, and some do a key drop off at the cabin, with an individual “key safe” connected to each cabin. See Oakland Mills Park, Henry County. This is an evolving area with no dominate practice. In terms of general security, we are not aware of any installation or use of a strictly “outside” video system around cabins for the benefit of park personnel, but there is some remote video security (accessible by park staff cell phones) for the nature center and park offices at Oakland Mills Park, Henry County.

Linen Service

Linen service (independently laundered, delivered and picked up sheets, pillows, pillow cases, blankets and towels) is rare in the Iowa park system. Hamilton County Conservation, Briggs Woods Park, offers linen service, but charges \$200 for large cabins and \$150 for small cabins for the service on a daily/weekly basis. The cabin managers at Lelah Bradley Park in

Centerville, Appanoose County, provide full linen service as a convenience and attraction to out of town renters. Polk County Conservation, Yellow Banks Park, is considering it. The upside is that it is a pay-as-you-go service that people who can pay, do pay, and who need that service, have it available. It is not widely available, apparently because it is still not widely in demand. To the extent people are flying into Iowa or driving through, and don't carry their own linens, but want to stay in public recreation cabins as they pass through or use our parks, there are few practical alternatives.

Washing Machines and Dryers

Washing machines and dryers in cabins in Iowa are rare. That suggests there really is not yet the demand. At present we don't know of any cabins with "no charge" washing machines and dryers stored in closets inside each cabin. We understand that Hamilton County Conservation, Briggs Woods Park, and now maybe Polk County Conservation, Yellow Banks Park, are constructing common facilities with coin operated washing machines and dryers within a park, usually if there is also an adjacent RV park facility as well. The same concerns about sanitation and maintenance that surface with dishwashers and disposals also appear with washing machines and dryers.

Dishwashers and Garbage Disposals

Dishwashers in cabins are now fairly common. There are always concerns about sanitation and maintenance costs associated with dishwashers. That said, the trend is toward providing dishwashers. One tip: only install high quality, durable dishwashers. Sometimes, pre-fab and kit cabin providers offer to include appliances with their cabins; park managers would be well advised to separately investigate and insure that the brand and model of dishwasher to be installed is durable and of recognized high quality. Otherwise, park staff will be spending time and money on frequent repairs, and then still have to prematurely replace the unit. These same concerns apply to garbage disposals, although providing a garbage disposal is still relatively rare for cabins in Iowa. Sanitation and maintenance issues are probably heightened with disposals relative to dishwashers.

Firewood

We are aware of one park that provides one "complementary" bundle of wood with each rental—Pine Lake State Park. Everyone else uses a private firewood vendor for cabin rentals, both for fireplaces and fire-rings. Some parks start out providing firewood through park staff, but that eventually evolves to contracting with a private vendor. Currently, fire-rings are the primary consumers of firewood, not interior fireplaces.

B. Bedbugs, Fleas, Other Bugs, Mice, Bats, Birds, and Night-time Critters

Bugs (i.e., June Bugs, Lightning Bugs, wasps, bees, spiders, house flies, ticks, etc.), mice, bats and even night-time critters (i.e., woodchucks, opossums, raccoons, squirrels, etc.) are just part of being in a public park overnight. For bugs, regular and periodic pest control spraying is advisable, especially during the peak service months. For mice, traps and pest control are the same old options. For bats (or birds), using metal soffits seem to be one way of avoiding an infestation, as well as not having windows in a loft, second story or vaulted ceiling that can be manually opened (and left open).

Night-time critters is a whole other category. If your cabin does not sit on a concrete poured or block crawl-space foundation or a basement, then ensuring critters do not nest below the cabin is an issue. Below-ground fencing and sealed skirting around the elevated base of the

cabin (whether wooden poles or concrete posts) is probably the best you can do. Trapping is the last alternative, but may be necessary. Poisoning raises safety risks for visiting kids and pets.

Bedbugs and fleas are an entirely different category of problem. Fleas should be controllable through regular and periodic pest control spraying, again, especially during the busy season. Bedbugs can shut down your operations for months with the traditional high-heat and spraying treatment, plus news of bedbugs spreads easily on social media. All motels and hotels face this same issue for exactly the same reasons. One cabin vendor, Conestoga Cabins, suggested (at the Task Force meeting) that a commercial grade “super ozone treatment” system is relatively inexpensive and generally effective once an infestation is discovered. www.foreverozone.com/blogs/news/ozone-does-kill-bed-bugs-but-not-their-eggs. A few cabin managers suggest that the cabin construction and design can encourage or discourage either the bedbug problem to begin with or minimize the problem once it occurs. For instance, they claim natural wood floors and walls give these bugs a place to hide easily and avoid extermination, so vinyl or concrete flooring would be preferable. There is no objective data to support this view at present.

C. Damage and Cleaning Deposits

There is a wide variance of damage and/or cleaning deposit practices across Iowa’s park systems. We know of few parks imposing strictly “cleaning deposits”; most who require deposits at all focus on “damage deposits”. To our knowledge, mycountyparks.com website does not yet operate to accept credit card damage deposits, or partial or full return of credit card deposits. Therefore, deposits are usually handled separately by check in the county park system. The practice of setting, collecting, and returning those deposit checks is so park-specific, not much in general terms can be said. Some parks, Harrison County Conservation, Willow Lake Recreation Area, for example, have done away with deposits altogether and rely upon letters and the threat of a local magistrate small claims court damage suite to collect damage compensation in the few instances when it occurs. With the advent and prevalence of “pet friendly” cabins, there will inevitably be more instances of dog or cat urine stains and smells, and claw and chew marks. In addition to vinyl or concrete flooring, damage deposits may be the only way to handle the wear and tear of pets in the future, especially as the reservation systems evolve to permit credit card deposits and deposit return credits directly on that same card. Where they exist, deposits are generally in the range of \$100 per rental. See Oakland Mills Park, Henry County (\$100 check deposited only needed to be retained 5-6 times since 2006).

D. Communications with Renters

First, consider communications by park personnel to cabin renters. Presumably, more park managers follow this practice than is currently known, but at least one park manager has a policy of emailing each cabin renter at least 10 days after the reservation is made and 60 days before the reservation date approaches, and attaches a copy of the cabin rental rules, general park amenities list, and user policies. Knowing these things (or having the verifiable opportunity to know them) upfront avoids a good deal of confusion and possibly conflict down the road. It may also impact legal rights and remedies in terms of cancellation policies, deposits and damage issues. To see an example of a current cabin rule sheet, see Appendix #4. Theoretically, text communications should be equal to email communications, but record-keeping might be different and possibly less reliable. Another possible approach is to

attach or cite a web-page or Facebook page with all of the pertinent information on it and instructions to read it all before arrival.

Second, consider communications by cabin renters to park personnel. This is a more delicate topic, usually centered on renters getting access to park personnel cell phone numbers. We have heard more than once that providing park personnel cell phone numbers to cabin renters only encourages late-night or otherwise avoidable or unnecessary phone calls, and concomitant expectations that the park cabins are a “resort” with corresponding level of services. Most parks do not provide cell phone numbers to cabin renters. The risk is that a true emergency occurs, but that trade-off is a policy question handled locally.

7. Operator Alternatives

The vast majority of rental cabins in Iowa are operated by local park staff, county and state. That said, firewood is frequently supplied by a local private vendor, cabin cleaning is handled by private part-time contractors on a per-cleaning basis, and non-standard maintenance and any serious refurbishment is generally contracted to private businesses. Some of those nuanced operational arrangements are generally described below.

A. Single and Shared Public Park Staff

While there are numerous examples of public recreation assets being owned, leased or operated by a different county, state and federal jurisdiction (i.e., Lake Icaria Park, Lake Red Rock and Saylorville Lake), we know of no instance where cabins are jointly managed and owned by different governmental jurisdictions. The clearest example of public recreational sharing would be Lake Icaria Park, where Adams County has a long-term management contract with the DNR for the standard recreational features of the park, including the many cabins built and owned by Adams County on parkland leased from the state. That “sharing” model holds great promise for the future because county park systems may have more immediate funding resources available for cabin construction (and more flexible funding sources and arrangements), while the state (and the federal) park systems may have the most suitable land locally for cabin construction and operation, but even much lower staffing available to operate cabins once built. Examples of successful county and state park cabin operations include the following:

- Travis Paul, Director, Adams County Conservation, Lake Icaria Park, 1688 Lake Icaria Rd Corning, IA 50841, Office: 641-322-4793, accb@adamscountyia.com
- Ross Tuel, Park Ranger, Marion County Conservation, Cordova County Park, 1378 Highway G-28, Otley, IA 50214, Office: 641-627-5935, cordovacopark@gmail.com
- Brian Lammers, Director, Hamilton County Conservation, Briggs Woods Park, hccblammers@wmtel.net; Office: 515-832-9570, Cell: 515-297-0436, www.facebook.com/Hamiltoncountyconservation; www.mycountyparks.com
- Zach Haworth, Park Ranger, Lake Darling State Park; Office: 319-694-2323, 111 Lake Darling Road, Brighton, IA 52540, zachary.haworth@dnr.iowa.gov; www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/Iowa-State-Parks/ParkDetails/ParkID/610109/idAdminBoundary/270; www.iowadnr.gov
- Wes Wiese, Director, Hardin County Conservation, Tower Rock Park, Cell: 641-373-1767, Office: 641-648-4361, wwiese@hardincountyia.gov; Cabins: www.hardincountyconservation.com/page/6

- Roger A. Kean, Director, Scott County Conservation Board, Scott County Park, 14910 110th Ave., Davenport, IA 52804, Office: 563-328-3280, ext.1, (5601 internal); roger.kean@scottcountyiowa.com; www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation
- Scott Nelson, Director, Harrison County Conservation Board, Willow Lake Recreation Area, 2725 Easton Trail, Woodbine, IA 51579, Office: 712-647-2785, ext. 21, HarrisonCountyParks.org, [Facebook.com/Harrison County Conservation](https://www.facebook.com/HarrisonCountyConservation), stnelson@harrisoncountyparks.org
- Mark Shoemaker, Director, Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, Arrowhead Park, 29357 310th Street, Neola, Iowa; mark.shoemaker@pottcounty-ia.gov; Cell: 402-680-6062.
- Curt Weiss, Director, Muscatine County Conservation, Deep Lakes Park, Office: 563-264-5922; Cell: 563-299-4489, email: cweiss@co.muscatine.ia.us
- John Pullis, Director, Henry County Conservation Department, Oakland Mills Park, Office: 319-986-5067; Cell: 319-931-2836; email: jpullis@henrycountyconservation.com
- Curtis "Pie" Reighard, Director, Keokuk County Conservation, Lake Belva Deer Park, 19366 242nd Ave, Sigourney, IA 52591; Office: 641-622-3757, Cell: 641-660-8621; kccb@cloudburst9.net

B. Local Private Cabin Operation Vendors

We are aware of one locally owned and operated private cabin manager vendor in Iowa. The Parks Bureau, DNR, is the contracting party for this service in Backbone State Park.

- Kelly Petermen, concessionaire at Backbone State Park (responsible for the cabins, lodges, and store), Cell: 319 361-4794; kellywinn12@yahoo.com

C. National Private Cabin Operation Vendors

Contracting with third party private park and/or cabin managers has been limited in Iowa too date. Only Honey Creek State Park has been using this model on a larger scale. Given the park infrastructure funding opportunities associated with private third-party park managers, this model may gain some currency in the years to come in Iowa.

- Warren Meyer, President, Recreation Resource Management (RRM), 1811 N. Tatum Blvd #4095, Phoenix, AZ 85028, Office: 602-569-2333, warren@camprrm.com; customer facing website is camprrm.com, cabin web site is park-cabins.com and the web site for other recreation services is recreationmanagers.com;
- Scott Mason, Cabin Manager, Honey Creek Resort State Park, under the auspices of Delaware North Parks and Resorts. smason@delawarenorth.com

Sometimes, concessionaires can add cabins to public lands without any investment or financial risk to the government. In this model, the government agency chooses their preferred cabin design (possibly from any manufacturer) and installation location. After conducting their own independent investigation and analysis, the private concessionaire then generally purchases and installs the cabins at their expense in exchange for a long-term (15-25 year) contract to operate the cabins. During the contract, the concessionaire provides all necessary operating labor and pays all expenses (from insurance to utilities). The concessionaire will also market the cabins and surrounding recreation area and can optionally

provide the reservations system or work with the agency's existing system. The concessionaire thus assumes all the financial risk and pays the public agency a negotiated percentage of the cabin revenues, this percentage varies based on the length of the contract, expected visitation, cabin nightly pricing, and installation difficulty.

The advantage of this approach is that the public agency can get cabins in their parks without the need for any additional capital, operating budget, or even employee headcount. Most concessionaires are not tied to any particular cabin design or manufacturer, though pre-fab cabins work better in this model. The important point with this model is that it all comes down to what the written and executed contract with the private concessionaire requires from each party. Visiting with others who have already been through this process for several park seasons seems advisable. Wording matters here; maybe park managers should consider involving a "practical" lawyer to help on this one.

D. Private Non-Profit Foundations

We know of one instance in Iowa where a private, non-profit foundation financed and built public recreation cabins on city parkland through a long-term management contract. From our investigation, the cabins are spectacular, the occupancy rates are high, and the revenues are significant; this has prompted the owner to investigate future cabins under the same organization. For more information, contact Mark Hoffman from the Appanoose Conservation Foundation: 641-895-4148; hoffmankids3@hotmail.com.

Chapter III: Design Considerations

The range of issues and questions that impact cabin design is enormous and could not possibly be covered in this one book. However, we hope to give you a reasonable start on those considerations and questions. See Appendix #5 for a Design Considerations Checklist.²

1. Design Tips from Iowa Cabin Operators

Dozens of public recreation cabin managers have contributed to this book, directly and indirectly. They have offered oral tips about their successes and failures. Those are included for whatever value readers ascribe. Some of these tips may apply to your situation and some may not. You may disagree with some tips or be aware of an alternative view from another cabin manager. These are organized in no particular order or category for your consideration and investigation. See also Cabin Case Studies design tips available at www.iaparks.org/cabins-task-force.

- Design your cabin with the vision in your mind of where you imagine the perfect place to sit and drink your cup of coffee first thing in the morning, or later in the evening just before sunset. This is true for both inside and outside space. That is something you will remember from your cabin visit.
- Include extra-large windows in at least the front of the cabin to view whatever nature is available from the cabin great room. Bedrooms and bathrooms don't need great views. Iowa can be overcast in the winter months, but sunlight helps.
- Consider an extra-large covered porch. If it rains, this is the spot, and when it is too warm for a fire in the fire-ring, this is also where people gather outside. So maybe the porch is wide enough for four chairs to face each other with a small coffee table in the middle.
- Uncovered decks get over-heated in the prime summer months from direct sunlight. If you cannot have some covered and some uncovered, then always recommend covering a deck. If you have a covered porch, it is not too much more to put a small uncovered deck off of one end for those who want to catch some sun.
- Especially comfortable great room furniture (maybe overstuffed furniture, rather than Stickley or Amish wood design, and comfortable kitchen table and chairs). Spend money here because this is where people will be during at least seven months a year.
- Do not bother with an electric fireplace. It has little appeal. Either go with a gas or wood-burning fireplace to get the desired impact. A fireplace is an occupancy driver and offers a greatly enhanced experience, even though some argue (without broad data) that the liability insurance may be higher.
- Wood floors are attractive but carry extra short-term and long-term maintenance obligations. They do create a sense of "authenticity". Vinyl flooring is durable and comes with a wood appearance. Laminate and linoleum floors are not favored based on durability issues. Colored concrete floors can be a maintenance advantage.

² Not addressed by this book are the possible design (and construction) patterns and preferences evident when considering cabins designed and constructed by pre-fab and kit vendors (Design Homes, Inc., Starlog Cabins, Conestoga/CFP Cabins), versus architecturally designed and contractor built cabins (Lake Icaria Park, Adams County and Jester Park, Polk County, Lake Darling State Park and Union Grove State Park), versus park manager designed (and often constructed) cabins (Oakland Mills Park, Henry County; Cordova Park, Marion County; and Briggs Woods Park, Hamilton County). That must be an issue for a later edition.

- Always include a locked storage closet for cleaning supplies and maintenance needs.
- Consider Smart-Siding as an alternative to logs or split-wood siding. It comes in permanent stained and periodic staining versions. The staining and deterioration with logs or split-wood siding carries material maintenance obligations.
- Consider a metal roof. It comes in natural colors and requires little or no maintenance.
- Do not install a single central fire ring for a cluster of cabins. People want their own fire ring for each cabin where they can choose to gather as a family. The fire ring can be on grass, gravel or concrete. There is an ADA compliance component on fire-rings: IDNR has a lay-out with a concrete patio surrounding the fire-ring, with a 6" rock buffer around the fire-ring itself to avoid the heat from damaging the concrete.
- If your cabin requires a wheelchair ramp, consider placing it along the side of the cabin or in the rear. Wheelchair ramps in the front of the cabin change the aesthetic appeal on the website considerably.
- Consider metal soffits around the roof, because they do not rot and they are more effective at excluding bats, birds and wasps.
- Consider metal or plastic railings in the porch or ramps because wooden railings may look nicer at the front end, but they rot or warp relatively quickly.
- Wooden doorframes and stairs seem to be the target of squirrel chewing in the winter. Not sure why, but maybe the wood soaks up snowmelt or salt and the squirrels are trying to get the salt. Maybe use metal instead.
- If you are going to use a concrete pad for your cabin, consider "raising" the pad a foot or more from ground-level to enhance drainage away from the cabin. Some use a "European" style of foundation for this reason. Local building codes may impact this design; we are advised that the Iowa building code requires a full-frost footing.
- Avoid second story small decks or porches. Experience teaches that renters do not use these decks or porches, preferring either the front porch or the fire ring in order to be with the whole family.
- Consider two doors to the cabin for egress and maybe some privacy opportunity.
- Place a cigarette butt holder outside the cabin. People are going to smoke, so give them a place to put their butts other than the ground.
- Outside of Lelah Bradley Park, in Appanoose County, there is no real developed experience with solar power or thermal heat for large multi-cabin operations as yet. Notably, IDNR has four cottages at Honey Creek Resort with a 5KW PV array on them, with good success, having sized them to be net zero on electric consumption.
- Put a suggestion sheet or book where renters can give feedback that is invaluable.
- There is some experience suggesting that when designing a cabin cluster, having just smaller cabins (sleeps 4-6) and then much larger cabins (10-15) creates optimum occupancy rates. Medium-sized cabins (6-9) don't rent as well, and that maybe because the smaller cabins fit one family and the larger cabins fit two families, but the medium cabins don't hit a specific family size demographic.
- There is some suggestion that cabin site locations are currently too bound to proximity to the park office, generally for purposes of oversight and avoiding vandalism. Now, with remote video monitoring of the "outside" of the cabin (and signage notifying

renters of the monitoring), there may be more cabin sites within a park or simply more parks that could offer desirable cabin sites. This hasn't been tried yet.

- There are mixed reviews of skylights in cabins. Some say they leak and some say there are no problems.
- Don't put your cabin fire-ring or gathering porch in the back of the cabin. Put it all in front or to the side. People like to see what else is going on.
- Don't put your cabin fire-ring or gathering porch tucked into the deep woods. This is where mosquitoes live and Iowa is full of them in the summer months. Use a clearing or an edge of a clearing for your cabin placement.
- Don't use an architect for a stick-built cabin who has never designed and supervised the construction of a public recreation cabin before. Public recreation cabins and standard residential homes are not the same. Experience matters. Always examine what they built previously in-person and talk to whoever has maintained that cabin.
- Don't add a kitchen and bathroom to an existing camper cabin. The plumbing and re-design are too expensive, costing around \$50k. When you build the cabin initially, it is better to anticipate updates, expansions or improvements in the future.
- "Location, location, location" is true with cabin site location and is a huge driver.
- Park managers or cabin decision-makers should consider tent-camping or borrowing an RV and spending a few nights at the actual proposed cabin site, maybe over several seasons. This will bring home many of the issues raised in this book. There are parks that actually place an RV at a proposed cabin site and rent it out to park users over a season or two, and get feedback and financial performance data for that site before investing in the cabins themselves.
- If you are going to build a crawl-space, consider just building a full basement, but preserve your options in how that basement space is used (i.e., storage, rental space, emergency shelter). The cost is not that different. Be mindful of areas that are prone to changes in water table levels.
- Cabins have ADA accessibility requirements. Generally speaking, we are advised that you would need an accessible cabin for each cabin type at a minimum (e.g., if you have a small, medium and large cabin, you would need one of each type to be fully accessible). Talk to an ADA expert (engineer, architect, landscape architect) for more.
- Confirm the Iowa code regarding sprinkler and fire retardant requirements, as they change periodically.

2. General Site Selection

Site selection bares directly upon cabin design (and the very close cousin of design, which is cost). Determining where a cabin or group of cabins should be placed is not a simple task. Placed in the ideal location, cabins can be drivers for activity and use for the park as a whole and can bring needed tourism dollars to the region. Some of these considerations are reflected in the checklists found in the Appendix #'s 5-6 (and specifically Chapters III and IV of this book). These considerations bare repeating and amplifying. Placed in the wrong location, the cabin can sit empty, acting as a black hole for maintenance dollars. Several determining factors which impact site selection are listed below.

A. Park Geography

The most important determinant of cabin siting is the geography of the park itself: the landform which permits a cabin to be built. The second and third determinants are the proximity to existing roads and utility systems. For instance, five cabins were built overlooking Lake Belva Deer in Keokuk, County, high on a ridge. The cabins required two septic systems and this was the only location where any future septic system problems would drain away from the lake. The geography determined cabin location. There are many other examples as well, including not just climactic issues, but infrastructure issues as well.

Many of these items are further explained elsewhere in this document:

- Site accessibility for construction; semi-truck and/or crane delivery
- Site accessibility for utilities (water, gas, electric, sewer)
- Site preparation needs (clearing of trees, grading, parking, new roads/drives)
- Solar access/protection from winter winds
- Proximity to existing security facilities (i.e. park offices)
- Proximity to maintenance facilities
- Proximity to nearby non-park amenities
- Prime viewing opportunities (lakes, rivers, valleys, etc.)
- Proximity to other camping facilities (RV areas, tent camping areas, etc.)
- Wayfinding or walking to and from the location
- Number of cabins desired, now and in the future
- Purpose and use of the cabins
- Parking opportunities
- Existing vegetation to be preserved
- Sensitive habitats/ecosystems
- Topographic opportunities/challenges

B. Land Use Restrictions

We are advised that those considering cabin placement would be wise to spend a little time examining legal land use restrictions, which can surface in a number of ways. The first way is certainly traditional land use easements, conservation easements, and/or simple local zoning code provisions. A second way is identifying use restrictions by ownership and lease obligations, especially where there exist a number of jurisdictional layers. In some instances, the same parkland may simultaneously fall under ownership and lease obligations from the federal, state and county governments simultaneously (i.e., Cordova Park, Marion County), or maybe just state and county government (i.e., Lake Icaria Park, Adams County). A third way that land restrictions can creep into determining site selection is the source of funding for either the cabins themselves or the land on which the cabins might sit; there are federal funds that establish development restrictions (i.e., conservation zones), as well as some state sourced funds. This is just a heads up to do a little homework before spending precious cabin dollars.

