

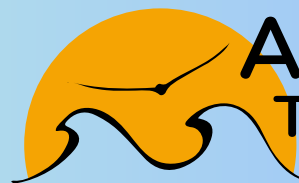
# AU TRAIN

TOWNSHIP

## MASTER PLAN 2045



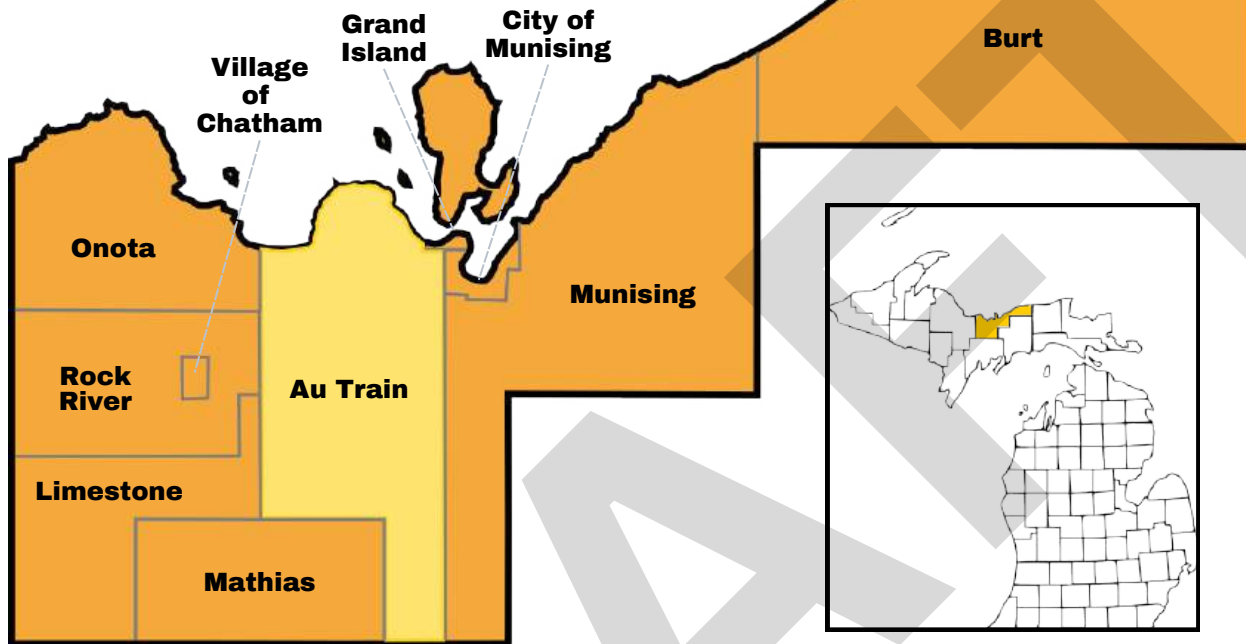
Prepared By:  
AU TRAIN TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
&  
TOWNSHIP BOARD



**Au Train**  
Township  
Alger County, Michigan



# Alger County



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan could not have been developed without the members of the Planning Commission, Township administration, and the citizens of Au Train Township.

### Au Train Township Planning Commission

Scott LaCombe, Chair  
Scott Smith, Secretary  
John Carr  
Matt Lang

### Au Train Township Board of Trustees

Tom Balmes, Supervisor  
Mary Walther Johnson, Clerk  
Kristy Cota, Treasurer  
Jacob Miller  
John Carr

### Previous Planning Commission members:

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Bill Weisinger  
William Gramm  
Donna Shields  
Jason Cain

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Special thanks to Michelle Doucette,  
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# RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION

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TOWNSHIP  
BOARD

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# RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION

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# INTRODUCTION+HISTORY



Au Train Township is located in the center of Alger County in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Water dominates its geography; Lake Superior forms the northern border of the township, the Au Train River and its reservoirs flow along the western border, and numerous woodland marshes and lakes are in abundance. These assets have established the township as a recreation and tourism destination, making it an ideal place to live, play, and visit.

Au Train is based on the French translation of the traditional Chippewa residents' name for the area, "*Me ta bwa nink*," describing the trail or portage along the Au Train and Whitefish Rivers between Little Bay de Noc and Lake Superior.\* In French, "Au Train" means "at the shortcut or traverse" relating to the trail. French voyageurs and early European explorers began visiting the area in the mid-1770s. The first settlers to the township arrived in 1856, with Au Train village founded in 1881 with the construction of the Detroit, Mackinac, and Marquette Railroad. Au Train was the first county seat until it was moved to the city of Munising in 1901.\*\*

Early settlement came in support of the iron ore and lumbering industries, using local timber for charcoal furnaces and construction. The exhaustion of local timber by the 1930s led to the purchase of much of the land by the federal government and the establishment of Hiawatha National Forest; protected forests and commercial timber land make up the dominant land uses today. The area's natural features and resources have always been predominant components of the local economy. Besides industry, communities



Bay Furnace Photo: CUPPAD

along the Lake Superior shoreline were established as recreational destinations, with those activities continuing through to the present day. Support of a growing tourism industry remains a focus, with a balance between the needs of full-time residents and seasonal visitors.

The preparation of this Master Plan represents many months of study, analysis, and review by the Au Train Township Planning Commission, with technical assistance from Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development (CUPPAD). The Planning Commission's authority to prepare a Master Plan is established by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, and authority for zoning through the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act. Together these help the Township protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community. The Master Plan is not the zoning ordinance, but is a tool to set long-range policy and decision-making

\*(1984). Peters, Benard C. *The Origin and Meaning of Chippewa Place Names Along the Lake Superior Shoreline between Grand Island and Point Abbaye. Names.*: Vol. 32 No. 3.

\*\*For further information on Au Train Township History, see "Alger County: A Centennial History 1885-1985" by Charles Symon, or visit the Alger County Historical Society.

# INTRODUCTION+HISTORY



for the Township. The zoning ordinance more specifically regulates development and the manner by which individual properties are used.

The Township last completed a Master Plan in 2011, with assistance from CUPPAD. The 2011 Master Plan provided the fundamental elements that were required by the Planning Enabling Act of 2008. Many items from the previous plan were accomplished, including updates to the township zoning ordinance in 2012, 2016, and 2022. Since the previous plan, new issues, development priorities, and goals for the township have been identified, necessitating a new long-term planning document. Throughout the development process, citizen participation was incorporated from Township Board and Planning Commission meetings and through a Citizen Survey. Nearly 150 residents participated in an online survey in the Spring of 2024, and

further public input was solicited at regular meetings and public comment periods as part of the Master Plan process.

Several other preceding local and regional plans were incorporated into this Master Plan. These include:

- Au Train Township Master Plan, 2011
- 2021 Central Upper Peninsula Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Alger County Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2022
- MDOT Superior Region Active Transportation Plan, 2022

as well as statistical information and other documents that are referenced throughout. Surrounding community plans and development goals have been considered, and the township supports achieving similar goals.



Photo: CUPPAD



# COMMUNITY DATA



## Population

The characteristics of a community's population are a reflection of its development needs. Housing, education, recreation, health care, transportation, and economic development are all affected by changes in the local population. The residents also make or effect change by their actions. Understanding the population issues of a community also means understanding them in context with the larger area, and how they are shaped by macro issues at a regional, state, and national level. Residents also do not carry out their lives inside their single community; they may work or shop or recreate in surrounding localities and influence development in those areas as well.

Data from the Decennial Census and American Community Survey (ACS)

estimates provided by the US Census Bureau is used throughout this Master Plan. While the Census is used primarily to count residents for congressional apportionment, it also collects statistics on social and economic characteristics of the population. Analyzing trends in these statistics over time allows for the identification of issues and opportunities. However, due to the way that this data is accumulated, there can be some margin of error. ACS data is collected each month using a random sampling method and aligned to the previous Census; with smaller sample sizes in smaller communities and townships there is a moderate margin of error. This analysis should be viewed as a snapshot of conditions at the time of writing, and be updated accordingly as new data is available.

Population Change, Local Municipalities 2000-2020

Unit of Government	Population				Percent Change	
	2000	2010	2020	2022 est.	2000-2020	2010-2020
Au Train Township	1,172	1,138	1,019	1,050	-13%	-10%
Burt Township	480	522	411	378	-14%	-21%
City of Munising	2,539	2,355	1,986	2,033	-22%	-16%
Grand Island Township	45	47	35	34	-22%	-26%
Limestone Township	407	438	392	460	-4%	-11%
Mathias Township	571	554	532	568	-7%	-4%
Munising Township	3,125	2,983	2,865	2,849	-8%	-4%
Onota Township	310	352	371	443	+20%	+5%
Rock River Township	1,213	1,212	1,231	1,097	+1%	+1%
Alger County	9,862	9,601	8,842	8,882	-10%	-8%
Upper Peninsula	317,616	311,361	301,608	302,259	-5.0%	-3.1%
Michigan	9,938,444	9,883,640	10,077,331	10,057,921	1.4%	2.0%

US Census

# COMMUNITY DATA



## Population and Proportion of Township/County, 1940-2020

Population	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Au Train Township	467	529	508	545	928	1047	1172	1138	1019
% Au Train/Alger	5%	5%	5%	6%	10%	12%	12%	12%	12%

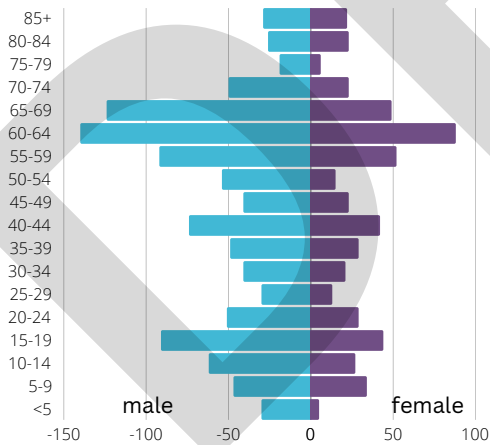
US Census

Over the past 20 years, Au Train Township has lost approximately 13% of its residents since the population peaked in the 2000 Census. Losses have slowed since 2010, and are likely a reflection of the Millennial generation coming of age and moving out of family households on their own. The Township's losses are higher than average in the Upper Peninsula, which has seen regional average losses of -3% over each decade. However, more recent ACS estimates since the 2020 Census have shown minor gains across the UP, and those gains are also reflected in the Township. These may reflect changing lifestyles and priorities resulting from the Coronavirus Pandemic. The majority of Alger County municipalities have experienced population losses over the same period. Gains in contiguous Onota and Rock River

