

Sauble Township Master Plan Volume A Summary

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Sauble Township Planning Commission

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Sauble Township Planning Commission; *Sauble Township Master Plan, Volume A Summary*; Sauble Township, Northwest Rural Planning LLC (Kurt H. Schindler, AICP); 2022.

Summary

This *Fact/Data Materials* book (volume B) is prepared as a presentation of facts and data for use by Sauble Township preparation of the *Sauble Township Master Plan* (volume C). The *Fact/Data Materials* document was completed before the Planning Commission starts to prepare the *Master Plan*. The purpose is to attempt to reach a common understanding about Sauble Township so participants in the planning process have a common frame of reference.

Former and other Plans

The township really does not have any previous Master Plans. However the township is within, and next to, other governments which have plans. The Sauble Township plan should be coordinated with those other plans. They are

- Lake County Planning Commission
- Mason County Planning Commission
- West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC), the traditional state region planning commission.
- West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance, the state prosperity region.
- The Right Place
- Elk, Eden, Sweetwater Townships (the Lake County Master Plan)
- Peacock Township Planning Commission
- Webber Township Planning Commission
- Branch Township, Sheridan Township, and Meade Townships (Mason County Master Plan)

This section summarizes each of these plans.

Sauble Township is part of a larger world. Coordination with neighboring townships, Lake and Mason Counties and regional agencies is a Michigan statute required responsibility of a township planning commission. The township should participate in the relevant county and regional efforts.

Also recognize Sauble Township cannot be everything. The township should view itself as a part of a larger whole.

Geography

There is not as large a variety of soil types in Sauble Township compared to what is found in this area of Michigan. Maps in this report which are based on this soil survey are:

- The general soil map
- Prime farm lands.
- Prime or high timber index for forest sites

- On-site sewage disposal system stability (two maps)
- Wetland probability map (one of three sources for this map)
- Steep slopes

History

The impact of historic land grants to Flint and Pere Marquette Railroad Company does not appear to have had a lasting impact on Sauble Township's landscape. There is little evidence left that might reflect this.

The public forest lands provide a strong attraction to those that enjoy outdoor activities: bird watching, hunting, hiking, fishing, boating, and much more. Today, in addition to the lakes and rivers, it may be viewed as an important part of what Sauble Township is.

The impacts of the township's lakes, topography, the Great Depression, and the creation of the U. S. Forest Service appear to be the most significant events impacting the current landscape, development, and use of land.

Land Use

Land use/cover is used to show extent and location of change in the use of land. Land use/cover documents where development already exists. If an area of the township is already shown as residential (or commercial, industrial, etc.) then often zoning should reflect that even if other indicators in this *Plan* suggest otherwise. This is because an existing land use, legally in place prior to adoption of a zoning regulation is a nonconforming use and is "grand fathered" for the current owner and all future owners. In Michigan nonconforming uses can be eliminated by only two ways. One is if Sauble Township buy it from the land owner. The other is if the owner decides to give it up by his or her own actions.

In Lake County there is not quality land use change data. What does exist is old land use/cover information. This is a handicap for the development of the Future Land Use Map for this *Plan*. Because the land use/cover data has not been updated in a reliable fashion the Future Land Use Map needs to be further edited by local knowledge (by planning commission members and comment during public participation) to reflect residential areas that developed after 1978.

Natural Resources

Groundwater and Surface Water

Groundwater protection should be done on a county-wide basis when sandy soil predominates. This means groundwater protection regulations should be adopted everywhere (e.g., in Sauble Township's zoning ordinance), as well as a county-wide education program. In addition, municipal water supplies should have an even greater level of protection; a community wellhead protection program. (Areas around water wells which provide public drinking water (Type I wells) should receive an additional amount of protection.)

Thus there should be:

1. County-wide site plan review for groundwater protection,
2. Development of a wellhead protection program for public water supplies.

The first recommendation is the county-wide ('wall-to-wall') groundwater protection/prevention measures in local zoning site plan review techniques. That would require significant amendments to zoning. There is sample, or model, zoning amendment text for this purpose. This approach is not intended to prevent all sources of groundwater contamination. It is intended to use low-cost preventative design in new construction to significantly reduce the chance of groundwater contamination from accidental spills in the first place (prevention).

A key is that no additional permits are required. The process is rolled into the existing zoning administration system to avoid any additional 'red tape.' Extra work, if any, is to be done by local government in its site plan review process before issuing a zoning permit.