3. Earthwork and Paving

As mentioned previously, the following areas of concern can greatly impact the timely completion of your cabin project.

A. Roadways

For cabin purposes in particular, consider the location and orientation of a road as it approaches the cabins. It's often best to not have roadways aim directly at cabin, as headlights at night can degrade the experience of cabin users. Instead, consider placing roads between cabins so headlight impacts are limited.

Secondly, the material of the roadway should be considered as well. Most park cabins have gravel roadways because gravel is cheaper to construct. However, it may make sense to pave your roads – especially if your park includes a multi-use paved trail network. If your park promotes family-friendly bike riding, those paved roadways may increase the trail network and make it so bike riding can be part of the cabin experience.

B. Parking

Parking is an obvious necessity for cabins and can often be one of the primary factors that determine whether users will return to the site in the future. In general, most users want to park as close as possible to their cabins in order to reduce the hardship of transferring their belongings into the facility. However, maintaining distance between the parking area and cabins is a benefit as well, as it maintains the natural aesthetic of the park.

Most cabins in the Midwest have a parking area within 50' of the front door of the cabin. This distance is not arduous for carrying in groceries, luggage, or other goods and maintains a solid "front yard" space for the cabin. The Iowa Cabins Task Force does not recommend placing the parking area closer than 50' if at all possible in order to maintain the cabin aesthetic that users prefer. At a maximum, the parking area needs to be within 150' of the front door to ensure that users don't drive across the lawn to the front door to unload.

For clustered cabins, it is often preferable to have a shared parking area in order to reduce the footprint of paved surfaces and for an increased sense of security. The same distances listed above apply to clustered cabins, however the gathering cabin or lodge facility often requires closer parking and/or a drop-off area to accommodate the needs of those spaces. Consider two parking spaces per cabin. For four-bedroom cabins or larger, it might be good to increase that to three parking spaces.

At a minimum parking lots must be constructed with compacted gravel to ensure long-term use and ease of access. Of course, users will always prefer a paved parking lot if given the option. Realistically, the material choice must be determined by cost and the amount of maintenance and upkeep for that parking area. Four-season cabins need to have routine snow removal, so paved parking areas may be preferred for maintenance purposes alone.

ADA accessible parking spaces and access paths are an important item to consider. While not all cabins need to be ADA accessible, cabins with ADA accommodations must include ADA pathways and parking spaces. In general, this means providing at least one paved handicap-accessible parking stall (with paved unloading zone), appropriate signage, a minimum of 5'-0" wide paved access paths, and appropriate grading throughout (parking stalls with maximum of 2% slopes, access paths with maximum of 5% slopes). See your ADA standards for more information.

C. Sidewalks

Sidewalks for cabins are only mandatory between the parking area and the front door of the cabin. While this might not have been the case years ago, modern cabin users are often bringing wheeled luggage with them. The last thing they want is to be wheeling their luggage over mud and grass.

To this end, it is recommended that the sidewalks be a minimum of 4'-0" wide and made out of concrete. While other hard-surfacing such as asphalt or pavers may work, they do not have the ease of use or durability of concrete. Crushed gravel paths will likely suffice for shorter pathways, less than 20' in length.

For clustered cabins, sidewalks are not necessary between each cabin in the cluster. However, if there is a gathering cabin or lodge facility within the cluster, it is recommended that a pedestrian pathway be created between the facility and each adjoining cabin. This not only benefits the user, it limits the creation of cow-paths that will require more long-term maintenance by park staff.

D. Retaining Walls

If your site requires retaining walls, it is recommended to use natural materials for those walls in order to continue the natural aesthetic of the park. Limestone wall block makes for a relatively inexpensive natural solution which not only blends the wall into its surroundings, the block is difficult to vandalize. Traditional concrete masonry unit (CMU) walls, such as typical residential block retaining walls, are certainly inexpensive to construct, however, they have a greater chance of failing over time and are easier to vandalize. A typical limestone block weighs about a half-ton each, so vandals will have to work to make an impact. Cabins with walk-out basements at Lelah Bradley Park in Centerville, Appanoose County, utilize locally quarried limestone blocks to add aesthetic appeal.

E. Drainage and Stormwater

Existing drainage channels, swales, and other stormwater areas are important features to preserve due to their environmental function. It is recommended that all cabin improvements should be kept well away from drainage areas, wetlands, or other stormwater features to not only protect their function, but also to reduce the number of mosquitoes or other wetland-loving pests from the cabin experience.

In terms of stormwater management for cabins, it is strongly recommended to limit the use of gutters on cabins in order to cut down on maintenance and to reduce the concentration of stormwater that may come out of a downspout. If gutters are not used, we recommend the use of a heavy-duty mulch, river rock band or even pavement band around the base of the cabin to ensure that rainwater coming off the roof does not cause erosion around the cabin. If gutters are used, it is recommended to place large river rock or other erosion control materials at the outfall of the gutter in order to slow the speed of water and help the water infiltrate the soil.

4. Utilities

Utility needs and access are often the biggest factors in terms of cabin placement. Therefore, determining the level of service and amenities early will aid in the site selection process.

One of the biggest questions to consider when contemplating cabin placement is whether the park will ever expand to additional cabins or other utility-using amenities. If that scenario

is a possibility, it may be wise to plan for that expansion now in order to save costs in the long term. That foresight may come in the form of “over-building,” or providing a larger system than is needed for the first phase of cabins, or it may mean designing the current system to easily accommodate an expanded network.

Your utility needs will also impact both the style of construction (i.e. stick-built, pre-fab, etc.) and the contractor/builder that you are using. Not all cabin fabricators are the same, so once you identify what style of construction you’d like to utilize (see Chapter IV of this book), we recommend talking to a few fabricators/contractors to get a better understanding of what they will build versus what you need to provide.

Below, the four main utilities for cabins are discussed, providing additional thoughts on the use and expansion possibilities in your park.

A. Water

Water access will likely come from either a well or from a public water line, which often follows a public road. Thus, water and road access often correlate as a consideration in cabin site decisions. Sometimes, water, like sewer and gas, emanates from a nearby housing development. If you are stick-building or kit-building your cabins, the water systems can be incorporated directly into the construction sequence and be located according to your plans. However, if you are having a pre-fabricated cabin brought to the site, they will require that all water lines be set in the foundation prior to the setting of the cabin. This requires some coordination with the manufacturer to get water lines placed in the correct locations. Many pre-fab contractors require that plumbing connections between the footing and their PEX (cross-linked polyethylene) plumbing lines be installed by the customer, so you would need to use in-house plumbing experts or hire a plumber to finish the connections.

B. Gas

If gas lines are necessary (see Chapter III(4)(D), Electric), we have heard several times that connecting to natural gas lines are preferable to LP (liquid propane) sources, simply because the gas line source doesn’t require monitoring or maintenance. However, LP often makes the most sense for remote locations, although the cabins must then be easily accessible by a gas truck. (A gas tank may also give rise to landscaping considerations in terms of hiding or de-emphasizing the gas tank through vegetation or decorative wood fence.) There are understandably fewer underground gas lines in rural or remote areas. All cabin construction styles accommodate gas and LP systems. Like water lines, however, pre-fabricated cabins will require the customer to install the line, connect it to the foundation slab, and make the necessary connections once the cabins are placed.

C. Sewer

The two options for sewer connection are septic systems or public sanitary sewer lines. Realistically, the decision likely will come down to the location of the cabins and their proximity to an existing sanitary sewer line, as well as requisite future capacity commensurate with cabin expansion plans. (At a certain size, a DNR permit may also be required.) The county will likely determine the size, location and type of septic system required. Typical septic systems are currently running in the \$25,000 - \$50,000 range, depending on size of the system and number of cabins that are connected. Connecting to an existing sewer system may be as simple as connecting a sanitary line to the existing system, but could be as complex as adding additional pump stations to compensate for any topographic differences between

the cabins and the sewer line. We recommend discussing your project with a civil engineer (and appropriate county official) to help identify the best solution and to size the project accordingly.

Because sewer lines are impacted by use, we recommend considering the long-term build-out of your project when sizing either the septic system or the sanitary sewer pipe. This is one area where up-sizing the system now is easier and likely cheaper rather than to expand when future cabins are added.

Stick-built and kit-built cabins can have the septic system installed directly by the contractor or by your staff. Pre-fabricated cabins almost always require that the septic system be installed by the contractor, as well as any connections between the slab and the cabins once the structures are in place.

D. Electric

Many park managers have been going toward all-electric cabins, rather than using gas, for the ease of use and the decreased chance of problems such as leaks or carbon monoxide. Anecdotally, we have heard that all-electric fireplaces, which use a screen to simulate the aesthetics of the fire, are getting more attractive but still generally not welcomed by cabins users. Gas fireplaces are the clear current favorite. The local electric company will have ideas on the appropriate electric system investment, including but not limited to whether you choose to meter the cabins separately or collectively. Separate metering allows more flexibility in cabin repair. The local company will probably advise you that running your electrical system underground is the best and safest option, but will cost a little more upfront.

Many pre-fabricated cabins come with 200 amp, 40-slot panels, but only use 20-25 of the slots. This leaves some additional space for customization of additional outlets as needed in areas such as covered porches.

The cabin manager at Lelah Bradley Park in Centerville, Appanoose County, opted to install ground solar panels to power their cabins, as well as geothermal systems for heating/cooling. The manager has been pleased with the overall cost savings and low maintenance.

5. Foundations

Foundations literally set the base upon which your cabins will be built. However, there are often more foundation options out there than most park managers realize. Below are listed the common forms that are currently found under most of Iowa's cabins. We are advised that in Iowa, you are allowed to do the following: full basement, trench footings, formed footings and column, caissons, piers, or pilings. All of these would be at or below the local frost depth.

A. Slab-on-Grade

There is some disagreement about this terminology, but we are advised that slab-on-grade only indicates that the concrete slab is poured on grade but still has full frost footings. All of the modern state park cabins (i.e., Union Grove State Park and Lake Darling State Park) are slab-on--grade with a full, 4'-0' frost footing. There still needs to be foam under the slab, and insulation on any foundation walls, inside and outside. Local building codes may vary in terms of the footings from 18 inches to four feet. At least one source advises us that a good practice is to put 1-1/2 to 2 inches of foam under the concrete slab at least four feet in from the exterior. Further recommended is a four-inch permeable under the slab, placing #4 rebar

in the concrete foundation. An advantage of this type of foundation is that the slab may be used as the concrete floor of the cabin, and may be both pressed and colored to mimic a wood floor. Finally, ventilation may be appropriate for your foundation in order to avoid condensation and resulting mold. We are advised that, aside from unoccupied, accessory structures, a floating slab without a foundation is not allowed in Iowa. (In the past, some of the state park pre-cast showers were placed on 18' of rock, but even that practice has ceased, and the state has moved away from this practice as frost heave has occurred.)³

B. Traditional Foundations

Most cabins in Iowa have what can be considered a traditional foundation: a concrete slab poured on top of, or in conjunction with, a series of footings that rest below the frost level. These allow for stable building foundations that are not likely to move due to frost heaves. The footings can be formed in a number of ways, however, the most common are trench footings (a continuous pour running along the length of a building) or piers (a series of cylinders dug into the ground in a regular pattern). With reinforcing, both footings are time-tested options for cabin foundations. The benefit of this style of foundation is its commonality – most contractors can pour a successful slab. The drawbacks are that they are relatively expensive due to the amount of material that is required.

Traditional foundations are best used with stick-built or kit-built cabins. Pre-fab cabins cannot utilize traditional foundations as they need a crawlspace or basement between the foundation and the bottom of the pre-fab cabin in order to make utility connections. What is known as a traditional footing would be a formed footing. Trench footings are used instead of formed footings, because the labor costs may be much reduced.

The year-round cabins at Union Grove State Park and Lake Darling State Park offer excellent examples of this foundation choice.

C. European Foundations

This style of foundation is relatively new to Iowa, so don't be surprised if you haven't heard of it. This foundation is similar to a slab-on-grade foundation; however, it does include a few sets of shallow (18" – 24" deep) beams or trench footings to help disperse weight. What makes it successful is the addition of several feet of polystyrene foam sheets which are placed under and around each of the footings – sometimes as much as 12" to 24" in depth. The insulation doesn't absorb heave; it doesn't allow frost to penetrate the ground below. These footings are used often in permafrost situations, but are not typically used in Iowa. We are advised by some that this foundation is known in the industry as "grade beams" and is not allowed as the primary footing for any occupied structures in Iowa.

Much like traditional foundations, they are best used when building stick-built or kit-built cabins. Pre-fab cabins still require the crawlspace or basement for utility connections after the cabin has been placed.

Hamilton County Conservation, Briggs Woods Park, utilized European foundations for their

³ In states other than Iowa, a slab-on-grade foundation (a.k.a. floating foundation) may involve pouring a thickened slab of concrete above a layer of compacted aggregate. Because the slab does not have footings which reach below the frost level, the slab – and therefore the building – is likely to react to frost heaves. To counteract this, the slab is often reinforced with rebar in order to minimize ground fluctuations. The only benefit of slab-on-grade foundations is cost, however, the frost heaves in Iowa make their use a significant challenge and would be non-compliant with code provisions of an occupied structure, such as a cabin. These foundations are not recommended.

most recent stacked-log cabins and have positive things to say about them – in particular that they were inexpensive to build. If you are considering this, we recommend you talk to the folks at Hamilton County Conservation, as well as an engineer, for more information.

D. Crawlspace

To be clear, “crawl space” is not a type of foundation, but merely descriptive of a pier or column footing design where there is a crawl space between the grade and the bottom of the structure. Stated otherwise, a crawl space is the area between the physical ground and a structure. They are often no taller than 4'-0" in height, hence the name. Crawlspace have several benefits, especially if you live in warm climates, have poor soils, have a sloping site, and/or are prone to insect damage as they can provide a flexible space under a structure to make repairs and physically separate the structure from the ground. However, they also have their drawbacks: they do allow for cold winter air to get under the structure, meaning additional insulation is needed under the floor. They also demand the structure be raised up on site, which makes ADA accessibility more challenging. Finally, they can provide ideal habitat for some animals, so it is often best to keep a skirt running around the base of the structure in order to keep large burrowing animals out. Another issue often over-looked with crawlspace is keeping utilities from freezing. There are crawlspace below all of the cottages at Honey Creek Resort, and in extremely cold years, the state has struggled with them.

Crawlspace typically utilize a series of reinforced concrete piers to rest the cabin on solid, frost-free soil. Above ground, the cabin rests on posts commonly made from either concrete, steel, or wood. Of those three, wood posts will require the most long-term maintenance. See Tower Rock Park, Hardin County Conservation. Engineering for “deflection loads” are an issue with wood posts, and the presence of heavier soils can lead to soil compaction (and/or hydraulic pressure possibly), which can damage wood posts. One advisor recommends consideration of Structural Insulated Panels (SIP), properly engineered. It’s highly encouraged that you keep the wood post physically separated from the concrete pier in order to reduce the likelihood of water sitting at the base and rotting up into the wood.

The bottom of a crawl space is often either paved in concrete or includes a layer of simple limestone aggregate with a plastic vapor barrier in order to keep weeds out, eliminate moisture, keep bugs out, and make it more difficult for larger animals to create a home.

Crawlspace can be used for any cabin construction option; however, a crawl space or basement is mandatory for pre-fab cabins because they allow the space for utilities to be connected after the cabin is placed. Of the pre-fab cabin vendors we contacted, a 4'-0" crawl space is what is required. The difficulty is making sure the contractor has the exact dimensions for the pre-fab cabin to sit properly on the foundation.

Deep Lakes Park in Muscatine County has new cabins which utilize crawlspace, so we encourage you to reach out to that county to find out more information.

E. Basements

Depending on your location and proximity to other amenities, basements may provide a benefit to your cabins. They can provide a maintenance-friendly utility space, provide additional storage space for either the park or the cabin user, can be fully occupied by the cabin user, or can be a storm shelter. Those cabin managers who have opted for full basements most often mention the minimal added cost of a full basement compared to a

crawl-space type foundation, about \$14,000 versus \$25,000 in some instances.⁴ If a cabin is positioned on a slope, a basement can become a stronger option. And if you are using a pre-fab construction model, either a basement or crawlspace is required by the vendor because utilities are generally designed to come up through the floor of the pre-fab cabin. There might be a different analysis if you are using a cabin model that normally accommodates a slab-based foundation, such as a kit cabin or stick-built cabin.

Maintenance-Friendly Utility/Storage Space

The Summit Cabins at West Lake Park, Scott County Conservation, all have basements with a single exterior entrance door, but they are not accessible to renters or as added living space. Storage and space for utilities are their function. The same is true for the new cabins at Oakland Mills Park, Henry County.

Renter Space

There are only three known parks which include living space basements used by renters: Jester Park, Polk County; Lelah Bradley Park, Appanoose County; and Backbone State Park, Delaware County. Backbone State Park currently has four walk-out style, fully furnished basements for cabin numbers 9-12. The Jester Park cabins have rear-facing basements and are fully finished with knotty pine walls, kitchenette, and bathroom facilities. For these cabins there is both an interior spiral staircase entrance and a rear basement level door with adjoining patio. Rentable space in basements requires windows for egress. Park managers cannot currently vouch for the occupancy rate impact or renter approval of a basement feature. At Lelah Bradley Park, the walk-out basements lead to a lake front and dock, with windows across an opening that covers an entire exposed basement wall. The cabin manager recommends ceiling heights of at least 9 feet in any usable basement space. They place the TV in the basement with couches to accommodate teenagers and sports fans.

6. Clustering and Gathering Cabins

Iowa has several examples where clustering cabins appear, at least anecdotally, to correlate to higher occupancy rates and annual revenue. Examples of this include Harrison, Hamilton, Polk, Marion, and Washington Counties – in both state and county parks. There are also several examples that show that single cabins with the same amenities as clustered cabins in other locations too often sit empty much more frequently, even though they are sited in lovely, amenity-filled parks. A possible good case study of this concept is the single cabin built at Nine Eagles State Park in southern Iowa, using the same year-round top-of-the-line cabin design found in Union Grove State Park and Lake Darling State Park, both of which use clustering of three or more cabins. The occupancy rate of the single cabin in Nine Eagles State Park is purportedly low; the question is what clustering might do to impact that occupancy rate. This makes a pretty strong argument that grouping cabins together may be a smart strategy for continued exploration.

A. Number, Size, and Similarity

Several park managers with cabin programs noted their users' preference for cabin clustering: siting three or more cabins in close proximity to accommodate larger groups (family reunions, class reunions, multi-family outings, church or civic group outings, hunting and fishing groups, and weddings). While some still value a single cabin in the right location, the market

⁴ One cabin vendor suggests that the general expected cost of a slab foundation is about \$25,000, a crawlspace is about \$20,000 and a full basement is about \$25,000. These prices will vary a great deal by cabin location, local contractor competition and other cabin design features.

for clustered cabins is only growing. In fact, several park managers who had two cabins in close proximity wished they had three or four cabins clustered instead due to demand.

The clustering effect may be enhanced if there is a high-quality lodge venue or other gathering space nearby. By the same token, some sites are offering a “gathering cabin” within a cluster, which amounts to a cabin with an over-sized great room and/or covered porch where everyone in the cluster can meet at once. These spaces provide a significant amount of flexibility for the users to customize a space and make the most out of their time together. Arguably, gathering space enhances the wintertime 9-11 hours of darkness every day and during any bad weather. For large cabins, this can often mean devoting 600 square feet to the gathering space, which includes an open kitchen, dining room, and living room space.

A separate unresolved debate involves the size and sleeping capacity of the cabins in a cluster. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the preferred size for clustered cabins is either small (sleeping 4-6 people, reflecting one family) or large (sleeping 10-15 people, reflecting two+ families) – not medium (sleeping 6-10 people). The explanation revolves around the types of users for these clustered events. A single family (4-6 people) would prefer to stay alone, or with a complete other family (10-15 people). The park manager for the cabins at Lelah Bradley Park, Appanoose County, believes the two high-end cabins, each sleeping 10-12 person, would have an even higher occupancy rate if there were two or three additional nearby cabins to accommodate groups of up to 36 persons, not just 24 persons. Specifically, when they add more cabins, they are planning to add smaller high-end cabins sleeping 4-6 each to maximize market appeal.

Another benefit of clustering cabins – in particular identical ones – is the cost savings. By “buying in bulk,” you can save money on the cost of each structure. At Lake Darling State Park, the DNR built six identical cabins. While the cabins would have cost \$200K apiece for one or two cabins, buying six at once made each cabin \$175K apiece. In total, that saved \$150K, almost the full cost of one of the cabins alone.

B. Distance Between and Natural Barriers

There is no hard evidence for the preferred distance between clustered cabins. However, a quick study of clustered cabins around the Midwest finds that a minimum distance of 100’ from front-door to front-door is preferred. This is around two times the typical distance between RV units. Importantly, it’s also less dense than a typical suburban residential neighborhood so, for many users, it will feel expansive and exclusive. (Dense suburban neighborhoods often have as little as 50’ distance from front-door to front-door.)

Cabins placed too far apart will lose their communal feeling. In general, cabins within a cluster want to be a maximum of 500’ apart. This distance, which amounts to be a tenth of a mile or a two to three-minute walk, is about as far as people will travel and still feel connected. Importantly, the cabins must be within sight of each other. This is not always a possibility for all cabins due to existing vegetation and/or topography, however, in an ideal situation, each cabin has a line-of-sight to its neighbors.

Ideally, cabins in a cluster want to be around 150’ to 250’ apart. That distance allows for separation and ownership of each cabin site, but maintains a connected community atmosphere. It also allows for buffer space between cabins for vegetation, play areas, or shared parking spaces.

If a gathering cabin is included, it typically is centrally located within the cluster. If a lodge or other non-sleeping gathering space is available, and it is intended for the explicit use of the cabin users, it is normally within 750' of the cabin cluster to ensure use.

Natural barriers might be pine trees or birch trees. This is a relatively cheap alternative that offers not only privacy, but a “North Woods” atmosphere. Man-made barriers cost more, require more maintenance and may not be nearly as attractive.

C. Directional Orientation

Conventional wisdom in Iowa is that cabins should face toward a southern or southeastern exposure in order to best enjoy the sun in the morning. Balanced against that maxim are the notions that you may want to use some natural geographic barrier to impede or even block the northern or northeastern winds, which may involve a hillside, ridge or something else. Also balanced against that maxim are the practicalities of the park landscape, location of amenities and the realistic options for cabin sites. The best view may be northerly. The utilities and roads may dictate a northerly facing cabin. For those planning cabins, spending a few nights in different seasons in the potential cabin sites, in either tents or RVs, might produce the most reasonable final decision on cabin site selection and what direction cabins should face. Another consideration is the degree of southern exposure, i.e., what is the impact with vaulted ceilings, A-frame windows or non-covered front porches. There may be such a thing as too much sun, depending on the cabin design and the degree of southern exposure.

