

# Whitefish Township Master Plan



This Plan was a cooperative effort by the  
Whitefish Township Planning Commission  
and the  
Eastern U.P. Regional Planning and Development Commission

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## OVERVIEW OF THE TOWNSHIP

### Location

Whitefish Township, located in the northwest corner of Chippewa County, is approximately 24 miles long (north to south) and about ten miles wide (east to west). The entire northern and eastern boundary is Lake Superior shoreline. The western side of the township is bound by Luce County and the southern part by Hulbert and Chippewa townships. The township is remotely located in a very scenic and natural setting. (See Map 1 - Location.)

### History

Whitefish Township is very rich historically. Several books about the Township have been written. Lumbering, commercial fishing, and blueberry and cranberry harvesting were among the major economic activities within the township.

Two lighthouses served as life-saving stations. As a result of these activities, many small settlements were developed in the area. Because of the depletion of lumber resources, most of the settlements were abandoned. Most other commercial operations left the area for better opportunities elsewhere.

In 1998, through an Act of Congress and by Federal Patents, the Bureau of Land Management transferred 8.27 acres at Whitefish Point to the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society and 2.69 acres to the Michigan Audubon Society. The U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife controls the other 33.04 acres at Whitefish Point.

Whitefish Point is a phenomenal concentration spot for migrating raptors, water birds, and songbirds. The surrounding land and water features create a natural corridor funneling thousands of birds directly to the Point each spring and fall as they travel through the Great Lakes region. This makes for spectacular birdwatching and provides tremendous opportunities to study and monitor bird populations. Whitefish Point is located adjacent to the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Museum and the Whitefish Point Management Unit of the Seney. The National Wildlife Refuge, the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO), has operated an education and research facility at Whitefish Point since 1979. WPBO is a Michigan Audubon Society affiliate.



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## **WHITEFISH TOWNSHIP POINTS OF HISTORICAL REMARK**

**Whitefish Point** – One of the oldest settlements in Michigan was originally named Pint au Poisson Blanc by the early explorers. Fishing activity here began with the Jesuit missionaries and future traders. In 1895, Whitefish Point had the largest and most productive fishery on Lake Superior. Today, the American Indian continues with to the tradition of Native American commercial fishing.

In 1848, a lighthouse was erected on the property. The present structure was built in 1902. This area was critical to the safety of ships traveling on Lake Superior. The lighthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 28, 1973. In the mid 1980's, the lighthouse was leased to the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society. The Society has, through the years, developed a museum on the property which thousands of visitors come to visit each year. The lighthouse remains an active beacon to sailors and remains in operation today by remote through the U.S. Coast Guard base in Sault Ste. Marie.

**Shelldrake** – Named for the Shelldrake River which runs through it, so named by French explorers in the late 1600's after the Merganser duck that nested there. The oldest commercial settlement in the township was formed in the 1880's and was once a thriving community of 600 to 1,000 people with a large sawmill and 155 other buildings including a company store, butcher shop, post office, stagecoach stop, a school, machine, wheel, and blacksmith shops, and boarding or Bay City houses. An impressive town for its time, complete with two main sets of rail tracks coming into town and two large freight docks going out a mile into Whitefish Bay. Mill fires in 1916 and 1925 destroyed most of Shelldrake, and the land is now privately owned.

**Vermillion** – Named for the deposits of red ochre near the Lake Superior shoreline. This area was an original U.S. Lifesaving Station designated as Lake Superior Station Number 9. The old station washed into Lake Superior during a storm in 1938. A new station was built but was abandoned in 1943. In later years, the station was manned by students and science faculty from Lake Superior State College. Today, it is privately owned. This area was the site of several cranberry marshes which stretched from Vermillion to Whitefish Point. The red berries were harvested in the fall by local Native American Indian families and shipped in barrels from Whitefish Point. There is currently a cranberry farm located in the township.

**Emerson** – This settlement was located at the mouth of the Tahquamenon River. At one time, both fishing and lumbering operated here. The town was founded in 1882 and named after Chris Emerson, a Saginaw lumberman. The town's activities were greatly diminished by the start of World War II, and there are no longer buildings on this site. Today, the land is part of the Tahquamenon Falls State Park.

**Paradise** – In June 1926, 225 lots were surveyed by Curley Lewis, Leon MacGregor, and Ed LeDuc. The area was named Paradise due to its natural beauty. Paradise is located within the boundaries of Whitefish Township. Today, the town includes the Whitefish Township Community School, the Whitefish Township Community Library, churches, motels, resorts,

restaurants, general stores, gift shops, auto repair services, a hardware store, grocery stores, gas stations, real-estate offices and other amenities for residents and visitors. Paradise hosts several seasonal events and activities each year.

## **PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN**

In Michigan, the ground rules of community planning are laid out in state statutes called “enabling acts.” In these acts, the state gives local governments the authority to undertake land use planning and zoning provided the locality follows steps prescribed by the statute. Local planning and zoning are not mandatory; but if a community chooses to take on that authority, it must be done using the process set up by the state. This process is meant to balance the rights and interests of private property owners with the health, safety, and welfare needs of the community.

Michigan has been a leader in local land use planning and zoning. The state adopted a statute enabling city and village zoning in 1921. In 1922, a real estate company in Ohio challenged the constitutionality of a similar state law in Ohio. That case made its way to the Supreme Court in 1926 (*Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty*). The court decided in favor of the village, finding that zoning and land use regulations are constitutional if the regulations are reasonably connected to the public welfare. The proof of that connection is found, in part, in the community’s master plan. Michigan’s 1921 zoning enabling act states that land use regulations “shall be made in accordance with a plan.” The plan provides the rationale for regulating land use based on health, safety, and welfare concerns documented in the plan.

Although cities and villages were the first local units enabled to conduct planning and zoning, state statutes were eventually passed to allow townships, counties, and regions to undertake plans as well. Each of these statutes were somewhat different in scope and requirements meaning, in effect, that Michigan had four different laws for planning and three different laws for zoning. Understandably, the situation was quite confusing. After decades of debate, Michigan consolidated the prior laws into a unified whole under the Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006) and the Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008). These are the state statutes that govern planning and zoning in Michigan today.

This master plan is created with the basic intent to provide the township with the changing lifestyle and social values of its community by planning for the future with knowledge of current conditions. This general land use plan will identify capability and suitability data for Whitefish Township which can further provide a base for zoning. The plan will also help the township enforce responsible development in areas within the township.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

Michigan’s Planning Enabling Act set out ground rules for establishing a planning commission and standards for developing and adopting a master plan. Creation of a planning commission requires that a local ordinance be adopted which specifies membership requirements and job

duties. Under state law, a planning commission may have five, seven, or nine members representing important segments of the community. Whitefish Township has a 5-member commission. Members are appointed by the governing body (in this case, the Township Board) to serve three-year staggered terms. Commissions must run meetings according to adopted bylaws and must provide opportunity for public comment at all meetings. The planning commission must meet at least quarterly. In Whitefish Township, meetings occur monthly. Minutes of all meetings must be kept and made available to the public, in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Minimum standards for the plan itself are also set by state statute. Before starting to prepare or update a plan, notice must be sent to surrounding communities, specific governmental bodies, and utilities or individuals who express interest in receiving plan information. The stated goal of any plan is to encourage coordinated, harmonious, efficient, and economic development; ensure suitability of land, environmental and recreational uses; maintain public health and safety; and promote good civic design. Plan content requirements to help reach these goals are necessarily broad in nature. They include consideration of geographic location, natural resources, public facilities and utilities, transportation networks, social and economic needs, and existing patterns of the built environment, open spaces, and community activities. One end product of a Master Plan is a future land use map. This map is intended to serve as a guide for future development or re-development within a specific community. Furthermore, the community's zoning regulations must be created to correspond with the future land use map and plan to be legally valid. Given the importance of the plan, the Planning Commission must hold a public hearing before it is adopted and allow for public comments. Under state law, a Master Plan can be officially adopted by the Planning Commission alone. However, the new planning enabling act also allows the legislative body to assert by resolution the right to plan approval. Under this provision, the master plan must be approved by both the Planning Commission and the governing body giving the plan an extra level of support and acknowledgement.

A new addition to the Planning Enabling Act requires that any community with an adopted master plan review that plan every five years and revise or update it as the Planning Commission sees fit. If the plan needs no updates, the Planning Commission is to state this fact for the record, and the matter is again addressed five years hence. The Planning Commission can also decide to undertake an update in response to any major changed circumstances such as a large employer arriving or leaving, a natural disaster, or a sudden influx of population. The process used for an update is identical to the process used for creating a plan in the first place. As this process is resource intensive, most communities consolidate small revisions and handle them together during a more substantial update.

Beyond the minimum requirements of planning law, a Master Plan can be used for several important community purposes. In earlier versions of the Master Plan, the text noted that the plan was future oriented, helping the community to evolve in ways that would best ensure the public safety and welfare. It also recognized that the plan set broad principles and policies to

address future growth, so governing officials would not be forced to respond in a piecemeal, ad hoc fashion. Common instances where the Master Plan can and should be applied include:

- Advisory Policies: The Whitefish Township Master Plan is an official advisory policy document which should readily be shared with existing and prospective landowners and developers to inform such persons and organizations about the long-term intentions of the Township regarding land use and public services; and, thus, more closely integrate development proposals with the policies expressed in the plan.
- Zoning Ordinance Basis: The plan establishes a practical and legal basis for the Township to revise, update, or otherwise prepare regulatory programs, including the zoning ordinance, to assure the policies of the Plan are implemented.
- Review of Rezoning or Variance Request: Future proposed rezoning or variance requests should be reviewed in light of Township goals and objectives stated in the plan which serves to establish a record on which these requests can be evaluated.
- Public Service Improvements: The cost-effective use of Whitefish Township's tax dollars requires the identification of a planned future land use pattern in order to pinpoint future population centers and areas planned for future commercial or industrial growth which typically requires a higher level of public services. The plan better enables the Township to anticipate areas of future need.
- Inter-governmental Coordination: The plan provides a basis for Whitefish Township to communicate effectively with its neighbors regarding the impacts of neighboring land uses and public service.

# CHAPTER TWO: SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

The chapter provides the background information necessary for Whitefish Township to assess current conditions to move for upcoming years. The Plan includes socioeconomic profile from 2020 U.S Decennial Census and 2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates (further noted as ACS data).

During the development of this Master Plan Update, an extensive socio-economic profile was prepared as a component of the township master plan update. That profile is available in digital format, as an excel spreadsheet, which has been provided to the Township. The purpose of this plan section is to summarize profile findings that will be especially helpful in developing plan goals and future land use objectives.

## Population

The total population of Whitefish Township was 474 people according to the 2020 Decennial Census. This represents a decrease of 17.5% when compared to the 2010 Census, and a decline of 8.3% since 1990. During the summer months the Township’s population increases substantially, as evidenced by the large percentage of seasonal housing units found within the Township. According to the American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year estimates, there were 993 vacant housing units in the Township, which accounted for over 81 percent of the total housing units.

As displayed in the table below, the Township’s population has seen varying fluctuations since the 1990 Census. From the 1990 Census to 2000, the population increased by 13.7%, and then declined by 2.2% from 2000 to 2010, and most recently, from the 2010 Census to 2021 the population is estimated to have decreased by 13.3%. In addition to decennial Census data, the 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year estimate data is cited here instead of the year 2020 census, due to Census counting and reliability problems encountered during the pandemic. It is also worth noting that both Chippewa County and the EUP region have also experienced population loss during the period from 2010 to 2021.