Major components of the sample zoning/site plan review are:

- (1) require the zoning permit application and site plan to be submitted **after** all other environmental permits have been issued or an agreement to concurrently issue those permits is obtained. This also means the zoning permit application and site plan submitted will already show whatever requirements are necessary to comply with those environmental permits. This will help ensure what zoning requires and does not contradict what other agencies require.
- (2) For a proposed land use which uses or generates over a given volume of hazardous materials the site plan will also show the areas where storing, using, loading hazardous substances will occur; location of underground and above ground storage tanks, drains, dry wells, storm water management areas; location of water wells; submission of "hazardous substances reporting form;" and submission of "state/county environmental permits checklist."
- (3) The design shown on a site for a proposed land use which uses or generates over a given volume of hazardous materials will be subject to additional approval standards, such as storm water management; drainage; storm drain design; primary and secondary containment for

storage of hazardous materials.

The second major recommendation is for municipalities which operate publicly owned Type I water well(s) (e.g. wells for public water systems) to start the process of developing a wellhead protection program. In Sauble Township there are not any Type I water wells.

On Site Sewage Disposal

Sauble Township does not have municipal sewers, so all dwellings and commercial establishments depend on on-site septic systems. With soil types and dependance on septic systems minimum parcel size should be 15,000 square feet (100 by 150 feet) for a two to three bedroom dwelling, larger for dwellings with more bedrooms. Because the Lake County Health Code requires 50 foot setback from water for the septic tank, 100 foot setback from water for the drain field, dry well or block trench, 75 feet from a water well, drain field minimum size requirements, it is recommended a 100 foot minimum parcel width at the water's edge, and required room within the parcel for a replacement drain field that much room is needed. If these recommendations are followed, plus room for the house, and two car garage, etc. one needs 15,000 square feet to be able to fit all of this within a parcel.

This is problematic. Upon review of existing subdivisions in Sauble Township existing parcels are as small as 3,150 square feet, and as narrow as 30 feet at the water's edge. The average size of smaller parcels in subdivisions are 9,388 square feet and 73 feet wide at the water's edge.

Zoning cannot retroactively change requirements for land uses, building, parcels already in existence. Those non-conformities are "grandfathered" in place. But the septic system will not work in such small space and in such dense development. Public sewers is one possible solution, but cost is beyond the township's ability and political acceptability.

Wildfire

Zoning should include preventative measures to minimize damage to property by wild fires:

1. Defeasible space around buildings where trees are thined, lower branches pruned and other similar measures.
2. Landscaping with low-combustion plants.
3. Building design to minimize fire from fire brands
4. General housekeeping to keep debris away from structures.
5. More than one access into developments/subdivisions for emergency equipment.
6. Roads and bridges built to accommodate large and very heavy fire-fighting trucks.

Specifically "Approach 3 Wildfire Hazard Zoning through General Regulations," pp. 7-11, of *Michigan State University Land Use Series* "Sample Wildfire Hazard Zoning".

On Site Sewage Systems

Nearly the entire township is rated as having severe limitations because the waste-water moves through the soils relatively quickly with little filtering and further filtering (except removal of particulates).

It is important to remember septic tanks and drain fields are state-of-the-art 1910 technology.

Septic tanks and drain fields will “work” in these areas in that when one flushes a toilet the effluent does go away, rather than plugs.

The Lake County Health code tries to mitigate this with requiring larger drain fields (covering a larger area) and greater isolation distances from water wells, wetlands, and surface water. But this requires larger parcel sizes.

However there are also areas of the township where soil is expected not to perc, so that effluent does not move away from a drain field or the drain field is too close to, or in, groundwater. These areas of the township should be considered a resource limitation where intense, or any, development is not allowed.

Wetlands

Extensive wetland areas in the township are areas which should not be designated for dense residential, commercial, or industrial development.

One method that can be effective is to have the zoning ordinance’ minimum parcel size also include a minimum “buildable area” size. Buildable area would be defined as upland areas of a parcel which are NOT wetlands, beach, power line and road right-of-way, steep slopes (>26%), flood plain, waterfront setback areas, and areas not accepted by the Health Department for on-site sewage disposal. Thus, for example the minimum parcel size might be one acre that shall contain a minimum contiguous buildable area of 20,000 square feet.

Slopes

Places where there are steep slopes (greater than 12% or 25%) are areas which should not be designated for dense residential, commercial, or industrial development.

Include moderate, or severe slopes as a characteristic which is not included within “buildable area.” See above about the buildable area concept.

Prime Timberlands

These areas of Sauble Township might be considered “working lands” and zoned for forestry purposes. This might also include very large minimum parcel sizes (e.g., 40 acres or a quarter of a quarter of a public land survey section) so there is enough land in a single ownership for the timber to be economically marketable.