7. Cabins Within or Near Existing RV Camping Areas

Locating cabins within an existing RV camping area or directly adjacent to an RV camping area is a recent trend that is gaining adherents. The logic is that such an arrangement serves as a “cross marketing” tool between RV and cabin users, but also encourages people with RVs (the predominate overnight camper experience) to invite and include friends and family who do not own RVs but want to camp in close proximity. Traditionally, park cabins have been located either in relative isolation or in more remote clusters. This joint location of RV and cabin facilities is being tried in the Scott County Park, Bald Eagle (loft unit), Scott County, and was loosely being tried at Little Wall Lake Park, Hamilton County, just by virtue of proximity. We have no data and no broad feedback on the advantages or success of this combined approach yet. Talking to park managers with this existing arrangement would be the most direct source of knowledge. At Lelah Bradley Park in Centerville, Appanoose County, cabin managers are considering putting one RV hook-up next to each cabin so renters have the option to recreate with an RV-owning friend or family member.

8. Cabin Exterior

The façade and roof of your cabins provide protection from the elements but can also visually connect or root the cabins to the place. Therefore, it is important to select materials carefully to ensure you can balance maintenance costs with aesthetics. Below, a series of considerations are listed to aid in your decision-making process.

A. Roofing, Soffits, and Gutters

The two primary options for roofing are asphalt shingles and standing-seam metal roofs. There are other options available (slate tile, shake shingles, clay tiles, etc.). However, the cost and lack of expertise in construction make those options less likely for the public cabin arena.

Asphalt shingles are likely the least expensive option on the market. They are easy to install and replace when needed. However, with that ease comes more maintenance. The thicker the shingle the better, in terms of quality, generally. They are more likely to leak than metal roofs, can grow moss or mildew in shaded areas, and will need to be replaced more often. Hail impacts shingles most. That being said, many top-tier shingle companies are now offering 30-year limited warranties on their shingles. They also increase the “residential” look of a cabin, if that is something that you are pursuing.

Standing-seam metal roofs are more expensive than asphalt shingles but require less maintenance and last longer. They can give off a more industrial look; however, that is changing as more residential houses opt for metal roofs. Additionally, new options for metal roofs allow for matte finishes and textures to mimic more traditional roof styles. Metal roofs often offer a 50-year warranty; however, the roof can last over 100 years if treated well. Odds are that you will pay less in the long-term for metal roofs versus the replacement costs with asphalt shingle roofs. Metal roofs can impact the user’s experience, as heavy rain or hail can be loud – especially if there isn’t an attic space to dampen sound. We are further advised that there is an important distinction between exposed fastener steel roofs and concealed fastener steel roofs. Exposed fastener roofs (i.e., barn tin) would not be recommended because of the conditioned space below. The neoprene gaskets degrade over time and leak. Concealed fastener, snap lock type products are the most cost-effective style (e.g., Snap Clad by Pac-Clad, UC-14 by Firestone, Medallion-Lok by McElroy). One advisor cautions us that insurance companies may not insure to replace a metal roof once hail damage occurs, so investigate this consideration.

A final option to mention would be vegetated or green roofs. While this roof type is more expensive than both above options, they can be a unique option for the site that wants to be as “green” as possible. Green roofs are more energy efficient than almost any other type of roof system due to their natural insulation qualities and lighter color. Most cabins with a vegetated roof have an extensive green roof, meaning the soil material is at or less than 4” in depth. This limits the plant options to hardy groundcovers (i.e. sedums). There are a number of companies out there (Liveroof, Columbia Green, etc.) who offer tray-based installation systems. These make the installation quick and easy and provide immediate impact.

For examples, the cabins in Lake Icaria State Park in Adams County have asphalt shingles. Tower Rock Park in Hardin County has cabins with metal roofs. The pavilion at Brenton Arboretum in Dallas County has a “green roof.” www.thebrentonarboretum.org/Pavilion.asp

We are advised that the best option for soffits is metal, both as a protection against rot and as an effective barrier against bugs and critters. In addition, we are advised that the greater the extension of the soffit overhang the better in terms of preserving the exterior of the cabin walls and keeping water, ice and snow away from the foundation. In addition, when it rains, if you have extended soffits, the renters can keep windows open for air without water getting into the cabin. Nice benefit in the rain!!

For gutters, we have rarely seen cabins with gutters in Iowa. That may be because they present an addition maintenance responsibility to keep clean. That said, if you decide to install gutters, you defeat the purpose if they are not clean. Gutter covers can be effective, but not the cheap ones. Get the more expensive longer lasting gutter covers if that is the route you decide to go. For an example, see the folks at Lelah Bradley Park in Appanoose County.

B. Exterior Walls and Siding

Many park managers recommend using cedar siding as the exterior material of the cabin, due to its resistance to rot and insects. However, cedar or pine siding will need to be re-stained every five years (on average) to maintain its longevity.

Other cabins, specifically ones that are looking for more of a residential aesthetic, utilize a typical painted concrete siding (Hardy Board, etc.). This material has incredible durability, though you'll pay more initially to install it. It will need repainting over time, though the repainting schedule is based on the quality of exterior-grade paint that is used.

Engineered wood siding (LP SmartSiding, etc.) offers some of the benefits of a wood exterior but with the benefits of engineered wood. According to the manufacturers, engineered wood siding offers the same wood texture and feel, but withstands damage from wind and hail better than traditional wood or concrete siding. That being said, it is more expensive than both other options. (One cabin vendor argues that LP SmartSiding is actually less expensive than cedar siding, but this is unconfirmed.) Site finished siding should be back finished as well. If you are planning on site staining the natural wood color, it will still require re-staining, despite manufacturers' claims. Other park professionals argue that they have experience with pre-stained (or factory finish) brown SmartSiding that has required no re-staining at all to maintain its original appearance. Lake Icaria Park in Adams County has SmartSiding on some of its cabins if you'd like to take a look or have a conversation.

Another option is the non-stained hardwood exterior adopted on some cabins at Briggs Woods Park, Hamilton County Conservation, where several native oak log-stacked cabins are not stained or otherwise treated on the exterior, and after initial weathering, take on a gray appearance. Park professionals there argue that the approach has worked well, saved staff time for maintenance and cost, and has proven aesthetically acceptable.

A final example of an exterior wall option for public recreation cabins involves Lelah Bradley Park in Appanoose County. There, park managers opted to use a kit for the stick-built frame, with strips of log siding and what appear to be dove-tail joints at the corners. These cabins give a "north woods," stacked-log aesthetic but allow for the use of cabin kits, which are cheaper and faster to build.

C. Decks, Porches, and Screening

Porches and decks are comparatively cheap living space to construct and maintain. There is still some maintenance, weathering and repair. But building a public recreation cabin without a deck or porch seems like choosing to do something cheaply, rather than correctly.

Decks

Few public recreation cabins have uncovered decks in Iowa. Anecdotally, the reason may simply be that uncovered decks are too hot in the summer and too unprotected in poor weather. In at least one instance with a year around luxury cabin with a very large uncovered front deck facing a lake (Willow Lake Recreation Area, Harrison County Conservation), the park manager is seeking ways to construct a covering for that deck following a few years of renter feedback. The wisdom of using treated wood versus composite or recycled or plastic decking or flooring materials is untested and unresolved. But the trend is toward composite materials.

At least one commercial pre-fab cabin provider (Star Log Cabins) strongly recommends metal or plastic railings on decks and porches, because nice-looking wood railing rots and

will break too easily. The size of the deck is another issue that is unresolved, as is the use of built-in deck benches or other deck amenities. Typically, decks are on the front of the cabin, but there are some on the sides and backs of cabins, and at least one outside a second story door. Preferences for deck locations are not sufficiently developed at this point. There is a compromise option as well: Oakland Mills Park, Mills County, is considering installing overhead decking slats (or a pergola) as a source of shade during the hottest summer months. We are not aware of an original or subsequently installed pergola on any Iowa park cabins yet.

Porches

The most common outside living space for public recreation cabins in Iowa are covered porches, generally located at the front of the cabin facing whatever desirable view is available. All of the issues applicable to uncovered decks are also applicable to covered porches. Concrete porches are being constructed in Iowa. See non-covered decks at Oakland Mills Park, Henry County Conservation, and Willow Lake Recreation Area, King Cabin, Harrison County Conservation. In one instance the non-covered porches (and/or large decks in the front) are on the “prow” or wedge-shaped cabins made by Design Homes, Inc.

While there is no standard ratio of porch space to indoor living space, a sample of what is being currently done may be instructive. That said, there is probably such a thing as having a covered porch that is too small, but whether a porch can be too big is unresolved. One can imagine a covered porch that is so wide on the front of a cabin that it blocks sunlight into the gathering room and creates a cavern experience inside the cabin.

See Appendix #13: Comparative Parks Data Sheet to see information on deck/porch information and ratio to interior space.

Observations about the decks/porches:

- Generally, the oldest cabins are less likely to have a covered stoop or porch or uncovered deck, and when there is covered exterior space it is likely to be smaller in square feet compared to newer cabins.
- Generally, the largest cabins in terms of interior first floor space also tend to have larger stoops, porches or decks, and a more even ratio of interior first floor space to porch, stoop or deck living space, but the outside living space is sometimes not covered in the largest cabins.
- Generally, the newest cabins tend to be slightly less evenly split between first floor inside and outside living space, with an average for benchmark cabins built between 2018 and 2019 of 4.05:1, which ratio may also reflect the preferences of a predominant prefab cabin vendor. The overall average ratio of reported benchmark cabins is 3.7:1, which includes a longer time period and greater variety of designs, construction options and vendors.
- While the gross amount of porch space varies widely by cabin, generally speaking, cabins rarely include less than 100 square feet of porch space per first floor bedroom.
- Generally, parks are not splitting uncovered deck space and covered porch or stoop space (except the new loft cabin in Scott County Park, Bald Eagle, Scott County) on the same cabin yet, but that may be the answer to controlling the cost of “covering” a deck with the trend toward larger and more equal outside living space, compared to interior living space. It also may address the trade-off in allowing interior light through the windows or glass doors adjoining the porch space.

- No one is using a pergola feature yet on deck or stoop space (or adjacent concrete patio space), but that is another option to address the trend toward larger and more equal outside living space, compared to interior living space. This may also address the trade-off in allowing interior light through the windows or glass doors adjoining the porch space.
- At Lelah Bradley Park in Appanoose County, cabins have a large wrap-around porch with one corner fully open and uncovered. This allows cabin users the freedom to move furniture into the full sun if they choose.

Additional considerations for covered porches include lighting, ceiling fans and screening options. In terms of lighting, low wattage and only as really necessary lighting seems like common sense, balancing safety needs against a desire to fully appreciate the night sky. In terms of ceiling fans, that one was tried at least once and the ceiling fans ultimately came down for lack of use.

Screening

This is the area that is most untested in Iowa and least understood. We know of one existing screened-in porch in Iowa, and that is a camping cabin located in Yellow River State Forest. Polk County Conservation is planning to install screened-in porches in its new cluster of year-round cabins at Yellow Banks Park. Pottawattamie County Conservation has discussed adding screening to its existing camping cabins overlooking the Missouri River Valley. The most common response from Iowa's park professionals to screening is that it presents a maintenance headache and too much cost. Kids and pets are the primary offenders, but Iowa has mosquitos and hot summers. We are informed that public recreation cabins in the southern United States typically have screened-in porches for this same reason. We don't have design or construction options to offer at present, but there is likely a screened-in porch design which satisfies all constituencies. Current ideas include layering the screening at different heights, utilizing different gauges of screening, or developing a paneling system for easy maintenance. We are open to creative ideas. For an example, the Brenton Arboretum Pavilion in Dallas County has screen panels that can be opened or closed manually as needed. www.weddingwire.com/biz/brenton-arboretum-dallas-center/423765c6e4ed4dbc.html

D. Outside Electric Lighting

Outside lighting is important for safety and security, however, it is important to take time to consider how and what you are lighting. First, keep parking lot lights as far away from cabins as possible in order to promote dark sky viewing. That also means utilizing dark-sky compliant light fixtures, which have a full-cut off so glare is reduced as well. Many modern LED light fixtures utilize a motion sensor to dim the light output by 50% when there isn't any movement. This not only saves on overall lighting costs and extends the life of the fixture, it allows for better dark sky viewing. At least one cabin vendor also includes a manual dimmer for the outside lighting for the same reasons.

Second, it is best to keep an external light on the face of the cabin at the door in order to provide easy night-time entrance. However, it is recommended to utilize warmer light temperatures to keep bugs from congregating at that same light fixture. We also recommend including a light switch for that light inside the cabin so users can choose whether to have it on or not during their stay. Too much light directly outside the cabin or throughout the porch will diminish night sky viewing and lessen the aesthetic impact of the nearby fire-ring. "Down lights" are best.

E. Outside Furniture

The selection of outside cabin furniture can really impact the occupancy and renter enjoyment of a cabin. Most Iowa cabins have some type of heavy-duty picnic table near a grill or fire-ring, and many of those are the extended table type to accommodate wheelchairs. Generally, renters are expected to provide their own camper chairs for use around the fire-ring, but the differences in practice comes with porch or deck furniture. Some cabins have wooden or recycled plastic Adirondack chairs. Some park managers will tell you that renters want and ask for Adirondack chairs on the porch. Other park managers note that renters will damage the chairs or move them near the lake or fire-ring, and they become a maintenance hassle. (One park responded to this challenge by limiting the mobility of the porch chairs with cables attached to the base of the chairs.) Therefore, they have no porch chairs and force the renters to supply their own. Other park managers have no problems at all with these Adirondack chairs. Adding a coffee table between chairs may be inexpensive and can be anchored to the porch if necessary. We have seen no porch swings seating 2-3 people, and we don't know the explanation, other than possibly liability concerns. We have seen no stand-alone table and chairs outside cabins in Iowa.

F. Fire-rings, Grills, and Outdoor Fireplaces

Fire rings and grills are two outdoor activities which can materially impact the use of cabins. They are the two expected pieces of park infrastructure that are symbols of families and friends coming together. However, proper siting and material choices for these amenities become important in ensuring the site is as low-maintenance as possible.

General Location

For both items, location is key. Since Iowa experiences winds coming from the south and east in the summer time, it's always best to keep both grills and fire rings away from buildings – a minimum of 50' from any structure – and ideally on the north or west side of a structure. This will prevent smoke from frequently getting inside the cabin and leaving long-lasting smells in soft furnishings. It's also good to have a source of water nearby, such as a spigot on the exterior of a cabin or frost-free Iowa hydrant, so fires can be extinguished in an emergency. Finally, ensure that the ring or grill is not under overhanging trees, which could catch fire if sparks rise quickly.

Fire-rings

Most fire rings in Iowa are currently made out of a simple circle of stones, a ring of pre-cast concrete, or a ring of steel. The stones in particular are a good solution for parks due to their use of natural material. However, stone fire rings can be vandalized, moved, or resized by users. Therefore, some parks have opted to utilize the pre-cast concrete instead, often using risers to stormwater structures, or metal rings.

Parks may consider using stones for parks with the following caveats: ensure that the ring is no wider than 4'-0" in diameter (this will keep down massive fires), ensure the ring is two stones wide (this will keep cooler stones on the outside of the fire, where people can put their feet), and ensure that there is a minimum 1'-0" wide gravel or concrete apron outside the outer ring of stones (this will prevent sparks from catching nearby grass on fire).

If a fire ring is going into an area with clustered cabins, consider putting in at least two fire rings in different areas of the cluster, and preferably one fire-ring for each cabin. This is done specifically when the cabin cluster is not being rented by the same group. While some park users like the comradery of strangers, others can find it disturbing. Having at least two fire-rings in communal but separate areas solves that problem.

Grills

The typical steel or cast iron park grill (generally designed for charcoal) will do just fine for cabin use as well. It is recommended that the grill include an adjustable height grill surface to accommodate the charcoal temperature and cleaning. Also recommended are larger diameter posts, as often the first thing to fail on a park grill is the post (sometimes being hit by over-zealous mowers).

Outdoor Fireplaces

Outdoor fireplaces are somewhat popular with new residential construction. Outdoor fireplaces can be expensive. But they may be an alternative to an inside (gas or wood-burning) fireplace if liability and maintenance concerns weigh too heavily upon your design analysis. We know of no park with public recreation cabins that currently includes outdoor fireplaces associated with those cabins. There is a (semi) outside fireplace in the CCC era lodge in Walnut Woods State Park, Polk County, as well as stand-alone stone chimney fireplaces in the back loop of Water Works Park in Des Moines, but no cabins in either instance.

G. Open Lawn

Several park managers noted a user preference for open lawn space around each cabin. This space is necessary for outside activities, play space, tent camping space, or other cabin renter uses. While a lawn might not be appropriate for remote locations, it is good to consider the flexible space around each cabin as an amenity.

H. Landscaping

A subject often under-appreciated and overlooked until well after the project starts (or is even completed) is landscaping, both as a maintenance consideration and occupancy enhancement driver. A well vegetated site can greatly improve the aesthetics of the experience, which is one of the primary drivers that brings users to cabins in the first place.

In terms of maintenance, several park managers have commented that putting plants close to the cabin is a mistake. They are abused by renters (or their kids), they die off, and/or they become habitat for critters and bugs that cause problems. Shrubs are often-times removed after a while. Flowering perennials are the first thing to get neglected when the season gets busy.

However, there are some low-maintenance options to keep the “curb appeal” of the cabins while not adding undue maintenance responsibilities. The first is mulch in any plant bed. Utilizing a river rock or lava rock mulch will keep weeds out and not require yearly topping of material. This is especially useful when placed around the foundation and beyond the roof line because any water that isn’t being funneled into gutters will not erode the soil at the base of the cabin.

It is recommended that any mulch include a metal edging material, ideally a mill-finish aluminum edging. While slightly more expensive than the typical black plastic residential edging, it will last far longer and have far more resistance to lawn mowers. The mill finish (a.k.a. unfinished) of the aluminum edging means that you can hit it with a mower and nobody will know.

In those new beds, experienced park managers encourage the planting of low-maintenance shrubs and/or grasses. This plant material helps to “root” the cabin into the site instead of making it look like the cabin was dropped onto the site from an airplane. When considering

plant material, always think native first. Several cultivars of native plants have been developed to tame the “wild” nature and make them more pleasing to the urban eye. For shrubs, these might include low-growing dogwoods, gro-low sumacs, or chokecherries. For grasses, there are several cultivars of little bluestem, prairie drop-seed, side-oats grama, or switchgrass which all stay consistently below 3’-0” tall. However, think about which side of the building you are placing your plants. Grasses in particular will do best on the south and west sides of buildings. (They will grow on other sides, but tend to flop over.)

Trees are often a touchy subject – especially in areas with a heavy mowing regime – however, trees are frequently cited by park managers as one of the best ways to add landscape value to a site. The first thing to consider is utilizing what you have. If you are inserting cabins into an already treed area, do your best to limit the area of disturbance to the smallest footprint possible. During cabin construction, it is strongly recommended to utilize tree protection fence (often just orange construction fencing material) placed at the dripline of the tree at a minimum. (Several studies find that tree roots often grow out two-times the diameter of the drip line.) This tree protection fence will remind workers that the trees are important and should be protected. Root compaction is the biggest killer of trees in construction zones, but the tree will often not show signs of stress until 3-5 years after the construction activity. Therefore, proper protection of that root zone is key to preserving the trees you have today.

When planting new trees, it is recommended to follow what you likely already know:

- Plant younger, smaller trees when possible, as they are cheaper and more likely to survive the transplanting process. Further, younger trees will acclimate to the shock of transplant faster than older trees. A one-year old transplanted tree will often out-pace a two-year old transplanted tree because it adapts that much quicker.
- Utilize trees to your benefit, specifically as sources of shade and wind protection. Plant evergreens on the north and west of a cabin as a wind-block in winter and plant deciduous trees close to the cabin on the south and west sides to provide shade in summer.
- Ensure any overstory trees planted near a cabin (within 20’) are slower-growing and sturdy (oaks, lindens/basswood, etc.). You want these trees to grow up and over the cabin and not drop branches.
- Utilize a mix of overstory and understory trees – especially in forested areas. This will lend some level of credibility to your forest ecosystem.
- Utilize various tree protection devices (deer fencing, HDPE pipe, etc.) to protect the trunk of the tree when it is young. Remember that mowers are often the biggest killer of young trees.

In terms of tree selection, it’s best to think about the aesthetic of your region. If you have a site that is or was historically forested, utilize the same native trees of your area. If you have a site that was historically open prairie or savanna, utilize burr or red oaks, spaced widely to provide the open feel of the space. If the site seems particularly bare, consider planting some fast-growing species (i.e., poplar, thornless honeylocust, etc.) far enough away from the cabin that falling branches won’t cause damage.

If you are aiming for a specific aesthetic, such as a “North Woods” feel, try to find cultivars of plants that provide that look without planting trees that are doomed from the start. For example, not all areas in Iowa will support the growth of aspens, so don’t try if you don’t have

the soil moisture to accommodate their success. However, there are several varieties of birch which will provide the light-colored bark and be far more tolerant to the warmth and dryness of some Iowa soils.

Consider the benefits of flowering trees. Many crabapple cultivars provide fantastic spring color with persistent small fruits. These can be a big attractor for users visiting in the spring. For a more native option, look at serviceberries, which not only have nice spring flowers but dynamic fall color as well. (Note: redbuds – while native and beautiful – can be tricky to transplant, especially if they aren't protected, so use caution.)

If your cabins happen to land near a body of water, it's strongly recommended that you do NOT utilize a turf grass down to the edge of the water. While users may want this, it will only end up in the continued erosion of the shoreline. Turfgrass does not have the root structure to withstand even small wave action. Secondly, turfgrass near a body of water is an invitation for lengthy stays of Canada Geese. These new pests feel comfortable when there isn't a vegetated edge, as that edge may have predators. Instead, utilize a low-growing mix of native wetland species. Not only will this protect the shoreline and keep away geese, the buffer will improve the water quality of any water run-off it encounters.

Finally, consider the option of adding educational or exploratory plants. These can come in the form of small orchards or raspberry/blackberry patches. They can also come in the form of big blocks of mono-cultures planted in one area, as demonstration plots. These often work best when highlighting the most common plants in a prairie. When these plants are planted *en masse*, with the help of a small sign, it can be an educational tool that helps your users understand their natural environment better.

At Lelah Bradley Park in Centerville, Appanoose County, the park manager planted young sycamores and oaks closer to the cabins because of the leaf and bark variation and shade. The park manager also planted flowering plants and bushes along the sides of the cabins and against the lower-level limestone retaining walls. These plants were specified to attract butterflies and birds and add color. The park manager admits that these plantings can and do become periodically overgrown with weeds when the season is in full swing, however they still plan to keep the current arrangement.

9. Cabin Interior

Modern cabin users are spending more time indoors. While that may not necessarily be a goal for park managers, it's a reality we all need to face (especially if we hope to increase occupancy during the off-season months or less desirable weather). Therefore, providing the proper amenities, finishes, and materials can greatly impact the preference and usage of cabins on your site.

A. Trim, Interior Walls, and Ceilings

This is an area of cabin design and decoration that varies considerably across the state. Some of the new pre-fab (Tower Rock Park, Hardin County) cabins have an interior finish entirely in knotty pine, with high-quality, non-yellowing finish. Some of the stick-built state park cabins (Lake Darling State Park), have recycled white Styrofoam press board finish with knotty pine/oak trim throughout the cabin. Other pre-fab cabins have a combination. For instance, there are cabins that use a white drywall with wood trim on the gathering room walls, but a knotty pine ceiling, and then no knotty pine in the enclosed bedrooms (See Summit Cabins,

West Lake Park, Scott County). The reasoning is that renters do not spend daylight hours in the bedrooms and the full, knotty pine ceiling gives it a “north woods” feel, but still permit cost savings on the drywall gathering room walls. The kit/stick-built cabins at Lelah Bradley Park in Centerville, Appanoose County, used knotty-pine on the lower half of each wall, with drywall above to allow for painted color variation within each bedroom. Only the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) era cabins in some state parks have a stone interior finish, with wood trim and ceiling (Pine Lake State Park).