Figure 2-1: Township Population Comparison

|                                                                          | 1990        | 2000        | 2010        | 2020        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>USA</b>                                                               | 248,709,873 | 281,421,906 | 308,745,538 | 331,449,281 |
| <b>MI</b>                                                                | 9,295,297   | 9,938,444   | 9,883,640   | 10,077,331  |
| <b>EUP</b>                                                               | 51,291      | 57,530      | 56,264      | 52,958      |
| <b>CC</b>                                                                | 34,788      | 38,599      | 38,520      | 36,785      |
| <b>Whitefish Twp.</b>                                                    | 517         | 588         | 575         | 474         |
| Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: 1990, 2000, 2010, & 2020 Decennial Censuses |             |             |             |             |

The Figure 2-2 below describes the distribution of males and females in the geographies under examination. Whitefish Township, like Chippewa County and the EUP, had more males than females. Whereas the USA and Michigan had a nearly 50-50 split in their respective populations. Whitefish Township has just over 5 percent more males than females, and when compared to State, the Township recorded 3.3% more males during the same period, according to the American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimate data.

**Figure 2-2: Population by Gender**

| Population by Gender                                        | Male        | Female      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| USA                                                         | 163,206,615 | 166,518,866 |
| Michigan                                                    | 4,983,325   | 5,079,187   |
| EUP                                                         | 28,747      | 24,678      |
| Chippewa Co.                                                | 19,884      | 17,207      |
| Whitefish Twp.                                              | 264         | 236         |
| Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: 2021 American Community Survey |             |             |

**Figure 2-3: Population Comparison by Gender**

| % Of Total Population                                       | Male  | Female |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|
| USA                                                         | 49.5% | 50.5%  |
| Michigan                                                    | 49.5% | 50.5%  |
| EUP                                                         | 53.8% | 46.2%  |
| Chippewa Co.                                                | 53.6% | 46.4%  |
| Whitefish Twp.                                              | 52.8% | 47.2%  |
| Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: 2021 American Community Survey |       |        |

### Population by Age

According to the 2021 ACS 5-Year estimate data, the majority of the township's residents were age 45 and over (74.6%), however, there was a large increase in the population aged 19 and under between 2010 and 2021 of 8.3%. Compared to the County and Region, the Township is aging at a more rapid rate, and well above state and national averages for the same period.

**Figure 2-4: Township Population by Age**

| % Of Total Population                                  | USA   |       | MI    |       | EUP   |       | CC    |       | Whitefish Twp. |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|
|                                                        | 2010  | 2021  | 2010  | 2021  | 2010  | 2021  | 2010  | 2021  | 2010           | 2021  |
| ≤ 19 Years                                             | 27.3% | 24.8% | 27.4% | 24.4% | 22.1% | 19.9% | 22.7% | 21.1% | 7.5%           | 15.8% |
| 20 To 24 Years                                         | 7.0%  | 6.4%  | 6.7%  | 6.8%  | 6.9%  | 7.6%  | 8.3%  | 8.7%  | 0.9%           | 0.0%  |
| 25 To 44 Years                                         | 27.1% | 26.8% | 25.6% | 24.8% | 26.6% | 24.0% | 28.0% | 25.9% | 7.6%           | 9.4%  |
| 45 To 64 Years                                         | 25.9% | 25.1% | 27.1% | 26.8% | 28.6% | 27.3% | 27.1% | 26.1% | 48.5%          | 36.4% |
| ≥ 65 Years                                             | 12.7% | 16.8% | 13.2% | 17.2% | 15.7% | 20.6% | 13.9% | 18.2% | 35.5%          | 38.2% |
| Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |                |       |

The median age for Whitefish Township is 61.1 years, which is older than that of the county at 40.4 years or the state at 39.8 years. The township has a smaller percentage of school-age children than the State (7.5% versus Michigan’s 24.4%), and the County (19.9%). What makes the township age distribution different from the county is the larger proportion of people in the 45-to-64-year category. The township shows 36.4% in this category with the county at 27.3%. This larger group of the late working age population supports stronger demand in the township for single family housing and home ownership. It also suggests a growing need for senior services and workforce replacements as this age cohort approaches retirement. In 2021, 25.6% of Whitefish Township’s population reported a disability compared to 18.4% of county residents. The disability numbers are anticipated to grow with the aging of the population. There are no reported group quarters within the township, in contrast to the county, where more than 10% of the population reside in prisons, college dormitories, or elder care facilities.

**Figure 2-5: Township Median Age**

| MEDIAN AGE                                             | 2010 | 2021 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| USA                                                    | 36.9 | 38.4 |
| Michigan                                               | 38.1 | 39.8 |
| EUP                                                    | 41.1 | 45.9 |
| Chippewa Co.                                           | 39.1 | 40.4 |
| Whitefish Twp.                                         | 60.2 | 61.1 |
| Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey |      |      |

Racial Distribution

Racial distribution within the township also demonstrates the unique regional characteristics of the community. Over 3% of township residents are Native Americans. These statistics reveal the area’s continuing importance as a tribal homeland. In contrast, 13.5% of the County’s population is Native American and just 0.5% statewide. Significantly, the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians and Bay Mills Indian Community are both headquartered in Chippewa County, and both Tribe offers social services within the Township. During 2021, the Township racial breakdown was predominantly white and of one race, there were 35 individuals who identified with two or more races, and 15 who were American Indian, and 7 of some other race.

**Figure 2-6: Township Racial Distribution**

|                                                        | USA         | MI         | EUP    | CC     | Whitefish<br>Twp. |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|--------|--------|-------------------|
|                                                        | 2021        | 2021       | 2021   | 2021   | 2021              |
| Total population                                       | 329,725,481 | 10,062,512 | 53,425 | 37,091 | 500               |
| One Race                                               | 306,686,059 | 9599143    | 47,942 | 32527  | 465               |
| Two or more races                                      | 23,039,422  | 463369     | 5,483  | 4564   | 35                |
| One Race                                               | 306,686,059 | 9599143    | 47,942 | 32527  | 465               |
| White                                                  | 224,789,109 | 7,715,291  | 37,452 | 25,185 | 443               |
| Black or African American                              | 41,393,012  | 1,368,177  | 2,615  | 1,733  | 0                 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native                      | 2,722,661   | 48,361     | 6,951  | 4,999  | 15                |
| Asian                                                  | 18,782,924  | 322,718    | 445    | 318    | 0                 |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander             | 615,557     | 2,915      | 83     | 33     | 0                 |
| Some other race                                        | 18,382,796  | 142,181    | 396    | 259    | 7                 |
| Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey |             |            |        |        |                   |

### Economy & Employment

Tourism/recreation, retail, commercial fishing, and small manufacturing establish the economic base for the township.

Thousands of visitors come to Paradise and Whitefish Township each year to enjoy the many attractions and natural beauty found here. The Lake Superior shoreline, Tahquamenon Falls, and the Whitefish Point Light Station (Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum) are among the major tourist attractions in the township. Fishing, boating, camping, hiking, and canoeing are some of the recreational activities enjoyed in the spring, summer, and fall. Snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are among the winter activities enjoyed here.

In terms of employment, 37.6% of the Whitefish Township workforce was gainfully employed, with the following sectors representing most of the industry occupations, 30.6% of the Whitefish Township workforce labors in the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services sector. The next most frequent categories are educational services/health care/social assistance, which accounted for 21.6% of the labor force. Third place is held by retail trade at 10.4%, followed by agriculture/forestry/fishing/hunting/mining at 9%. Work in all these categories is readily available nearby in the surrounding area.

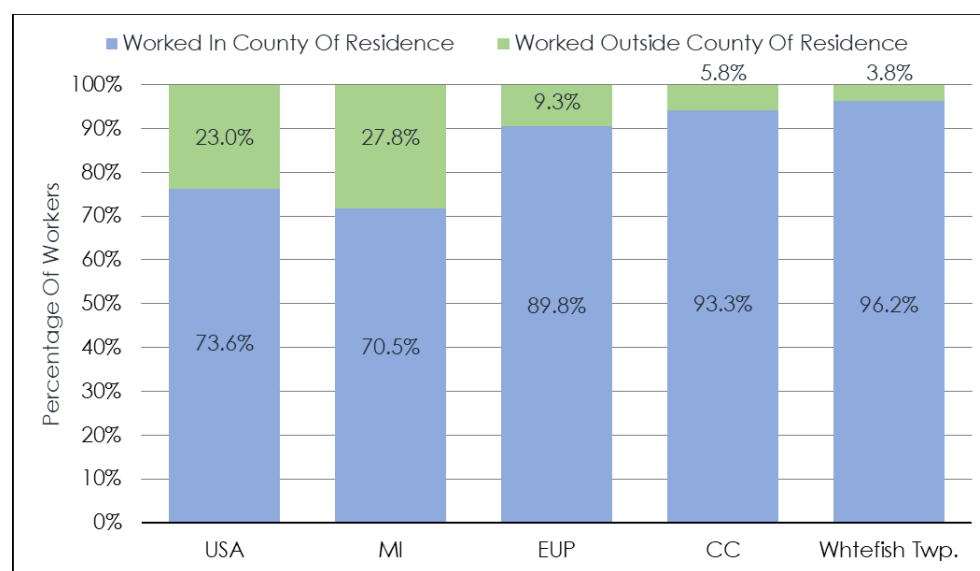
**Figure 2-7: Employment by Industry Sector**

|                                                              | USA   |       | MI    |       | EUP   |       | CC    |       | Whitefish Twp. |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|
|                                                              | 2010  | 2021  | 2010  | 2021  | 2010  | 2021  | 2010  | 2021  | 2010           | 2021  |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting, & Mining           | 1.9%  | 1.7%  | 1.3%  | 1.1%  | 2.1%  | 2.4%  | 1.3%  | 2.0%  | 2.4%           | 9.0%  |
| Construction                                                 | 7.1%  | 6.8%  | 5.3%  | 5.6%  | 6.6%  | 6.8%  | 5.8%  | 6.5%  | 4.2%           | 8.2%  |
| Manufacturing                                                | 11.0% | 10.0% | 17.6% | 18.7% | 5.7%  | 6.8%  | 5.8%  | 7.2%  | 11.4%          | 5.2%  |
| Wholesale Trade                                              | 3.1%  | 2.5%  | 2.8%  | 2.3%  | 1.4%  | 1.7%  | 1.6%  | 2.0%  | 0.0%           | 6.0%  |
| Retail Trade                                                 | 11.5% | 11.0% | 11.6% | 10.8% | 12.6% | 11.5% | 12.6% | 11.9% | 12.7%          | 10.4% |
| Transportation & Warehousing, & Utilities                    | 5.1%  | 5.7%  | 4.2%  | 4.6%  | 4.2%  | 4.9%  | 4.0%  | 5.0%  | 4.8%           | 4.5%  |
| Information                                                  | 2.4%  | 1.9%  | 1.9%  | 1.3%  | 1.2%  | 1.4%  | 1.5%  | 1.5%  | 0.0%           | 0.0%  |
| Finance & Insurance, & Real Estate & Rental & Leasing        | 7.0%  | 6.7%  | 5.7%  | 5.7%  | 3.8%  | 4.4%  | 3.7%  | 4.0%  | 6.6%           | 6.0%  |
| Pro., Sci., & Mgmt., & Admin. & Waste Mgmt. Services         | 10.4% | 11.9% | 8.9%  | 9.8%  | 4.4%  | 5.2%  | 4.5%  | 5.3%  | 1.2%           | 0.0%  |
| Edu. Services, & Health Care & Social Assistance             | 22.1% | 23.3% | 23.2% | 23.3% | 23.4% | 22.9% | 24.2% | 23.8% | 14.5%          | 21.6% |
| Arts, Entertainment, & Rec., & Accommodation & Food Services | 8.9%  | 9.1%  | 9.1%  | 9.0%  | 16.5% | 15.2% | 15.7% | 14.4% | 10.8%          | 30.6% |
| Other Services, Except Public Administration                 | 4.9%  | 4.8%  | 4.7%  | 4.5%  | 5.0%  | 4.7%  | 4.8%  | 4.7%  | 10.2%          | 1.5%  |
| Public Administration                                        | 4.8%  | 4.7%  | 3.8%  | 3.4%  | 13.0% | 12.0% | 14.3% | 11.7% | 21.1%          | 6.0%  |

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey

In Whitefish Township, 96.2% of the workers find employment within their county of residence as opposed to 93.3% countywide, 89.8% in the EUP region, and just 70.5% of workers in the State of Michigan. Nationally, 73.6% of workers found employment within their county of residence. When compared to 2010 data, the number of workers aged 16 & over who worked in their county of residence declined by nearly 10 percent, fueled by the increase in workers who worked outside of the State of Michigan, which was up 9.3 percent over the same period.