The term “working lands” is intended to be those areas where the major economic activity is dependant on the use of land for production: forestry, agriculture, mining, and so on.

Prime Agricultural Lands

Prime agricultural lands are areas of Sauble Township might be considered “working lands” and zoned for exclusive agricultural purposes. This might also include very large minimum parcel sizes (e.g., 40 acres or a quarter of a quarter of a public land survey section) so there is enough land in a single ownership for most farming operations to be economically marketable.

See above about “working lands” concept.

While protection of working land, is to prevent loss of farm lands, this is often not supported by farmers. The concern is the sale of the farm land is the farmer’s retirement and zoning requiring exclusive agriculture land uses and large parcel sizes might be viewed as reducing the potential value from the sale of the land. There are areas of Michigan where large parcels are no longer common. As a result the per acre price of land is higher for a 40+ acre parcel than it is for a 10 acre or less parcel.

Ecology, Habitat, Scenic Resources: Special Animals and Plants Special and Unique Areas

Special and unique areas are places, or locations which are particularly noteworthy for the township. It can include: H. areas of cultural and historic significance, C. areas of cultural and historic built environment, S. areas of an aesthetic or scenic significance, E. areas of natural significance, and R. recreational activity based. These are the special and unique areas for Sauble Township:

- 01H. Sauble Township Hall
- 02H. Sauble School House
- 03H. Sauble Station
- 04H. Bloody Run
- 05H. Bowling Alley
- 06H. Roller Rink and Dance

- 07H. Boy’s Camp
- 08H. Select old Rail Road grades
- 09H. Ward Hills Ski Area
- 10R. North Country Trail
- 11RE. McCarthy Lake Federal Forest camping area
- 12RE. Little Sable River
- 13RE. Twin Lakes Creek
- 14RE. McCarthy Creek
- 15RE. Un-named creek
- 16E. Cranberry-Noud-Pleasant Lakes wetlands

These areas should receive special attention. For some of these it would be in the form of a special zoning district. In other cases it may be other actions, such as information or historic sign at sites of former buildings.

Population

Sauble township had a 2020 U.S. Census population of 373 persons. The township had between 100 to 200 people until a growth spurt occurred in the 1970s.

Population projections for Sauble Township are:

	Most likely projection	Average projection	Range of projections		
			Low to		High
2020	343	357 :	from	343 to	377
2030	352	377 :	from	352 to	409
2040	360	399 :	from	360 to	443

Seasonal peek population projections are:

	Most likely projection	Average projection	Range of projections		
			Low to		High
2020	1,271	1,324 :	from	1,271 to	1,397
2030	1,305	1,400 :	from	1,305 to	1,516

	Most likely projection	Average projection		Range of projections	
				Low to	High
2040	1,336	1,480	:	from	
				1,336	to 1,645

The projections mean estimates for new 23 new homes (23 to 91) and nominal need for new commercial and service establishments. Other projections were made for need, if any, for new roads and parks.

The township’s master plan, future land use map, and zoning ordinance should accommodate the above development areas. That accommodation should be as close to the projections as possible. To plan for and zoning more land than is needed for future development creates a surplus supply, of residential lands for example, which may drive the price of that land down. Not zoning enough, creates a shortage, which may drive the price of that land up.

Infrastructure

Parking

Parking needs data for a similar northwest Michigan township is presented, as a starting point for discussion of Sauble Township’s parking requirements.

Signs

A survey of most (not all) commercial/business signs in Sauble Township was conducted. As result of that survey, and assuming the following signs are not to be regulated:

- Signs under one square foot in size (e.g., address number, “no trespassing” or similar signs).
- Signs which could not be seen from a public area (road, park, etc.).
- Signs which are inside buildings.
- Signs inside a building but visible to the outside through a window.

Then signs in residential and rural residential areas associated with dwellings maybe should allow four to seven signs.

Then signs in rural residential, agricultural, and forest areas associated with farms and forest operation maybe should allow 10 up to a range of 14-21 signs.

Then for all other signs (commercial, public buildings, etc.) it may be easier to limit the total area of all signs. In other words do not try to regulate the number of signs, but rather have a maximum

number of square feet for all signs combined, along with a maximum size for any one sign. This gives a business flexibility to choose fewer large signs, or many smaller signs.

For example, based on the survey above, a maximum of 120 square feet of all signs, 90 square feet for the maximum size of any one sign. Type of sign design is limited to signs physically positioned on the ground (bottom of the sign in contact with the ground), mounted on two or one (cantilevered) posts, and mounted on a wall or gable of a building.