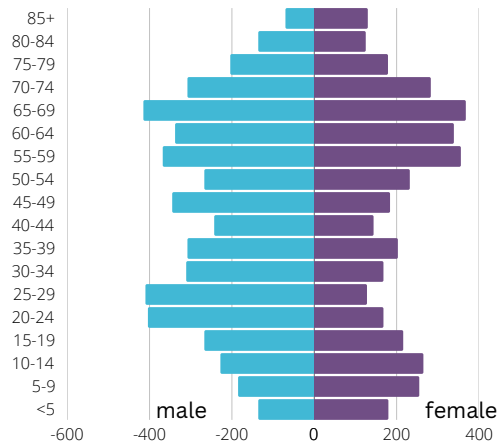
Townships to the west may be partially attributable to the growing suburbanization of the Marquette area. Historically, the township's population represented 5-6% of the county's population until the 1980s and 90s, when the growing movement of the Baby Boomer generation out of cities, establishing families in larger households on larger rural lots occurred. Since then, the proportion of Au Train Township residents in the county has remained stable at about 12%.

While population numbers have been stable, the township's residents are aging. An analysis of a community's age structure can reveal the needs of different cohorts. The proportion of the population representing those of retirement age, 65 years and over, is expected to increase as the Baby Boomer

Au Train Township  
Population Pyramid, 2022



Alger County  
Population Pyramid, 2022\*



Retirement  
Age

Established  
Families

Early Career

School Age

US Census, 2022 Five-year ACS Estimates

\*Overweighting of the estimated male population in Alger County cohorts is due in part to the presence of Alger Correctional Facility in Munising Township.

# COMMUNITY DATA



generation ages into retirement. Currently, those age 65 and older represent 23% of the township population; this is expected to continue to increase above 35% by 2030. Population pyramids, which show the number of persons of a particular cohort and gender grouped, show stability in a population when represented as a similar pillar-shape across all cohorts. In both the township and Alger County, the population pyramid is over-represented towards the top with smaller proportions of younger cohorts, representing probable population loss over time. The township has noticeable losses in the 20-35 cohorts, reflecting the movement of young persons away from the area possibly to due a lack of educational, employment, and housing opportunities. The proportion of school age children is also decreasing, reflecting macro trends of smaller families and lower birth rates.

Median age in the township continues to increase with these proportions. At the 2020 Census, the median resident of the township was 57.5 years of age. While lower than nearby Onota Township, this age is still 8 years above the median age of Alger County, and nearly 20 years above the median in Michigan and wider United

## Selected Median Age, 2020

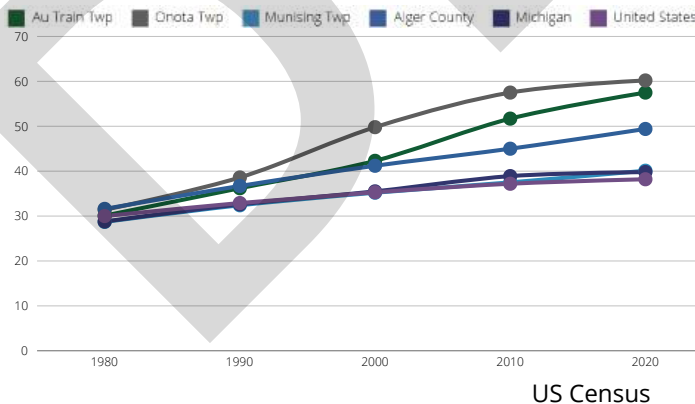
- 60.2 Onota Township**
- 57.5 Au Train Township**
- 50.9 City of Munising**
- 49.4 Alger County**
- 47.2 Rock River Township**
- 40.1 Munising Township**
- 39.8 Michigan**
- 38.2 United States**

US Census

States. Median age has continued to increase in the township with the aging population and loss of younger residents.

Demographic aging trends represent a primary factor in determining a community's economic health and social well-being. A declining birth rate and increasing out-migration can lead to fewer school age children seeking educational opportunities, leading to reduced funding and services. A decline in working age residents will continue to tighten the labor market, causing hardships for local businesses. An increase in retirees puts higher demands on social services, medical facilities, and specialty care providers. Without intervention, these trends are expected to last to the 2050s.

## Median Age, 1980-2020



## Households

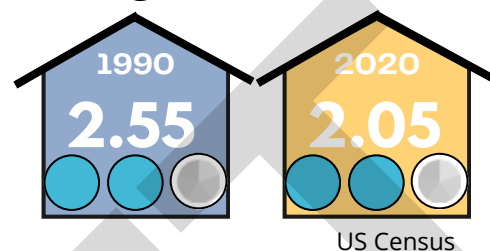
Household characteristics in a community are related to population trends, and can reflect larger changes in social values and economic conditions. There were 496 total full-time resident households recorded in the 2020 Census. This is a loss of 26 households from 2010, and may be reflective of an increase in seasonal housing. Over the

# COMMUNITY DATA



Au Train Township Household Types	2000		2010		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Family Households	349	70.6%	344	65.9%	313	63.1%
Married Couples	305	61.7%	297	56.9%	278	57.9%
Female Householder with Children	34	6.9%	24	4.6%	9	1.8%
Non-family Households	145	29.4%	149	34.1%	183	36.8%
Total Households	494		522		496	
Average Household Size	2.37		2.18		2.05	

## Average Household Size



past 30 years, average household size has decreased from 2.55 to 2.05 persons, aligning with the aging of the population and the movement of children to adult households of their own. From 2000, a corresponding decrease in married-couple and non-family households is reflective of wider social changes in family makeup and an increase in the number of people living alone. Those above age 65 living alone has almost tripled from 46 to 112; these individuals may have need of a larger social safety net as they age in their current housing.

poverty level, but less than the basic cost of living. In Au Train Township, 42% of households in 2021 were considered to be below the ALICE threshold (poverty + ALICE proportion of households), meaning that they may struggle with meeting their everyday basic needs. Mean household income is comparable to median, indicating that among full-time residents incomes are spread relatively evenly between high and low-income earners.

## Household Income

Median household income in Au Train is estimated at \$64,318, second only to Onota Township in the county and slightly lower than the statewide median income of \$68,505. However, even though this household income is higher, the township has the highest level of households below the poverty line in the county, estimated at 18.1%. Roughly 13% of Michigan households are below the poverty line, and 11.5% nationally. This high proportion of low-income households is spread across demographics. The United Way uses a metric called ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) that represents households that earn more than the federal

## Household Income and ALICE

Unit of Government	Median Household Income, 2022	% ALICE Households, 2021
Au Train Township	\$64,318	42%
Burt Township	\$44,545	61%
City of Munising	\$50,069	42%
Grand Island Township	\$99,375	-
Limestone Township	\$57,083	42%
Mathias Township	\$56,250	39%
Munising Township	\$56,683	48%
Onota Township	\$66,875	39%
Rock River Township	\$59,176	40%
Alger County	\$55,528	36%
Michigan	\$68,505	39%

US Census, United Way

\* (2021) Michigan, County Reports 2021. United Way of Northern New Jersey. [www.unitedforalice.org](http://www.unitedforalice.org)



## Education

Educational and workforce training requirements have been increasing over the past several decades. Employers are now looking for employees with post-high school education, primarily due to the complexity of equipment and methods being used in the modern workplace. A highly trained, educated workforce is an asset in attracting employers to a community. 97.5% of Au Train Township residents have graduated high school; a 10% increase since the 2000 Census. 26.5% of residents have gone on to pursue a bachelor's degree or higher, another 10% increase. Approximately 35% of residents have pursued some higher education or received associate degrees; a 6% increase since 2000.

The Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget predicts that by 2026 almost three-quarters of all U.P. jobs will require some sort of post-high school on-the-job, certificate, or associate's level training program, particularly in skilled trades.\* Students in the area can pursue these types of training through Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Services Agency (MARESA), which offers students vocational education opportunities. Bay College in Delta County offers vocational, certificate, associate and bachelor degree programs. Northern Michigan University, Michigan Technological University, and Lake Superior State University offer university-level higher education programs throughout the Upper Peninsula. Residents also have the opportunity to pursue education with workforce development agencies like UP Michigan Works!

Despite enrollment declines and the pressures of school of choice, staffing, and post-pandemic education, local schools are well-positioned to continue to offer premier educational opportunities. Students attending Au Train Onota Public Schools, Munising Public Schools, or Superior Central Schools have diversified educational opportunities and workforce development partnerships that have increased the ability of residents to develop new skills in the communities in which they live, keeping people from having to leave the community for education and skilled employment.

## Employment Trends

The labor force participation rate is an estimate of the number of people age 16 and older engaged in the workforce. The American Community Survey estimates that 43% of eligible township residents were engaged in the workforce in 2022. This is considerably less than the national rate of 62.7% calculated by the Federal Reserve. It is likely that the lower rate is due to the pandemic's impact to employment and the subsequent "Great Resignation" resulting in increased job mobility and retirements, along with the township's higher proportion of retirement-age residents. Alger County also has a high unemployment rate (9.5% in April 2024) compared to other Michigan counties, related to the seasonal nature of tourism employment in the area\*.

Tourism and recreation continue to be major and growing industries in the Township and across the region. Once primarily limited to the summer season, increases in the popularity of "fall color tours", winter sports, and short-term rental

\*(2024) Michigan Labor Market Information. Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget.