**Figure 2-8: Place of Work for Township Residents**

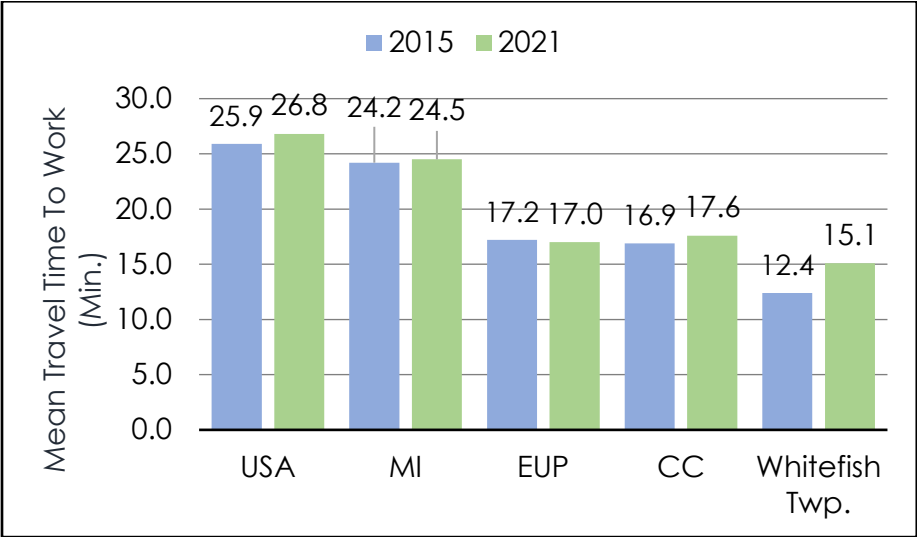


### Mean Travel Time to Work

Ease of access to employment is one of the factors that brings residents to the township as more people can work from home. This advantage may decrease over time. However, in 2021,

township residents had a lower average commute time than county, region, or state as shown in the following chart.

**Figure 2-9: Travel Time to Work Comparison**



According to the 2021 ACS 5-Year estimates, 89.9% of the township’s residents utilized a car, truck or van as their primary means of transportation work, slightly higher than the state at 87.1% and County at 87.6%, meanwhile, the Township outpaces the County for at home workers, recording 7.8% of the workers aged 16 and over, compared to 5.9% at the County level.

**Figure 2-10: Means of Transportation to Work**

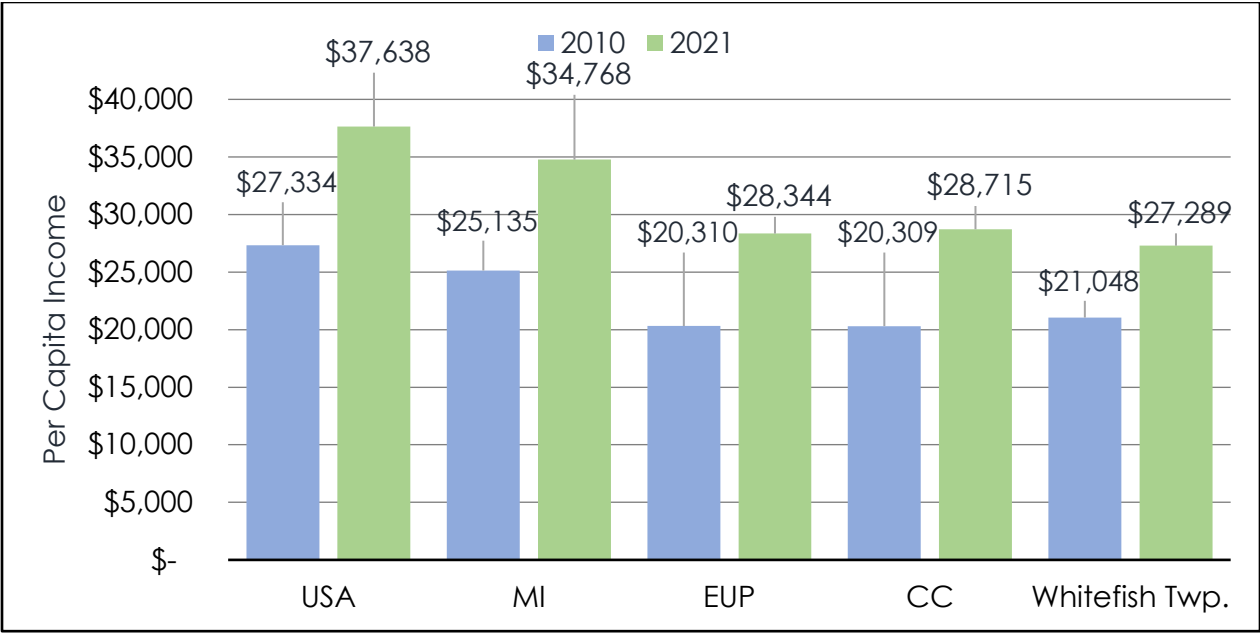
| Means of Transportation to Work - 2021                 |       |       |       |       |               |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|
| Workers 16 Years & Over                                | USA   | MI    | EUP   | CC    | Whtefish Twp. |
| Car, truck or van                                      | 81.8% | 87.1% | 83.2% | 87.6% | 89.9%         |
| Public Transportation (Excluding Taxicab)              | 4.2%  | 1.2%  | 0.5%  | 0.4%  | 0.0%          |
| Bicycle                                                | 47.6% | 0.4%  | 3.2%  | 1.0%  | 0.0%          |
| Walked                                                 | 2.5%  | 2.1%  | 2.6%  | 3.7%  | 2.3%          |
| Worked At Home                                         | 9.7%  | 8.3%  | 6.6%  | 5.9%  | 7.8%          |
| Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey |       |       |       |       |               |

**Education, Income, and Employment:**

Educational attainment is a significant economic indicator because it can influence the ability to secure gainful employment and provide financial well-being. In the important late working age cohort of 45–64-year-olds, 6% of the Township’s residents held a bachelor’s degree or Higher, which was slightly lower than the County averages, at 8.2% for bachelor’s degree or Higher, and 36.4% were High School Graduates or higher, which was significantly higher than the same age cohort at the county level, which was recorded at 24.8%.

The township’s per capita income, according to 2021 ACS 5-year data was \$27,289, slightly below the Chippewa County per capita of \$28,715, and the EUP region at \$28,344. The median household income in the township was recorded as \$62,032 in 2021, with was slightly lower than Chippewa County’s median at \$71,531, and the EUP Region at \$67,203.

**Figure 2-11: Per Capita Income**

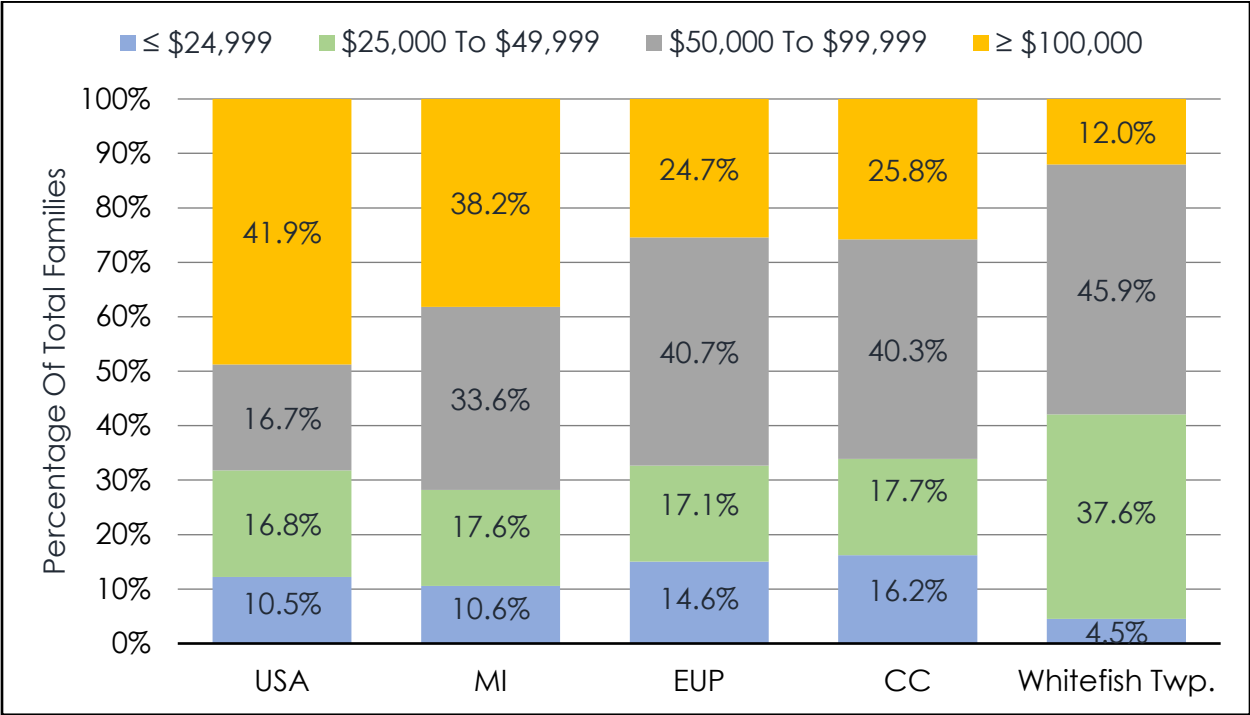


Educational attainment is a significant economic indicator because it can influence the ability to secure gainful employment and provide financial well-being. In the important late working age cohort of 45-64 years, 7.3% of township residents hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 5.7% in the county, and 7.9% statewide. This foundation of better education continues to support greater wealth and financial stability locally. The township’s per capita income in 2021 was \$27,289, which lags behind the state average of \$34,768 and just below the county’s \$28,334 average. The township’s economic advantages are also shown by the higher proportions of Whitefish families falling into the middle-class income group of \$50,000 to \$99,999 per year, and the lower proportion of families falling into the lower income group of \$24,999 per year or less as compared to the nation, state, and county.

Family Income Ranges

Family income, as recorded in the 2021 ACS is identified below. The majority of Whitefish Township falls within the \$50,000 to \$99,000 family income bracket, which is higher than rates for the same income bracket in the County and Regionally. This income bracket has increased by 110.3% since 2010, while lower income brackets have declined significantly.

**Figure 2-12: Family Median Income**



Housing

**Housing Unit Status**

In 2021, there were 219 households in Whitefish Township and 133 families. These numbers are slightly different because a household is defined as one or more persons occupying a dwelling unit while families are defined as related individuals occupying a dwelling unit. To accommodate these families and households, the township has a total of 1,212 housing units. Of the total, 219 units are occupied; 192 by owners and 27 by renters. Vacant units in the township number 993; 942 held for seasonal, occasional or recreation use and 13 vacant rental units. “Other vacant” units totaled 33 and could include units under construction or repair or those remaining uninhabited or uninhabitable for various reasons. In recent years, an increasing number of housing units have been held for seasonal and vacation rentals through outlets such as Air B&B and VRBO (Vacation Rental by Owner). Because tourism and recreation are growing in the EUP region, the competition between worker and resident housing versus recreational housing may become a more critical economic factor in the near future. The chart below compares the distribution of township housing units to that of the county and state.