Land Ownership

Public Land Ownership is predominantly in the south $\frac{2}{3}$ of the township, and nearly all part of the United States Forest Service. Private Land Ownership includes relatively large parcels in the south $\frac{2}{3}$ of the township. In the northern $\frac{1}{3}$ of the township there are smaller parcels and Subdivisions.

Existing larger parcels in the south $\frac{2}{3}$ of the township lends itself to the type of large parcel zoning that might be considered for working lands (forestry, agricultural, wetlands, and certain special and unique areas in the township. It is important to understand that smaller parcels which exist prior to adoption of zoning are nonconforming and would be “grand fathered” for continued use for the current and all future owners.

Existing Zoning

The existing zoning and zoning map was critiqued. That work found a series of serious problems with existing zoning. As a result there is a strong argument the township would strategically best served with development of an entirely new zoning ordinance.

Sauble Township Master Plan, Volume C The Plan

About This Plan

It is important to remember a “plan” is a government policy statement. It is not a statute, law or ordinance. Use of the words “must” or “shall” does not make it the mandatory directive. It would be if in a statute or ordinance. Use of the words “must” or “shall” in the *Plan* is intended to convey a strong desire that it be followed.

This *Plan* is the same ‘Master Plan’ and ‘zoning plan’ that is authorized by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires zoning be based on a plan. This is that plan. This *Plan* is the Sauble Township Planning Commission's recommendations for the development of the Township for land use; zoning; and infrastructure. This *Plan* is the

Commission’s recommendations for coordination with other municipalities, township departments, Lake County Road Commission, state, Native American, and federal governments. **This Plan is the formal policy of the Township, and its statement of goals, objectives, and intended strategies.** This *Plan* is intended to be the document, that once adopted, involves the planning commission’s review of proposed capital improvements.

Land Use Plan

Future Land Use Map

The future land use plan map for this *Plan* was developed using the following process.:

Step 1: Show on the map designated **special and unique areas** (Dark Green)

Step 2: Show on the map “**working lands**” (prime forest, agricultural) (Light Green). These working lands are shown on the map where ever special and unique areas do not exist.

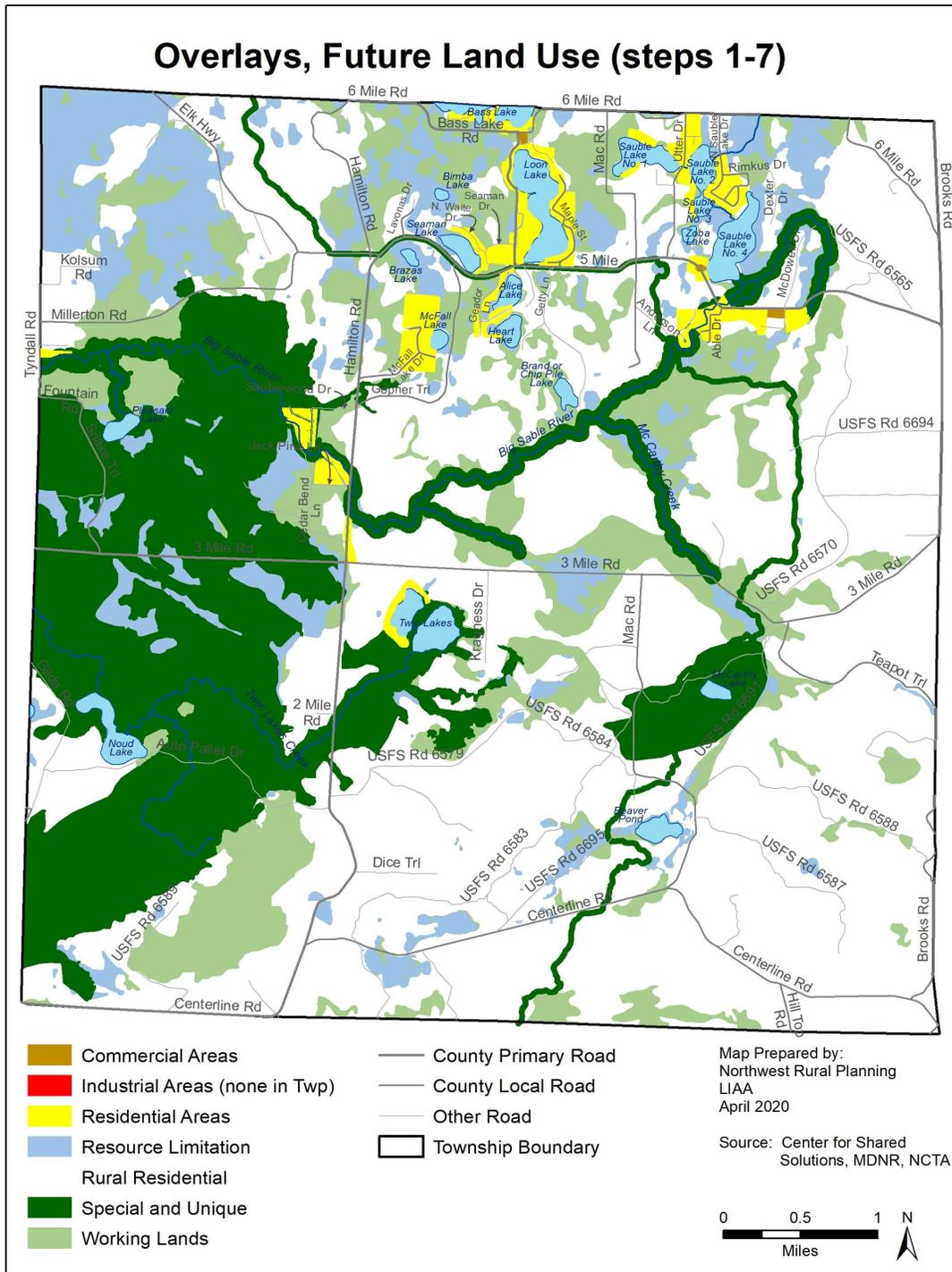
Step 3: Show on the map “**resource limitation.**” (wetlands where on-site sewage disposal systems are suspected not to work due to poor percolation, severe slopes) (Light Blue). These working lands are shown on the map where ever special and unique and working lands do not exist.