B. Windows and Doors

This is an area of cabin construction and design that deserves a great deal more attention, especially in a very pronounced four-season climate like Iowa’s, with a considerable number of off-season cloudy days. When it comes to windows, generally speaking, the feedback we get is “the more the merrier” (Lake Darling State Park, Washington County). The cabins at Lelah Bradley Park, in Appanoose County, have what are likely the most expansive windows in the state. The park manager specifically did not install shades or blinds to permit the maximum light inside. The cautionary note is that windows carry a cost increase and must be cleaned during the prime season periodically. And at least one authority suggests using “big” single pane metal/vinyl windows because they are cheaper than wood or multi-pane windows. The more expensive windows are the ones that you can open or manipulate. If the window is fixed, it normally would not require a screen to damage, clean or replace. Wood windows will require more maintenance, because the sun will deteriorate the wood, so consider high quality fiber glass, composite or vinyl windows. Local code may require some windows that open for ventilation or fire egress. Other than Scott County Park, Bald Eagle (Loft Cabin), we know of no cabins in Iowa with French doors or sliding glass doors, and we suspect that relates to perceived unacceptable cost and maintenance. The new cabins in Oakland Mills Park, Henry County, do have double glass doors, with one of the two solid window doors swinging out and the other being fixed in place.

See Appendix #13: Comparative Parks Data Sheet to see information on gathering spaces, window area, and ratios for both.

Observations about gathering spaces and windows:

- At least one park manager cautions that vaulted ceiling windows and/or large front windows facing southerly will materially raise the temperature inside the cabin and may prove uncomfortable in the high season or during some portions of the day. It is all a trade-off.
- The more windows, the better.

C. Floor-Plan Considerations

Whole books could be written just on each of these floor-plan topics, but this book is intended more as a jack-of-all-trades resource, not the preeminent authority. Cabins lend themselves to reducing or eliminating boundaries among intended gathering, dining and kitchen areas (and even sleeping areas). How you position renter amenities within that broader interior space sometimes determines what a specific area is called and what “experience” the entire interior is intended to offer. Here, we break down some of those areas in order to encourage the reader to make concerted choices. More specifically, the goal is to ask the appropriate questions and offer the opportunity to visit or otherwise investigate the

existing choices of other park managers in terms of cabin design, priorities and construction. Then, hopefully, the reader will be able to make a clear-eyed decision about the cabin design, priorities and construction most suitable for their own park. We do note that all “dark hole areas” (i.e., bathrooms, closets, interior hallways, and to some extent, bedrooms) should garner the “subpar” views if there needs to be such an allocation of views, while common areas should enjoy the best windows and views, as well as ready access to porches and the out-of-doors. Please note that porches and decks are addressed in Chapter III(8)(C) of this book, but they are considered to be every bit as much a part of the cabin “living space” as any interior amenities or design feature, maybe more so.

Bedrooms and Open Bedroom Closets

The trend is to treat bedrooms as sleeping spaces only, and less as living spaces. At least one enclosed bedroom seems to be the standard. If the cabin has only one bedroom, or only one bedroom on the first floor, it must be ADA compliant (12' x 12' minimum). There is some debate about whether kids require a second bedroom at all; some may prefer to sleep on pull-out couches or futons in larger gathering rooms. These factors impact the size and number of bedrooms. The furnishings tend to be simple: one queen sized bed or bunkbeds with an open closet (or no open closet space) available for a fold-up suitcase stand or two. Now, some cabins are using the queen bed with a partially overhanging single bunkbed over the wall-side of the queen bed. Generally, there are two average windows, one on each of two walls. One change over time is that some cabins are offering a wall-hanging TV screen in bedrooms, which might change the space and furnishing options as experience with this feature matures, because people might then expect to spend more time in the bedrooms than previously thought. Few bedrooms have bathrooms directly accessible, and a common hallway bathroom is generally available. Few have decks or porches directly accessible as well.

See Appendix #13: Comparative Parks Data Sheet to see information on bedroom spaces and ratios of bedrooms to overall building footprints.

Observations about the bedroom spaces:

- Generally speaking, the ratio of first floor gathering space to total first floor bedroom space is between 2.5:1 and 3.5:1.
- Generally speaking, the older the cabins, the smaller the total first floor bedroom square footage.
- Generally speaking, based upon the ratio of first floor gathering space to total first floor bedroom space, the only true “gathering cabins” in terms of disproportionate available interior gathering space are Hickory Cabin in the Briggs Woods Park, Hamilton County, built in 2016, and the new one bedroom cabin in Deep Lakes Park, Muscatine County, built in 2019.
- Generally speaking, there are three ways to create a gathering cabin now adapted in Iowa: first, build a cabin with one bedroom on the first floor, but include a vaulted ceiling with a loft area covering half the cabin footprint; second, build a cabin with multiple first floor bedrooms, but have an extraordinarily large first floor footprint; and third, include a more modest ratio of first floor gathering space to total first floor bedroom space, BUT, attach at least 300 square feet of covered porch space for the 5-6 months when porches are most usable.

Gathering/Family Room and Gathering Space

In the gathering room area, issues about area size and location are tied to several different but intertwined considerations: (1) what outside view those in the gathering area are intended to enjoy, which means proximity to windows; (2) what the use or focus of the gathering area is intended to be, i.e., whether the comfortable gathering room furniture should face a TV or a fireplace, or be arranged in a circular fashion so that chairs and couches face each other to facilitate conversation or group games; (3) how the gathering area is intended to create mixed uses with the kitchen area and any dining area; (4) whether the number of gathering room occupants is intended principally for the renting family itself or an extended family renting other cabins, using RVs or otherwise visiting the cabin, and the type of furniture required for those numbers; (5) whether the gathering room is intended to open out onto the porch through glass doors, to expand the largest available space; and (6) not unimportant, aesthetic preferences in how a gathering room should “look” and the “experience” or feeling of spaciousness or coziness desired and where do you want the sun to strike the room during most of the day (which is also impacted by the porch width and overhang roof section).

These considerations are to some extent inherently subjective. As such, this comes down to how the park manager perceives the space will actually be used by renters (and probably some personal preferences and a reflection of how the park manager’s own living room in their private residence is arranged).

The gathering room itself is treated as being part of the larger gathering space, which includes the kitchen, dining room and gathering/family room, taken together. Comparative dimensions for the total gathering space is set forth in Chapter III(9)(C), in conjunction with comparative window exposure dimensions.

Dining Area

As with the gathering room, the purpose and desired “experience” of the dining area governs its interior location, size, design and construction. Some of the intertwined considerations include: (1) what outside view those in the dining area are intended to enjoy, which means proximity to windows; (2) how the dining area is intended to create mixed uses with the kitchen area and any gathering area; (3) whether the number of dining area occupants is intended principally for the renting family itself or an extended family renting other cabins, using RVs or otherwise visiting the cabin, and the type of furniture required for those numbers; (4) whether you intend a “cozy” smaller space, like a “coffee clutch”, where a limited number of renters can enjoy an extended visit with very comfortable dining area furniture; (5) whether you intend a standard family style sit-down meal space with a longer rectangular table and wooden chairs; (6) whether you prefer buffet style accommodations [or even an island “lunch counter” table (or counter space) with a limited number of taller stools for casual meals where renters will also eat in the gathering area, kitchen and porch]; (7) whether you intend a dining space with a more square or round table to accommodate games, computer use or a formal meeting; and/or (8) not unimportant, aesthetic preferences in how a dining space should “look” and the “experience” or feeling of where do you want the sun to strike the dining space during most of the day. There is at least one camper cabin in Iowa with a fold-down square wall-table (trundle-bed style), intended to maximize gathering space and minimize dining space.

Kitchen Area

Again, intention governs design, size, location and construction. Do you anticipate that, generally speaking, your renters will: (1) prepare simple, small meals, requiring little counter space and food storage, and really just an add-on to the grill facility outside; (2) prepare larger celebratory or holiday meals, requiring more counter space and food storage; (3) consider the kitchen area a social place where part of the group will naturally gather, talk and spend time; or (4) want an island usable for both counter space and a dining facility with higher stools for a few renters. Kitchens generally include at least one window near the sink, with little concern for view, but a preference for some sunlight.

Bathrooms

Bathrooms in Iowa cabins don't vary a great deal. Certainly, the quality of the fixtures and amenities does vary and can be the source of much frustration if not appropriate quality. Generally, park managers include a vanity (counter space for toiletries; free standing or wall-hung sinks with no counter-top space accommodate no one), sink, mirror, towel racks or hooks, toilet, shower (with hand sprayer or overhead wall shower; not an overhead rain head show, which will add cost), and all ADA compliant. We have seen no tubs, saunas or hot-tubs yet. The big issue with bathrooms is the number and placement. For instance, two bedrooms generally means one bathroom. Three bedrooms, especially if one is in a basement or in a loft, generally means a second bathroom.

We are aware of a newly poured concrete bathroom floor, with the slope all draining to the shower drain, including any overflowing sink or toilet. See Oakland Mills Park (new cabins), Henry County. We know of no stone or tile floors in Iowa cabins as of this date. We have been advised of some advantages to vinyl tile floors, as follows:

- **Cost Effective.** Vinyl tiles are a good value because they are long-lasting and less expensive than ceramic tile or hardwood flooring, even though they can create a very similar look. For those on a budget, vinyl tiles are a smart choice.
- **Beauty.** Vinyl tiles are visually appealing because they are available in so many colors, patterns, and designs. Some are even made to look like ceramic tile or hardwood floors. Luxury vinyl tile has a textured surface option which makes them look even more like stone or wood. When installed correctly, it may be difficult to tell the difference between LVT and natural products.
- **Comfort.** Vinyl tile floors are softer than stone tiles or wood floors. The layer of felt underneath makes it a bit more flexible and comfortable on the feet when standing. LVT has an added layer to protect it from scratches and scuffs, making it thicker and even more comfortable.
- **Durability.** Vinyl tile is very durable and able to withstand a lot of traffic. That is one of the main reasons that so many homes include it in the kitchen, bathroom, laundry room, and in some cases throughout the whole house. Many vinyl tile manufacturers offer warranties of 15 years or longer and some offer lifetime guarantees. When properly installed, vinyl tiles should last 20 years or more.
- **Ease of Installation.** Many people choose vinyl tiles because they are easy to install. In many cases, vinyl tiles can be installed right over the top of existing floors, eliminating the need to remove the old floor. Vinyl tile can also be installed right over the subfloor. It is a good choice where there are cracks in the floor or if there may be movement on the floor.

- Easy Care. Vinyl tile floors are very low maintenance. People love having beautiful floors that don't require special treatments. There is no need for waxing or scrubbing. Caring for a vinyl tile floor is as simple as sweeping up debris and damp mopping. LVT is water resistant which makes it an excellent choice for the kitchen and bathrooms. CAT: there are also waterproof lines where pieces snap together to create a waterproof floor.

Basement Area

Cabin basements are still uncommon in Iowa. There are some (Jester Park, Polk County; Oakland Mills Park, Henry County; West Lake Park, Scott County, Lelah Bradley Park, Appanoose County). Even so, cabin basements are becoming more common, because several cabin options now require at least a crawlspace foundation, and the incremental cost to go from a crawlspace to a full basement is not at all substantial, in the neighborhood of \$2,000-\$6,000 in many cases. For that incremental extra, parks get options, either as: (1) secure storage for maintenance equipment, HVAC and water heater housing; (2) an emergency shelter; or (3) additional rentable living space. If the purpose is living space, then the space should be designed and finished in a way that it best serves as a children's play or sleeping area, a gaming or TV area or a sleeping option—or a full separate living space complete with knotty pine walls and ceiling, bathroom and kitchen facilities. If you build a basement with an exterior entrance, does that mean sidewalks and/or concrete porch facilities are required? If there is an interior entrance, how does that impact gathering or dining space on the main floor? In most of these instances the question arises whether there is only an exterior entrance, only an interior entrance, or both, as well as whether there are windows (if the cabin is built on a slope), or there are full, partial or no bathroom or kitchen facilities.

See Appendix #13: Comparative Parks Data Sheet to see information on basement spaces and their use.

Observations about the basement spaces in comparison cabins:

- Generally, few cabins (probably less than 3%) in Iowa have fully finished, rentable basement space, possibly because basement space adds sleeping capacity but lacks the "experience" of being in a cabin.
- Generally, the cost difference between a crawlspace foundation and a full basement foundation is comparatively minor, and the additional flexibility for utilities and storage is significant. It might be a different calculation if a park manager is having to choose between a storage basement on the one hand, and a vaulted ceiling with loft space or an expanded porch on the other hand. In that instance, the basement may not be the obvious choice.
- Generally, cabin builders simply match the (non-porch interior) cabin dimensions to the basement foundation directly. There is no obvious reason to make the basement smaller or bigger.
- Generally, cabin builders do not include windows in a basement due to typical use of the basement space, but do have one exit door leading outside for mandatory egress purposes.

Loft Area

Lofts are increasingly common in Iowa cabins. The distinctions include: (1) full versus half-loft; (2) standard staircase versus spiral stairs and that impact on gathering space on the main floor; (3) enclosed bedroom and/or bathroom in loft space; (4) purpose of loft as kids play or sleeping space, or separate adult or family sleeping space; and (5) windows or adjoining deck space. Generally speaking, loft space has produced very positive renter feedback and creates little to no additional maintenance obligations from park personnel. We are not aware of any park using loft space for storage only, and no loft kitchens are known.

See Appendix #13: Comparative Parks Data Sheet to see information on loft spaces and ratios to the overall building footprint.

Supply Closet

Most cabins have a supply or storage closet for cleaning and maintenance supplies, and often to house at least the water heater, even if HVAC is addressed with a hanging ceiling PVAC unit. The supply closet is usually locked for park personnel use only, unless renters have particular cleaning obligations and then supplies are available. The sizes of supply closets vary a great deal, depending on whether there is basement storage capacity in the cabin.

D. Insulation

As we understand it, cabins receive a total “R Factor” for insulation codes, which may be any combination of wall, flooring and ceiling insulation. This is true whether the insulation is foam-based, fiber or some form of foam board. There is considerable disagreement among cabin vendors about what type of insulation is most effective, or even necessary, and the trade-offs in cost and maintenance. We are advised that spray foam is the best, but regardless of which type you choose, the more the better. Especially with vaulted ceilings, improper roof insulation can lead to early roof sheeting failure. At this time, we have no suggestions on the total amount of insulation or “R Factor” that is advisable, or the distribution of insulation between roof, walls, floors and foundation to accomplish the desired “R Factor”. This is an area deserving of your investigation with local builders, construction professionals, cabin vendors and regulators.

Notably, if the cabin uses a ceiling hung PTAC unit or a wall PTAC unit to provide HVAC, we have heard at least two cabin managers observe that inadequate ceiling insulation results in premature breakdown and replacement of the ceiling hung PTAC unit and/or the wall hung unit, maybe at a cost of \$800-\$900 per unit per year. There is some indication that utility companies might provide free insulation if it is a certain kind and degree.

Ventilation in and around insulated areas can be important as well in order to avoid condensation of moisture and any resulting mold.

E. Flooring

The trend in flooring for cabins is toward natural commercial grade “luxury wood vinyl” (i.e., Mannington or Mohawk), and distinctly away from natural wood, laminate or linoleum. (At least one source indicates that there are some laminate products that are now water-proof, but we are not aware of specific examples.) Vinyl is less apt to soak up pet urine or spills and looks like natural wood. Natural wood floors, whether pine or oak, are less and less the preferred option due to stains and swelling. Carpeting is also not preferred, but if carpeting is the choice, then carpet squares or carpet tiles can be replaced easily. The other trend is toward concrete flooring (Lake Darling State Park), some smooth finished and other floors

with a colored “pressed concrete” finish (Oakland Mills Park, Henry County). Concrete and vinyl probably cost more initially, but have much lower maintenance requirements. We know of no stone floors or tile floors in Iowa public recreation cabins as of this date, probably because of cost.

F. Fireplaces

Many year-round cabins in Iowa have a fireplace amenity. The common belief is that fireplaces are part of the cabin “experience” and drive occupancy rates and thus, support rental rates as well. That said, there are three articulated reasons park personnel do not include fireplaces: added maintenance, construction cost and liability insurance premiums or insurability. We have no real documented indication of added maintenance for gas and electric units. Wood-burning fireplaces and flues do require attention and cleaning. Also, there is a construction cost, but no indication it outweighs the positive customer feedback; it does require a gas line or LP source, and some venting mechanism for gas-burning. We have heard it both ways on the cost or availability of liability insurance. At least one park manager said he could not get liability insurance with a fireplace; another with multiple cabins and all with gas fireplaces said there was no issue about getting liability insurance or any indication of added cost. It must be a local insurance company/agent issue.

Wood-burning Fireplaces and Stoves

Most cabins, particularly camper cabins, have no interior fireplace of any kind, probably based upon cost, perceived maintenance and liability, and availability of a gas line. Some Civilian Conservation Corp/WPA era stone cabins (i.e., Pine Lake State Park, Dolliver State Park and Backbone State Park) do have wood-burning fireplaces. We know of no public recreation cabins in Iowa with wood-burning stoves or heaters, but that would be something to try as an alternative.

Gas

Gas is the most common type of fireplace amenity in Iowa. Some pre-fab cabin vendors include a gas fireplace as a standard feature, with a wall-mounted simple on/off switch. Glass fronts are also standard. Some have fans and some do not, but those that do emit a very substantial amount of heat in the colder months and may reduce the need for separate furnace or electrical heating. See Summit Cabins and Bald Eagle loft unit, Scott County Park, Scott County. [No automatic on/off time-based switches (maybe 2 hours) are currently included, but maybe should be considered in the future.] No direct problems, costs or material inconveniences have been reported so far with these units. The renter feedback has been uniformly positive. Likely, periodic gas leak checks are probably appropriate, presumably at the same time as the other appliances and the furnace are checked.

Electric

A few cabins in the state have found success with all-electric fireplaces. These fireplaces, which utilize a digital fire rather than an actual flame, provide enough heat and ambiance to meet the user’s needs. One vendor, Dimplex (www.dimplex.com/en/electric_fireplace), allegedly claims that newer technology makes these electric fireplaces appear more realistic, but a fair number of park managers believe electric fireplaces are a waste of money, because they provide no true fire or flame “experience”. Your call!

See Appendix #13: Comparative Parks Data Sheet to see information on fireplaces and their fuel source.

G. Natural Ceiling Light

Of course, this topic ties inextricably into the design and construction decisions regarding windows. Combining these decisions may be more art than science.

Vaulted Ceilings

We don't currently know much about the comparison costs of construction, utilities or maintenance for vaulted ceilings versus regular 8-10 foot ceilings in cabins. At least one advisor suggests that the reason a vaulted ceiling is a key architectural element of a cabin is that it creates the perception of additional space without creating additional footprint. See Jester Park, Polk County [used Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs)].

See Appendix #13: Comparative Parks Data Sheet to see information on which cabins have vaulted ceilings.

Light Tubes

An option to consider would be light tubes (or "sun-tubes"). These are similar to skylights, in that they allow sunlight to penetrate the roof, however, these smaller systems focus on only one thing: allowing natural light into the room. Often no larger than 18" in diameter, these tubes allow natural light into a space, but do not allow users inside to see outside. In fact, the interior "fixture" of the light is a piece of frosted plastic, so the users won't see the inside of the tube. What this allows is an incredible quantity of natural light to illuminate interior spaces. These can especially be helpful in the interior rooms of cabins without windows, such as bathrooms. Even at night, the ambient light coming in these fixtures is enough to easily see – acting like a natural nightlight.

Skylights

We haven't seen skylights in Iowa cabins yet. Opinions and insights are welcome.

H. Interior Electric Lighting

We don't know much about interior light preferences, from a maintenance, cost, quality, usefulness and design standpoint. We are advised that LED lighting is much preferred, even though it is initially more expensive (i.e., no burned out lightbulbs). In addition, one advisor suggests the use of dimmers in the main family room area. Certainly, this subject tracks with decisions made about the size and location of windows and whether there are vaulted ceilings. This seems to be very much in the weeds of cabin construction but it matters to maintenance and the natural aesthetic. We simply need to get more information on the options, pros and cons, before reporting any meaningful recommendations.

I. Exit, Entrance, and Interior Doors

These doors generally have a window in the top half. Few cabin doors also feature an attached screen door. Most cabins have a single door, somewhere in the front of the cabin (either to the side or in the middle) that adjoins the front porch or deck. Few doors also use a "kick plate" at the base of the door on the inside swinging out, but this would seem to be a logical addition with family renters and young kids. While one door per cabin is standard, we did see a few cabins with two doors, placed at different locations on the cabin for different reasons. One cabin had both a front door and a side door to accommodate an ADA ramp along the side of the cabin (Briggs Woods Park, Hamilton County). Another cabin had an upstairs door to accommodate a small second story deck. (Cordova Park, Marion County). We didn't notice any doors directly from rear first-floor bedrooms, but if an emergency door were desirable, then one of the bedrooms seems like a logical place. We saw mostly metal doors; no solid wood

doors. We are advised that you should ensure that doors, to be ADA accessible and compliant with the Iowa building code, are 3'-0" x 7'-0" doors.

For inside and outside doors, use butt hinges. They are the lowest maintenance. Pocket and bi-fold doors will require more maintenance.

J. Wi-Fi, Streaming, and TVs

Wi-Fi access and TVs, including quantity and placement, are policy issues, about which there is substantial disagreement among park managers. Generally speaking, the Iowa state park system does not provide Wi-Fi access or any TVs inside cabins in any state parks. Their philosophy is straight-forward and not surprising: cabins in parks are there for the enjoyment of nature and those family members or friends you bring with you. Technology just gets in the way of that "park" and "cabin" experience.

There are also many county park systems with a variety of cabins that choose to provide both Wi-Fi access and one or more TVs inside their cabins as standard amenities, including the great room and all bedrooms. Both of these technology amenities are in direct response to customer feedback and demand, and that they contribute to reaching occupancy rate goals. Additionally, these park managers argue that technology makes cabins more attractive in the off-season and bad weather. The downside is that providing technology means that you must be prepared to fix technology when it doesn't work, which sometimes occurs at night. Technology expertise and 24-hour staff availability become management issues.

There is no current data that correlates technology amenities and occupancy rates. Maybe yes; maybe no. It is probably really a philosophical issue about how to best enjoy the "cabin" experience.

On a separate note, whether or not the park provides either Wi-Fi access or TVs inside cabins will probably become a non-issue over time. This is because cell signal access and entertainment streaming availability on cell-phones, laptops or I-Pads is only growing. Technology is coming to parks, but individual park managers can probably have some impact on the speed with which that occurs.