**Figure 2-13: Township Housing Characteristics**

|                                                        | EUP<br>2021 | CC<br>2021 | Whitefish<br>Twp.<br>2021 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------------------|
| Total Housing Units                                    | 36,588      | 20,386     | 1,212                     |
| Occupied Housing Units                                 | 21,583      | 13,757     | 219                       |
| Owner-Occupied Housing Units                           | 15,318      | 9,929      | 192                       |
| Renter-Occupied Housing Units                          | 5,630       | 3,828      | 27                        |
| Vacant Housing Units                                   | 15,005      | 6,629      | 993                       |
| For rent                                               | 517         | 227        | 13                        |
| Rented, not occupied                                   | 70          | 33         | -                         |
| For sale only                                          | 547         | 164        | 5                         |
| Sold, not occupied                                     | 241         | 47         | -                         |
| For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use          | 11,984      | 5,230      | 942                       |
| For migrant workers                                    | 187         | -          | -                         |
| Other vacant                                           | 1,459       | 928        | 33                        |
| Sources: U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey |             |            |                           |

The overwhelming majority of housing units in the township, 91.5%, are single-family detached units. Attached, multiple unit structures (apartments or town homes hosting between 3 and 20 units) comprise 0.7% of the total stock. Mobile homes represent 7.5% of the total with boat/RV/van/etc., 0.2%.

#### Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units, 2021

The township's 2021 median value of owner-occupied homes, at \$153,700, was substantially higher in the township than the county at \$123,300 or EUP region at \$117,000. Township values were lower than the State median of \$172,100. Part of this higher value is explained by the fact that a sizeable number of the township's housing has been constructed since 2000; 26.9% in the township versus 17.8% in the county and 16.1% for the region. Housing stock forms an important part of the township's taxable value and helps increase local government's ability to provide the services needed and desired by residents.

#### Transportation

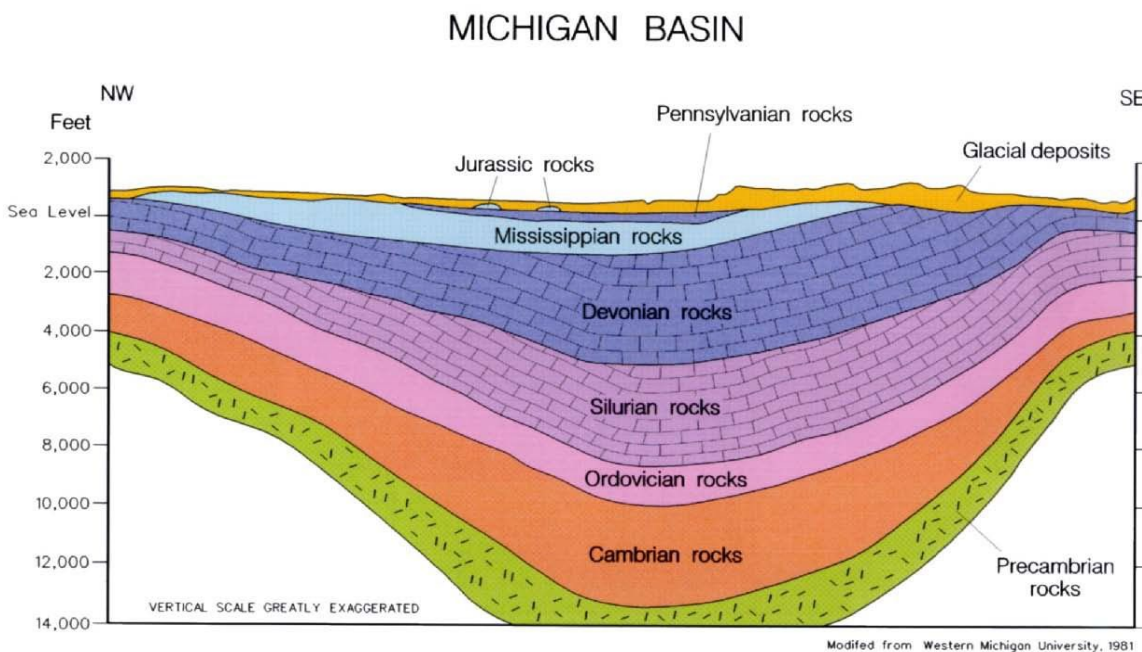
The transportation network shows accessible roadways in the township. Michigan Highway 123 is the major road which serves the township. This road connects with Michigan Highway 28 (east to west) and Federal Interstate 75 (north to south). The Township is served by numerous year-round County Roads such as: Whitefish Point Road; Wildcat Road; part of Vermillion Rd.; Lost Lake Rd.; Tahqua Trail; North Rd.; and East-West Rd. Many seasonal county roads abound such as: Betsy River Rd.; Maple Block Rd.; Farm Truck Trail; part of Vermillion Rd; Timberlost Rd., etc. Many logging trails provide access to public lands as well. Private easements allow access to some of the property in the township.

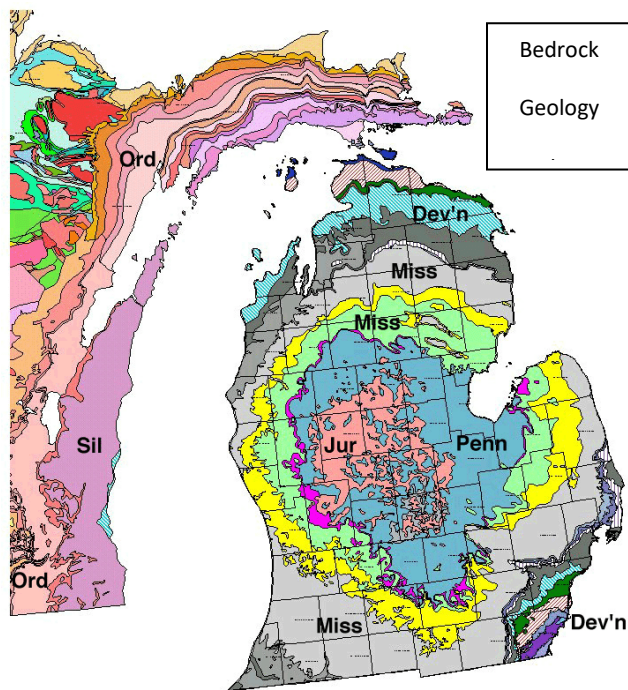
## CHAPTER THREE: ENVIRONMENTAL PROFILE

### Geology

The Eastern Upper Peninsula, including Whitefish Township, is part of North America's great plains physical region. A vast stable platform lying between the Appalachians on the southeast, the granites of the Canadian Shield on the north, and the elevated Great Plains and Rocky Mountains on the west. This physical region is characterized by low altitudes and low topographic relief. It has a continental climate, with hot summers and cold winters. It is also a land of great river systems and the Great Lakes that help to temper climate extremes. The entire region is blanketed by a layer of glacial deposits left behind from the successive advance and retreat of continental glaciers during the last Ice Age. The region's assets support a rich and diverse economy balanced between agriculture, minerals, manufacturing, and transportation.

Underneath Michigan, bedrock layers are stacked up like saucers, with a low depression called the Michigan Basin located at the center, near the Houghton Lake area of the lower peninsula. Bedrock layers are exposed at the saucer edges, which extend in concentric circles around the state. The saucer edges underlying Soo Township's mainland is the Jacobsville formation which is a Cambrian age sandstone deposited approximately 550 years before the present. The younger Munising sandstones underlay the northern portion of Neebish Island. Moving southward, Ordovician age limestones originating 425 million years before the present underlie the lower portion of Neebish Island, including the Prairie du Chien, Black River and Trenton groups (see geological cross-section and map below).





<http://www.geo.mtu.edu/svl/geoscience/figures/digital%20geologic%20map%20of%20michigan.jpg>

In both mainland and island parts of the township, unconsolidated sands, gravels, silts, and clays cover the bedrock, deposited during the most recent Wisconsin period of glaciation that ended approximately 15,000 years ago. Glaciers pushing their way south in earlier epochs helped carve out the Great Lakes basins, and glacial melt water then filled them with glacial debris deposits acting as dams to change flow patterns block outflow.

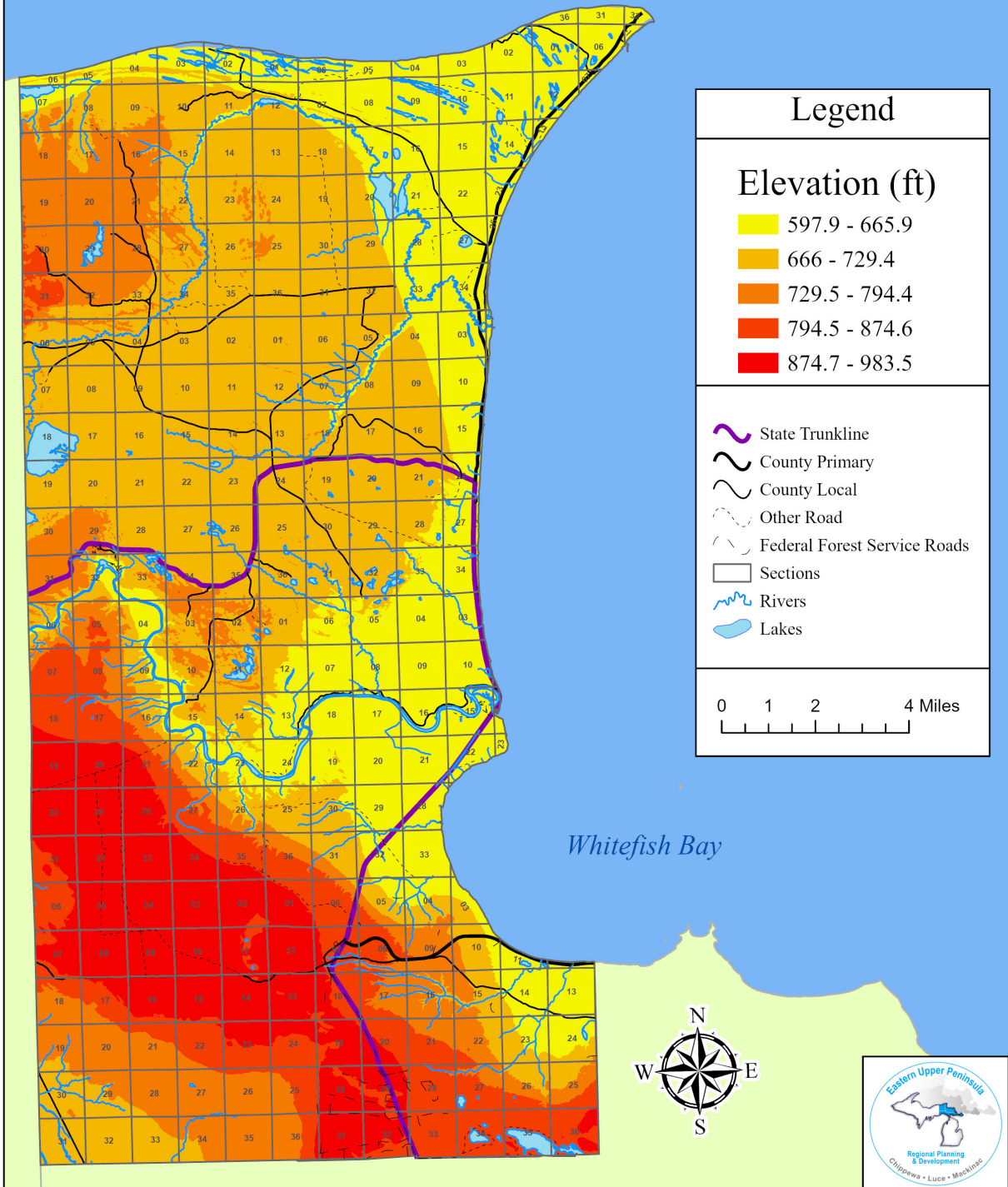
Geological resources can play an important role in the local economy. Glacial-era sands and gravels are mined at several locations in Soo Township. Sandstone bedrock is often tapped as a good aquifer for municipal water because sandstone is sufficiently porous to

provide high storage capacity yet dense enough to provide filtering. Limestones, in contrast, are typified by cracks and joints that can allow groundwater pollution to travel great distances and can be risky as a drinking water aquifer. While glacial era sands and gravels also store water, pollution from surface land uses can pose a contamination risk. While some deposits are adequate for domestic supply, they are not generally appropriate as a municipal drinking water source.