# COMMUNITY DATA



options have made the area a year-round destination. A major tourist attraction in Alger County is the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, a diverse area encompassing over 73,000 acres of picturesque Lake Superior shoreline and woodlands. The vast timberlands, lakes, and rivers of the Hiawatha National Forest offer a variety of recreational opportunities, and represent about 56% of the land ownership of the Township.

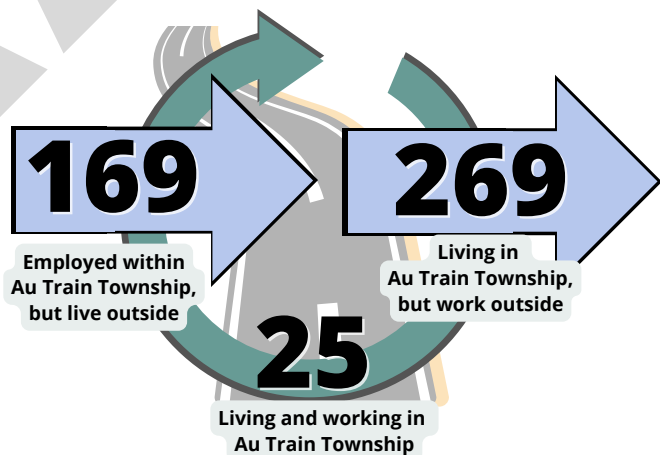


Photo: Aaron Peterson Studios

The local economy has historically been linked to the area's natural resources and geography. Tourism and extractive forest products are the area's largest industries. In the township, the Kewadin Casino in Christmas is the largest employer. Other large employers are generally within commuting distance of the cities of Munising or Marquette. The township has a variety of small businesses supporting the tourism industry that employ local residents, and a growing amount of remote workers who may reside in the township but are employed elsewhere. Diversification of the types of businesses in the township is a priority to reduce the dependence

on natural resources extraction and seasonal industries. The area's amenities make it attractive for remote work, broadening the workforce and strengthening economic resiliency should a downturn come. Additional employment in the township is likely to be located along the highway trunklines where supporting infrastructure is more readily available.

The Census Bureau estimates that only 25 residents both live and work in the township; the majority commute to work in areas outside the township. About a quarter of these commuters are employed in the city of Munising, and slightly less commute to Marquette. The other widely distributed locations represented in the data may be indicative of the growing proportion of remote workers in the Upper Peninsula; anecdotally these numbers have been steadily growing in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the expansion of high speed internet infrastructure to rural areas.



Source: US Census

# COMMUNITY DATA



169 residents are estimated to travel into the township for work with many coming from Munising. The commuting data may reflect a disparity between the places where people are both able to work and live, tied to housing availability and affordability. High inflow and outflow rates suggest that higher earners may commute out for jobs or perform remote work, while those commuting in may likely work lower-paying tourism and recreation jobs while living in more affordable areas.

## Occupations

In the past ten years of available data, the township has seen growth in natural resource-related employment, construction, and finance and real estate. Losses in manufacturing jobs, retail positions, and professional services may be reflective of wider regional trends. Concentrations of employment tend to be higher than the average across Alger County and are affected by seasonal fluctuations in the

labor force. A 2023 Labor Market Study conducted by Invest UP\* recommended that Alger County employers address seasonal labor issues by identifying cross-training opportunities and investing in infrastructure and housing to attract and retain permanent residents, supporting full-time employment across various industries.

## Housing

Housing is a key factor in planning for a community's future. Where people want to live and the style of housing they desire reflects on the need for infrastructure and community services, employment, and land use. Housing characteristics can also reveal information about a community's history and its economic and social situation. The cost of housing and types available are typically determined by market factors and local zoning control. Local governments can have an impact on the housing in a community through policy, the availability

### Industry Area Employment, 2012 and 2022

Industry Area	2012		2022	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting and Mining	7	1%	17	5%
Construction	35	7%	47	13%
Manufacturing	56	12%	31	9%
Wholesale Trade	0	-	0	-
Retail Trade	51	11%	28	8%
Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities	6	1%	10	3%
Information	26	5%	3	1%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rentals and Leasing	15	3%	37	10%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative Services	43	9%	9	3%
Educational, Health and Social Services	82	17%	69	19%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Food Services	101	21%	66	19%
Other Services	9	2%	8	2%
Public Administration	48	10%	31	9%

US Census

\*(2023) Upper Peninsula Labor Market Study: Supplemental County Materials. Invest UP. [www.investupmi.com](http://www.investupmi.com)

# COMMUNITY DATA



of infrastructure and public services, tax incentives, and quality of life amenities.

Over the past several years, record-high home prices and record-low inventory, combined with fluctuating interest rates, have increased competition in the housing market. Coming out of the COVID-19 Pandemic, employment flexibility and remote work options have led to the purchase of primary or secondary homes from more buyers outside of the community, leading to additional competition. Increases in rental prices and economic uncertainty have also led renters to seek housing opportunities in more affordable communities.

The Census Bureau reported there were 1,151 housing units in the township in 2020. This is a decrease of about 60 units from the previous Census, which may be the result of margin of error, housing aged past the point of occupancy, and/or shift in the types of housing available. Other types of non-permanent or semi-permanent structures used for housing and/or rental may not be included.

The average home in the township is a 2-3 bedroom single family home built around 1980. Many of these homes were built as the Baby Boomer generation aged out of their parents' homes and desired larger homes on rural lots to raise growing families.

The Census Bureau defines "vacant" housing as those that are either truly vacant, or non-permanently occupied (seasonal). These would include cabins, cottages, and housing units used as short-term rentals. A typical vacancy rate is less than 10%, however, the majority of housing in Au Train Township is occupied seasonally, with many of these units used for rental purposes.

Existing secondary seasonal residences are generally concentrated around the Township's water features. The use of the existing housing as an alternative for hotels or other temporary lodging has been identified as a regional issue putting additional pressure on the local housing market by removing availability for long-term renters and homeowners. In addition to wider market trends, larger homes built on waterfront property over the past 30 years have contributed to an increase in housing value across the

## Occupancy, 2010 and 2020

Housing Units	Au Train Township		Alger County	
	2010	2020	2010	2020
<b>Total Units</b>	1,212	1,151	6,554	6,169
Occupied Housing Units	522 (43%)	496 (43%)	3,898 (59%)	3,609 (59%)
Owner	95.3%	94.7%	81.7%	80.4%
Renter	4.7%	5.3%	18.3%	19.6%
Vacant Housing Units	690 (57%)	655 (57%)	2,656 (41%)	2,560 (41%)

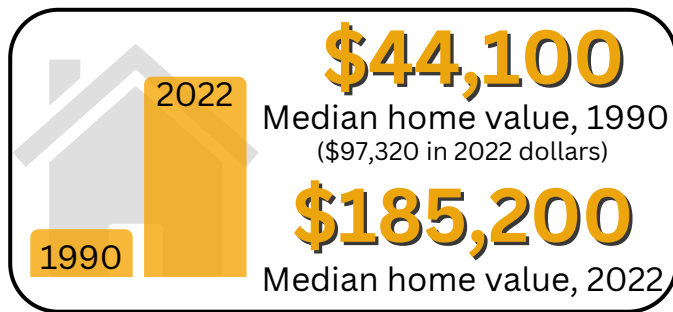
US Census



# COMMUNITY DATA



township. In 1990, the Census Bureau estimated median home value in the township at \$44,100. As of 2022, median home value is estimated at \$185,200, a greater than 300% increase.



US Census

A 2016 Target Market Analysis\* of potential housing and buyers in Alger County found that seasonal housing development had the potential to increase in value by 20% or more compared to building residential single family homes. That trend has been amplified by the area's growing popularity after COVID-19. The continued development of detached single family homes on wider lots allowing for onsite water and wastewater was expected in the TMA. It was anticipated the priority for development would continue in those areas with proximity and access to water features, which has continued to be the case.

In the years following the TMA, more than one-third of all Au Train Township households are now headed by someone of retirement age. This proportion is expected to continue to increase over the next decade as the Baby Boomer generation reaches retirement. Many of these residents

have completed traditional 30-year mortgage terms, and can be expected to continue to want to "age in place" in their homes into the future. Being able to independently age in place is increasing in importance. With older homes in rural communities, this may mean further marketing programs that can rehabilitate homes to meet the needs of aging occupants and mitigate costs to income-constrained households. Adding accessible fixtures like railings, lighting, and mobility features can help prepare for eventual changes in health. In addition, proximity and safety when travelling for medical appointments, and connecting people to community services and spaces can help people stay in their homes longer. One story dwellings or townhomes, with minimal outdoor maintenance requirements will likely become more desirable. Neighborhoods that provide close access to everyday goods and services will offer more opportunities to older residents.

Coming out of Michigan's first Statewide Housing Plan, the Central Upper Peninsula Regional Housing Partnership Action Plan sets the priorities for investment by state housing partners.\*\* The goals are to focus on creating capacity for local governments and developers to take on a wider variety of housing projects; increase the supply and condition of the available housing stock across the spectrum of local communities; and create affordability for renters. One of the first steps a community can take is to identify challenges to housing presented by current zoning regulations.

\*(2016) Target Market Analysis, Alger County, Michigan. LandUse USA

\*\* (2023) Central Upper Peninsula Regional Housing Partnership Final Action Plan. CUPPAD.

# COMMUNITY DATA



MSHDA's goal as a result of the Statewide Housing Plan and subsequent investments identify a need for at least 200 new units across Alger County to meet statewide goals. A new Target Market Analysis would support the placement and market areas for different types of housing in varied communities. At a regional level, the Central UP Regional Housing Partnership Action Plan is a direct local outcome of the statewide plan, providing support for locally identified priorities: continuing to build the housing support ecosystem to provide capacity for local governments, community organizations, and developers to realize projects; increasing the supply and variety of the housing stock and rehabilitating existing properties; and providing support to renters by making housing assistance resources more accessible and available.