K. Pets

We actually have not run into "cat" policy issues as of yet. Surely, they exist. But dog friendly policy issues are everywhere. Generally, the issues come down to maintenance demands and liability concerns in one form or another. Everything from dog hair, urine, odor and mud on the furniture and scattered around the interior, to chewing and scratching the windows, doors, trim and furniture, to feces in the grassy areas surrounding the cabin, to possible dog fights and dog bites, to pet allergies by some renters. Stack those maintenance and liability issues against the fact that virtually all public businesses and amenities have dog-friendly policies. From common experience, we know that people are taking their dogs with them everywhere—motels, stores, offices and restaurants. Apartments routinely now permit dogs.

In response, some parks permit complete access to all cabins by all dogs, relying on damage deposits to police abuse and damage. Some parks allow dogs in the cabin area, but not inside the cabins, counting on renters to provide portable outside kennels (but knowing renters are cheating and bringing dogs inside). Some parks are making most cabins dog-friendly, but reserving one cabin as "no pets" to accommodate renters with pet allergies (although it is not clear this actually works). We are not aware of any parks—so far—providing outside kennels

or fenced running areas for cabin renters. And all of these considerations are really directed to “recreational” dog owners, not hunters. What to do with hunting dogs in hunting season may involve an altogether different set of considerations.

So where does that leave us in terms of cabin design, construction, furnishings, operations and deposits? We are afraid we don’t currently have any answers; there are just insufficient facts and anecdotes gathered to point one direction or another. Stay tuned.

L. Lofts, Staircases, and Multi-Story Cabins

There are several examples of loft cabins with both straight and spiraling staircases, including but not limited to Lake Icaria Park in Adams County, Cordova Park in Marion County, Briggs Woods Park in Hamilton County and the Bald Eagle loft unit at Scott County Park. We are not aware of a true full two-story cabin in Iowa currently. Typically, lofts are used either for separate sleeping arrangements for kids (bunkbeds) or recreational games. In Cordova Park in Marion County, there are bathrooms in the lofts, so adult bedrooms are also available. All of the park managers we interviewed spoke highly of the loft option and renter feedback. With these loft and multi-story features, you are advised to check the local codes and the Iowa building code for compliance.

M. Miscellaneous

These are some of the things that are often forgotten until the end of the project and opening day suddenly occurs. These items might be a \$20,000 total cost item or more (or less if you are creative), so economically (and in terms of stress reduction), consider your options early in the process.

Appliances

Appliances receive little attention upfront, but are frequently the basis for short-term and long-term maintenance costs, hygiene issues and staff attention. Cheaper isn’t always better; it is sometimes just cheaper. Planning at the front-end will save on costs and staff frustration. Paying attention to locally accessible and affordable repair service providers also deserves consideration. Using “commercial” appliances, such as commercial dishwashers, may invoke health department code requirements and would be unfamiliar to the general public. Many park managers we talked to expected to replace the appliances (and interior furnishings) every eight-to-ten years. Occupancy rates obviously impact replacement, but that range was recommended for some of the highest occupancy rate cabins in the state.

Cabinets

Generally speaking, the fewer cabinets in the cabins the better. Calculate what is actually needed for pots and pans storage, and some amount of food brought in by renters. Anything else is wasted space and additional cost. Moreover, the upper shelf and the base shelf could both be left open (without cabinet doors), which require less maintenance and they make it easy to find things. Closed cabinets may only hide things. Add a window or two to the kitchen area if possible and avoid extra cabinets

Counter Spaces and Surface Materials

This matters to a surprising degree and varies considerably across the state. Some cabins have little or no real counter space, and other cabins include a kitchen area island counter. We have nothing definite here. In ADA compliant cabins, cabinets, counter tops, stoves and sinks are subject to height requirements. Linoleum counters are still common, especially in older cabins, but require replacement and repair more frequently. Laminates are also common

in newer cabins, including solid surface and quartz. No one uses marble due to cost and maintenance

Sinks

This usually comes down to a single or double sink, and ceramic versus stainless steel. The faucet is often detachable on a hose. If there is no dishwasher, that is an argument for a cleaning and adjoining rinsing sink. Cost is the key factor and available counter space, relative to the overall size of the cabin and kitchen area.

Pans, Dishes, and Utensils

Dishes, including basic silverware, serving utensils, plates, bowls, and basic drinkware, are often provided in cabins which have full-service kitchens. We recommend using commercial-grade equipment so they withstand repeated public use. Also, park managers should expect to redistribute dishes, silverware, and utensils in areas that have clustered cabins. When collective families come together, they will often move the serving utensils in particular to the largest cabin to help serve food. Pans have the same or similar issues. Therefore, that equipment will need to be monitored and redistributed as needed.

Figure III—9m: Appliance List—Your Info

In the below list, take a stab at listing the appliances you plan to include. Think about brands you want to investigate, costs, and warranties for each item.

Appliance	In your Cabin? (Y/N)	Brand/Source	Cost and Warranty
Gas Fireplace Unit			
Electric Fireplace Unit			
Stove/Range			
Refrigerator			
Dishwasher			
Disposal			
Microwave			
Toaster/Blender			
Washing Machine			
Dryer			
Room Heater			
Televisions			
Ceiling Fans			

Mattresses

This is bigger than you think. Soft versus hard; rubberized versus cloth or vinyl. Initial cost, how long they last, their susceptibility to insect infestation, and ease of cleaning and maintenance are all issues. We don't know enough about this yet to be helpful.

N. Bedroom and Gathering Room Furniture

Inside furniture is a wide-ranging subject. Iowa public recreation cabins frequently use Prison Industry supplied Stickley-style furniture. It is very attractive, durable and comfortable. It is also affordable. Especially with respect to the futon frames produced by Prison Industries, the durability of the metal folding joints matters. That said, over-sized and stuffed inside cabin furniture is an amenity driver where available. The cabins at Cordova Park in Marion County are the best example, as are the Summit Cabins at West Lake Park in Scott County. There are other parks using the over-stuffed model, some even leather rather than durable cloth. There is some question about whether the over-stuffed furniture (and leather in at least one park) is not as durable and ultimately more costly over time. It is a trade-off for some enhanced level of comfort. And there are certainly parks that use "garage sale" furniture or local or furniture warehouse type furniture. They do lose the "North Woods" aesthetic. Some of the cabin vendors also provide furniture as an option (as well as appliances).

As noted in the above section, the highest occupancy rate cabins in the state expect to replace the interior furniture every eight-to-ten years due to wear and tear. That number is based on utilizing higher-end commercial furniture which is designed for public use.

See Appendix #13: Comparative Parks Data Sheet to see information on furnishing choices for gathering and dining rooms and bedrooms.

O. Interior Décor and Window Treatments

More than one park manager mentioned that "North Woods" décor (i.e., rustic photos or prints on the wall, mounted snowshoes, other rusty items, old wooden or metal signs, deer horns, mounted fish, etc.) in modest amounts can really enhance a cabin's attractiveness. Knotty pine walls and pine-board or vinyl wood-appearing floors also really help. In the Tower Rock Park, Hardin County, the cabins came with that feature included (i.e., Starlog Cabins). The cabin managers at Lelah Bradley Park, in Appanoose County, change décor seasonally to create a lived-in and family environment. Theft and damage to decorative items can occur, but precautions and reasonable accommodations are available. Avoiding a sterile, spartan, or institutional interior feel for an otherwise attractive cabin on the exterior is critical to occupancy rates and renter satisfaction. It should go without saying, but nonetheless, no one provides ashtrays in cabins in Iowa. See Figure III-9o to track your information/options.

P. House Plants

We haven't seen a single house plant in any public recreation cabin in Iowa. We don't know why, unless there is some cost, maintenance, pest or disease issue we don't recognize. We have been advised that house plants can attract various bugs, white flies, and gnats, some of which burrow into the soil beneath these plants and require continual maintenance to avoid problems.

Q. HVAC, Water Heaters, and Temperature Control

There are certainly cabins using traditional furnaces and hot water heaters in Iowa. But the clear trend is toward the PTAC units hung from the ceiling or on wall (for heating/cooling), sometimes called "mini-splits". With standard maintenance these units should last at least

Figure III—9o: Comparative Cabins Décor and Window Treatments—Your Info

In the below list, note whether you would like the decor items and, if so, where you might source them.

Decor	In your Cabin? (Y/N)	Brand/Source	Cost and Warranty
Framed Local or Historic Photos			
Framed Recreational Maps			
Taxidermy Exhibits			
Local Original Paintings and Prints			
Antique Recreational Equipment			
Antique Historical and Local Metal Signs			
Antique Agricultural Items			
Wood or Metal Window Blinds			
Pull-back Curtains			
Pull-down Shades			
Wooden Shutters			
Lamps			
Table Centerpieces			

five (5) years. There will be some issues in more remote parks where there may be a lack of maintenance expertise and the corresponding need to go to a more urban center for repairs. Notably at least one county conservation system has experienced difficulty where there is inadequate insulation in the cabin roof or ceiling; the heating component of the PTAC wears out prematurely at a cost of \$800-900 per unit, and that proves expensive.

At least one cabin vendor argues that PTAC and baseboard heating creates higher operating costs, but we have no data on this point. That same vendor uses gas forced air high efficiency furnaces and A/C as an alternative. Additional investigation on these points is advisable. The cabins at Lelah Bradley Park, in Appanoose County, utilize a geothermal system, run off of localized ground solar panels, for heating and cooling.

We have not had clear comments or preferences regarding hot water heaters yet or separate temperature control systems. However, we have been advised that thermostat valves are really meant for long-term residential home use, rather than cabins. There should be clear regulation of water heaters to avoid scalding water and risking child or senior safety. Water quality may be an issue in the event instant hot water heaters are installed because the fins can get clogged with hard water sediment. On a related note, we are advised to use a single handle faucet that mixes the water as it is turned on with a single handle (versus a two-handle

faucet which might be more aesthetically pleasing), because a single handle faucet is simply easier to use.

10. ADA, Fire Safety, and Building Code Compliance

Cabin vendors routinely claim that one of the assets they bring to the table is local, state, and national building code compliance, including ADA accessibility and fire code compliance. For stick-built cabins, one would expect the architect or builder to provide that expertise. Since these are buildings for commercial gain and not R-1 residential classification, it technically would require a licensed architect. Whatever you rely on to assure building code and other regulatory compliance for your proposed cabin site, design and construction, nailing that down cleanly is time well spent. It will avoid future headaches. At least one cabin manager warns—be equally careful of the engineer that tries to get you to “over-comply” with some facet of the project that might ultimately price you right out of your project. Check with more than one source if something sounds extreme or unreasonable. There is nothing wrong with getting an objective second opinion from a licensed-engineer or architect.

Recent changes to the Iowa Code have impacted sprinkler and fire retardant requirements for public recreation cabins. For example, all hotels and motels are required to be equipped with fire sprinkler system. It follows that since a public recreation cabin would (arguably) be classified as an R-1 Occupancy (same as a hotel, transient w/ occupant load greater than 10), Iowa Code Section 903.2.8 would require it also to be equipped with a fire sprinkler system. Story County Conservation, along with their architects and civil engineers, is analyzing this issue so they may be worthy of a conversation. The Iowa DNR architect is likely to have good insight on this issue in relation to their newer cabins, such as those at Lake Darling State Park.

11. Novel Features

Bike trails, hiking trails, nature centers, traditional playground equipment and shoreline fishing are the standard-bearers for kids’ options in and around cabins. There may be more options to consider. Warren Meyer suggested placing a “Kids Camp Site” right next to family cabins, with a plat-form and/or a canvas tent just for kids to sleep in next to their parents’ cabin, as well as smaller furniture and fire-ring—all designed to get kids to try tent camping for a night where it is safe and they can go inside the cabin if it starts to lightening, snow, rain or gets too windy. Other options include providing river boulders nearby to climb on, or a nearby sand pile is cheap fun. Bird or butterfly habitat plantings are not uncommon. A bird-watching blind can be an adventure. A duck blind near a swamp or slough is a bonus. Some parks have put in common fish cleaning or game cleaning tables. Frisbee or disc golf courses are inexpensive and frisbee is making a comeback. Dog kennels or fenced areas for pets are now becoming popular in urban parks, but carry some liability analysis. A dock on a lake is huge, but takes staff time. Logs and stumps, if properly arranged and presented, can be prime play-ground tools. See www.thebrentonarbooretum.org/NaturePlay.asp; Brenton Arboretum.

12. Miscellaneous

This book is primarily directed to traditional year-round public recreation cabins. We recognize there are many options for overnight stays in parks. This section touches on some of those options, expecting that park management plans might include a variety of planned experiences and even an evolving set of experiences and assets. Experimenting can be half the fun and certainly a genuine asset of the large number of park jurisdictions reflected in Iowa’s county and state park systems!

A. Impact of Nearby Lodge Facility on Cabin Occupancy Rates

There is a real contest of experiences and ideas about whether cabins enhance nearby lodge facility use, and vice versa, whether nearby lodge facilities enhance cabin occupancy. Park managers just disagree on the correlation, both positive and negative, and suggest that really the users reflect two different demographics. Some argue that public park lodge facilities will inherently cost more than the local community center or VFW lodge, and lower cost will prevail. And there is also the issue of how high an occupancy rate (and at what price point) does a lodge have to reach before that much larger cost of construction and maintenance justifies that investment. At this point, we feel we need more objective data before we weigh in on any definitive existence or degree of causative impact between a lodge and cabin use in parks.

B. Technology, Experiments, and Design Trends

Year-round cabins (versus camper cabins) is a clear trend over the last ten years in Iowa. Another clear trend is toward pre-fab cabins, based upon cost efficiencies, as well as design and construction improvements. (That's not to say that stick-built and kit cabins are not also successful.) Low maintenance building materials and HVAC alternatives are also a trend, as is permitting pets and providing Wi-Fi and TV access, as well as ADA accessibility. Locating cabins in proximity to bike and hiking trails is also a trend that is just starting. Banning smoking is a trend completed.

We have not seen other unique technology trends among Iowa cabins yet. Experiments yes; trends no. There has not been a great deal of experimenting yet with alternative energy sources, recycled construction materials or unusual design options. That may be a function of cost, time or expertise of park managers. We may see experiments (and then trends) in the future in windows, inside and outside lighting, landscaping, cabin placement in relation to other cabins or RV pads, porch spaces and use, and gathering room size and use. Cabins marketing may also witness major changes in the years ahead (in addition to mycountyparks.com), and a move toward the "experience" and multi-park planning approach to park use. When we see something new, we will endeavor to point it out, for better or worse.

Off-Grid Cabins

We know of no fully off-grid cabin in Iowa. By that we encompass cabins only reliant on natural water collection and solar, geo-thermal, wind, or wood-burning energy. There are some cabins that use "solar" power. See Fontana Park, Buchanan County and Lelah Bradley Park, Appanoose County. Conestoga Cabins is also in the process of introducing a fully off-grid version of a kit cabin in the months or years ahead.

Non-traditional Cabin Options (Yurts, Platform Tents, Tiny Houses, Metal Cabins, etc.)

Webster County Conservation has purchased some Prison Industry manufactured "Tiny Houses" for placement in Gypsum City Park, Webster County. We are not aware of any Mobile Hiking Huts, or Canvas Platform Tents in Iowa parks at this time. We are also not aware of any instance when a park maintained one or more temporary RVs as a means to test the cabin market or particular cabin locations. We understand there are metal grain-bin style cabins in Dog Creek Park, O'Brien County, for consideration. We are not aware of any truly "treehouse" cabins in Iowa, although it has been discussed. Yurts are available at Pammel State Park, Madison County, and McIntosh Woods State Park, Cerro Gordo County.

Converting Existing Residential Structures into Rental Cabins

Unless there is a historical preservation argument to be made, whether to build new cabins or refurbish existing residential structures surely comes down to cost comparisons and likely occupancy rates or potential revenue generation. Polk County Conservation recently acquired property with a five-year old residential house and a 100-year-old log cabin, and they are considering what structures may be economically (and desirably) converted into rental cabins. White Rock Conservancy inherited 6-7 residential homes or cottages when it acquired parkland, and they have converted all of them into rental cabins. See www.whiterockconservancy.org/rooms-and-cottages. Contacting these park managers directly may offer the best opportunity for others to evaluate the alternatives best for them. At present, we have heard no glowing reviews about converted residential houses into public recreation cabins. A different category is probably reflected in the tentative desire of park managers at Pine Lake State Park to convert a Civil Conservation Corp era stone latrine into a rental cabin. There, historical considerations may outweigh all other factors.

Recycled Materials

Increasingly, cabin designers are advocating for the use of recycled materials, such as “ReWall” (recycled plastic containers), now in use in the cabins at Lake Darling State Park, Washington County. Ryan Richey, DNR architect, has some information on this subject.

Remote Site Video Security Surveillance

Most county park cabins are located within line-of-sight of the park office or park manager’s residence. This is done to prevent vandalism or unruly renter behavior relating to the cabins. This also limits the number of sites in a park that can be considered for cabins—and the number of parks within a county that can be considered. Remote site video surveillance only outside the cabin has not been tried to address these challenges and create more cabin site opportunities, but it could be. Oakland Mills Park, Henry County, does use remote video surveillance for its nature center, office and maintenance facilities, with cell phone-based access to video by park managers.

C. Re-conditioning Camper Cabins to Year-Round Cabins

This is an interesting topic and one that will be addressed at the local level all over Iowa in the next ten years, because even though few camper cabins have been built or installed in the last five years, there are dozens of camper cabins already in place all over Iowa’s park systems. There are two schools of thought generally on re-conditioning. One school opts to change the camper cabin experience to more closely resemble the year-round cabin experience. Lake Icaria Park in Adams County opted for this approach by adding bathrooms and kitchens to existing camper cabins, at a cost approaching \$50,000 per camper cabin. They are pleased with the results, but also note floor plan is not optimal: the size and location of the sleeping and central living space remains unchanged.

The other school of thought opts to maintain camper cabins as camper cabins, usually with electricity, microwaves and lights. Hamilton County Conservation at Briggs Woods Park has chosen this route. Repairs are done to the existing structure, as is painting or staining the exterior, but no plumbing or other cooking facilities are added. The park managers then built separate year-round cabins to expand the portfolio of experiences.

A middle-of-the-road approach might be to add porch space to a camper cabin—or a screened in porch—which effectively adds living space but at a much-reduced cost. Of

course, park managers have the option to sell, move or otherwise replace camper cabins with traditional year-round cabins when their funding and any park strategic plan permits that endeavor.

D. Selling, Moving, and Replacing Camper Cabins

We are not aware yet of any instance in Iowa where camper cabins have been sold or moved, within or among park systems, however that doesn't mean it cannot economically be done or that it isn't desirable. It may also be true that a local person wanting a camper cabin could buy and transport a camper (or possibly a year-round pre-fab) cabin where that makes sense. In either event, if a park is interested in starting a cabin project or upgrading a cabin project, this should be an option. We understand that crane rental in at least one instance was about \$3,000 for lifting two pre-fab cabins off of a semi (Tower Rock County Park, Hardin County). There are semi-trailer transports available, but we are not aware of the cost. Certainly existing pre-fab vendors are using some trucking company to transport their products and that trucker may be available. We are anxious to hear of instances where this has been tried in Iowa, because it seems like a win-win alternative in many instances and with a variety of goals in mind.

E. Inside and Outside Ceiling Fans

The only space where ceiling fans seem to make sense is in the main gathering room, even with a vaulted ceiling. At least one park tried ceiling fans in the porch ceilings outside and no one used them. Conversely, some parks tried ceiling fans in the bedrooms, but they were often damaged (and maybe dangerous) because kids would bounce on the beds and hit them.

F. Wall Safes

Wall safes are now standard in hotels and resorts. We have not seen any safes in public recreation cabins in Iowa. But it is coming. The one issue may be the staff time associated with providing and changing safe combinations.

G. Insurance (Construction Bonds, General Fire & Liability)

Those interviewed by The Iowa Cabins Task Force did not have experience with construction bonds, though that is not to say that they are not beneficial. In general, if you are concerned about the financial well-being of your contractor, a construction bond may be beneficial. We have heard varying accounts of issues involving general fire and liability insurance. At least one park manager indicated that they were told by the local insurance agent that liability insurance would not be available if either a gas or wood-burning fireplace were installed in cabins. As a result, no fireplaces were installed. The cabins in Scott County parks all have gas fireplaces, and there were no issues with obtaining general fire and liability insurance or with paying allegedly inflated premiums due to fireplaces. We are inclined to believe that this issue is really about the local agent and a particular insurance company. Therefore, if a park manager wants fireplaces, simply switching agents or insurance companies may best facilitate this issue.

H. Interior Signs for Renters

We are looking for funny and effective ideas for small signs inside cabins to motivate positive renter behavior and add some color to the experience. Jimmy Johns sandwich shops have great signs along these lines. There should be similar ideas for cabins. Please submit your ideas to the name and email address at the end of this book.

Chapter IV: Construction Considerations

This chapter is designed to get you started and offer hints at some of the questions you might ask your cabin vendor, contractor, engineer or architect, and certainly whoever on the park staff takes on this responsibility. See Appendix #6 for a checklist of construction considerations.

1. Construction Tips from Iowa Cabin Operators

Dozens of public recreation cabin operators have contributed to this book, directly and indirectly. They have offered oral tips about their successes and failures. Those are included for whatever value readers ascribe. Some of these tips may apply to your situation and some may not. You may disagree with some tips or be aware of an alternative view from another cabin manager. These are organized in no particular order or category for your consideration and investigation. See also Cabin Case Studies design tips available at www.iaparks.org/cabins-task-force.

- Don't cut corners on insulation.
- Don't cut corners on total window and glass exposure for dining, kitchen or family room areas.
- Don't worry about bedrooms as much; people just generally need a bed and some privacy.
- Covered porch space is relatively cheap, as is any additional uncovered deck space.
- Do your homework on modern building materials; get second opinions if you have any doubts.
- Resist the urge to do it the way it has always been done.

2. Recruiting a Mentor

Before you go any further, it is highly recommended that you recruit a cabin mentor: someone who has experienced the entire project process and can advise you on how to go forward. This is likely a public recreation cabin manager or park manager, but it may also include private cabin managers and/or a long-time cabin vendor or contractor. The cabin vendor you are investigating may have a suggestion in your county, region or state. Even a few key tips from someone who has travelled this road before can save you many sleepless nights and future headaches and expenses.

3. Construction Alternatives

There are a lot of options when it comes to the actual construction of cabins. The following matrix (Figure IV-3) is intended to help identify the best option for your site, based on a number of different parameters.

4. Project Timing and Calendar

The project calendar is heavily affected by the type of cabins you decide to build, the vendor you select, and the site preparation required. But, if you are sensitive to cash flow considerations, creating a calendar that allows you to start rental operations on May 1st of any given year will maximize your cash flow for the first year of operations. That is because with

Figure IV-3: Construction Alternative Matrix

Review each of the categories and circle the option that best fits your site and situation. If you have other options or don't know fully, feel free to circle more than one option. Once you fill out the full matrix, count up the answers or circles in each category in the spaces provided. That should give you some indication of what options are most promising for your circumstances.