## Topography

The terrain of Whitefish Township is remarkably variable, with the areas along M-123 on Whitefish Bay within 597-666 feet in elevation. However, moving more inland, and to the west, the elevations begin to change, with the area north and west of M-123 to the west of Paradise in the 666-to-729-foot elevation range. Further south and to the western corner of the township, the highest elevation ranges of 974-983 are found, which are among the highest found in the Eastern Upper Peninsula Region.

# Whitefish Township: Topography



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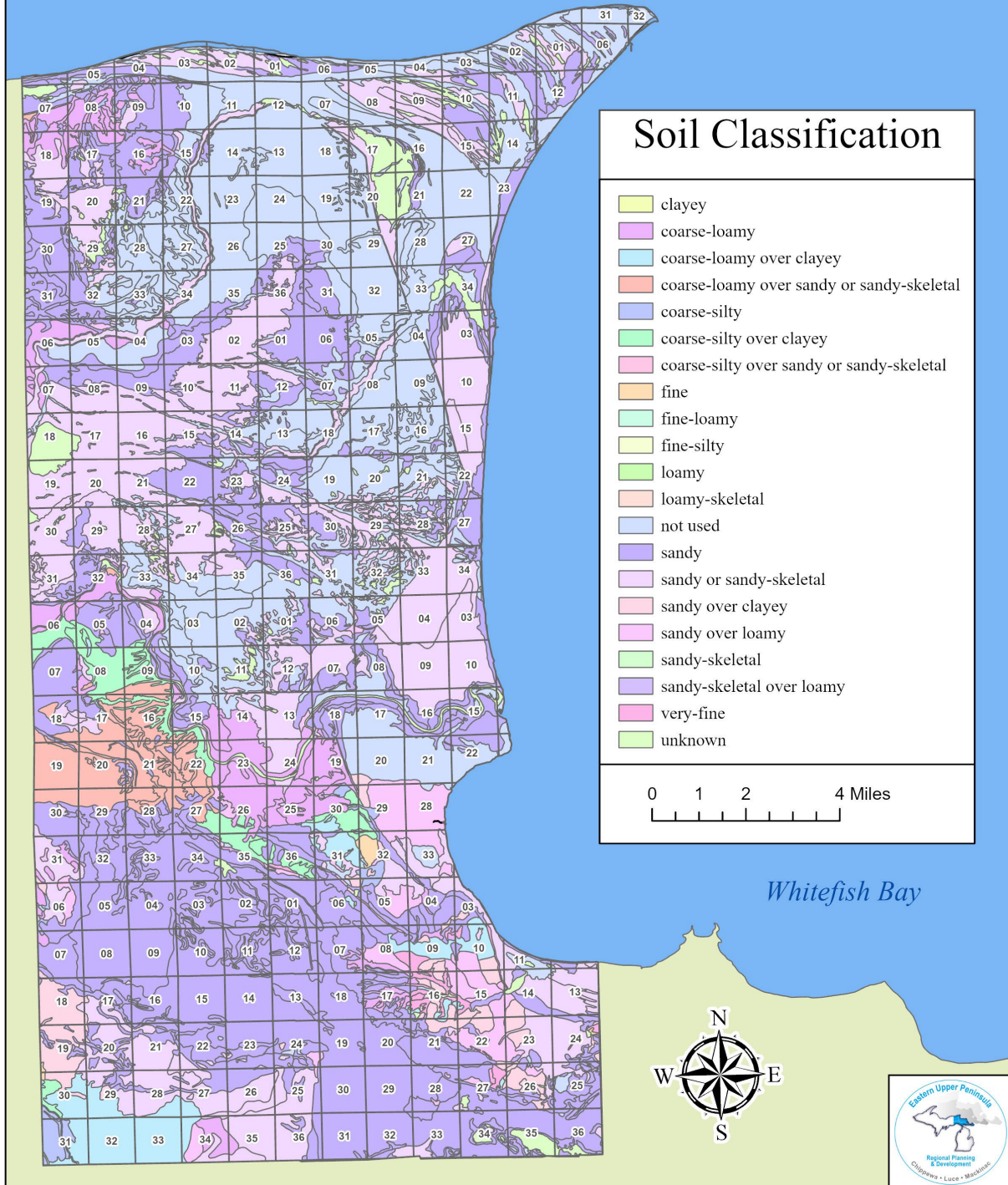
## Soil Characteristics

Soils are an important part in determining building foundation strength, effectiveness of septic sewage disposal, plant fertility, erosion hazards, drainage conditions and other environmental factors. Soils also help determine how much development and what types of development should occur in any given area.

A (U.S. Soil Conservation Service) general soils survey categorizes soil types within the township and helps the local township officials and planning and zoning board members in determining and approving development. Included in this plan is the soils determination for the area. For practical reasons, three basic soils have been identified within the township: 1) sandy; 2) mucky and wet (loam); 3) clay. (See Map 3 – Soil Types.)

Sandy soils are primarily deep, nearly level to sloping, well to moderately well drained that have coarse textured subsoils. Included are some areas of deep, nearly level, poorly drained soils with coarse textured subsoils. About half of the township area has sandy soils. Such areas are scattered throughout the township and are “capable” and “most capable” for residential development. Mucky and wet loamy soils cover approximately 40 percent of the township. They consist primarily of deep and nearly level, very poorly drained organic soils. Development should proceed with caution in these areas and with all environmental factors considered. Also included are small areas of deep, well drained, gentle to heavy sloping soils with coarse textured subsoils. These areas are generally “incapable” of supporting development. Clay soil areas are the least common in the township. These areas are found almost exclusively in the Tahquamenon River watershed. Soils here are primarily deep, gently sloping, well to poorly drained with fine textured subsoils. A few areas of deep, nearly level, poorly drained soils with moderately coarse and fine textured subsoils are included (complex soils). Generally, these areas are incapable for conventional septic tank sewage disposal, however, there are alternative systems that will work in these soils. These soils are capable for agricultural use.

# Whitefish Township: Soil Composition



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## **Waterfront Resources**

The township's waterfront provides one of the most important economic and social factors for development. The area 500 feet from the edge of the water is considered its shore width. This includes the shoreline for Lake Superior, and a number of inland lakes and streams. The main purpose of this corridor is to preserve the natural features of the shore for the benefit of present and future generations, to protect the fish, wildlife, water quality, scenic and aesthetic qualities and historic, natural and recreational values. The second purpose is to delineate areas along the waterfront that do not meet criteria for development so that there is no damage to the area's natural resources. The waterfront is divided into environmentally defined corridors that provide for township approval for land use and zoning.

### Preservation Corridor

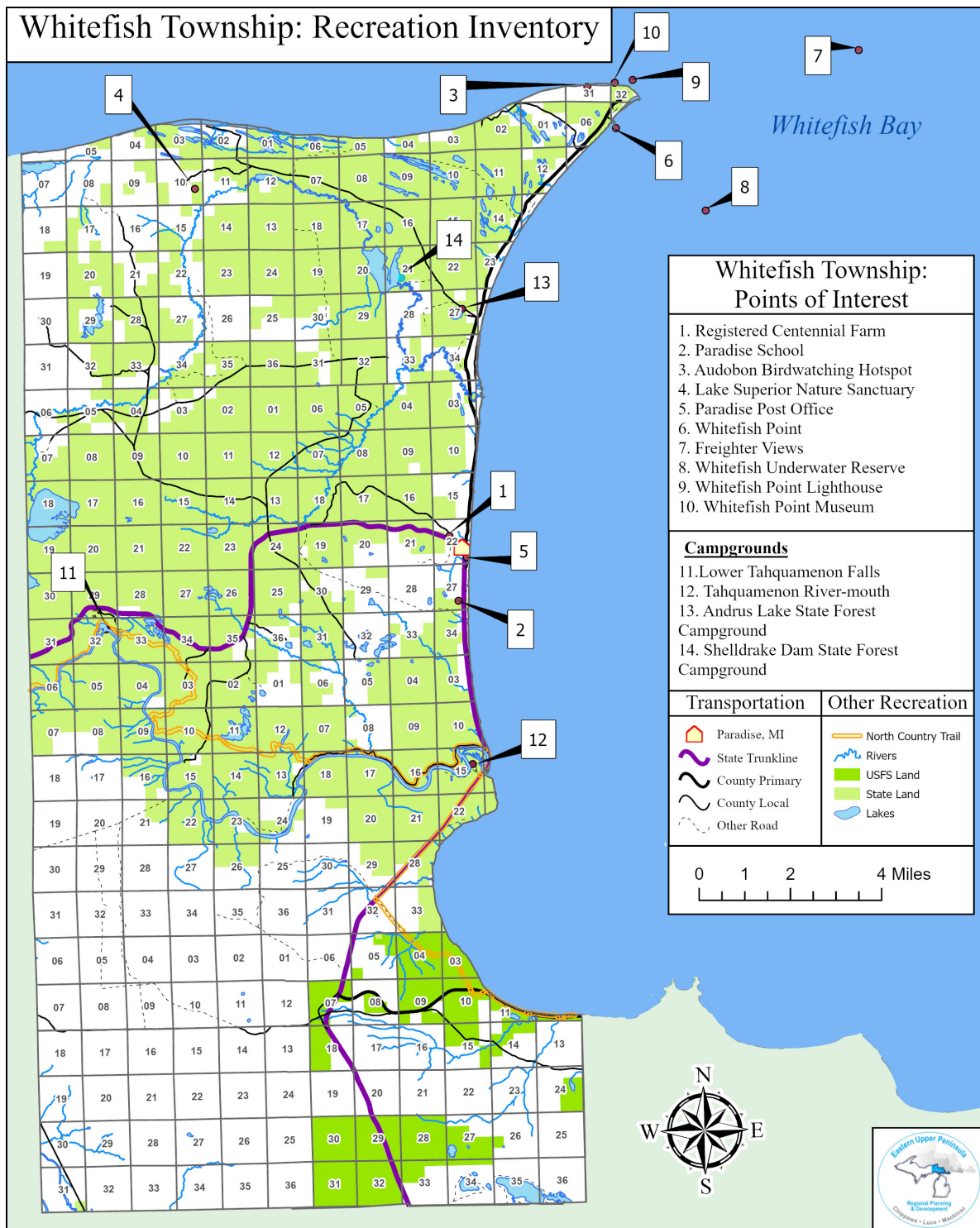
This corridor encompasses areas of significant historic, natural, aesthetic, recreational and cultural resources in which characteristic values and long-term environmental productivity may be assured through preservation. The preservation corridor should be used to keep a shoreline area in its present state or to enhance and restore the area to the greatest possible degree. An area of significance to the township is the northern area. This area contains the Whitefish Point Light Station and the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. Other significant properties are federally owned and under the supervision of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A management plan for this area has been approved (December 2002).