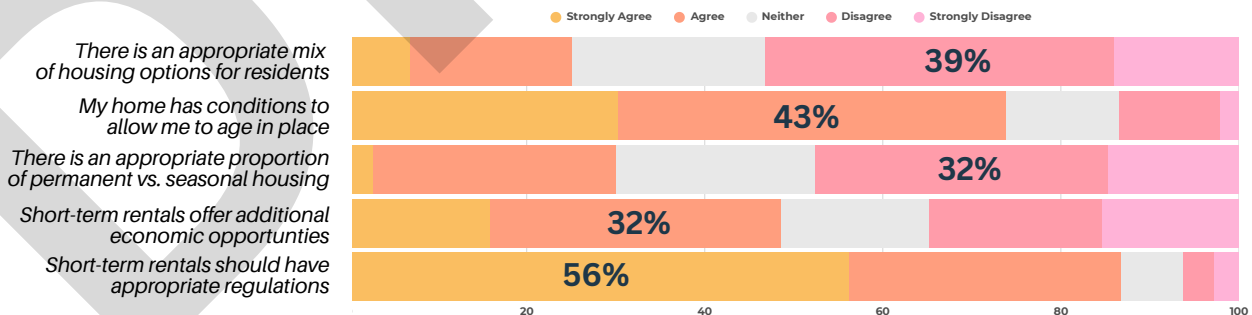
Housing development throughout the township is expected to remain dispersed, due to the scattered nature of private property available around Hiawatha National Forest parcels. The National Forest and other state and commercial forest

lands, along with an abundance of wetlands, create natural barriers to development in many areas. Building on waterfront properties is expected to continue, provided that lots and access are available. Areas of concentrated development (Au Train, Christmas, Sixteen Mile Lake) may experience water and septic issues should there be continued development. The rural nature of the township means that housing related infrastructure like municipal water and sewer, residential sidewalks, and other services are unlikely to be implemented.

The Township's goal for housing is to provide more available stock for long-term residents, flexibility in housing types to support changing demands and the local economy, and support for current homeowners to continue to live in place in the area in which they enjoy. The Planning Commission is likely to review typology and standards that reflect the community's character and mitigate the impacts of further growth without consideration of surrounding uses.

## Citizen Survey

*"Thinking about the overall housing stock available in the Township, to what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"*



See Appendix for full details



## Short-term Rentals

The Township has long been a destination for vacationers and seasonal residents, with many property owners offering their homes to transient visitors on a formal or informal basis. The use of homes within the Township as “short-term rentals” or those generally rented for less than 14 days at a time, has steadily increased over the past several years. Many use third-party advertising and booking agencies to market and manage their use, expanding the reach and popularity of the township and these types of lodging. While these uses have provided additional economic opportunities for the region, the swift rise in popularity and potentially impactful character and overuse that has come with them has caused residential complaints.

Historic short-term rentals, which existed before the Township’s adoption of zoning regulations, have been in place for decades or even close to a century. These rentals are considered nonconforming under the current zoning ordinance and are permitted to continue operating as long as their use and nature do not substantially change. Short-term rentals established after the adoption of regulations in the ordinance are subject to those regulations. In recent years, the number of applications for short-term rental uses has greatly increased, along with reported issues caused by transient visitors using these lodgings.

The Township Planning Commission and Board have considered various short term rental regulations and moratoriums over the past several years, with concerns around

### Citizen Survey

“What issue(s) do you think have the greatest impact on the Township and its residents? - Tourism.”

**43%** of residents

**believe tourism-related issues have a great impact on the Township and its residents**

*See Appendix for details*

potential nuisance issues such as parking, noise, and lack of respect for adjacent private property owners. Regulations addressing these issues have been adopted into the ordinance as a conditional use process, whereby the Planning Commission reviews and considers each application under a particular set of standards, and applies reasonable conditions to mitigate the impact of the use to surrounding properties.

The Township should continue to document the issues surrounding short term rentals and how the zoning ordinance does not currently address them. The Planning Commission should evaluate these and review whether additional requirements and enforcement through a regulatory police-power ordinance would better serve the needs of the Township and its residents. A regulatory ordinance would allow for more flexibility and clearer enforcement process, though would require additional Township staff capacity and fees to enact effectively.



## Impacts of Tourism

The COVID-19 Pandemic was a catalyst for a sudden increase in tourism in the Upper Peninsula. Restrictions to travel, a move to remote work options, and social changes have made travelers more open to outdoor-focused rural destinations that offer a variety of recreational experiences and natural beauty. The immediate business revenues and opportunities were welcome in UP communities, but repetitive stressors have come in the form of challenges to housing, increases in infrastructure deterioration, and reliance on services designed to accommodate fewer residents. These are all challenges for small rural townships like Au Train, but also present opportunities to plan accordingly and regulate appropriately to ensure undue harm does not come upon long-term residents.

### Challenges

- Excessive use of physical infrastructure (roads, trails, traffic safety, etc.)
- Visitor and resident etiquette and education (how we perceive and are perceived)
- Land access and land use (private vs. public lands, juxtaposition of the tourism-industry in residential neighborhoods)
- Emergency services (increased service calls, reliance on volunteers)
- Workforce shortages and employment (seasonal industry and workforce, housing shortage, low wages)

### Opportunities

- Explore solutions to enhance physical infrastructure to better accommodate tourism uses: advocate for lower speeds on M-28; coordinate safety projects for pedestrian/bicyclist/snowmobile users; create EV charging stations to attract people to local businesses and recreation sites; partner with trail organizations to better maintain, sign, and mitigate trail issues.
- Create marketing that communicates responsible recreation practices; have clear processes and channels for handling complaints.
- Continue to advocate for clear signage and access to public lands; protect property owners from overuse and trespass; enhance mapping and trail asset inventories; use zoning to mitigate identified issues between land uses.
- Collaborate services between jurisdictions and pool resources; engage younger residents early and often in volunteer positions; increase awareness in the need for volunteers in township positions and for emergency services; increase benefits for volunteer service.
- Explore opportunities for workforce housing; identify where affordability does not meet housing use and needs; partner with local businesses to collaborate on solutions to attract and maintain an adequate workforce.



## Township Facilities

Au Train Township provides community facilities and additional services that meet the needs of its residents and the general public. The administration of the Township and these services is located at the Township Hall in Au Train. The Hall was constructed in 1980, and has been updated several times to facilitate township offices and act as a community center for residents. While no major renovations are expected, the township continues to look for ways that the building can continue to serve the community and support the needs of local government.

Three fire halls are staffed by two dozen volunteers in Au Train, Christmas, and Sixteen Mile Lake. The distributed nature of development and road infrastructure necessitate supporting these facilities to cut down on response times. The Township maintains a millage to help fund fire services, and maintains mutual aid agreements with other surrounding jurisdictions to support response to events across the county. A contractual agreement with Grand Island Township also supports their fire service response from the hall in

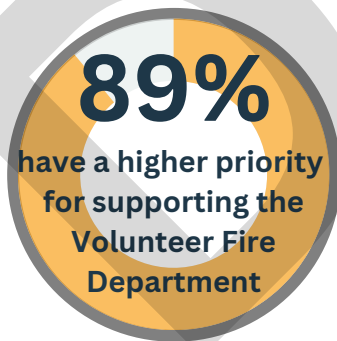
Christmas. Maintaining a high level of fire service and equipment is important to protecting the safety of residents and visitors. The large amount of forested land also make wildfire a significant concern. The Forest Service maintains firefighting equipment and personnel at the station in Munising and the DNR maintains service from their Shingleton facility. Recent expansions in participation in the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) can provide additional support and resources from across the wider region if necessary. In addition to these facilities, the Township also maintains a playground in Au Train, the Heritage Trail trailhead at the Au Train River bridge, and the 10-acre Serenity Pines Cemetery north of M-28.

## Recreation

Au Train Township is exceptionally rich in natural resources and areas that draw a growing number of visitors each year to stay and recreate. The township offers a variety of lodgings that make it perfect as a “home base” for recreation activities, and both tourists and residents utilize facilities across the area. The local tourism industry that was previously limited to the summer months has grown into a four season enterprise with the growth of travel and fall and winter activities. Having adequate recreational facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and visitors is vital to the community.

The Township maintains a regular five-year Recreation Plan that identifies needs and opportunities. While the Township only owns one recreational facility in the

### Citizen Survey



*“Thinking about infrastructure and land use, what are your priorities for the following: Ensuring appropriate staffing and equipment on the Volunteer Fire Department.”*

89% said “higher priority”  
5% “lower priority”  
4% “not a priority”

See Appendix for details

# FACILITIES+SERVICES



playground at the community center, it supports the wide variety of activities and sites found throughout the area. The goals for the 2023-2027 Recreation Plan include:

- Fostering stewardship and conservation with businesses, organizations, individuals and agencies in protecting Au Train Township's natural and cultural resources
- Improving collaboration with recreation stakeholders to meet the outdoor needs of Township residents and visitors
- Raising the awareness of residents and visitors on the variety of outdoor recreational opportunities available in Au Train Township
- Improving recreation accessibility for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities
- Providing quality outdoor recreational experiences in balance with Township resource management and conservation
- Enhancing the health of Au Train Township Residents and visitors by providing physical outdoor recreational opportunities
- Enhancing economic prosperity by supporting a high-quality of life to attract and retain residents in Au Train Township

These goals all support an action program of similar recreation projects including support for trail connections, improved site amenities, access to resources, and safety and accessibility. Creative opportunities exist to help realize goals and projects in this and future recreation plans.

## Citizen Survey

*"What issue(s) do you think have the greatest impact on the Township and its residents? Access to the internet or cell service."*

**43%** of residents

**believe access to the internet and cell service in the township is an impactful issue**

*See Appendix for details*

## Infrastructure and Services

Critical community infrastructure systems and services include transportation, water, wastewater, public energy, food, public safety, public health, solid waste, and public recreation; all tied to local economic development. It is particularly important to plan for long-term resiliency in community systems so that a failure in one aspect does not cascade into others, and that growth and maintenance are managed accordingly. Local governments face internal and external challenges when managing infrastructure systems. Declining revenues, rising expenses, and aging infrastructure are issues seen across the Upper Peninsula, and these impact the ability of the Township to provide essential services to residents.