Question	Potential Answer	Potential Answer	Potential Answer
What is your access to in-house construction labor	Plenty of in-house workers who can build buildings	Workers available, but no builders	No in-house workers
Do you have access to volunteers?	Not that we want to use for this project	Yes! We have people who want to build things	Not that we want to use for this project
What is your access to a building contractor (RFP process or direct contract)?	We have worked with building contractors in the past	We rarely work with contractors, other than specialized projects (concrete pouring, utility construction, etc.)	We almost never work with contractors
Can you easily drive a semi-truck to the cabin site?	No, it's too remote	Yes, but we may have to build a road and/or remove a few trees	Yes, it's easy to drive a semi-truck to the site
Do you have someone on staff who can be a project manager?	Yes, we're familiar with project management	Yes, we've done a bit of project management.	Not really
Do you want your cabin to be mobile if park expands or changes?	Not really	Not really	This may happen with park expansion and we may want to move cabins then
Do you have a shorter or longer timeline to completion and cash-flow?	Longer timeline, and the project can take 5.0 years with possible delays	Shorter timeline, and the project should probably take 1.5-3.0 years with fewer likely delays	Shorter timeline, and the project should probably take 1.5 years with fewer likely delays
How important is it for rental operations to start on May 1st and cash flow to start a few months before then?	Start date is flexible and pre-operation cash flow is not high priority	Start date is less flexible and pre-operation cash flow is more of a high priority	We want to start rental operations on May 1st and cash flow a few months before then through online reservations
How long do you want your cabins to last absent total refurbishment?	We want our cabins to last 75-100 years	We want our cabins to last 25-75 years	We want our cabins to last 25-60 years
Totals:			
You should investigate:	Stick-built Cabins	Kit-construction Cabins	Pre-fabricated Cabins

web-based reservation and payment systems, you could start accumulating cash six months or more before May 1st. Careful planning reduces the risks of delays and ultimately creates cash flow. Total project time requirements are discussed in Chapter I(3).

5. Available Park Staff for Construction and Supervision

A factor in comparing and distinguishing between different types of cabin vendors may be the availability and skill of existing park staff for cabin construction and supervision of construction. This is especially true where a park is comparing kit and stick-built cabin construction and pre-fabricated cabin installation. Prior residential construction experience, foundation work, finished carpentry and cabinet work may all be applicable skills. Some have used high school shop class students or volunteers from civic organizations for kit cabin construction (or even stick-built cabin construction), but the risks of costly errors are much greater with this alternative, generally speaking. It is a separate issue where a park can obtain donated site preparation, utility installation, foundation work or construction services from existing contractors. Notably, the park staff in Henry County recently constructed two year-round cabins, using an off-the-shelf software design product for the design phase and a local building materials supplier for general support, producing a distinctly local design. Park staff did the construction, except running utility lines and pouring the basement. The kit/stick-built cabins at Lelah Bradley Park in Centerville, Appanoose County, utilized local professional and lay volunteers to construct cabins. Project management was run by the park manager in order to save costs, but was feasible due to the park manager's familial background in construction. See Figure IV-5 to track the availability of park staff for construction purposes.

A. Managing Design Professionals

If you plan to hire outside design consultants (architects, landscape architects, engineers, etc.), we have a couple quick tips. First, select designers who have worked on cabin projects previously. Many designers may think that cabins are easy to design; however, great cabin design demands a balance of cost-effective solutions and comfortable, yet tough finishes. Not everyone can provide that balance, so interview your designers well. Second, be wary of over-designed cabins. The internet can provide a plethora of cabin images that show exquisite finishes, dynamic spaces, and luxurious experiences. Designers may use those spaces for inspiration, not fully understanding that they are privately-owned cabins. Simple is often best when it comes to public recreation cabin design, so make sure you share that vision with your design team. Finally, keep your design team focused on your schedule. This is especially important if you are relying on an opening date for your cabins to meet your fiscal plans. While not typically a big issue, design delays can lead to delays throughout the rest of the process, so keep your design team on time from the beginning.

B. Managing Contractors and Subcontractors

If you are stick-building your cabins, we strongly recommend having a general contractor (GC) on board to help schedule and manage subcontractors. We understand that the cost for a GC may seem unnecessary and may be an easy item to cut if your costs are high, however, if run well, a GC can simplify your life. They not only simplify the communication streams between the workers and your staff, they also simplify the contracts required to get the project going.

If you decide that you or your staff will be the GC, we recommend acting like a GC as much as possible. Develop a schedule which you can share with all your subs so they have a document that confirms when they are going to be needed. While there will likely be schedule revisions, keeping your subs connected to the timeline can be one of the best ways to get your project

Figure IV-5: Park Staff Availability for Construction and Supervision Checklist—Your Info

Note the staff members you have and their potential skills/role in your upcoming cabin project.

Employee	Site Prep & Utilities	Foundation & Footings	Framing & Exterior	Interior & Finish Work	Plumbing & Electrical	Budget Oversight

done on time. Also, host weekly construction meetings in order to keep the project on the top-of-mind for your subs. Construction delays can often happen due to subcontractors losing focus on what projects are important. Construction meetings can keep subs connected and increase communication as well. We are advised that when using local contractors, consider using materials for construction that your contractor’s employees are familiar with already, based upon prior experience.

C. Using Civic and School Volunteers

The feedback we get from park managers is that using civic organization or school volunteers for cabin construction sounds like good publicity and maybe a cost savings. Generally speaking, however, park managers suggest this approach be avoided. Maybe volunteers could help with landscaping or building the deck onto the cabins. But nothing fundamental to the cabins. Alternatively, using experienced park staff or paid professionals with clear contractual expectations will save future lost sleep and expense. We do have counter-examples: a set of kit log-stacked cabins was built by community volunteers and park staff in Oakland Mills Park, Henry County, and kit/stick-built cabins in Lelah Bradley Park, Appanoose County. Park staff at both report it worked very well.

D. Public Bidding Process

Odds are you are used to utilizing a public, low-bid process to secure outside construction services. This process does have its benefits, as it can often secure the lowest cost contract as possible. However, since cabins can be relatively simple structures to build, you may run into contractors who are low-balling bids on cabins to build their resume. If you use the low-bid process, we encourage using experience-based requirements that allow you to reject bids if they do not demonstrate prior successful completed cabin projects.

However, the low-bid contract is not the only way! Instead, look into the “construction manager at-risk” contract. In that system, the contractor is selected from an owner-chosen shortlist of known and experienced contractors. The contractors interview for the project during the design phase, then agree to a lump sum construction cost for the project. That cost is then locked-in (provided there are no unforeseen issues, of course) so you can still maintain the budgets you want. The other benefit is that the contractor can then work with the design team to find additional places to save costs or make the construction process

more efficient. While this bidding system is still relatively new to many smaller agencies, it is how large-scale construction projects have been managed for a long time and is now being utilized for small complex projects as well. Talk to your county supervisors or other agencies which handle contracts to see how this process can work for your project.

6. Cabin Vendors and Iowa Customer Experiences

PLEASE READ: IPF and the Iowa Cabins Task Force do not endorse or vouch for any particular alternative for cabin construction, nor do IPF and the Iowa Cabins Task Force endorse or vouch for the work, credit-worthiness or reputation of any particular cabin-related vendor. Parks personnel using this book are directed to contact the cabin vendors of their choice and any local references, which may (or may not) include those listed below. In any event, speaking to more than one previous or existing cabin vendor customer or reference, especially those with an Iowa connection, is advisable

A. Individually Designed and Stick-built Vendors

Architects for stick-built year-round cabins have generally been local professionals, or park personnel with an aptitude or interest in cabin design. Similarly, construction personnel have generally been local, or park personnel with an aptitude or interest in some or all aspects of cabin construction. Examples of individually designed and stick-built cabins in Iowa include the following county and state parks:

- Travis Paul, Director, Adams County Conservation, Lake Icaria Park, 1688 Lake Icaria Rd Corning, IA 50841, Office: 641-322-4793, accb@adamscountyia.com
- Ross Tuel, Park Ranger, Marion County Conservation, Cordova Park, 1378 Highway G-28, Otley, IA 50214, Office: 641-627-5935, cordovacopark@gmail.com
- Zach Haworth, Park Ranger, Lake Darling State Park; Office: 319-694-2323, 111 Lake Darling Road, Brighton, IA 52540, zachary.haworth@dnr.iowa.gov; www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/Iowa-State-Parks/ParkDetails/ParkID/610109/idAdminBoundary/270; www.iowadnr.gov
- John Pullis, Director, Henry County Conservation Department, Oakland Mills Park, Office: 319-986-5067; Cell: 319-931-2836; email: jpullis@henrycountyconservation.com
- Curtis "Pie" Reighard, Director, Keokuk County Conservation, Lake Belva Deer Park, 19366 242nd Ave., Sigourney, IA 52591; Office: 641-622-3757, Cell: 641-660-8621; kccb@cloudburst9.net

We did not conduct direct comparisons or study appropriate feature differences, but Iowa does have experience with very different sources for cabin designs and construction: (a) park manager designed/constructed cabins (Oakland Mills Park, Henry County Conservation; Cordova Park, Marion County Conservation; Briggs Woods Park, Hamilton County Conservation); (b) professional architect and contractor built (Lake Icaria Park, Adams County Conservation; Jester Park, Polk County Conservation; Lake Darling State Park; Union Grove State Park and Nine Eagles State Park, using the professional DNR architect and commercial contractors); and (c) some flexible combination from pre-fab cabins vendors (Scott County Park and West Lake Park, Scott County Conservation; Deep Lakes Park, Muscatine County Conservation; Tower Rock Park, Hardon County Conservation). At some point, it might be illuminating to do direct comparisons of design features and construction approaches, based upon the background and perspective of the various designers and constructors.

B. Pre-fabricated Vendors

The issue with pre-fab cabin vendors center on certain restrictions on size due to interstate cargo regulations limited width and height. One cabin vendor argues that these interstate cargo regulations may not actually impact cabin selection, because few cabins exceed 30' in width in any event. The second issue is that the semi-truck must be able to get to the spot where the cabins are to be placed, as does a fairly substantial crane in order to lift the pieces off of the semi-trailer. The same cabin vendor suggests that even where a semi cannot travel, they have used crawlers on-site to place the cabins. The great upside involves construction efficiencies and the relatively short timetable from the date the units are ordered to the date they can be delivered to the site. Like kit vendors, pre-fab vendors have some substantial flexibility in cabin design features. Possible vendors with Iowa references include:

- **Design Homes** of Chippewa Falls, Design Homes Inc. (www.designhomes.com), Jake Schneckloth, Sales Manager, 1180 East Price Street, Eldridge, IA 52748. dheldridge@designhomes.com; Office: 563-285-9575; Greg Larson, Sales Manager, 3181 Joliet Avenue, Missouri Valley, IA 51555; dhmovalley@designhomes.com; Office: 712-642-5000; Jeff Irvine, Vice President, 2054 125th Street, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729; jeffirvine@designhomes.com; Office: 715-726-2034
 - Local references regarding Design Homes include:
 - Roger A. Kean, Director, Scott County Conservation Board, Scott County Park, 14910 110th Ave., Davenport, IA 52804, Office: 563-328-3280, ext.1, (5601 internal); roger.kean@scottcountyiowa.com; www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation
 - Scott Nelson, Director, Harrison County Conservation Board, Willow Lake Recreation Area, 2725 Easton Trail, Woodbine, IA 51579, Office: 712-647-2785, ext. 21, HarrisonCountyParks.org, Facebook.com/Harrison County Conservation, stnelson@harrisoncountyparks.org
 - Mark Shoemaker, Director, Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, Arrowhead Park, 29357 310th Street, Neola, IA; mark.shoemaker@pottcounty-ia.gov; Cell: 402-680-6062.
 - Curt Weiss, Director, Muscatine County Conservation, Deep Lakes Park, Office: 563-264-5922, Cell: 563-299-4489, cweiss@co.muscatine.ia.us
 - Rick Schneider, retired Director at Woodbury County Conservation Board, Snyder Bend Park, when the Design Homes cabins were installed in 2009 and worked with their local Design Homes sales person. The current Director is Dan Heissel; dheissel@woodburyparks.org; www.woodburyparks.org; Office: 712-258-0838;
 - Adam Fendrick, Park Planner, Polk County Conservation, 11407 NW Jester Park Drive, Granger, IA 50109, Office: 515-473-1956; Adam.Fendrick@polkcountyiowa.gov; Yellow Banks Park.
 - Jerad Getter, Director, Mills County Conservation, Pony Creek Conservation Park, Office: 712-527-9685; millsccbia@hotmail.com

- **Star Log Cabins**, Jim, Carrie and Charlotte Schmitt (owners), 608-487-0087, starlogcabin@gmail.com; 907 Avon Road, Sparta, WI and 610 West Hwy 16, West Salem, WI; www.starlogcabins.com;
 - Local references regarding Star Log Cabins Homes include:
 - Wes Wiese, Director, Hardin County Conservation, Tower Rock Park, Cell: 641-373-1767, Office: 641-648-4361; wwiese@hardincountyia.gov; Cabins: www.hardincountyconservation.com/page/6

C. Kit Stacked-log Vendors

Kit stacked-log vendors are willing to consider multiple design options and can accommodate more cabin size variations because the pieces being transported by interstate trucking are necessarily smaller compared to pre-fab cabin sections. www.logcabinhub.com/log-cabin-kits; Possible vendors with Iowa references include:

- **Conestoga Cabins**, John Connell, General Manager, 246 N. Lincoln Avenue, Lebanon, PA. 17046, Office: 717-306-4490; info@conestogalogcabins.com; and Larry Rife, AB Creative (manufacturer's representative), Office: 515-333-9800, larry@abcreative.net; www.conestogalogcabins.com
- **Cedar Forest Products**, Ben LeBarge, President, P.O. Box 145, West Olive, Michigan 49460, Office: 1-800-552-9495; cfpinfo@cedarforestproducts.com; and Larry Rife, AB Creative (manufacturer's representative), Office: 515-333-9800, larry@abcreative.net;
 - Local references regarding Conestoga Cabins and Cedar Forest Products include:
 - Adam Fendrick, Park Planner, Polk County Conservation, 11407 NW Jester Park Drive, Granger, IA 50109, Office: 515-473-1956; Adam.Fendrick@polkcountyiowa.gov; Jester County Park and Yellow Banks County Park; www.cedarforestproducts.com/inner.php?p=35;
 - John Pullis, Director, Henry County Conservation Department, Oakland Mills Park, Office: 319-986-5067; Cell: 319-931-2836; email: jpullis@henrycountyconservation.com
- **American Log Homes**, PO Box 77923, Charlotte, NC 28271-7021; www.thegreatamericanlogco.com; (704) 602-3035
 - Local references regarding American Log Homes include:
 - Scott Nelson, Director, Harrison County Conservation Board, Willow Lake Recreation Area (White Pine Cabin), 2725 Easton Trail, Woodbine, IA 51579, Office: 712-647-2785, ext. 21, www.HarrisonCountyParks.org, www.facebook.com/HarrisonCountyConservation, stnelson@harrisoncountyparks.org

D. Kit/Stick-Built Vendors

This option offers a cabin design which closely resembles the "North Woods" appearance, but without the significant adjustments associated with stacked-log cabins. The interior layout can be entirely customized.

- **Landmark Log Homes**, P.O. Box 4228, Frankfort, KY 40604; 877-875-1154; www.landmarkloghomes.com; Robert Sweeney: robert@landmarkloghomes.com;
 - Local references regarding Landmark Log Homes include:
 - Appanoose Conservation Foundation, 711 West Green Street, Centerville, Iowa 52544; <https://www.facebook.com/appanooseconservationfoundation>; Mark Hoffman, President, Cell: 641-895-4148; hoffmankids3@hotmail.com

E. Individually Designed Stacked-Log Vendors

The only known locally designed and sourced stacked-log cabins are located in Briggs Woods Park in Hamilton County. There are some advantages (in terms of using local timber), but there are some unique annual maintenance issues associated with stacked-log cabins. You are referred to:

- Brian Lammers, Director, Hamilton County Conservation, Briggs Woods Park, hccblammers@wmtel.net; Office: 515-832-9570, Cell: 515-297-0436, www.facebook.com/Hamiltoncountyconservation; www.mycountyparks.com; Mike Brandrup might also be of assistance.

F. Stone Vendors

There are currently no stone cabin vendors known. The stone cabins that do exist are from the 1920s and 1930s, built by the WPA or CCC, and located at Pine Lake State Park, Backbone State Park and Dolliver State Park.

- Andy Place, Park Ranger, Pine Lake State Park, Iowa Department of Natural Resources; Office: 641-858-5832; 22620 CO HWY S-56, Eldora, IA 50627; andrew.place@dnr.iowa.gov; www.iowadnr.gov

7. Rough Project Cost Comparisons and Sample Spreadsheet

We have created a sample spreadsheet, with the help of private developers, cabin vendors and park managers, to provide a place to start. The categories of expense and revenue are helpful. What the numbers are across from the categories will vary a great deal by type of cabin selected, site chosen, site preparation needed, and cabin rental environment of a particular park. That is where the local input all comes to bear. But let us start with those sample spreadsheets (whether for pre-fabricated cabin construction, kit-construction or individually designed and stick-built cabin construction), attached as Figure IV-8b.

One goal, in addition to ongoing positive cash flow from operations, is growing and then maintaining a capital surplus account for cabin operations. Disciplining the cabin operations to create and maintain a capital surplus account will fund long-term maintenance, major cabin refurbishment or new and replacement cabins. Some parks use that capital surplus account to fund other non-cabin operational expenses.

See Appendix #13: Comparative Parks Data Sheet to see information on cabin costs and what was included in the cost.

Figure IV-8b: Sample Cost Estimation Worksheet—Your Info

The worksheet below is intended to give you an outline or framework in which to build your cost estimation worksheet.

Construction Item	1-Bedroom Projection	2-Bedroom Projection	Your Results
Modular or Pre-fab Construction and Delivery			
Grading and Site Prep Work			
County Inspections			
Electricity			
Well			
Septic Sewer			
Furnishings			
Annual Marketing			
Total Capital Cost			

Projected Operations	1-Bedroom Projection	2-Bedroom Projection	Your Results
Rate per Night			
Occupancy Rates			

Monthly Income	1-Bedroom Projection	2-Bedroom Projection	Your Results
Monthly Rental Income			
Cleaning Fees (\$30 - \$40/night)			
Total Monthly Income			

Monthly Expenses	1-Bedroom Projection	2-Bedroom Projection	Your Results
Cleaning			
Utilities			
Maintenance Reserve/Depreciation			
Management Fees (~15%)			
Total Monthly Expenses			

Net Monthly Cash-flow			
Net Annual Cash-flow			
Payback (in years)			

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Chapter V: Cabin Funding

Cabin funding is often the biggest and first question park managers face. The options that have been used are set forth in a Cabin Funding Checklist, Appendix #7. They all can work, but it does quickly become evident which of these options fits the personality of the park and governing body involved. Talking to another park manager and/or supervisor about their experience with the option you are considering is a great short-cut to what might actually work for you.

1. Funding Alternatives

The most common funding option is full-government funding upfront from the applicable jurisdiction (i.e., the Board of Supervisors or the Legislature). The second most common model for funding is a combination of different public funding pools (often for different parts of the whole project, i.e., roads and utilities from one pot; cabin construction from another pot). The third most common model is an interest-bearing or non-interest-bearing “loan” from the applicable Board of Supervisors to the County Conservation Board for cabin construction, possibly combined with multiple sources of private donor funding and various other state and local government pots. So far, only two purely privately funded cabin projects, and no private lender-based project, or third-party operator/lessor projects are known.

A. Full Governmental Grants

With regard to cabin projects in county parks, we repeatedly hear from park professionals that the key is bringing along the County Conservation Board and one or more key members of the Board of Supervisors (as well as professional county managers where applicable). Very wealthy urban counties have to make fewer trade-offs and tough choices when investing in cabins; but even with that caveat (and recognizing that counties are all in different financial positions for many reasons), there is a way to make progress toward a successful cabin program. It is also surely related to the pre-existing interests and motivations of the elected officials involved. All of that said, building relationships is routinely what we hear from park personnel with successful cabin programs. Full governmental funding is surely the simplest approach to funding a cabin program. Here are a few folks with some applicable experience:

- Roger A. Kean, Director, Scott County Conservation Board, Scott County Park, 14910 110th Ave., Davenport, IA 52804, Office: 563-328-3280, ext.1, (5601 internal); roger.kean@scottcountyiowa.com; www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation;
- Mark Shoemaker, Director, Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, Arrowhead Park, 29357 310th Street, Neola, IA; mark.shoemaker@pottcounty-ia.gov; Cell: 402-680-6062.
- Curt Weiss, Director, Muscatine County Conservation Board, Deep Lakes Park, Office: 563-264-5922; Cell: 563-299-4489, cweiss@co.muscatine.ia.us
- Adam Fendrick, Park Planner, Polk County Conservation, 11407 NW Jester Park Drive, Granger, IA 50109, Office: 515-473-1956; Adam.Fendrick@polkcountyiowa.gov; Jester Park and Yellow Banks Park; www.cedarforestproducts.com/inner.php?p=35; www.cedarforestproducts.com/inner.php?p=35
- Curtis “Pie” Reighard, Director, Keokuk County Conservation, Lake Belva Deer Park, 19366 242nd Ave, Sigourney, IA 52591; Office: 641-622-3757, Cell: 641-660-8621; kccb@cloudburst9.net

At the state park level, we are aware of the most recent cabin construction projects, including Union Grove State Park and Lake Darling State Park. In both instances, there were substantial private donors involved to supplement state budget funding from various sources. We are not aware of fully funded state park cabins built recently entirely from state funds.

B. Creating a Capital Account

Harrison County Conservation and the Hamilton County Conservation maintain capital accounts for their cabin operations, initially established to pay down the intra-governmental loans used to fund the cabins, but also to build funds for future maintenance and additional or replacement cabins. These capital accounts may hold anywhere from \$10,000 to \$100,000, depending how much time has passed. This approach not only encourages park managers to be conscientious of costs, but it builds good will with County Boards of Supervisors, who appreciate the accountability. There have been some concerns raised by parks managers that when tough times come financially for a county, supervisors will directly or indirectly tap this account for other public services or investments, not intended at the beginning. Maybe so; but that is a challenge that just seeks a solution and focus. We expect the creation and use of cabin capital accounts will grow.

C. Intra-Governmental Loans (With or Without Bonding)

This is a promising trend in cabin financing. By way of example, Hamilton County Board of Supervisors loaned all of the necessary funds to the Hamilton County Conservation Board for cabins from a refinanced hospital bond project, totaling about \$600,000. All of those funds, plus interest due, must be paid back from cabin revenues over seven (7) years, minus all (or nearly all) attributable expenses. All rental payments are placed in a single capital account, and cabin expenses are taken directly from that account. Similarly, the Hardin County Board of Supervisors required repayment of their loan over four (4) years. For those case study counties that utilized an intra-county loan to finance cabin construction, the payback was generally 3-10 years, and most on a 7-year payback. This assumed county park staff did routine maintenance, and in some cases, did initial construction. Here are a few folks with some applicable experience:

- Brian Lammers, Director, Hamilton County Conservation Board, Briggs Woods Park, hccblammers@wmtel.net; Office: 515-832-9570, Cell: 515-297-0436, www.facebook.com/Hamiltoncountyconservation; www.mycountyparks.com
- Wes Wiese, Director, Hardin County Conservation Board, Tower Rock Park, Cell: 641-373-1767, Office: 641-648-4361, wwiese@hardincountyia.gov; www.hardincountyconservation.com/page/6

We understand how the intra-governmental loan approach has worked at the county park level, but we are open to ideas about how the same basic concept might also work at the state park level with cabins and cash flow. It would be a terrific opportunity for state park cabin expansion.