### Conservation Corridor

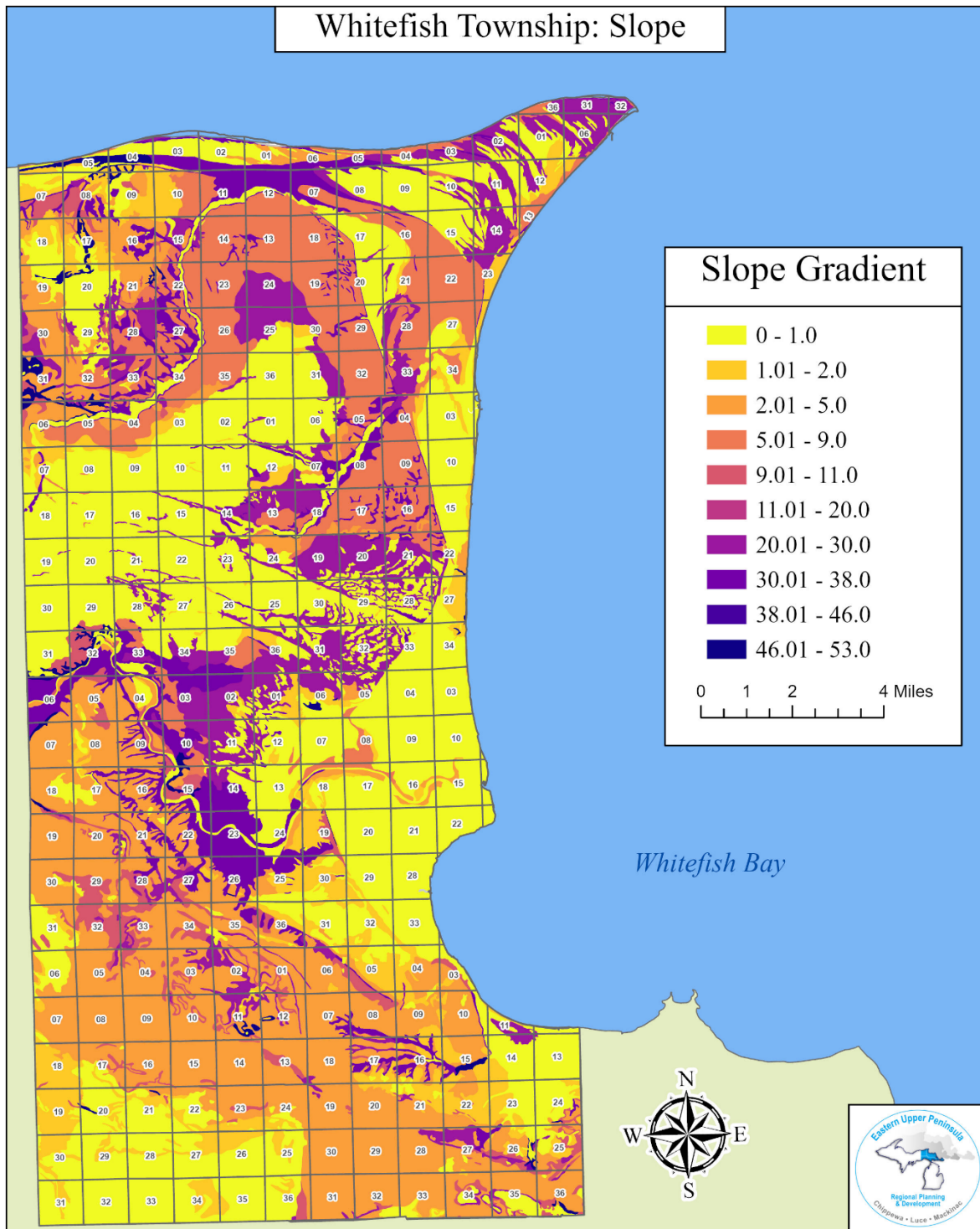
This corridor has a high risk for erosion as evidenced by past high water level impacts. It includes areas of diverse natural, aesthetic and recreational values, which should be protected through a combination of preservation, enhancement, restoration, and recreational or tourist-oriented development compatible with the existing landscape.

### General Use Corridor

This corridor includes areas that are not as critical as in the other two corridors, and general use development will not affect the characteristic values or long-range environmental productivity of the shore corridor. This area is capable for development, but management objectives should be kept in mind.



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### **Slope Interpretation**

Slope characteristics help determine drainage, erosion and practicality for construction. Slope information is obtained from USGS quadrangle sheets. Slope is determined by measuring the horizontal distance between contour lines and is calculated in percent. One percent slope means that there is a rise or fall of one foot in horizontal distance of one hundred feet. Map 2 shows the slope greater than 10% for this area in three categories: 6-15%, 15-35%, and 35-60% slope. Only a few scattered small hills and depressions exist in areas in the township. These are generally located along rivers and streams and are not capable of supporting structures. Other areas are considered capable of supporting structures.

## CHAPTER FOUR: LAND USE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

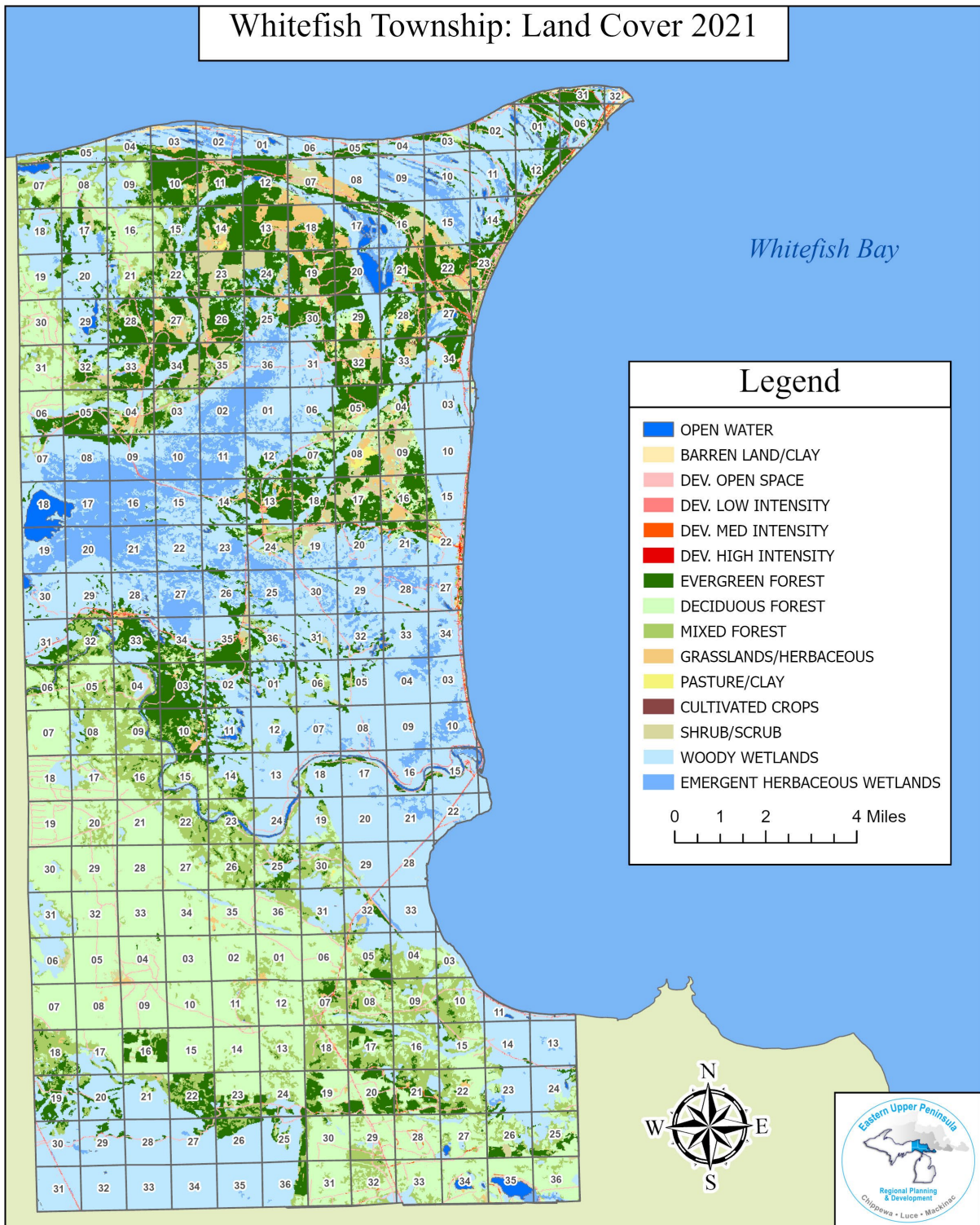
Historical and physical aspects of the area and community survey results, etc. form the basis for developing objectives and goals. The Township Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) under the direction of the Township Board should update their goals and objectives on an annual basis. Realistically, township goals should match or clearly reflect the township's potential for growth, or in maintaining the status quo. The summary below reflects the information discussed in this plan.

1. The township population is expected to increase, due to baby-boomer retirees purchasing property and building homes in the area. Proper planning and zoning regulations should be enforced.
2. Recreational/tourism development is expected to increase and diversify (attractions, fishing, boating, camping, etc.)
3. The unspoiled natural and scenic environment provides the area with unique opportunities for outdoor recreation and economic well-being. Saving and sharing the environment should be a top priority in determining development. Development ideas and plans should support preservation. Consideration should also be given to suitability and capability for these opportunities.

The following reflect some of the goals.

1. Natural features of the township should be protected through proper land use.
2. Future development should only occur in those areas that meet capability and suitability criteria for that particular development.
3. The land density should reflect the capability of the physical environment to accommodate septic tanks and other leaching devices in the absence of municipal water and sewage disposal systems.
4. The township should adopt a list of activities/projects (in priority of importance) that reflect the desires of the township. (Note: See Survey 2002 - attached.)
5. The township should consider expanding or more clearly defining its zone categories to better reflect each zone use. Update of the present zoning ordinance is strongly encouraged.
6. The township should have in place a high-quality emergency response program and facility for its residents' safety.
7. The township should adopt a "business friendly" stance in all its decisions.

## Whitefish Township: Land Cover 2021



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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERALL DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

### Implementation

This plan provides the basic information on management and development for the township. The factual information forms the basis for determining where and to what extent development should occur. Maps and other graphics provide a visual picture and add to the overall understanding of the information. Surveys and supporting materials provide input from the residents. This information should be highly considered. History of the area provides an opportunity to share past experiences through museum exhibits, books, etc., thus promoting business ventures. New recreational opportunities open up all the time. Proper planning, implementation and management can support new development that has very little to no effect on the existing natural environment.

The township government shall exercise firm, balanced and responsible control allowable by law over development activities within the township. Officials shall insist on consistent and appropriate adherence to the basic concepts of this plan for all development activities. Further, they shall insist on the development of long-range plans.