Electrical service within the Township is provided by Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO) and Alger-Delta Cooperative Electric Association. These companies own and operate the distribution systems throughout the area. A hydroelectric power generation station capable of producing up to 1 megawatt of

# FACILITIES+SERVICES



energy (~750 homes equivalent) is operated by a dam on the Au Train River creating Forest Lake with the generation station at Au Train Falls downstream. The hydroelectric project was originally built by the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company during its heyday of operations across the Upper Peninsula. The current dam was built in 1930. Renewable World Energies, the current owner, has cited the age and low generation capability of the station as cause to reduce or abandon the project in filings with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Ensuring compliance with dam safety regulations, which may include significantly lowering the lake level, has raised concerns among residents. Surrendering the project and land holdings to the State of Michigan has also been proposed.

Natural gas service is provided in several areas by DTE Energy. Two natural gas pipelines enter the township in the west from the direction of Chatham, before following parallel to M-28 to Munising. Residential service is available in Au Train and south for several miles along Au Train Forest Lake Road, and in Christmas. Further expansion of natural gas service is unlikely due to the low density of potential customers compared to construction costs. A smaller number of homes use on-site propane tanks delivered by private companies.

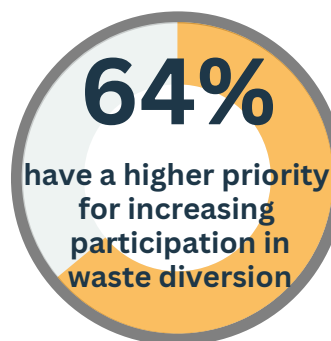
Communications and internet services are provided through the township by Hiawatha Communications and subsidiaries, Spectrum, TDS Telecom, and various satellite providers. High-speed internet service is an almost ubiquitous

need to participate in the current digital economy, with reliable uninterrupted connections desired by businesses and remote workers. The current accepted need for internet speed in households is “broadband” or 100 megabytes per second (Mbps) download/10 Mbps upload. Much of the township currently has broadband quality service available, however there are many “last mile” homes in rural areas still underserved or unserved.

The Township maintains a millage for solid waste disposal, which is collected by Green For Life (GFL) on a weekly basis. Residents also have the ability to transport waste and recycling directly to GFL’s Wood Island Landfill in Munising Township.

There are no municipal water or wastewater services in the township, with households relying on private wells and septic systems. These systems are regulated by the Luce-Mackinac-Alger-Schoolcraft (LMAS) Health Department and the Upper Peninsula Environmental Health Code. Failure of systems and non-point source pollution of water bodies has become an increasing concern with the responsibility of prevention reliant on installers and residents.

## Citizen Survey



*“Thinking about infrastructure and land use, what are your priorities for the following: Increasing the availability and participation in recycling, hazardous waste, and other waste [bulk, tires, electronics] collection programs.”*

64% said “higher priority”  
21% “lower priority”  
8% “not a priority”

**See Appendix for details**



## Transportation

Land use affects transportation choices and transportation opportunities impact land use decisions. Where people live, work, recreate, and use land, as well as the physical characteristics of an area, determine where roads and other transportation facilities are sited. Efficient and safe movement is the primary objective of any transportation system. The Alger County Road Commission is responsible for the majority of public roads in the Township, with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) responsible for M-28 and M-94, and the US Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) responsible for the system of forest access roads. The Road Commission maintains maintenance contracts and some revenue for work on roads under these other jurisdictions. County Roads are classified as either “primary roads” that facilitate movement from place to place, or “local roads” that provide access to homes and businesses. A number of private roads also exist throughout the Township, with maintenance and sufficient access to services the responsibility of property owners.

There are approximately 216 miles of roads throughout the township: 19 miles of state trunkline, 36 miles of primary county roads, 32 miles of county local roads, and the rest forest and private. Funding for road improvements is dependent on jurisdiction, road classification, and available revenues; the Township maintains a millage for the funding of road projects in coordination with the Road Commission. Local funds are



*PASER Road Conditions, 2021-2023\**

mainly used for maintenance and matching state and federal sources when possible. Declining state and federal revenues and funding created through fuel taxes, along with rising construction costs, mean that fewer roads are able to be resurfaced each

\* (2024) Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council (TAMC) [www.michigan.gov/mic/tamc](http://www.michigan.gov/mic/tamc).



# FACILITIES+SERVICES

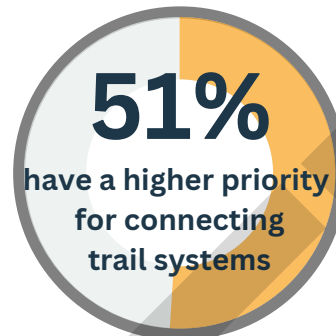


year. Road surfaces are rated on a regular schedule using the PASER system for evaluating “good”, “fair”, and “poor” conditions. The majority of county primaries through the township are in good or fair condition. The Road Commission evaluates and implements projects on local roads when funding and scheduling allows.

In 2027, due to concerns of tourism and traffic at Au Train Beach, MDOT will modify the M-28/Au Train Forest Lake Road intersection to include dedicated left-hand turning lanes; speed increases on M-28 and the popularity of the area have made this intersection a repeated safety concern.

Active, or nonmotorized transportation, generally consisting of walking or bicycling activity has increased in response to public interest over the past few years. No sidewalks currently exist in the township, so the majority of use occurs on on-road shared facilities with motor vehicles. Active transportation is made safer by creating dedicated facilities that provide separation from traffic; previous attempts to gather local funding for a pathway along Au Train Forest Lake Road to help mitigate safety concerns for users along the river died for lack of support. The North Country Scenic Trail, a 4,800-mile-long hiking trail from Vermont to North Dakota passes east-west through the township between M-28 and M-94. The Bay de Noc-Grand Island National Recreation Trail passes north-south through the Hiawatha National Forest and the township on its way from Rapid River to a connector trail with the North Country at M-94.

## Citizen Survey



*“Thinking about infrastructure and land use, what are your priorities for the following: Walking/bicycling trails connecting various areas or other communities.”*

51% said “higher priority”  
28% “lower priority”  
17% “not a priority”

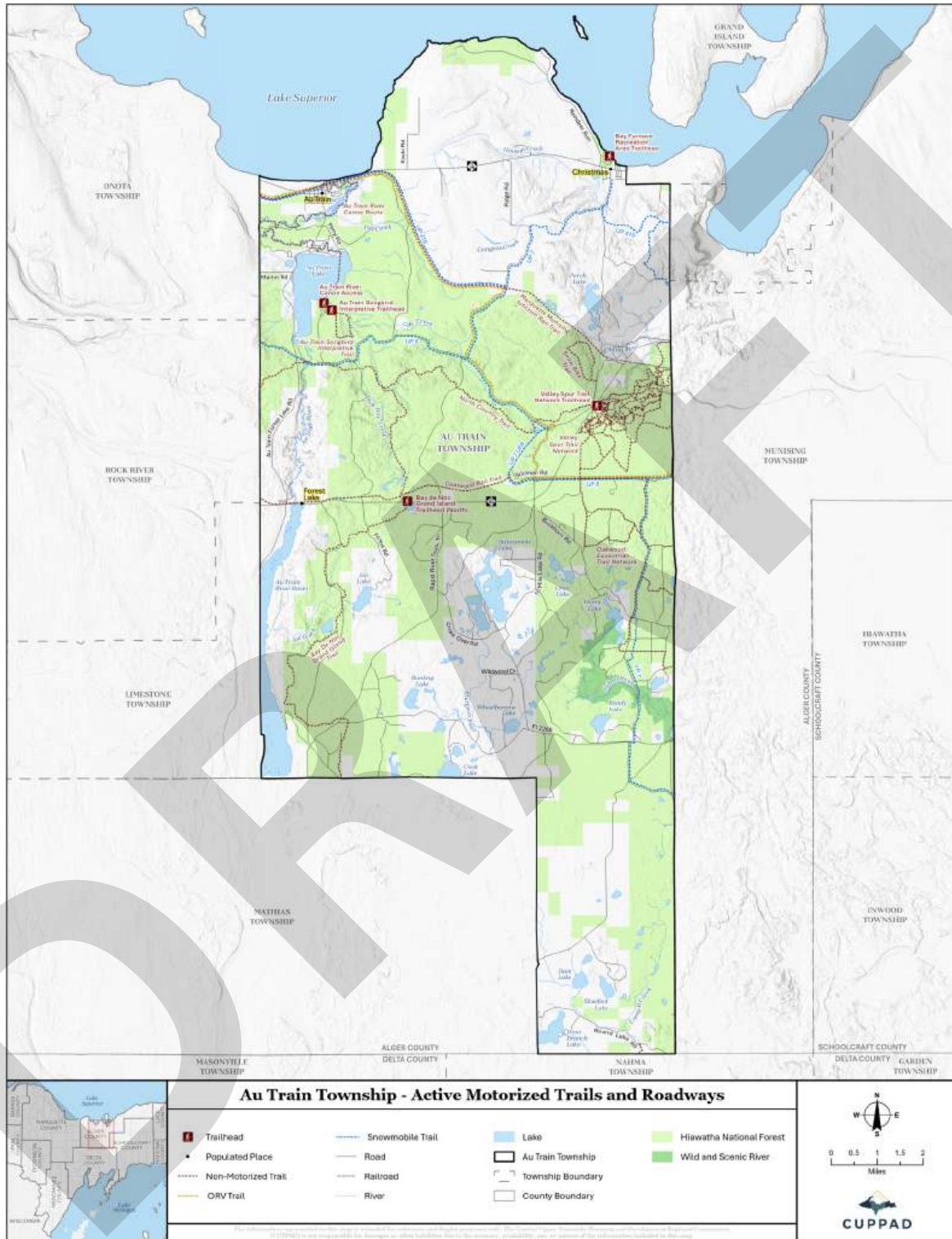
See Appendix for details

Valley Spur Trails in the National Forest offer 42 miles of off-road biking, hiking, snowshoe, and cross-country trails through a partnership between the Forest Service and Munising Bay Trail Networks. Valley Spur has connections to the North Country Trail and Wetmore area to facilitate pathways to the greater Munising area. In addition to these, the township also has kayaking/canoe trails along the Au Train River, and the Lake Superior East Water Trail along the shoreline. The water trail at Au Train Lake to the river mouth has exploded in popularity over recent years with its calm water and variety of activities.