D. Private Donors (Individuals, Corporations, and Foundations)

We know of several instances where private donors have partnered with governmental unit and foundation grants to fund cabins. See Lake Darling State Park and Union Grove State Park. We know of two instances where the cabin development budget was funded by private donors.

- King Cabin. Scott Nelson, Director, Harrison County Conservation Board, Willow Lake Recreation Area, 2725 Easton Trail, Woodbine, IA 51579, Office: 712-647-2785, ext. 21, HarrisonCountyParks.org, Facebook.com/Harrison County Conservation, stnelson@harrisoncountyparks.org
- (New) Cabins, John Pullis, Director, Henry County Conservation Board, Oakland Mills Park, 2593 Nature Center Drive, Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641; Office: 319-986-5067; Cell: 319-931-2836; jpullis@henrycountyconservation.com

There may be many more examples of both successful combined funding efforts and single private donor cabin developments. We continue to investigate.

E. Combination of Governmental Sources and Private Donors

This is generally the jackpot category of cabin funding. On a larger scale, the Loess Hills Region is working to put together a funding package for nine cabins split between Pottawattamie County Parks and Mills County Parks, using a variety of funding sources. The economic development professionals involved with at least two regions have been right in the center of the funding source gathering, including the Loess Hills Region and the Grant Wood Loop. The mix of sources can best be described by those involved, including:

- Mark Shoemaker, Director, Pottawattamie County Conservation Board, Arrowhead Park, 29357 310th Street, Neola, IA; mark.shoemaker@pottcounty-ia.gov; Cell: 402-680-6062.
- Michelle Wodtke Franks, Golden Hills RCD, Executive Director, and Loess Hills Region, Coordinator, 712 S. Hwy 6, Oakland, IA 51560; Office: 712- 482-3029; www.goldenhillsrccd.org; michelle.franks@goldenhillsrccd.org
- Jerad Getter, Director, Mills County Conservation Board, Pony Creek Conservation Park, 56235 Deacon Rd, Pacific Junction, IA 51561, Office: 712-527-9685; millsccbia@hotmail.com

Two state parks in particular have had tremendous success with combined public and private funding of cabins, Union Grove State Park and Lake Darling State Park.

- Zach Haworth, Park Ranger, Lake Darling State Park; Office: 319-694-2323, 111 Lake Darling Road, Brighton, IA 52540, zachary.haworth@dnr.iowa.gov; www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/Iowa-State-Parks/ParkDetails/ParkID/610109/idAdminBoundary/270; www.iowadnr.gov
- Union Grove State Park, 1215 220th St, Gladbrook, IA 50635; Office: 641- 473-2556.

It is also instructive to visit with park managers, as well as county or regional officials who have not yet secured all of the funding needed for cabins, but they are in the process of identifying and securing those funds, including Jackson County Conservation, Ringgold County Conservation and the Grant Wood Loop.

- Kate Zimmerman, Director, Ringgold County Conservation Board, 2205 210th St., Mount Ayr, IA 50854; Office: 641-464-2787; Cell: 641-234-1519; www.mycountyparks.com/County/Ringgold.aspx; www.facebook.com/RinggoldCountyConservationBoard; RinggoldCCB@ringgoldcounty.us



- Daryl Parker, Director, Jackson County Conservation Board, 18670 63rd St., Maquoketa, IA 52060; 563-652-3783; darylaparker@jacksonccb.com
- Nicolas Hockenberry, Director, Jackson County Economic Alliance, 119 South Main St, Suite 5, Maquoketa, IA 52060; Office: 563-652-4549; Fax: 563-652-4446; hockenberry@thejcea.org
- Dave Heiar, Senior Advisor & Community Coach, Jackson County Economic Alliance, 119 South Main St. Suite 5, Maquoketa, IA 52060; heiar@thejcea.org; Office: 563-652-4549; Cell: 563-599-1223; www.thejcea.org

F. Public Grant Programs

The governmental sources, other than direct grants from county boards of supervisors, typically involves state programs, including the following:

Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT)

State funding administered by the Iowa Economic Development Authority. Dependent on annual appropriation from the Iowa Legislature. Grants accepted quarterly. Will fund up to 20% of last dollars needed for project costs; requires 80% local and private funding. Limits on maximum grant awards too. Contact IEDA staff for details.

www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/our-agency-detail-resources?id=6496&panel=2&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/our-agency-detail-resources%3Fid%3D6496%26panel%3D2&utm_campaign=PubNotJuly2017EICAT

REAP - Resource Enhancement and Protection

State funds administered by Iowa Department of Natural Resources for eligible counties and cities to support parkland acquisition, park improvements, natural resource enhancements, etc. The REAP program is currently dependent on annual appropriation from the Iowa Legislature.

Application Deadline for City and County grants is August 15

- County Conservation program information: www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/REAP/REAP-Funding-at-Work/County-Conservation
- City Parks and Open Space program: www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/REAP/REAP-Funding-at-Work/City-Parks-Open-Spaces

G. Private Lenders

There are currently no known examples of private lenders funding all or part of any public recreation cabin projects. We are aware of at least one conversation where funding might include a local banker. Some issues may include whether only pre-fab cabins can be considered “fixtures” that can be moved, and thus might serve as some portion of the collateral for a private lender (since the land under the cabin is a public park, there would not appear to be a traditional mortgage situation). Another possibility is a private individual as lender or a community foundation could be a guarantor for a private lender to assure collateral for a variety of cabin construction options. Where applicable, a county conservation foundation (such as in Pottawattamie County) may be an alternative as well. This is a new area.

H. Lease to Own/Operator Vendors

There are currently no known examples of lease to own/operator vendor financing arrangement in Iowa parks. Some pre-fab cabin vendors have expressed an interest in exploring offering a private financing option. We will let them identify themselves once they decide to proceed.

One national parks cabin operator already provides cabin financing. There may be more.

- Warren Meyer, President, Recreation Resource Management (RRM), 1811 N. Tatum Blvd #4095, Phoenix, AZ 85028, Office: 602-569-2333, warren@camprrm.com; customer facing website is camprrm.com, cabin web site is www.park-cabins.com and the web site for other recreation services is www.recreationmanagers.com.

I. Other

There is another unique option for funding cabins in Iowa, based upon a private foundation, which builds and operates cabins locally. Two year-round cabins are located on the lower reservoir in Lelah Bradley Park, which is a city park on the edge of Centerville. The Lelah Bradley Park property is owned by the city of Centerville, not Appanoose County or the Appanoose County Conservation Board. The cabins are owned and managed by Appanoose Conservation Foundation. The Foundation raised funds for the cabins by gradually soliciting donors, including several large, local estate bequests and annual local fundraising “radioathons” raising about \$15k a year. Revenue from these cabins and additional private donors will likely fund the construction of additional cabins at Lelah Bradley Park in the near future.

2. Tips from the County and State Park Fundraising Trenches

There are cabin managers and their supporters who have been doing this funding thing for a while, and they have some tidbits of wisdom (or maybe common sense) to offer for consideration. The tips are in no particular order of preference or effectiveness.

- Sometimes you just get lucky (but don’t count on it). A wealthy farmer with a local family foundation called a county parks manager in his park office out of the blue at the end of the year when the farmer was deciding what to do with “left-over” family foundation money. He had always been friendly with the park manager and this fellow would occasionally drive through the county parks. The farmer asked if the parks could use a few hundred thousand dollars, and did the parks have any ideas. Voila—cabins! Making yourself aware of local family foundations, local philanthropists or successful farmers or business people can pay off; you just don’t know when.
- Always being friendly is part of the job because you never know who will want to help!
- When a new church, community center or athletic facility is built in your community, track down and pay attention to the local funding sources, whether governmental, foundation, or private funders are involved. Prior givers tend to keep giving; you just have to find out who they are.
- “Fish where the fish are:” most cabin funding comes from county government, so gaining the trust and “buy-in” of supervisors, conservation board chairpersons, or governmental management professionals is the best place to start. The retiring park manager told his successor on the last day: “It’s all about relationships.”

- Grant-writing is the best way to spend cold winter days. Learn how to get good at it and seek out a grant-writing mentor (or maybe pay a professional grant writer a little on the first project or two to get the hang of it).
- Visit with your local prominent business, real estate, tax or trusts and estates lawyer or accountant. Local bankers, trust officers and financial planners are equally good. Show them your long-term written parks plan, if you have one. These folks know where all of the bodies (and money) are buried and who might be interested in helping. One park manager tells the story of being approached in a courthouse parking lot by a prominent local attorney and being informed that county parks had been included in a recently deceased widow's will and the parks would be receiving several hundred thousand dollars, which were then used to build two new year-round cabins. See Henry County, Oakland Mills Park.
- Ask the local Rotary, Lions or VFW clubs what they think should be done with cabins: maybe it becomes a "club project". Maybe do a presentation during their lunch meeting on what is possible and do an informal survey of interest.
- Local electric or phone cooperatives or Farm Bureau chapters have and will look for ways to engage in community improvement, and cabins are tangible and visible contributions!
- State parks should look to those who have supported county park projects in the past and county parks should look to who has supported state parks locally in the past. These folks just like parks!
- Statewide organizations with active conservation donor solicitation efforts may know who in your area are likely funders. The INHF, TNC, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, deer or turkey groups, and Trees Forever all have funders who may well want cabins to bolster their own outdoor interests. This can be presented as fairly benefiting all organizations involved in terms of community stature and visibility. These organizations may or may not want to help; but you gotta ask!
- The local economic development folks and the tourist folks know about raising money; they know where it is hidden. If you buy them lunch (or maybe just coffee), you could hit a gold mine. They already know the connection between economic development, tourism and public recreation (cabins).
- The executive director, president or board chairperson of the local community foundation is the first stop; their hearts are already in the right place.
- Consider the Rocky Mountain YMCA Camp cabin model of fundraising. There, families donate what it takes to build, replace or refurbish a cabin. In return, that family gets the first shot at reserving the period for rental each year that they prefer. They pay the same rental rate as everyone else, but they can choose their dates, and they come back year after year.
- Naming cabins after sole or predominant donors is painless and appropriate. In both instances where individuals were the sole private funders of parks cabins, those cabins bear their names. Everyone is pleased and it makes a very nice local newspaper article. See Henry County, Oakland Mills Park, and Harrison County, King Cabin, Willow Lake Recreation Area.

3. Preparations for Fundraising

Everyone hates doing their homework; but you cannot avoid it if you want to succeed on the scale you are dreaming about for your park. So here goes!!

A. Business Planning

Hamilton County Conservation has provided the only examples of business plans created to present to their County Board of Supervisors in relation to the cabins at Briggs Woods Park. Those plans are on the IPF website: www.iaparks.org/cabins-task-force. In addition to this book, a full plan (with pictures) might be just the selling tool to generate supervisor and/or other funder enthusiasm. It shows that you have really thought through your objectives.

B. Cooperation, Cost-Savings, and Volume Discounts

Several cabin vendors mentioned during their presentations that they routinely offer negotiated volume discounts. If you don't ask, you won't get them. Coordinating with other cabin projects in your region or statewide could pay off in terms of substantial cash savings (or lower intra-governmental loans). There is nothing you can do that will result in immediate price reductions more obvious than finding purchasing partners and negotiating a discount.

C. Funding Themes and Project Justifications

When investigating and identifying your "funding champions" among elected officials, county or city government professionals, community foundation supporters, trade associations, or local individual, corporate or private foundation donors, having some funding themes in mind may be helpful. Of course, your own community will have some unique themes, like particular family legacies or parks friend's groups with a long-term vision, or any number of other things. But below are a few baseline possibilities.

Building Cabin Experiences

The trend in outdoor recreation generally is toward building and marketing "experiences." Park managers sometimes use this term in connection with the "north woods" experience they are seeking to invoke with their cabins. But there could be other "experiences" as well, such as contemporary, spartan, mountain lodge, biker/athlete, hunter/fisherman, etc. This approach is in its early stages regarding cabins; we await developments and experiments with "experiences". Localized experiences may be sufficiently unique to tap local pride and funding sources.

Community Legacies

There are few known examples of legacy funded cabins in Iowa. Both Henry County, Oakland Mills Park and Harrison County, Willow Lake Recreation Area, have had full-funding legacy gifts for cabin construction. The Henry County cabins were funded through a local resident estate gift that park officials were surprised (but pleased) to receive. The Harrison County cabins were funded after a local successful business person initiated contact with park officials and aggressively offered funds for cabin construction. In neither instance was there a "legacy funding program" in place or active. That points out an opportunity for park officials or local park advocates to create and implement a legacy funding program associated with cabins. Local community foundation leaders may be the place to start.

Economic Impact and Community Competitiveness

There are some broad economic statistics available from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and IDNR on the economic impact of public recreation on Iowa's economy generally. No "cabin specific" data is known at this time. There is evidence generally that recreation counties attract new residents and higher incomes. www.headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/recreation-counties-attract; www.headwaterseconomics.org/topic/economic-development/trails-pathways

Iowa's trends in camping also bolster the above conclusions and suggest ways communities can be more competitive in terms of public recreation assets. Again, how does your community compare to these experiences? Let's start with overnight camping preferences other than cabins.

- Tent Camping. Anecdotally, case study county park managers in Iowa report that only 2-5% of their overnight campers use tents in primitive and partial amenity campsites. There are no known expansions of exclusively tent camping areas in case study parks. Compare that to 30% of all campers being tent campers nationally, according to at least one camping advocacy group. www.recpro.org/assets/Library/Recreation_Research/2017-north-american-camping-report.pdf
- RV Camping. Anecdotally, case study county park managers in Iowa report that the dominant form of overnight camping is with RVs using a variety of amenity-related RV pads. Most are moving toward "full-hook-up" pads (i.e., concrete pad, electric and sewer). We currently do not know the percentage of overnight campers in Iowa using RVs. RV advocacy groups report that the percentage of American households who own an RV is about 7%. Typically, according to one source, an RV owner is 49 years old with an annual income of \$62,000. www.rv-roadtrips.thefuntimesguide.com/who_owns_rvs
- Camping of all types is on the rise across America. Millennials are joining that trend. www.cnbc.com/2018/08/09/how-much-first-time-campers-pay.html; www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170315005391/en/Camping-U.S.-Trend-Expected-Continue-Millennials-Seek;

Now let's consider the overnight cabin preferences in Iowa.

- Approximately 330 public recreation cabins in Iowa (117 state, 213 county cabins).
- Anecdotally, case study county park managers in Iowa indicate that about 50% of cabins are "camper cabins" and 50% are year-round cabins.
- 36 Counties have NO public recreation cabins (36.4% of all counties).
- 25 Counties have 1-2 public recreation cabins (25.3% of all counties).
- Anecdotally, case study county park managers in Iowa indicate that the ideal configuration of rental cabins (in terms of occupancy rates) is in clusters of three cabins, possibly of different sleeping capacities.
- 20 of the top population counties in Iowa (with 65% of the population) contain 78 (or 23.6%) of the public recreation cabins.
- Anecdotally, case study county park managers in Iowa indicate (over 3-5 years following construction) that about 50% of cabin renters are in-county residents and about 50% are out of county residents. There are some county park cabins located near borders with urban areas (Pottawattamie County) or with particularly strong amenities (Adams County), where the percentage of out of county cabin renters is much higher, approaching 70% in some instances.
- Since 2017, the number of public recreation cabins in Iowa has grown significantly, reflecting the trends described in this book.

Health Impact of Public Recreation Cabins

It is simple: Family and Friends Time + Nature and Parks + Public Recreation Cabins = Healthier Iowans. There is data-driven evidence that time spent with family (and friends) makes kids and adults mentally and physically healthier in measurable ways.

- www.lifetothe fullest.abbott/en/articles/families-help-health.html
- www.rileychildrens.org/connections/3-ways-spending-time-with-your-family-positively-affects-health
- www.cbhs.com.au/health-well-being-blog/blog-article/2017/06/19/how-your-family-can-improve-your-health
- www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/psychology/importance-of-family-time-on-kids-mental-health-and-adjustment-to-life

There is also data-driven evidence that time spent in nature (i.e., parks and cabins) makes kids and adults mentally and physically healthier in measurable ways.

- www.my.usgs.gov/hd/issues_and_topics/connections-between-nature-and-human-health
- www.hphpcentral.com/article/global-research-compilation-proves-strong-link-between-nature-and-human-health
- www.rwjf.org/en/blog/2016/08/6_reasons_why_parks.html
- www.nature.com/articles/srep28551

Iowa's own demographics bolster these conclusions. How does your community compare to statewide demographic data?

- The population of Iowa in 2017 was 3,145,711. In 2010 the population was 3,046,355. Those numbers reflect an overall statewide growth rate of 3.2%. www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/IET/615751.pdf There are pockets of higher population growth, notably the Des Moines metro area (13.4% growth between 2010 and 2017) and the Iowa City metro area (12.4% growth between 2010 and 2017). www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2018/03/22/iowas-fastest-growing-county/448861002
- Iowans average "household" income in 2016 was \$54,570. www.factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk
- The percentage of single parent households in Iowa in 2016 was 13.4%. The percentage of homes headed by women was 9.2%. www.factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk
- The percentage of Iowa households in 2016 with one resident at least 65 years old was 27.2%. www.factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk
- The percentage of Iowa residents in 2016 who are kids (under 18) was 28.2%. www.factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk

Logically, public recreation cabins bolster mental and physical health among kids and adults because of the unique combination of concentrated family time and direct engagement with nature and parks. The math on family and friends time, parks and cabins is simple. Four (4) new public recreation cabins x 40% annual occupancy (or 146 nights/days) x 16 hours a day (assumes sleep for 8 hours with 4 as the average number of people in cabin) x 50 years (although cabins last 50-100 years) = 467,200 Family Hours in parks and nature. Now take that number times 100 new cabins constructed in Iowa over the next 5-10 years (46,720,000 Family Hours); imagine the benefits.

Park Access When Faced with Iowa Income Inequality Trends

Another reason to focus and fund cabins involves the worsening trend in both income and wealth inequality in Iowa, much as has been experienced by America generally. Income inequality trends in Iowa are clear. www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/iowa.pdf; www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1500/RR1509/RAND_RR1509.pdf; Cabins are very inexpensive recreational alternatives, even though they are not free (although a park could choose to offer that opportunity based upon low-income status as a policy choice). RV camping (or other remote vacation or recreational travel options) are simply not an option for a significant portion of our citizenry. And tent-camping is not being adopted by certain clear demographics. That leaves cabins!

Conclusion

It is your decision. The Iowa Cabins Task Force believes that success is defined by making a locally-based, informed and reasonable judgment about whether year-round cabins are an appropriate risk/reward investment at this time, and if so, what type and how many cabins. If the local answer is that cabins are an appropriate investment, we believe our park user families will be the beneficiaries for decades to come. If the answer is that cabins are not an appropriate investment at this time, that too can be the basis for future park planning, and maybe future cabin construction as park and community circumstances change. In any event, the Task Force wishes you all the best as you explore your cabin options!

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Appendix – Table of Contents

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11. *The Cabins Book* Editorial Board: 1st Edition
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A1: Lammers' One Page "At-a-Glance" Cabins Checklist

Location Research:

- Does the cabin project fall within your park management plan?
- Consider your park location to surrounding communities.
- What is the population area around you?
- Identify any natural resource attractions near the cabins.
- Identify major roadways, highways, interstates to gain access to the cabins.
- What does the 60-mile radius look like from your cabin location?

Area:

- Complete a site assessment of where the cabins will be placed.
- Ownership of land? No lease, or other restriction easements or agreements?
- Access to the cabins? Good roads that are maintainable?
- Any hazard trees or other natural feature that might be unstable?
- What is the terrain like around the cabin?
- Consider parking for customers after construction.
- Think of the area under construction. Can large trucks, cranes or semi-trucks enter and leave the job site easily?

Infrastructure:

- Digging or trenching in infrastructure can be a challenge. Rocks, tree roots, old buildings, etc. Know the area
- What is the water source? Well water or municipal? Think of repairs in the future.
- Electrical service? Transformers, sub panels, meters?
- Septic and waste water treatment? Location for septic tanks, leach fields, pumping stations?
- Are there good roads with a good base? Gravel? Hard Surfaced? Think of future maintenance.
- Parking? Is there enough parking at each cabin? Think of visitors and guests. What is the distance between the parking lot and cabin? Sidewalks may need to be installed and maintained.

Capital:

- Is the funding to build secured? Don't forget at least a 15% contingency figure.
- Is the funding from loans, bonds, grants or through secured funding?
- Has a business plan been completed?
- What is the payback? Years of debt? Occupancy expectations.

Maintenance:

- Cleaning that will include staffing, contract services, supplies and equipment.
- Building upkeep includes staff labor, future items such as doors, windows, roof, etc.
- Equipment upkeep will include appliances, furniture, HVAC, light and bath fixtures, etc.
- Snow removal, roads and parking lots, grass, landscaping, etc.
- Marketing: This is maintenance. All areas, branding, upkeep of websites, social media, expense for advertising, etc.

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A2: List of Select Cabin Managers in Iowa

The list below reflect a non-random sampling of the existing public recreation cabins in Iowa, their construction type(s), and contact information for the current park manager.