Step 4: Show on the map that is currently “**residential**” (Including subdivisions) (yellow). These residential areas are shown as residential even if they overlap with one of the above.

Step 5: Show on the map that is currently “**commercial**” (orange). Omit any areas which would be spot zoning. These commercial areas are shown as commercial even if they overlap with one of the above.

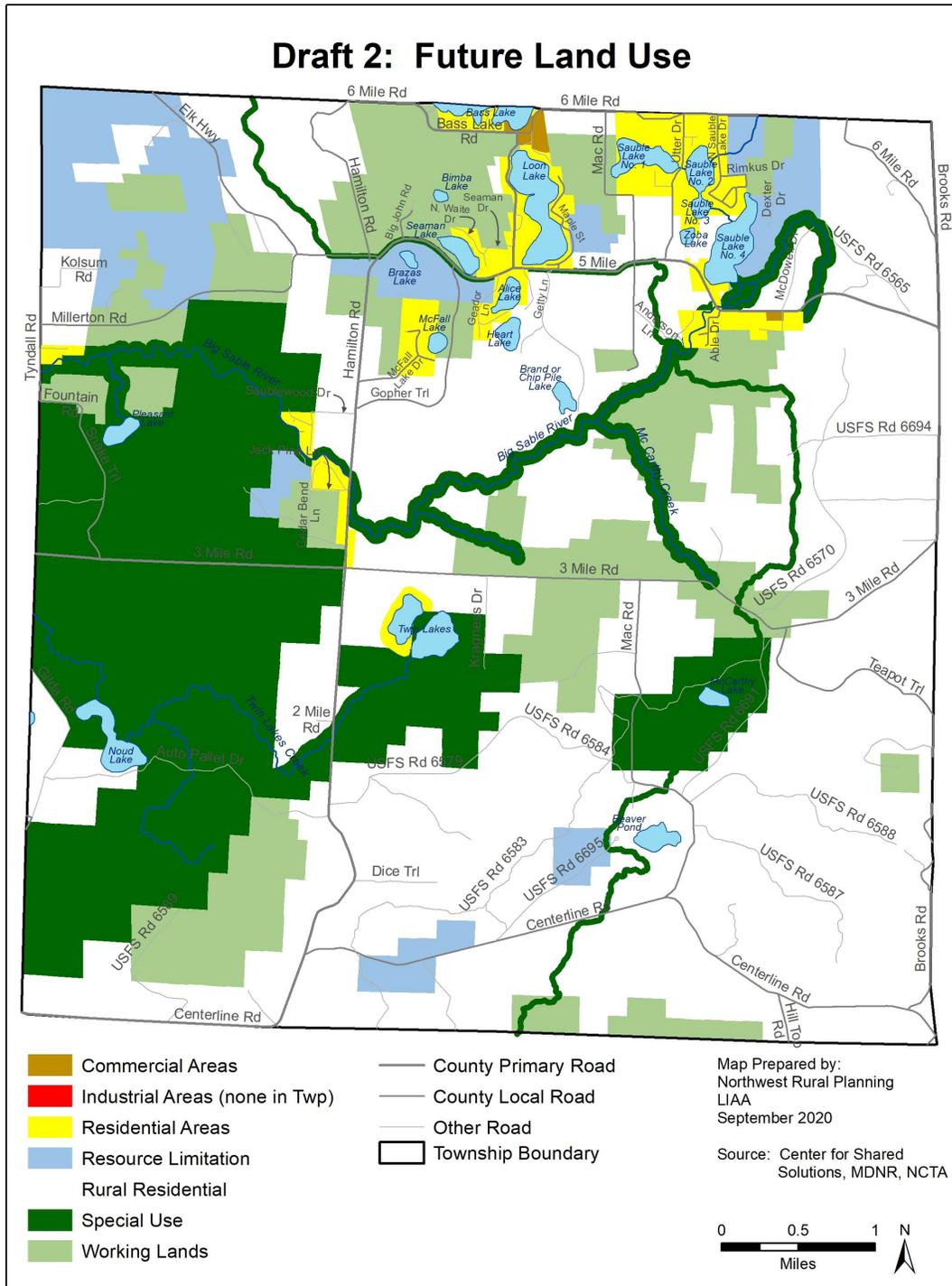
Step 6: Show on the map that is currently “**industrial**” (red). Omit any areas which would be spot zoning. These commercial areas are shown as commercial even if they overlap with one of the above.