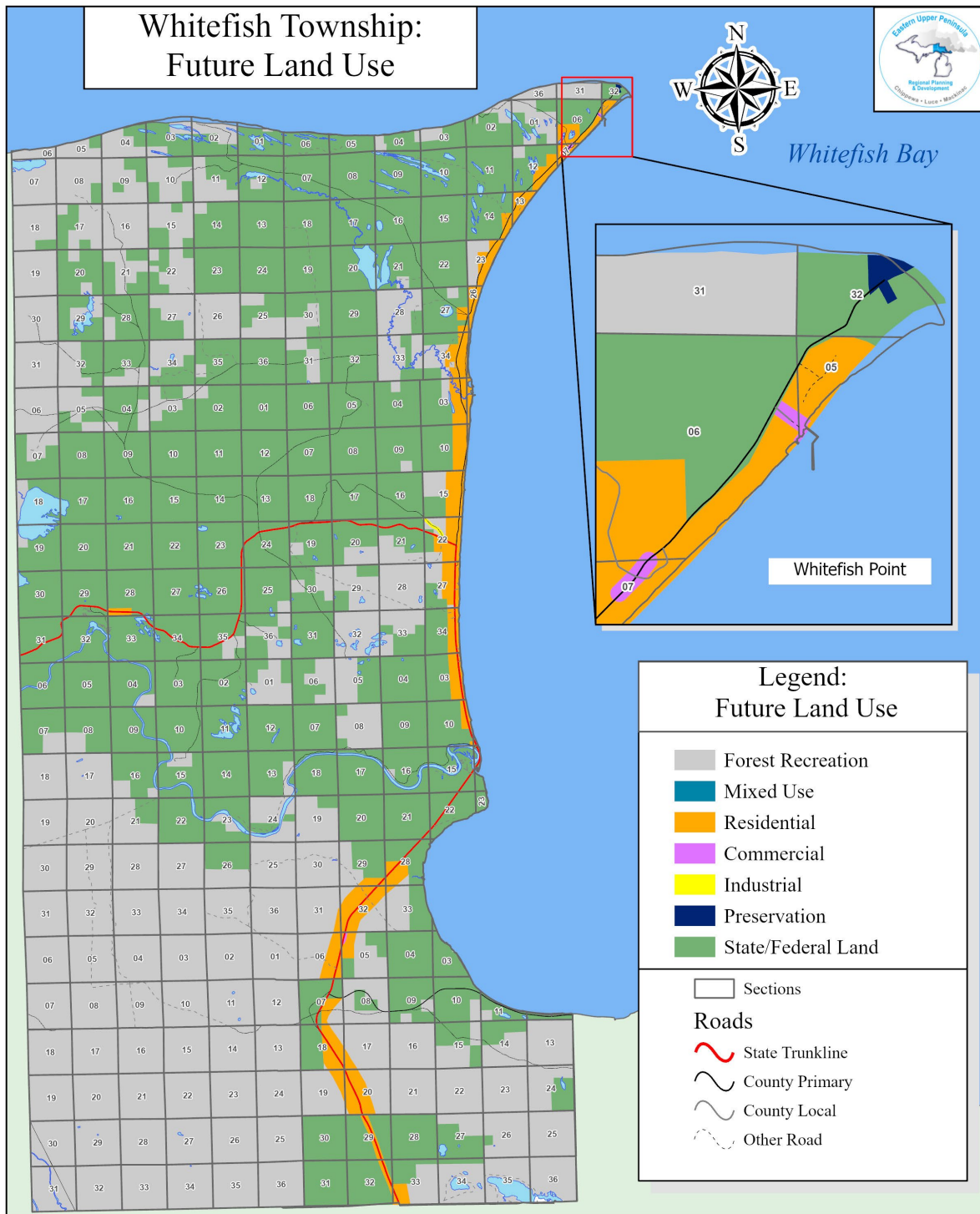
Below is a list that could accelerate the realization of the plan:

1. Require that all potential businesses submit a structural site plan to the planning commission, prior to construction, that is in compliance with township zoning.
2. Require that all utilities, as much as possible, be installed underground so as not to take away from the natural environment.
3. Maintain up-to-date emergency services and facilities.
4. Update the township zoning ordinance on a regular basis.
5. Encourage businesses to increase hours during peak tourist season and to seek downtown beautification initiatives and funding and consider tax breaks for those owners who engage in beautification improvements to their properties.
6. File action against property owners who do not maintain their property in accordance with zoning ordinance.
7. Encourage and support development and maintenance of pathways for walkers and bicyclists along M-123 and Whitefish Point Road.
8. Encourage and support the development and maintenance of parks, schools, marina, airport and other township assets for future generations.

9. Work with groups, organizations and governmental units, to increase opportunities for grant monies, shared activities and to increase business in the township.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY

The Future Land Use Strategy recommends the land use pattern throughout the Township for the next 10 years, with the understanding that a significant local occurrence could lead to its revision at any time. It was created on the basis of an analysis of the Township's natural and cultural characteristics including: existing road network, soil conditions, environmentally sensitive areas and neighboring communities land uses. The analysis of these characteristics first resulted in the creation of the goals and objectives and led to the planned future land use pattern, which is consistent with the existing Whitefish Township Zoning Map, as amended in 2024. (See Map 9 – Whitefish Township Zoning Map.)



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## CHAPTER SIX: ACTION PLAN

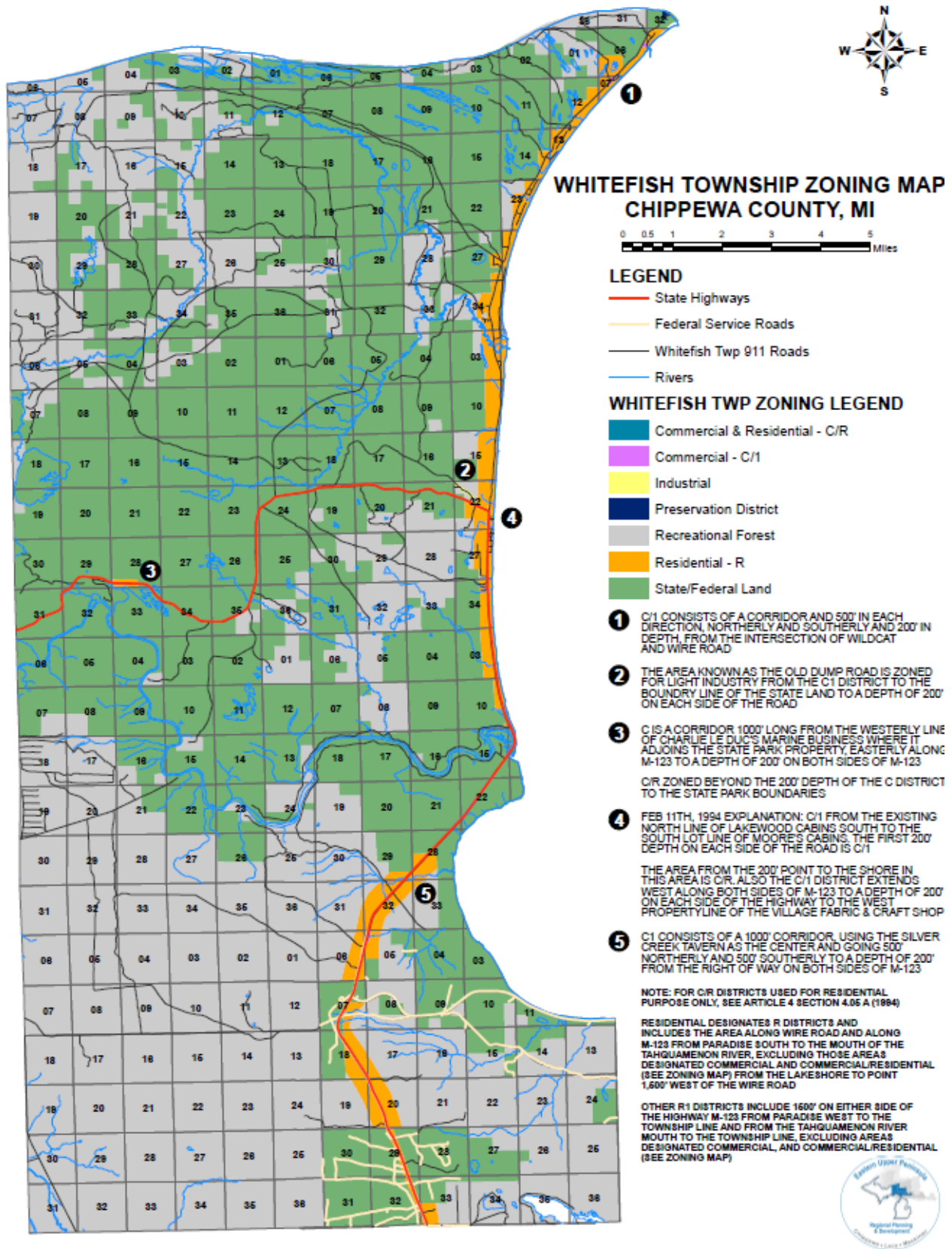
When amendments to Michigan’s Planning Enabling Act were adopted by the state legislature in 2008, one new requirement for communities with an adopted zoning ordinance was the inclusion of a “zoning plan.” The purpose of the zoning plan is to clearly relate the future land use recommended by the plan with the community’s zoning districts. This allows the reader to quickly determine if a zoning district or proposal complies with the plan; and if it does not, where changes might be made to ensure compliance.

Whitefish Township has maintained a zoning ordinance for decades. With a few exceptions (see discussion below), the community is generally satisfied with the number and types of districts currently provided. Listed below are the future land use classifications used on that map and the related zoning districts that would be appropriate in each recommended future land use area.

| <u>Future Land Use Classification</u> | <u>Corresponding Zoning District</u>           |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Forest Recreation                     | Recreational Forest                            |
| Mixed Use                             | Commercial & Residential                       |
| Residential                           | Residential, R                                 |
| Commercial                            | Commercial, C-1                                |
| Industrial                            | Industrial                                     |
| Preservation                          | Preservation District                          |
| State/Federal Land                    | State/Federal Land (for display purposes only) |

The Forest Recreation, Commercial, Industrial and Preservation classifications all have a one-to-one correspondence with a related zoning district. For Residential, Mixed Use, Commercial, and Preservation future land use areas, however, two or more zoning districts would be acceptable, depending upon local circumstances.

To better characterize the existing land use the Commercial and Residential zone might be split in two, with one area focused on Commercial and the other on rural housing. To better carry out the stated goal of preserving critical waterfront areas, site development, and occupancy standards might be added to the Preservation District that would protect these critical areas from environmental damage during development and active use, and/or adding a Waterfront District to the zoning featuring these provisions.



## Implementing the Plan

Zoning Ordinance Amendments: One of the primary purposes of a Master Plan is to provide a sound base for community zoning. In fact, Michigan compiled statutes at Section 125.3203 state: “The zoning ordinance shall be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare.” The statute then lists all the factors considered in the earlier chapters of this plan that are essential to provide the expressed needs and desires of the community while preserving natural and cultural resources that the community holds dear.

Using the Master Plan as a basis for establishing and updating local zoning makes the job of the Planning Commission and Township Board much more understandable and defensible. A proposed zoning ordinance amendment can be easily compared to the proposed future land use map and the zoning plan contained above. If the zoning revision is consistent with the plan, it can be approved with confidence that the public interest is being served.

It is important to note that the Master Plan text also provides a strong foundation for zoning. For example, this plan emphasizes the significance of transportation access management along high-traffic commercial corridors. Based on this goal, it would be reasonable to create development standards within the zoning ordinance to make sure that best practices for access management are utilized during site plan development and review. In another example, the Plan expresses the goal to preserve and protect and enhance the Lake Superior waterfront. This goal statement will support water resource protection measures that may be added to or strengthened within the zoning ordinance.

Because of the strong relationship between the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance, once the Master Plan is adopted, it is considered good practice to initiate a thorough review of current zoning. Reviewing the zoning can help make sure it is consistent with the new plan and suggest any needed adjustments to ensure consistency. However, the Plan is anticipated to cover a 20-year time period. There is no need to make all zoning changes anticipated by the plan immediately. Rather, as proposals for re-zoning come up and are considered by the community, the Plan helps support the changes that will help accomplish community planning goals.