The MDOT Superior Region Active Transportation Plan identifies that safety and infrastructure improvements for bicycling and pedestrian activities are a priority for the Upper Peninsula.\* The Township should continue to engage with local stakeholders to identify where these improvements could be implemented, and gaps in the network remediated. Since

\* (2022) Superior Region Active Transportation Plan and Investment Strategy, 2022-2030. Michigan Department of Transportation [www.michigan.gov/mdot/travel/safety/road-users/bicycling](https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/travel/safety/road-users/bicycling)

# FACILITIES+SERVICES



# FACILITIES+SERVICES



funding is limited, extending paved shoulder width along roadways and continuing to identify areas of safety concern and conflict between motorized/nonmotorized uses will continue to be methods to increase safety in the area.

Off-road powersports, including ORVs, dirtbikes, and snowmobiles continue to grow in popularity in the Upper Peninsula, particularly for tourism. Off-road vehicles have a variety of dedicated trails and state and federal forest roads to utilize throughout the township. Local clubs maintain many of these routes through collaboration with the MDNR. Established in 2004, the Snowmobile and ORV Association of Alger County (SORVA) maintains and grooms over 100 miles of ORV and snowmobile trails for year-round use with connections to destinations across the central UP. Alger County also maintains an ORV ordinance allowing use of ORVs along county roads.

Both active and motorized recreation activities and facilities continue to be draws for residents and tourism year-round. Where feasible, trails should take into consideration the separation of these users for safety reasons, but should also continue to connect to economic and social destinations between communities. Extensive collaborations and long-term partnerships will continue to be needed to ensure maintenance and marketability of trails and amenities as recreational destinations. The Township continues to advocate for identifying and acquiring both motorized and nonmotorized rights-of-way

and crossing points at strategic intersections in support of the continued integration, preservation, and development of trail networks.



Photo: CUPPAD

## Public Transit

Countywide public transit services were initiated in 1982, with the formation of the Alger County Transit Authority (ALTRAN) in 1990. ALTRAN provides demand-response services six days per week using a variety of vehicles. Roughly one-tenth of riders in 2022 were work-related, while over one-third were seniors or disabled.\* ALTRAN offers services in support of tourism, non-emergency medical transportation, “drunk bus”, and regional trips between Munising and Marquette. With the changing demographics of the township towards an aging population, along with changing social norms and employment patterns, increased utilization of public transit services can be expected. Increased capacity for public transit service would more readily allow residents access businesses, services, and medical appointments, and also allow for them and others to visit destinations within the township that are less feasibly accessible by walking or bicycling.

\* (2024) Alger County Transit Authority (ALTRAN) [www.altranbus.com](http://www.altranbus.com).

# NATURAL FEATURES+LAND USE



Natural features, including soils, geology, topography, water features and other natural resources, not only enhance the aesthetic quality of the area but also have a profound effect on a community's development. These physical features directly or indirectly constrain or encourage growth. Natural resources which occur in certain areas (timber, minerals, water sources) are often a primary factor in the establishment and growth (or decline) of communities. Development in Alger County has historically been dependent on natural resources. Continued utilization of the area's resources may result in population growth. Au Train Township must recognize the impacts that occur with increasing development and take steps to conserve and use these important resources wisely.

## Geology

The underground and surface geology and topography of the landscape provide an area with its own unique character. The township's terrain ranges from hilly inland in proximity to M-94 sloping north to be nearly level along the Lake Superior shoreline, with over 450 feet in elevation change. The Upper Peninsula's watershed divide bisects the township, with waters north and west of M-94 flowing into Lake Superior, while those south and east flow into Lake Michigan. The Forest Lake reservoir straddles this line, with water flowing to both Great Lakes to the north and south.

Underlying bedrock tends to be of a sedimentary nature, mostly sandstones, shales, and limestones, that have the ability to hold sufficient amounts of groundwater

for onsite wells. Surface geology is primarily the result of past glacial activity, with rolling hills and valleys the result of ice and water erosion. Glaciers deposited over 200 recognized soil types in Alger County; the majority of these are moderately well draining and sandy, while wetlands retain water in lower areas. Sandy soils have limitations for both groundwater retention and septic efficiency, leading to contamination concerns. Point and non-point source contaminants from various uses may seep directly down through the soil and move underground to water sources; these sources may be difficult to identify and monitor without the collective efforts of local residents and regulatory agencies.



*Photo: Aaron Peterson Studios*

## Surface Waters

Au Train Township includes approximately fifty lakes, five rivers, and thirteen creeks. The Township's northern boundary on Lake Superior provides access to the largest freshwater body of water in the world. Inland lakes outside the National Forest became popular for residential development and recreation soon after the

# NATURAL FEATURES+LAND USE



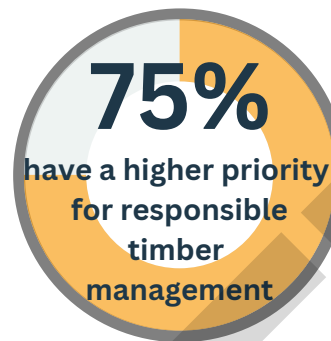
conclusion of major lumbering activities in the early 20th Century. The major rivers provided logging runs to sawmills and shipping on the Great Lakes in contrast to today's trucking.

Wetlands both create potential limitations to development and mitigate the impact of natural hazards. A wetland area may be referred to as a swamp, bog, or marsh and often form a link between water bodies and upland features. Coastal wetlands make up approximately 10% of the Lake Superior shoreline in protected bays, river estuaries, and barrier lagoons. The meandering nature of the Au Train River is a prime example with its shallow depth and slow current offering valuable habitat, water retention, and recreation opportunities. Large wetland areas are also found in proximity to Sixteen Mile and Round Lakes. State regulations for wetlands are triggered when filling or removing soils in wetlands, constructing or maintaining use and development in proximity, or draining surface water. With an abundance of both water features and forested land in the township, the health of trees and wetlands can contribute to watershed quality. Trees and wetlands filter stormwater, reduce erosion, contribute to flood control, and provide wildlife habitat and natural beauty.



Photo: Aaron Peterson Studios

## Citizen Survey



*"Thinking about infrastructure and land use, what are your priorities for the following: Responsible timber management, protecting the natural beauty and economic value of forested lands."*

75% said "higher priority"  
17% "lower priority"  
4% "not a priority"

See Appendix for details

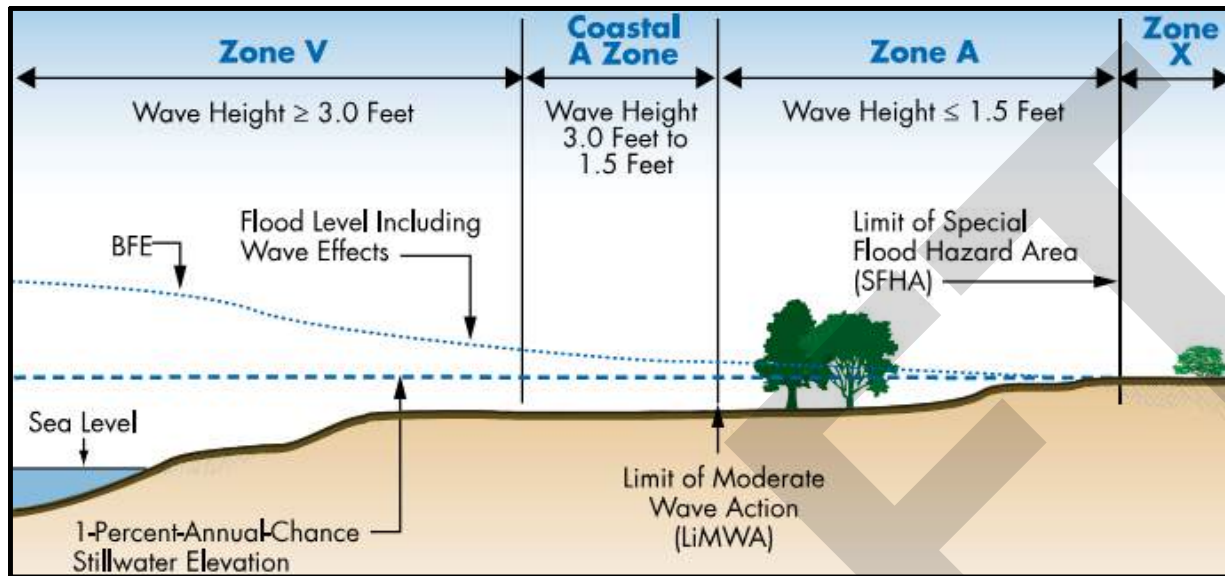
## Forested Lands

Well managed woodlands provide clean air, clean water, natural habitat, recreation space, and wildfire mitigation in addition to their economic benefit. Over half of all the land in the township is designated as part of the Hiawatha National Forest, with another significant portion used as Commercial Forest. The USFS, MDNR, and private landowners actively manage these lands for timber growth, harvesting, and recreational opportunities. Local governments receive a payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) for these lands, while the timber industry benefits from sales, and the public benefits from access.