Step 7: All the area left over is labeled “**Rural Residential**” (White).



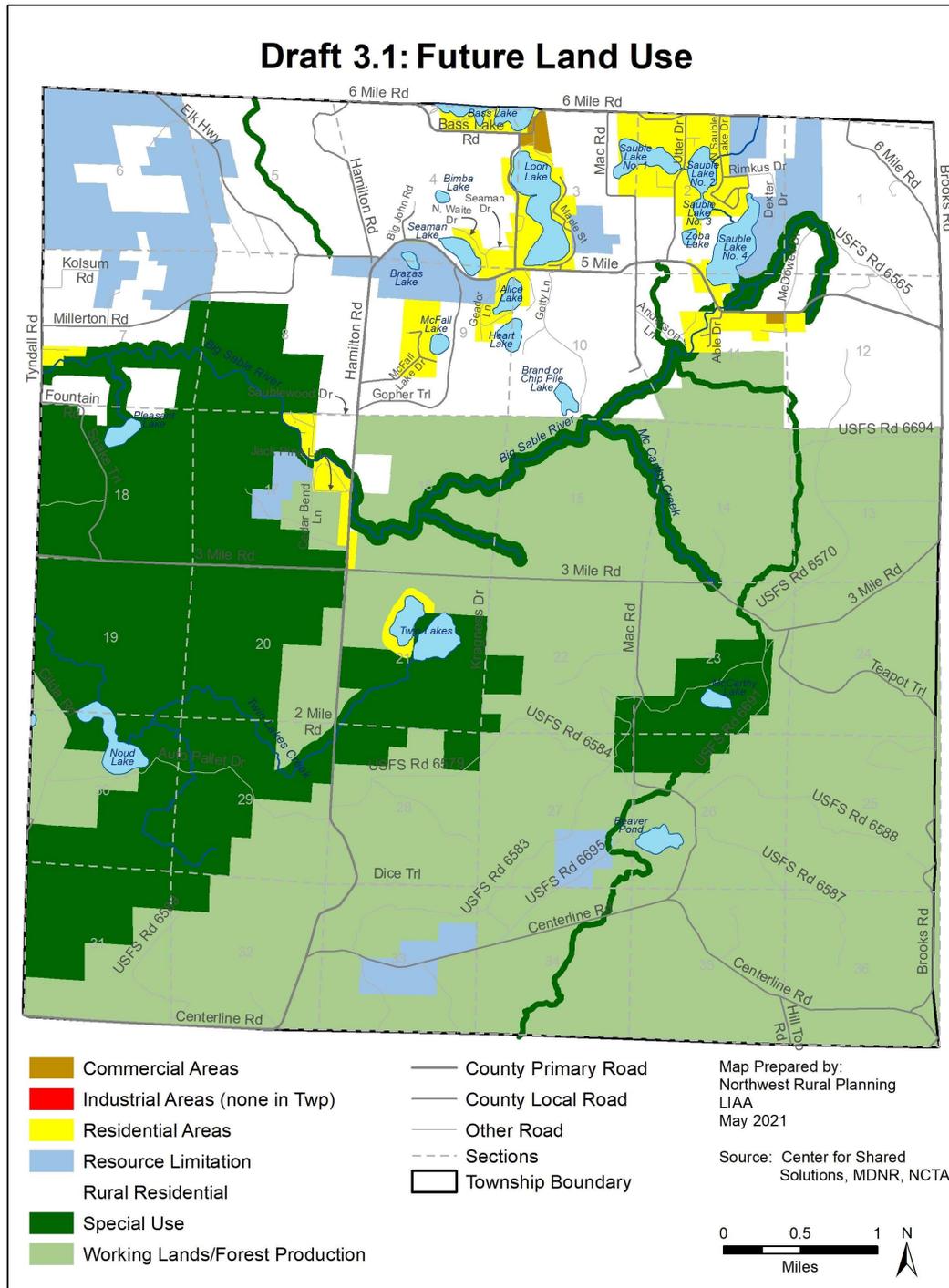
Step 8: There may be areas which are likely to be in “**transition**” (usually toward residential, commercial, or industrial uses) (Brown). These areas should be defined and shown on the map. (There are no “transition” areas.)