Capital Improvements: Another way to implement the Master Plan is to undertake the capital improvements recommended in the plan. In Whitefish Township, this could mean making budget allocations to support big-ticket capital items like firefighting equipment, park improvements, marina development or trail system improvements, all of which are listed in the plan as long-term goals. Capital items are usually those large enough to require funding over time or at least advance planning for large expenses. In Michigan, a capital improvement plan is required for all communities with an adopted Master Plan. In Michigan Compiled Laws at Section 125.3865, a capital improvement planning requirement is spelled out as follows:

*“To further the desirable future development of the local unit of government under the master plan, a planning commission, after adoption of a master plan, shall annually prepare a capital improvements program of public structures and improvements.... The capital improvements program shall show those public structures and improvements, in the general order of their*

*priority, that in the commission's judgement will be needed or desirable and can be undertaken within the ensuing six-year period."*

Because building capital improvements will require expenditure of funds by local government, the Planning Commission needs to work cooperatively with the Township Board on future budget matters to ensure that, as a practical matter, the needed improvements called out in the plan can realistically be funded. Given the limited availability of local dollars, this also means helping the Township Board search for appropriate grant sources that can help lighten the financial burden of civic development. A small community may be able to afford just a small list of improvements in any six-year period, but the planning process helps make sure the improvements are consistent with community goals and get the largest possible "bang for the buck."

As capital projects are completed, they drop off the list, making space for new projects as the years progress. The capital improvements plan can and should be reviewed and updated during each community budgeting period based on collaboration between the planning commission and the Township Board.

Planning Partnerships: Especially in small communities, local government depends on help from partner agencies and community organizations and cooperating agencies at other levels of government. In the examples used above of traffic management, partner agencies include the County Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation. With natural resource preservation goals, the Township can work with organizations who already manage special resources in the community like the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Hiawatha Forest Service. The North Country Trail extends into the Township but are located on State land and Federal lands. Effective cooperation with both these governments will be necessary to maximize environmental benefits for Whitefish Township residents.

State planning statutes encourage local planning commissions to reach out to citizens and to other public officials. Section 125.3851 of MI Compiled Laws state:

*"To promote public interest in and understanding of the master plan, a planning commission may publish and distribute copies of the master plan or of any report and employ other means of publicity and education." and:*

*"A planning commission shall consult with and advise public officials and agencies, public utility companies, civic, educational professional, and other organizations, and citizens concerning the promotion or implementation of the master plan."*

These passages make it clear that planning is a team sport and community improvements depend on cooperative effort from a wide variety of individuals and organizations. This is reassuring because with very limited fiscal resources, the Township quite literally cannot accomplish all its goals without assistance from citizens, community groups, and other governmental entities. In this matter, small communities may have a distinct advantage over larger urban areas because community members are already inter-connected in many ways and are accustomed to working together.

## **Plan Updates and Amendments**

Under the Michigan's new planning statutes, an adopted master plan must be reviewed by the planning commission every five years to determine whether the plan needs to be amended. The commission's review and findings must be recorded in the official planning commission minutes. While a master plan, by its nature, looks out to a twenty-year horizon, major changes could arise that would justify, in the planning commission's judgement, an amendment or revision than at two-decade intervals. If the Planning Commission does decide to undertake major changes in the plan, the process for plan amendment is the same as undertaken for creating the plan initially. Therefore, amendments are not likely to be undertaken lightly unless a clear need is present.

April 29, 2025

**To: Whitefish Township Board of Trustees  
Commission**

**From: Whitefish Township Planning**

**Re: Master Plan 2024 Update – Summary of Public Comment Received, and Recommendation**

**Background info:** On December 5, 2024, the Board of Trustees approved the draft Whitefish Township Master Plan Update of 2024 for distribution, opening the required 63-day Public Review and Comment Period. On April 29, 2025, the Planning Commission conducted a Public Hearing on the Master Plan Update, ending the Public Review and Comment Period.

**Available for Public Inspection:** During the 63-day period a copy of the draft Master Plan Update of 2024 has been available for public review on the township website, the Eastern UP Regional Planning & Development Commission website, at the Whitefish Township Offices, and at the Whitefish Township Public Library. On December 20, 2024, EUP Regional Planning sent the Public Notice and Master Plan documents to the stakeholders who received the initial Notice of Intent, shown below:

| COMMUNITY                       | ADDRESS                             | CITY             | ST | ZIP   | Email                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|----|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chippewa County                 | 319 Court St.                       | Sault Ste. Marie | MI | 49783 | <a href="mailto:kchurch@chiggewacountymi.gov">kchurch@chiggewacountymi.gov</a>           |
| Luce County                     | 407 W. Harrie Street                | Newberry         | MI | 49868 | <a href="mailto:lucoclark@lighthouse.net">lucoclark@lighthouse.net</a>                   |
| Chippewa County Road Commission | 3949 S. Mackinac Trail              | Sault Ste. Marie | MI | 49783 | <a href="mailto:rlaitinen@chiggewacountyroads.org">rlaitinen@chiggewacountyroads.org</a> |
| Luce County Road Commission     | 423 W. McMillan Ave.; P. O. Box 401 | Newberry         | MI | 49868 | <a href="mailto:engineer@lcrc48.org">engineer@lcrc48.org</a>                             |
| Cloverland Electric Co- Op      | 2916 W. M-28                        | Dafer            | MI | 49724 | <a href="mailto:abrawley@cloverland.com">abrawley@cloverland.com</a>                     |
| McMillan Township               | 402 Newberry Ave.; P.O. Box 442     | Newberry         | MI | 49868 | <a href="mailto:art_mcmillantwg@sbcglobal.net">art_mcmillantwg@sbcglobal.net</a>         |
| Hulbert Township                | 37686 W. Fourth St.; P. O. Box 128  | Hulbert          | MI | 49748 | <a href="mailto:hulbert@jamadots.com">hulbert@jamadots.com</a>                           |
| Chippewa Township               | 30014 W. M-28                       | Eckerman         | MI | 49728 | <a href="mailto:tlbeseau@yahoo.com">tlbeseau@yahoo.com</a>                               |
| Bay Mills Township              | 5030 S. Ranger Rd.                  | Brimley          | MI | 49715 | <a href="mailto:mar.swen@yahoo.com">mar.swen@yahoo.com</a>                               |

**Summary of the Public Comment Received:** The one written public comment received is attached. Spoken public comment received at the April 29<sup>th</sup> Public Hearing included:

**Planning Commission Comment:** *Efforts are underway to gather additional feedback from the community through surveys*

**Recommendation:** The Whitefish Township Planning Commission at a meeting duly convened

on April 29, 2025, held a Public Hearing duly published on: December 26, 2024 to receive Public Comment regarding the Master Plan Update of 2024. WHEREAS, at said Public Hearing all who desired to be heard had the opportunity, and their written testimony and public comment was recorded, and, WHEREAS, all testimony has been carefully considered and the pertinent facts noted:

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RECOMMENDED, by the Whitefish Township Planning Commission that: The Board of Trustees adopt the draft Master Plan Update of 2024 (A cooperative effort by the Whitefish Township Planning Commission and the Eastern U.P. Regional Planning and Development Commission) in its entirety, with only the following one change: The number of Planning Commission members shown (pg. 7) be corrected from 7 to 5.

Sincerely,  
Chair Jason Hughes

*acting Chair*  
*DM Manduch*

## PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR APRIL 29, 2025 PUBLIC HEARING

**From:** Bridget M Nodurft <bmnodurft@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, March 13, 2025 5:04 PM

**To:** Fred Roach <clerk@whitefishtownshipmi.gov>

**Cc:** Jeff Hagan <jshagan@eup-planning.org>

**Subject:** Nodurft Nodurft Public Comment for WFT PC March 19, 2025 Public Hearing for Master Plan

Dear Whitefish Township Planning Commission,

It's not too late for the Planning Commission to conduct a public input survey before finalizing the revision of the Master Plan.

**The purpose of a Master Plan is to serve as a guide for a community's vision of the future.**

**The proposed revisions of the Master Plan are based on 21 year old information from a survey conducted in 2004.**

An informal public poll conducted in January 2025 indicates Whitefish Township community vision of the future.

### INFORMAL PUBLIC POLL RESULTS

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

The Whitefish Township Board of Trustees explored options for affordable housing during 2024. The draft Master Plan reported that in 2021 only 5 homes were for sale

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Whitefish Township Master Plan Update 2024

and 13 for rent in Whitefish Township. The draft Master Plan reports statistics but **neither the Township Board nor the Master Plan reflect the community's vision of housing needs.**

**75% of informal public poll respondents said the development of affordable housing should be left to private developers,** 21% said township housing services should increase, 3% said it should decrease, and 1% said it's about right.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1E7BucC6XK/>

## **EMERGENCY SERVICES**

The draft Master Plan includes the goal of a "high quality emergency response program and facility for its resident's safety" (p 27).

### AMBULANCE SERVICES:

57% of poll respondents in an informal public poll said that Whitefish Township's Basic Life Support ambulance services should decrease, 19% said the service should increase, and 19% said the level of ambulance service is about right.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ACYnFU1Z9/>

### LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES:

**67% of poll respondents of an informal poll said that Whitefish Township should continue to wait for the State Police or the Sheriff Department to respond,** 22% said that the township should hire a certified law enforcement as Constable, 5% said the township should develop its own law enforcement department, and 2% said the township should contract with a local policing agency.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1963843464078033/permalink/2123002491495462/>

CONCLUSION: The informal survey indicates that THE MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS DO NOT FAVOR INCREASED TAXES to pay for emergency services of any kind.

### PUBLIC LAKESIDE PARK VS SENIOR CENTER VS PARKING SPACE FINANCED WITH GRANT FUNDING

The proposed Master Plan calls for recreational and tourism development but makes no mention of the longstanding community goal of a lakeside park next the Community Center. The Master Plan fails to recognize the chronic shortage of parking for large community events at the Community Center. The master plan notes that the median age in Whitefish Township is 61.1 years but does not address whether there is a need for senior services.

**58% of poll respondents wanted a public lakeside park financed by grant funding, 8% wanted a senior center financed with grant funding, 12% wanted parking for community events, and 12% wanted both a park and a senior center.**

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16DejdyPp2/>

**NOTE:** When the option of grant funding was not included, 78% of poll respondents were opposed to a senior center.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18WToeYUXp/>

CONCLUSION: The majority public does not want increased taxes to pay for services. DRAFT MASTER PLAN MATCHES THE PUBLIC'S VISION ON THESE ISSUES:

#### **BLIGHT ORDINANCE ENFORCEMENT**

**65% of poll respondents said blight ordinance enforcement should increase, 15% said it should decrease, 10% said it's about right, and 10 % had no opinion.**

#### **ZONING ORDINANCE ENFORCEMENT**

**51% of poll respondents said zoning ordinance enforcement should increase, 37% said it should decrease, 6% it's about right, and 6% had no opinion.**

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EnL7bqazM/>

CONCLUSION: The majority of the public favors enforcement of land use regulations.

#### **TRAIL DEVELOPMENT/GRANTS:**

**67% of poll respondents said the township and community organizations should increase grant applications to repair, maintain, and improve trails, 15% wanted a decrease, 36% said it's about right, and 15 % had no opinion.**

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1A8bdTRxWA/>

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO CONDUCT A PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY

**87 % OF RESPONDENTS IN AN INFORMAL POLL WANTED THE PLANNING COMMISSION TO CONTRACT WITH A PROFESSIONAL PLANNING SERVICE TO ASSIST WITH A PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY PRIOR TO THE ADOPTION OF A REVISED MASTER PLAN.**

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19WLS8kFd5/>

The revision of the Whitefish Township Master Plan is already overdue. We respectfully request that the Planning Commission contract professional planning services to conduct a comprehensive public input survey that can be used to

revise the Master Plan to reflect the public's vision for the community. This would add only a few months to the process while finding out what the public really wants for Whitefish Township.

Thank you for your  
consideration.

Sincerely,  
Bridget and Lyle  
Nodurft Whitefish  
Township Resident