The Hiawatha National Forest was established in 1931, after extensive logging and burning rendered much of the Upper Peninsula economically unusable. This led the land to revert back to state and federal ownership. As a result, much of the National Forest was replanted in the 1930s and '40s into stands of uniform species and age. The Forest Service has identified rotation schedules and replanting guidelines that emphasize productive economic and environmental forest growth outlined in its Forest Plan.\*

\* (2006) Hiawatha National Forest: 2006 Forest Plan. United States Department of Agriculture..

# NATURAL FEATURES+LAND USE



Coastal Flood Hazard Zones, EGLE\*

## Coastal Management

Wind-driven waves and currents, frequency and intensity of storms, and shoreline type are coastal processes and hazards for the Lake Superior shoreline. A basic understanding of local coastal processes is essential for a community to increase resilience towards coastal hazards.\*\* The majority of the township's coastline is sandy beach or bluff, which adapts to changing water levels and wave conditions. Sandy beaches are constantly changing to dissipate incoming wave energy. Low energy waves and mild storm seasons may increase the amount of sand on the beach, while high energy waves and storms cause erosion. A beach's natural ability to change in response to current conditions makes it the best form of shoreline protection; when shorelines are artificially modified, they lose this mechanism and increase the impact of

erosion. Coastal dunes can also lower the vulnerability from hazards by increasing elevations and retaining excess sand to mitigate wave action.

Heavy winds during storms on Lake Superior can inundate shoreline areas and threaten property.\*\*\* FEMA has designated the entire shoreline of the township within the 100-year floodplain, meaning it has at least a one percent chance of being flooded each year. On the Great Lakes, the 100-year floodplain also assumes that waves remain less than 3 feet in height. Seiches are rare events on Lake Superior, caused by high pressure systems that can raise water levels rapidly. The last local seiche recorded in 2014 caused water levels to rise up to three feet above normal; a record-high wave of over 28 feet was recorded north of Munising in 2017. While these events are rare, climate

\* (2022) Floodplain Management in Michigan Quick Guide. Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

\*\* (2023) Resilient Coastal Communities Planning Guide. Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. [www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/coastal-management](http://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/coastal-management)

\*\*\* (2022) Alger County Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2022-2027. Alger County Emergency Management.

# NATURAL FEATURES+LAND USE



trends indicate that the area may experience more intense storms with greater frequency, meaning more wave energy will impact the coastline.

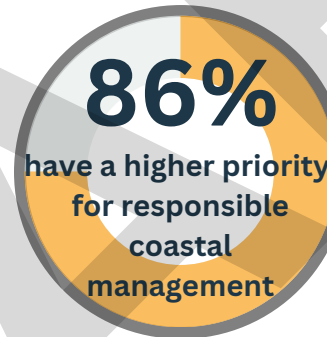
The Coastal High Hazard Area (Zone V) extends from the current water level to the 100-year high elevation. The 100-year coastal floodplain lies beyond and experiences wave action between 1.5 and 3 feet. Coastal dunes lower vulnerability from hazards by acting as a source of sand against erosion and wave action, and increasing elevation. Dunes are present at the mouth of the Au Train River while the majority of the rest of the township's coastline is made up of sandy bluffs, in some cases just a few feet above the water line. Restrictions on floodplain development along the coast and the requirements of building permits prevent certain construction activities in these areas. Local zoning regulations can also set requirements for building placement and setbacks, and the use of natural mitigation techniques as opposed to hardening or armoring the shoreline.

## Natural Hazards

Hazards are events that threaten public safety and property and can be caused by a variety of natural and human activities. Natural hazards include wildfires, flooding, severe storms, and other events that are uncontrolled, but their impacts can be mitigated. The Alger County Hazard Mitigation Plan\* identifies local hazards and outlines mitigation actions that can be used by municipalities and responding agencies to seek additional funding and support.

The majority of natural hazard events in Alger County are related to winter weather and its effects. Winter weather and high winds off of Lake Superior close major transportation routes, businesses, and schools several times per year. Effective removal of snow is generally up to the County Road Commission on public roads and individual property owners elsewhere. Emergency preparedness, cold-hardened infrastructure, and effective communication methods are all important mitigation actions for these kinds of events.

### Citizen Survey



*"Thinking about infrastructure and land use, what are your priorities for the following: Protecting the Lake Superior shoreline through responsible coastal management practices."*

86% said "higher priority"  
7% "lower priority"  
4% "not a priority"

**See Appendix for details**

With the majority of the township heavily forested, wildfire presents a significant risk to persons and property. Ensuring proper first responder staffing and mutual aid communication channels are paramount to responding to events in rural areas. With few major roads, many of the forest and private roads are not constructed in a manner to permit access to all areas. The Township should continue to ensure that roads to residential structures have adequate access and egress routes for vehicles. The Township should also continue to advocate and communicate to residents the efforts of the Forest Service in coordinating prescribed burns and wildfire education events.

\* (2022) Alger County Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2022-2027. Alger County Emergency Management.

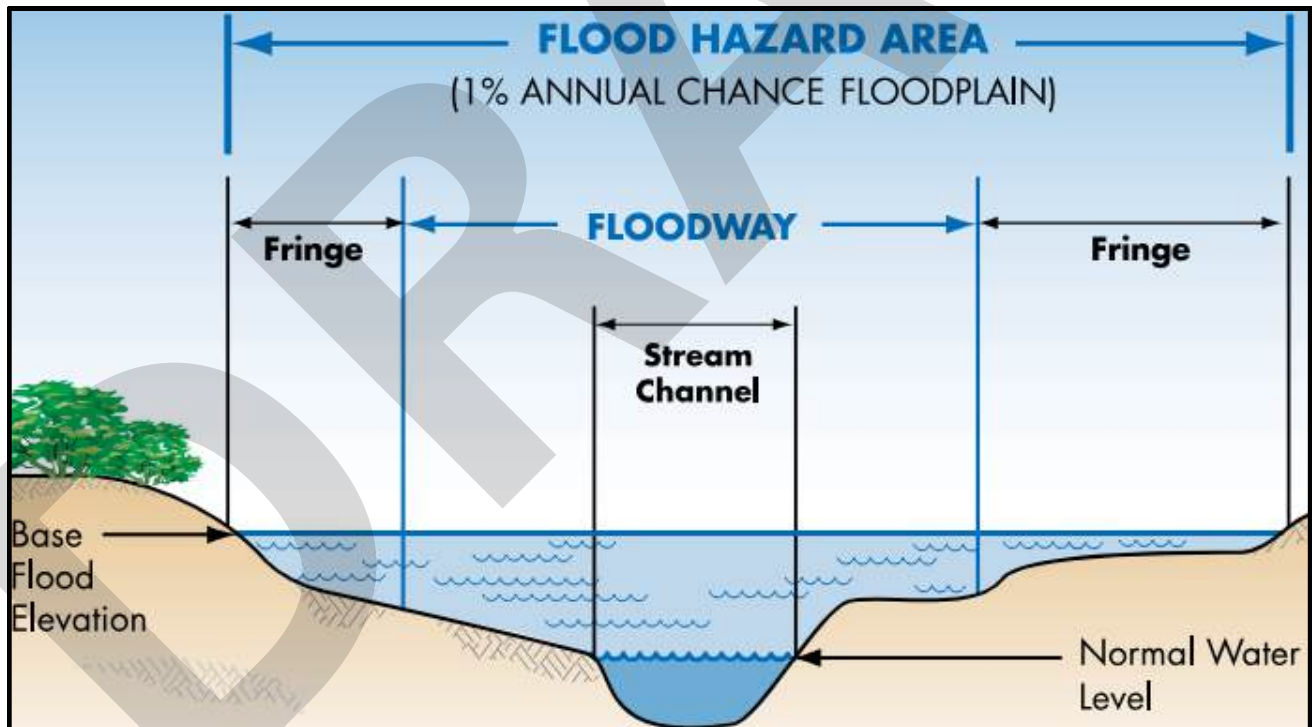
# NATURAL FEATURES+LAND USE



While not considered a high-hazard risk across the county as a whole, flooding is a concern for many township residents. Au Train Township participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, which allows residents to purchase coverage in areas considered flood-prone. The Au Train River estuary has flooded several times in the past, and homes along the Lake Superior shoreline are at risk of flooding and erosion events, particularly from storms.

Any proposed floodway development is subject to additional standards from state regulations, building codes, and local zoning. The Township can use its zoning to provide some mitigation from hazards. Regulations and construction standards

should respect the natural processes of flooding and coastal erosion, and seek to mitigate their impact. Anticipated revisions to FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps may affect residents not previously considered to be in flood-affected zones. Property owners may find that new construction, renovations, and repairs are subject to further requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program and other entities. To ensure that these impacts do not become an undue burden, the Planning Commission should work to maintain floodplain regulations, and the Township should continue its participation in the NFIP, Hazard Mitigation Planning process, and voluntary programs that incentivize floodplain management.



Riverine Flood Hazard Zones, EGLE\*

\* (2022) Floodplain Management in Michigan Quick Guide. Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.





## Au Train River Flooding

The low-lying estuarial path of the Au Train River between Au Train Lake and Lake Superior creates excellent natural features and recreational opportunities, but also presents a severe natural hazard in high precipitation events. The hazard is compounded by the dynamic nature of the river mouth's movement at the beach, and the static constraint of the M-28 bridge. The result of high water, particularly when combined with wintertime ice floes, has caused several flood events over the years. These floods have caused damage and losses to numerous homes and structures.

The movement of the sand between the bridge and river mouth is caused by the constant wave action of Lake Superior, storms, and water level. Over time the river's mouth moves significantly. Over 40 years ago, the Township attempted to dredge a channel which caused significant erosion and affected the condition of the bridge; the highway and beach area is all State of Michigan land and under their jurisdiction to maintain.