Step 9: Compare the boundaries on the map with the following to modify/straighten them to follow section lines, $\frac{1}{4}$ lines, $\frac{1}{16}$ lines, natural features, transportation right-of-ways, or parcel boundaries.



Step 10: Further editing and modification is done upon planning commission review, public participation, comment at public hearing(s), and so on.

- Upon review by the planning commission: Not to have any working lands/agricultural (combine with rural residential, white on map) and to have working lands/forest production in predominantly large parcel and Forest Service area in the south $\frac{2}{3}$ of the township (Light Green on map)
- Upon review by the township board before setting forth for public comment: Parcels to the west of the township hall are changed to be residential.
- Upon comment made inn public participation
- Upon comment made by adjacent and other reviewers
- Upon comment made at public hearing



Zoning

GOAL: To treat the lakes in the township are an important resource for residents and visitors to the area.

OBJECTIVE: Provide surface and groundwater protection throughout the township.

OBJECTIVE: To not have surface water restrictions riparian (river front) or littoral (lake front) property.

GOAL: To retain the rural character of the township with emphasis on outdoor activities for residents and visitors to the area.

OBJECTIVE: Keep commercial and industrial activities on a small scale in terms of physical building size, hours of operation, and so on.

GOAL: Make it easy for residents to move into Sauble Township.

STRATEGY: To adopt zoning with the following zoning districts:

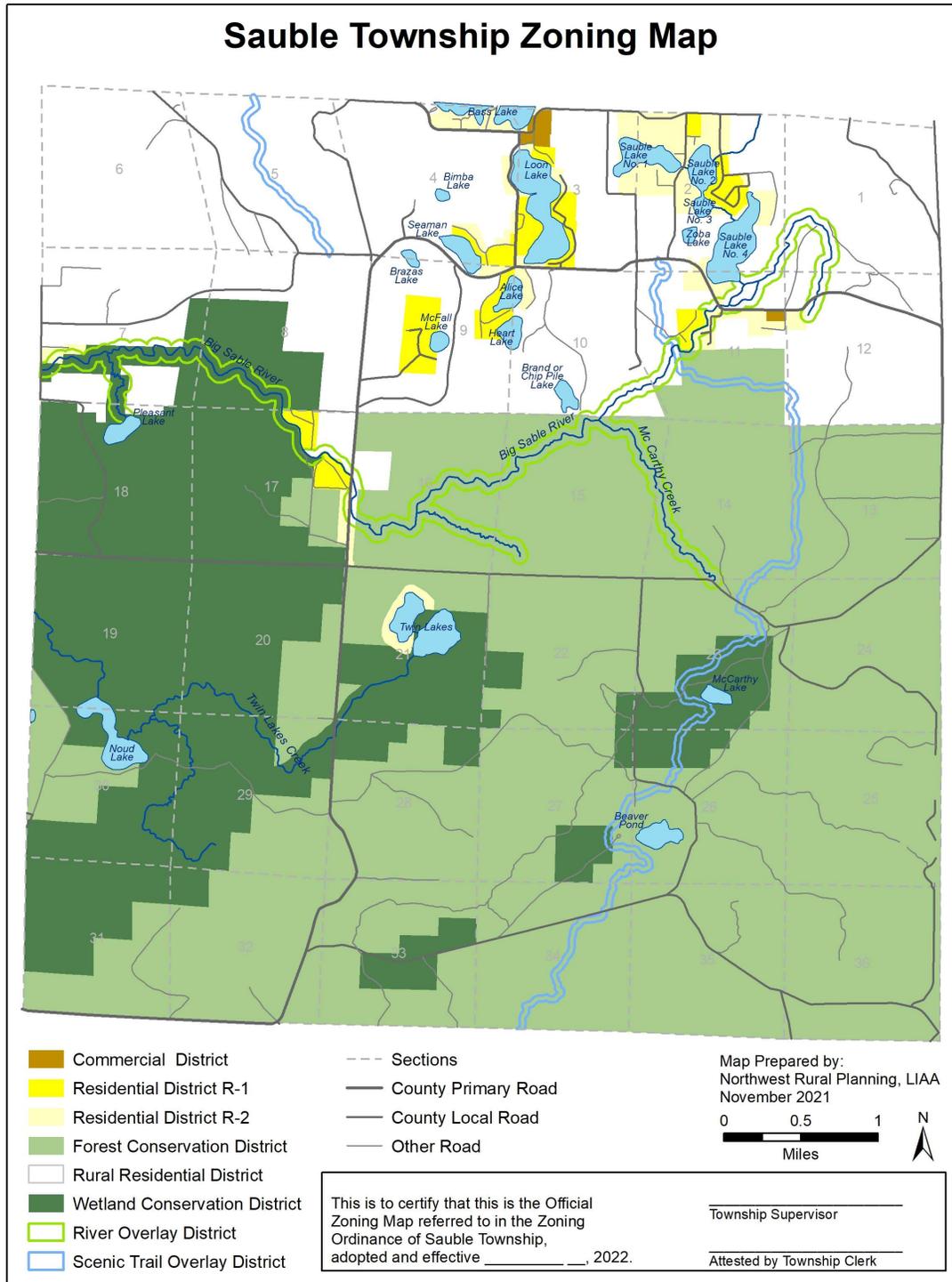
- Commercial
- Developed Residential R-1 (existing or new with sewer)
- New Residential R-2 (without sewer)
- Rural Residential
- Forest Production
- Wetland Conservation
- River Overlay District
- Scenic Trail Overlay District