Construction Type Codes: SB: Stick Built, KB: Kit Built, PF: Pre-fabricated, SL: Stacked-log Built, ST: Stone Built

Park (County)	Const. Type	Park Manager	Phone Numbers	Email
Tower Rock Park (Hardin)	PF	Wes Wiese	C: 641-373-1767 O: 641-648-4361	wwiese@hardincountyia.gov
Deep Lakes Park (Muscatine)	PF new	Curt Weiss	C: 563-299-4489 O: 563-264-5922	cweiss@co.muscatine.ia.us
Scott County Park (Scott)	PF old/new	Roger A. Kean	O: 563-328-3280, ext.1	roger.kean@scottcountyiowa.com
Pony Creek Cons. Park (Mills)	PF new	Jerad Getter	O: 712- 527-9685	millsccbia@hotmail.com
Arrowhead Park (Pottawattamie)	PF old/new	Mark Shoemaker	C: 402-680-6062	mark.shoemaker@pottcounty-ia.gov
Willow Lake Rec. Area (Harrison)	SB/PF	Scott Nelson	O: 712-647-2785, ext. 21	stnelson@harrisoncountyparks.org
Jester & Yellow Banks Park (Polk)	SB/PF old/new	Adam Fendrick	O: 515-473-1956	Adam.Fendrick@polkcountyiowa.gov
Oakland Mills Park (Henry)	SB/KB new/old	John Pullis	C: 319-931-2836 O: 319- 986-5067	jpullis@henrycountyconservation.com
Briggs Woods Park (Hamilton)	SB	Brian Lammers	O: 515-832-9570 C: 515-297-0436	hccblammers@wmtel.net
Lake Darling State Park (Washington)	SB	Zach Haworth	O: 319-694-2323	zachary.haworth@dnr.iowa.gov
Lake Belva Deer Park (Keokuk)	SB	Curtis "Pie" Reighard	O: 641-622-3757 C: 641-660-8621	kccb@cloudburst9.net
Lake Icaria Park (Adams)	SB new	Travis Paul	O: 641-322-4793	accb@adamscountyia.com
Cordova Park (Marion)	SB	Ross Tuel	O: 641-627-5935	cordovacopark@gmail.com
Briggs Woods Park (Hamilton)	SL	Brian Lammers	O: 515-832-9570 C: 515-297-0436	hccblammers@wmtel.net
Pine Lake State Park (Hardin)	ST	Andy Place	O: 641-858-5832	andrew.place@dnr.iowa.gov
Liberty Lake Park, Ringgold County		Kate Zimmerman	O: 641-464-2787 C: 641-234-1519	RinggoldCCB@ringgoldcounty.us
Prairie Creek Recreation Area, Jackson County		Daryl Parker	O: 563-652-3783	darylarparker@jacksonccb.com
Lelah Bradley Park, Appanoose County	SB/KB	Mark Hoffman	C: 641-895-4148	hoffmankids3@hotmail.com

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A3: Cabin Development Checklist

To-Do List	Employee Responsible	Cabin #1	Cabin #2	Cabin #3
Marketing Plan (Years 1-3)				
Goals: Occupancy Rates (Years 1-3)				
Goals: Pricing (Years 1-3)				
Goals: Annual Revenue (Years 1-3)				
Reservation and Cancellation Policy				
Two-Day vs. One-Week Policy				
Walk-in Policy				
One-Year vs. Two-Year Reservation Policy				
May-September Season Plan				
October-April Season Plan				
Weekday Occupancy Plan				
Weekend Occupancy Plan				
Holiday Occupancy Plan				
Short-term Maintenance				
Long-term Maintenance				
Cleaning, Locks, Linens, Washing Machines, Firewood				
Bugs and Critters				
Damage and Cleaning Deposits				
Sample Cabin Rules				
Operators: Single and/or Shared Public Park Staff				
Operators: Local Private Vendor				
Operators: Nationwide Private Vendor				

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A4: Sample Cabin Rules

The rules below are from Briggs Woods Park in Hamilton County, pulled from their website in February 2019:

Cabin Rental Contract Agreement

CABIN ACCESS INFORMATION:

Your cabin has a keyless pad on the door that can only use the numbers 1 thru 5. Numbers cannot be duplicated. Please follow these directions:

1. Push in the buttons for each number of your code in the exact order.
2. Push the ENTER button. If you need to reset, just push down the door handle.
3. Then push down the door handle.
4. The code will need to be entered each time, as the door does not unlock.

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CABIN RULES:

Check-In Time: 4:00 PM - no earlier; Check-Out Time: 11:00 am – no later

- Maximum number of occupants per cabin is 15: no exceptions.
- Maximum length of stay is 14 consecutive nights.
- Minimum age to reserve a cabin is 21 years of age.
- Vehicles must park at designated cabin parking area.
- All county and state park/campground rules apply.
- Park closing is 10:30 p.m. for non-registered guests.
- RV's, Motor Homes, Pop-ups, 5th Wheels and tents must use regular campground.
- Cabin furniture must stay inside cabin.
- The fire ring is for burning wood only
- Do not throw your trash over the sides of the deck.
- Keg beer is prohibited.
- Pets are prohibited inside the cabin.
- Smoking is prohibited inside the cabin.
- A grill is provided outside each cabin for cooking. Cooking of any kind is prohibited on the cabin deck.

UPON CHECK OUT, PLEASE:

- Close and lock windows.
- Clean microwave, refrigerator, coffee pot, counter top with cleaner provided; leave it as you arrived.
- Sweep floor.

- Put trash in the dumpster provided.
- Put recycle items in the container provided.
- Set thermostat to 74 degrees (summer) and 64 degrees (winter)
- Shut off all lights.
- Make sure door is shut tight.
- Please make sure the picnic table where and as it was when you arrived.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Please consider this policy prior to purchasing your facility reservation. Cancellations or changes must be made 15 days in advance of the reservation. **SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO CANCEL A RESERVATION, YOU WILL FORFEIT 100% OF ALL RESERVATION FEES PAID.** Cancellations cannot be done online and must be made by calling the Conservation Office at (515) 832-9570.

REFUND POLICY

Please understand at the time of booking your reservation that you immediately prohibit other people from reserving & utilizing that facility - they therefore go elsewhere to locate a facility for that date. However, if you need to cancel your reservation you have one opportunity to reschedule within 12 months of your reservation date.

We will observe a NON-REFUNDABLE reservation fee policy with the following exceptions:

- Accident, serious injury or death of an immediate family member
- Travel conditions where a substantial risk is required in order to travel such as a winter storm where a travel advisory has been issued
- We are unable to provide your facility (or like facility) in operable condition for the date of your event

ALL requests for refunds cannot be done online and must be made by calling the Conservation Office at (515) 832-9570.

FEES

Peak Season - May 1 - October 31

- Weekdays (Sun-Thurs) \$200/night plus \$200 deposit
- Weekends (Fri-Sat) \$250/night plus \$200 deposit

Off-Season - November 1 - April 30

- \$150/night plus \$200 deposit

Day rentals (no overnight stay) - not available June through August

- \$100 per day - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday only
- Must contact the office at 515-832-9570 to make the reservation

TAX - There is an additional overnight fee of a 5% statewide Hotel/Motel Consumer's Use Tax imposed on the rental of recreational cabins, plus a 5% Hamilton County hotel/motel tax for a total of 10% tax

Minimum of a two nights required. Cabin rental must be in the name of a person **21 years of age or older** who will be present at the facility for the full term of the reservation.

LINEN SERVICE

\$200 per rental - includes pillow, sheets, blanket (3 queen, 1 twin, 3 full)

There are NO DISCOUNTS for youth groups, seniors or multiple reservations.

DEPOSIT REQUIRED:

This facility requires that an additional deposit check in the amount of \$200.00 be mailed to the Conservation Office no later than two weeks from the date you made your reservation. This deposit is refundable as long as there is no damage and cleaning has been completed as posted on the refrigerator. It is the responsibility of the user to ensure that this deposit is provided on time.

Hours of Operation & Seasons

- Park hours are 5:00 am to 10:30 pm.
- Cabins are open year-round, weather permitting. -
- Check-in time: 4:00 pm - no earlier
- Check-out time: 11:00 am - no later
- Renters must have the facility and area cleaned and exited by scheduled check-out time.

Closures

- Park hours are 5:00 am to 10:30 pm.

Permits

- 2-night minimum required
- All laws of the State of Iowa are in effect.
- Must be 21 years old to rent the cabin
- Smoking is prohibited
- Keg beer is prohibited
- Pets are prohibited inside the cabin
- Bachelor and Bachelorette parties are prohibited
- Cabin furniture must remain inside the cabin.
- No cooking with grill, fryer or any device on the deck of the cabin.
- Clean-up of facility and area must be completed no later than scheduled check-out time.
- We have a No Refund policy; however, if you need to cancel your reservation you have one opportunity to reschedule within 12 months. Be sure to read the Facility Contract for details.
- Please contact the office for additional information - 515-832-9570

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A5: Design Considerations Checklist

To-Do List	Cabin #1	Cabin #2	Cabin #3
General Site Selection			
Earthwork & Paving			
• Roadways			
• Parking			
• Sidewalks			
• Retaining Walls			
Utilities			
• Water			
• Gas			
• Sewer			
• Electric			
Foundations			
• Slab & Footings			
• European Foundation			
• Footings & Crawlspace			
• Footings and Wood Posts			
• Basements			
Clustering and Gathering Cabins			
• Number, Size, and Similarity			
• Distance Between & Natural Barriers			
• Cabin Orientation			
Cabin Exterior			
• Roofing			
• Siding/Exterior Walls			
• Porches & Decks			
• Outside Lighting			
• Outside Furniture			

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A5: Design Considerations Checklist (continued)

To-Do List	Cabin #1	Cabin #2	Cabin #3
Cabin Exterior (continued)			
• Fire-Rings, Grills, and Outdoor Fireplaces			
• Landscaping			
Cabin Interior			
• Trim/Exterior Walls			
• Windows			
• Floor Plans			
• Insulation			
• Flooring			
• Fireplace			
• Vaulted Ceilings, Light Tubes, Skylights			
• Interior Lighting			
• Wi-fi and TVs			
• Pets			
• Lofts & Staircases			
• Appliances, Cabinets, Dishes, Mattresses			
• Interior Furniture			
• Interior Decor			
• Novel Features			

A6: Construction Considerations Checklist

To-Do List	Cabin #1	Cabin #2	Cabin #3
Recruiting a Mentor			
Construction Alternatives			
Project Timing and Calendar			
ADA and Building Code Compliance			
Available Park Staff for Construction and Supervision			
Cabin Vendors and Iowa Customer Experiences			
• Individually Designed and Stick-built			
• Pre-fabricated			
• Kits (stacked log and stick-built)			
• Individually Designed and Stacked-logs			
• Stone			
Rough Project Cost Spreadsheet			

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A7: Cabin Funding Checklist

To-Do List	Cabin #1	Cabin #2	Cabin #3
Business Plan			
Creating Capital Account			
Cooperation, Cost-Savings and Volume Discounts			
Funding Alternatives			
• Full Government Grant			
• Intra-Governmental Loan			
• Private Individual or Corporate Donors			
• Private Foundation Donors			
• Private Lender			
• Lease to Own/Operator Vendor			
• Combination of Governmental Sources and Private Donors			

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A8: Iowa Cabins Task Force Members

Paul Hayes

Tom Hazelton

Mike Brandrup

Ryan Richey

Michelle Franks

Scott Nelson

Daryl Parker

Onnalee Kelley

Mark Ackelson

Joe Gunderson, Co-chair

Brian Lammers

Jake Christensen, Co-chair

Hans Klein-Hewett

Todd Coffelt

Catherine Thomas

Bob Riley, Jr.

Jessica Manken

Lisa Hein

Wes Weise

Matt Cosgrove

Adam Fendrick

Dave Mackaman

Mark Shoemaker

Wes Ehrecke

Bill Dirx

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A9: Iowa Cabins Task Force Presenters

John Connell
General Manager, Conestoga Cabins

Ben LeBarge and James Kuipers
Co-owners, Cedar Forest Products

Larry Rife
Manufacturer's Representative, AB Creative

Ryan Richey
Architect, Parks Bureau, DNR

Jessica Manken
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A10: Park Manager Contributors to the Task Force

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A11: The Cabins Book Editorial Board: First Edition

The members of the editorial board agreed, disagreed and compromised about the structure and contents of this book. It is an evolving and ongoing effort and will require multiple versions over several years to reach the collective expectations of the Iowa Task Force Members, the Task Force Presenters, the Park Manager Contributors and *The Cabins Book* Editorial Board. Be patient with us. Let us know how we can make the book more useful.

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A12: Proposal: Sleeping 4-6 Persons Year-Round

We don't know what an ideal year-round public recreation cabin sleeping 4-6 persons might look like for Iowa. Some would argue (and have on this Task Force forcefully), that there can be no "ideal" cabin because of differences in location, funding and other circumstances that vary so widely. Maybe; maybe not. Here, we are just trying to start that conversation and solicit comments, criticisms and suggestions. No name-calling. Fire away and let's see where we end up. For now, we only offer ranges of primary cabin attributes, leaving it to park managers, cabins vendors, designers and architects to find a fit within those ranges, should they choose to consider this proposal. We put this proposal at the end of the Appendix, because we want to emphasize that it is not the purpose of this book. This Appendix #12 is just as non-consensus based as all of the items discussed in the related *The Public Policy Discussion* booklet.

- General Total Interior First Floor Square Footage: _____ to _____ SF
- Ratio of Gathering Space (family room, dining and kitchen) to Bedroom Space: _____:_____
- Number of Bedrooms on Interior First Floor: _____
- Range of Minimum Exterior Covered Porch and/or Uncovered or Portago Deck Space: _____:_____ SF
- Ratio of Gathering Space to Exterior Covered Porch and/or Deck Space: _____:_____
- Ratio of Exterior Covered Porch to Uncovered Deck Space: _____:_____
- Square Footage of Loft with Sleeping Facilities: _____ to _____ SF (or about half of the interior first floor space, leaving space for vaulted ceiling and windows)
- Square Footage of Open Vaulted Ceiling Space Beyond Loft Over Family Room: _____ to _____ SF
- Range of Window Area Shining on Gathering Space: _____ to _____ SF
- Ratio of Window Area Shining on Gathering Space: _____:_____
- Mostly Fixed but Some Non-fixed Windows in Gathering Space
- Metal or Vinyl Windows
- Full Basement Foundation for Utilities and Storage
- Factory Stained Smart Siding
- Metal Roof
- Maximum Insulation and Foundation Ventilation
- Metal Soffits and Large Roof Overhangs
- Composite Decking Material Outside and Metal/Non-wood Railing
- Gas-burning Fireplace with Wall Switch and 2 Hour Timer
- Overstuffed Couch and Chairs in Family Room
- Four-Person Wood Dining Table and Chairs Suitable for Games or Computer Work

- High Quality Kitchen Fixtures
- Limited Kitchen Cabinet and Counter Space
- Fire-ring, Stand-up Grill and Heavy Gauge Picnic Table Outside
- Local Art or Historic Photos and Other Local Curiosities on Gathering Space Walls
- Adirondack Chairs and Coffee Tables for Deck/Porch Space
- Commercial Grade Luxury Vinyl Flooring
- Knotty Pine Ceiling, with Drywall Walls and Knotty Pine Trim (encourages reflective light)
- Cabins Cluster: Two Sleeping 4-6 Persons Year-round Cabins and One Sleeping 10-15 Persons Year-round Cabin as "Gathering Cabin"
- We Express no Preference on Cabin Designers, Builders or Vendors
- We Express no Opinion on Including TVs and/or Wi-Fi
- We Express no Opinion on Pet Friendly Policies
- We Express no Opinion on the Exact Shape of the Cabins
- Well-considered but Low Maintenance Landscaping and Tree Placement
- Nearby Hard-Surface Parking
- Low-level, Downward Facing, Lighting Outside to Maximize the Stars, Possibly with Dimmer Switch
- One Bathroom with Toilet, Shower and Some Counter Space

If the cabins designer, builder or vendor you choose takes issue with any of these items, everyone benefits if you simply make them explain "why?", and then make your own decision. Of course, we would really appreciate hearing from you about those "issues" and your thinking in response.

A13: Comparative Parks Data Sheet

A Park Name	B County	C Year Built	D # of Bedrms	E Const. Type	F First Floor Dims (Area SF)	G Deck Dims (Area SF)	H Int to Ext Ratio	I Decking Type	J Direction of Deck	K Gathering Dims	L Int to Gathering Ratio
Briggs Woods Park (Hickory)	Hamilton	2016	1	SL	36'-5" x 25'-2" (919)	10'-6" x 26'-6" (278)	3.3:1	Unknown	Front, facing River		
Briggs Woods Park (Legacy)	Hamilton	2012	2	SL	24'-0" x 30'-4" (720)	10'-0" x 25'-0" (250)	2.88:1	Unknown	Front, facing Lake		
Briggs Woods Park (Oak)	Hamilton	2014	2	SL	28'-0" x 15'-6" (519)	10'-0" x 25'-6" (225)	2.04:1	Unknown	Front, facing Lake		
Cordova Park (2 bed)	Marion		2	SB	28'-0" x 26'-0" (728)			Unknown	Rear, facing Lake		
Cordova Park (3 bed)	Marion		3	SB	30'-0" x 30'-0" (900)			Unknown	Rear, facing Lake		
Deep Lakes Park (1 bed)	Muscatine	2019	1	PF	24'-0" x 36'-0" (864)	8'-0" x 24'-0" (192)	4.5:1	CM	Front, facing Lake		
Deep Lakes Park (2 bed)	Muscatine	2019	2	PF	28'-0" x 42'-0" (1,232)	8'-0" x 28'-0" (224)	5.5:1	CM	Front, facing Lake		
Jester Park	Polk	2014	2	SB	36'-4" x 24'-0" (872)	24'-0" x 8'-0" (192)	4.54:1	CN	Front, facing fire pit		
Lake Belva Deer Park	Keokuk	2007	1	SB	19'-7" x 23'-7" (480)	6'-0" x 20'-0" (120)	5.97:1	CM	Front, facing away from Lake		
Lake Darling State Park	Washington	2016	2	SB	25'-4" x 30'-4" (750)	24'-6" x 9'-0" (220)	3.41:1	TW	Rear, facing Lake		
Lake Icaria Park	Adams	2018	2	SB	36'-0" x 30'-0" (1,080)	12'-0" x 30'-0" (360)	3.89:1	Unknown	Rear, facing Lake		
Lelah Bradley Park	Appanoose			SB/KB							
Oakland Mills Park (2 bed)	Henry	2006	2	KB	14'-7" x 27'-0" (394)	6'-0" x 14'-7" (88)	4.5:1	TW	Front, facing River		
Oakland Mills Park (3 bed)	Henry	2019	3	SB	31'-3" x 27'-5" (857)	32'-0" x 10'-0" (320)	2.68:1	CM	Front, facing Pond		
Pine Lake State Park	Hardin	1930s	1	ST	(372)	None	None	None	None		
Scott County Park	Scott	2019	2	PF	26'-0" x 42'-0" (1,092)	10'-0" x 24'-0" (240)	4.55:1	CM	Front, facing RV Area		
Tower Rock Park	Hardin	2015	1	PF	16'-0" x 30'-0" (480)	6'-0" x 30'-0" (180)	2.67:1	TW	Front, facing common lawn		
West Lake Park (Summit)	Scott	2016	2	PF	42'-0" x 28'-0" (1,176)	6'-0" x 28'-0" (168)	3.42:1	CM	Front, facing Lake		
Willow Lake Rec. Area (King)	Harrison	2012	3	PF	26'-0" x 47'-0" (1,222)	14'-0" x 32'-0" (448)	2.73:1	TW	Front, facing Lake		
Willow Lake Rec. Area (White Pine)	Harrison	2002	2	KB	23'-0" x 23'-0" (529)	10'-0" x 29'-0" (290)	1.82:1	TW	Rear, facing Lake		

Appendix 13: Comparative Park Data Sheet (continued)

A Park Name	M Window Area (SF)	N Gathering Window Area	O Window Ratio	P 1st Bed Dims (Area SF)	Q 2nd Bed Dims (Area SF)	R 3rd Bed Dims (Area SF)	S Total Bedroom Area SF	T Cabing to Bed Ratio	U Basement Dims (Area SF)	V First Floor to Basement Ratio	W Basement Use
Briggs Woods Park (Hickory)				10'-0" x 10'-7" (106)			106	8.66:1			
Briggs Woods Park (Legacy)				10'-8" x 9'-10" (105)	10'-6" x 14'-6" (152)		257	2.8:1			
Briggs Woods Park (Oak)				9'9" x 12'-6" (122)	11'-7" x 12'-6" (145)		267	1.95:1			
Cordova Park (2 bed)											
Cordova Park (3 bed)											
Deep Lakes Park (1 bed)				12'-0" x 12'-0" (144)			144	6:1			
Deep Lakes Park (2 bed)				14'-0" x 14'-0" (196)	11'-10" x 14'-0" (166)		362	3.41:1			
Jester Park				12'-3" x 12'-0" (148)	13'-9" x 10'-0" (138)		286	3.05:1	36'-4" x 24'-0" (872)	1:1	Finished
Lake Belva Deer Park				(129)	(129)		129	3.72:1			
Lake Darling State Park				11'-6" x 9'-6" (109)	11'-6" x 9'-6" (109)		218	3.43:1			
Lake Icaria Park				9'-4" x 11'-11" (111)	9'-0" x 11'-0" (99)		210	5.14:1			
Lelah Bradley Park											
Oakland Mills Park (2 bed)				11'-0" x 9'-0" (99)	11'-0" x 9'-0" (99)	8'-0" x 7'-0" (56)	155	2.54:1			
Oakland Mills Park (3 bed)				9'-8" x 11'-7.5" (113)	9'-8" x 11'-7.5" (113)	12'-2" x 11'-7.5" (142)	366	2.34:1	28'-0" x 32'-0" (896)	1:1	Storage, Utilities
Pine Lake State Park				6'-0" x 9'-0" (54)			54	6.89:1			
Scott County Park				11'-0" x 12'-0" (132)	12'-0" x 19'-10" (238)		370	2.95:1	24'-0" x 42'-0" (1008)	1:1	Storage, Utilities
Tower Rock Park											
West Lake Park (Summit)				10'-0" x 14'-0" (140)	14'-0" x 14'-0" (196)		336	3.5:1	42'-0" x 28'-0" (1176)	1:1	Storage, Utilities
Willow Lake Rec. Area (King)											
Willow Lake Rec. Area (White Pine)											

Appendix 13: Comparative Park Data Sheet (continued)

A Park Name	X Basement Entrance	Y Loft Dims (Area SF)	Z First Floor to Loft Ratio	AA Loft Amenities	AB Fireplace Fuel	AC Vaulted Ceiling	AD Vault w/ Window	AE Gathering Furniture Type	AF Dining Furniture Type	AG Bedroom Furniture Type	AH Cabin Cost/SF (Total)
Briggs Woods Park (Hickory)		43'-6" x 25'-5" (884)	1.04:1	2 bedrooms, bathroom							
Briggs Woods Park (Legacy)		(468)	1.54:1	Bedrooms, Bathroom							
Briggs Woods Park (Oak)											
Cordova Park (2 bed)											
Cordova Park (3 bed)											
Deep Lakes Park (1 bed)											
Deep Lakes Park (2 bed)					Gas						
Jester Park	Interior, Exterior										
Lake Belva Deer Park		11'-5.5" x 10'-1.25" (129)	3.72:1								
Lake Darling State Park					None						
Lake Icaria Park		(740)	1.46:1		Electric						
Lelah Bradley Park											
Oakland Mills Park (2 bed)		19'-0" x 21'-7" (216)	1.82:1					Cedar			
Oakland Mills Park (3 bed)	Exterior				None						
Pine Lake State Park					Wood						
Scott County Park	Exterior	19'-10" x 24'-0" (476)	2.11:1		Gas						
Tower Rock Park											\$194/SF (\$93K)
West Lake Park (Summit)	Exterior				Gas						
Willow Lake Rec. Area (King)											
Willow Lake Rec. Area (White Pine)											

Appendix 13: Comparative Park Data Sheet (continued)

A Park Name	AI Included in Construction	AJ Not Included in Construction
Briggs Woods Park (Hickory)		
Briggs Woods Park (Legacy)		
Briggs Woods Park (Oak)		
Cordova Park (2 bed)		
Cordova Park (3 bed)		
Deep Lakes Park (1 bed)		
Deep Lakes Park (2 bed)		
Jester Park		
Lake Belva Deer Park		
Lake Darling State Park		
Lake Icaria Park		
Lelah Bradley Park		
Oakland Mills Park (2 bed)		
Oakland Mills Park (3 bed)		
Pine Lake State Park		
Scott County Park		
Tower Rock Park	Cabin, transportation, crane rental, utility hook-up on-site, indoor furniture, back deck, front porch, kitchen cabinets, appliances, decorations, plumbing fixtures	Roadwork, parking lot, foundation, utilities (water, electric and sewer construction), special cabin design features, outdoor furniture, grill and fire-ring
West Lake Park (Summit)		
Willow Lake Rec. Area (King)		
Willow Lake Rec. Area (White Pine)		