Zoning Plan

This section explains the purpose of the zoning plan: how the *Master Plan* directly relates to the zoning ordinance. This includes explanation how zoning is to the *Plan*, description of each zoning district, and a table showing the relationship between the future land use map and proposed zoning district map.

There is also criteria to be used when considering amending the zoning ordinance, to decide if the amendment should be adopted or not.

This section also presents the proposed zoning map.



Environment, Natural Resources Plan

Ground and Surface Water Protection

There should be a township-wide site plan review for groundwater protection. This groundwater protection/prevention measures would be in local zoning site plan review techniques.

Major components of the sample zoning/site plan review are:

- (1) require the zoning permit application and site plan to be submitted **after** all other environmental permits have been issued or an agreement to concurrently issue those permits is obtained.
- (2) For a proposed land use which uses or generates over a given volume of hazardous materials the site plan will also show the areas where storing, using, loading hazardous substances will occur.
- (3) The design shown on a site for a proposed land use which uses or generates over a given volume of hazardous materials will be subject to additional approval standards, such as storm water management; drainage; storm drain design; primary and secondary containment for storage of hazardous materials.

The zoning ordinance, includes wetland protection, appropriate locations for septic on-site sewage disposal, avoidance of steep slope erosion, and coordination with county and state laws about these issues is to have the zoning ordinance' minimum parcel size also include a minimum "buildable area" size. Buildable area would be defined as upland areas of a parcel which are NOT wetlands, beach, powerline and road right-of-way, steep slopes (>26%), flood plain, waterfront setback areas, and areas not accepted by the Health Department for on-site sewage disposal. Thus, for example the minimum parcel size might be one acre that shall contain a minimum contiguous buildable area of 20,000 square feet.

Forest Fire Prevention

GOAL: Zoning should include preventative measures to minimize damage to property by wild fires.

Blight/Community Cleanup

GOAL: Eliminate blight in Sauble Township

Historic and cultural sites

GOAL: Preserve and draw attention to the township's historic and cultural heritage.

GOAL: Have a means to preserve historic structures on private property.

Infrastructure Plan

Complete Streets

Make improvements in order to further accommodate pedestrian and bicycle use of roads, especially for the following routes:

- Bike lane or wider paved shoulders for US 20 Bike route goes through the township on Five Mile Road and on Bass Lake Road.
- County route 669 in the township starts at the Indiana Boarder and goes north through Sauble Township to the Lake Michigan Shore in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.
- A sidewalk, or wider paved shoulders for Five Mile Road as the North Country trail route. (The North Country trail enters the township near the center of its south boarder and works its way northeast to Five Mile Road, then north to a point between Hamilton and Elk Roads to the township's north boarder.)