In November of 2005, strong winds from the north and cold temperatures allowed for sand and ice to build up and caused minor flooding behind the blockage, which was mitigated by the use of a backhoe to clear the mouth. A blockage in January 2015 caused flooding near the river mouth, with heavy equipment needed to restore the water flow. In October of 2017, 60 mile per



*Buildup at the river mouth, 2023*



*Satellite view circa 2023*



*Aerial imagery in 2015*



*Aerial imagery in 2012*



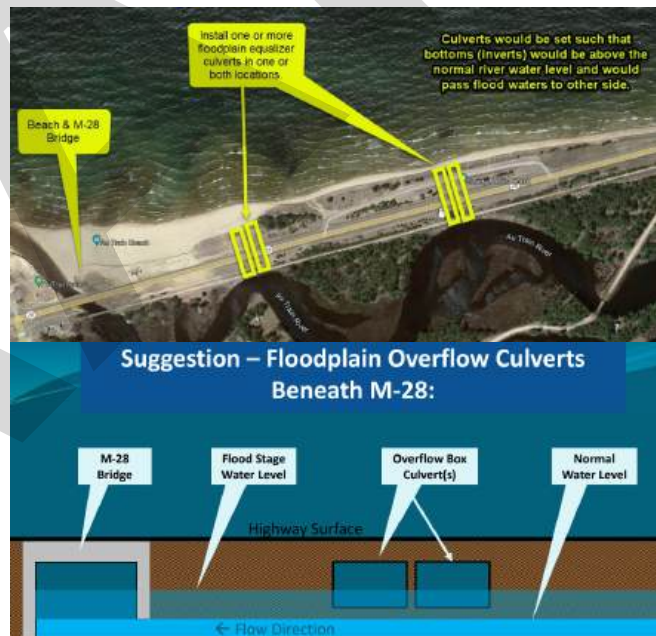
## Au Train River Flooding

hour wind from the north caused minor lakeshore flooding and waves as high as 20 feet, with significant erosion.

In May of 2023, a combination of record wet, heavy snowfall of 15+ inches and rapid warming created the equivalent of 2-4 inches of rain in the area. Runoff in the Au Train River watershed overtopped the Forest Lake Dam, causing river water levels to rise. At the same time, ice and sand buildup caused a blockage at the beach, raising the overall river water level by several feet. The resulting flooding impacted nearly 200 homes along the river and caused an estimated \$1.5 million in damages from the storm and flooding. Heavy equipment was again needed to open the blockage and reduce the flooding.

The current effective Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) created in 1987 designates much of the shoreline and river estuary in the 100-year floodplain. An updated FIRM expected to be published in the near future will revise and expand the 100-year floodplain area to encompass many of the currently existing homes and developed areas along the river and the Lake Superior shoreline. Property owners may be expected to have flood insurance to mitigate the cost of future events. As climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of storms and high wind events affecting the coastline, some mitigation action may need to be taken.

MDOT, EGLE, and federal agencies have reviewed several options for the highway and beach area with significant reconstruction unlikely. A proposal to add flood overflow culverts beneath M-28 may present a viable solution. In the event that the river mouth is blocked, rising water would reach the culverts placed in secondary locations east of the bridge where the river channel is closest to the beach. When above the normal level, water would be able to flow through these culverts to alternative outlets, overcoming any blockage at the river mouth.



Further feasibility studies and identification of funding sources would be needed to realize a long-term hazard mitigation solution.

\* (2023) Au Train River Flooding Presentation. Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

# NATURAL FEATURES+LAND USE

## Sustainability

Climate change impacts have already been felt in the area through more frequent and intense storm events, hotter and drier summers, and significant fluctuations of Great Lakes water levels. Through its MI Healthy Climate Plan, Michigan has identified that climate resiliency can also create economic opportunity, providing infrastructure improvements, job opportunities, and lower costs for consumers. To meet the goals outlined in the plan, the state will need to increase the adoption of wind and solar generation, increase energy waste reduction and identify energy efficiency programs, and invest in additional infrastructure. These investments also create additional opportunities to protect land and water resources and develop additional recreation and greenspace. Climate-resilient and low-impact development solutions can also result in savings for additional infrastructure and energy needs.

Through proactive land use planning, local governments can increase their resilience to major climate changes and ensure that people and property are more resilient to impacts. Planning and zoning tools that can be used to reduce risks include vulnerability mapping and outlining potential future

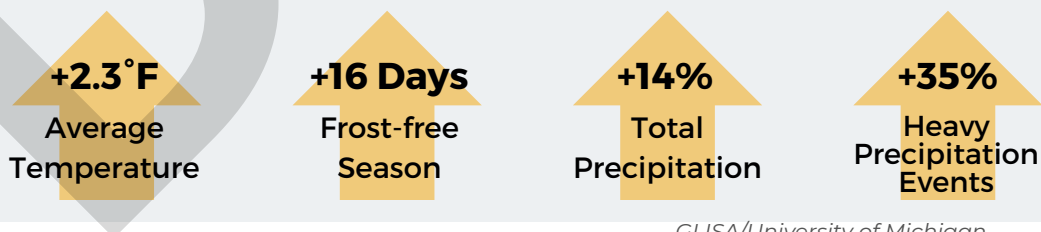
conditions. These can be mitigated through limited development intensity in hazard-prone areas, hardening built structures and infrastructure, preserving natural areas that buffer against storm effects, and installing “green” infrastructure that uses natural systems to mitigate the effects of temperature and excess stormwater.

The preservation of the Township's natural beauty and character has co-benefits in the expansion of protected natural areas, increased recreational opportunities, beneficial health and wellbeing effects, and preservation of biodiversity. The Township should continue to embrace ways to incorporate sustainable development that aligns with this character, and communicate these benefits to residents and visitors.

## Land Use

The pattern of land use in the township has evolved from historic economic activity. The economy was firmly linked to trade and industry routes that followed natural features, and communities grew up near active points of commercial activity. Today, those historic land use patterns still concentrate people and commercial activities into small areas while greater transportation choice, technology, and social norms have broadened residential

From 1951-2017 in the Great Lakes Region:



GLISA/University of Michigan

\* (2024). Summary Climate Information. GLISA/University of Michigan. [www.glisa.umich.edu](http://www.glisa.umich.edu)

# NATURAL FEATURES+LAND USE

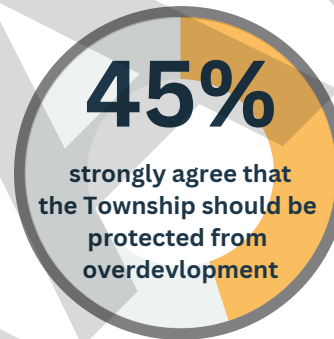
and recreational mobility to the wider area. Natural features, like rugged terrain and wetlands, continue to affect where activities are placed. Changes in land use have been the result of various and compounding decisions made by individuals, families, businesses, and governmental agencies. Local planning efforts seek to define the most desirable and appropriate uses for various parts of a community to anticipate growth and guide long-term decision-making.

A majority of the township's residential development is concentrated on or near transportation corridors and around water features. The communities of Au Train and Christmas, and the many lakes consist mostly of single family residences and seasonal vacation dwellings. Commercial uses are also concentrated in these areas, and generally consist of tourism and recreation-related businesses. The largest commercial enterprise in the township is the Kewadin Casino in Christmas, operated by the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. No light industrial or industrial uses are present in the township at this time.

Forested lands make up the vast majority of all land use in the township, either as public or commercial forest land. Over half of all land is in ownership of the Hiawatha National Forest, and nearly another quarter is listed as commercial forest reserve. Both of these can be used for recreation and commercial logging activities, supporting the primary drivers of the local economy.

Large tracts of land in public and commercial ownership mean that less land is available for private development. In addition, natural and environmentally important or sensitive features further constrain the available developable land. The result is a tight pattern of development and often higher than average market conditions. Much of the land in the township is desirable for its physical location and intrinsic qualities; in terms of future land use, it is important that decision makers are aware of the potential for certain types and intensities of use to cause environmental contamination and other affects to surrounding property owners.

## Citizen Survey



*"Au Train Township should seek to maintain its rural character and protect the area from development which may cause that character to significantly change."*

45% said "strongly agree"  
27% "agree"  
17% "neither agree or disagree"  
9% "disagree"  
2% "strongly disagree"

**See Appendix for details**

Au Train Township has developed into a seasonal and year-round residential community based on proximity to recreational opportunities. Natural features, land use, and land ownership constrain available opportunities for future development; changes will likely occur as infill in historically clustered areas of various use.



## Overview

Throughout this Master Plan, detailed information has outlined the historical trends and current situation in Au Train Township. Public input was received through the Citizen Survey and public comment at Township meetings. This background information has helped the Planning Commission gain an understanding of the forces that have shaped development and land use. These goals and recommendations are a guide in projecting a long term vision and to realize implementation. These must remain flexible enough to respond to changing needs and conditions throughout the life of this document as needs arise.

In order for a community to have a sound plan for growth and development, it is essential to set goals that outline desired future conditions and that are based on the information given in the previous chapters. More specific actions can then be developed to meet these goals as more information becomes available or opportunities arise. Plan implementation will continue following these goals and the resulting actions identified. The Planning Commission and Township Board, together with other groups, organizations, and individuals can use this plan as a dynamic decision making tool, and should assure that the plan is referred to frequently and updated periodically.

In furtherance of the information presented in this plan and the needs and desires of Au Train Township's residents, the following goals are set:

**Goal:** Encourage opportunities to retain current population density by responding to demographic changes and understanding community needs.

**Goal:** Recognize that the population of the Township is aging, and prioritize projects that promote accessibility and community to allow people to age in place in their homes.

**Goal:** Provide housing options that are affordable for all members of the community, and reflect a diversity of types and forms.

**Goal:** Promote participation in plans and programs that offer assistance in housing development, renovation, energy efficiency, and other needs to residents.

**Goal:** Continue to document and review issues identified with short-term rentals, and explore additional options for regulation and enforcement.

**Goal:** Provide reasonable opportunities to establish commercial and light industrial uses which meet the needs of Township residents and provide gainful employment.

**Goal:** Continue to enhance the physical appearance of the community by exploring reuse of vacant or underutilized property, remediating nuisances, and protecting viewsheds.

# GOALS+POLICIES+OBJECTIVES



**Goal:** Continue to expand compatible development along the M-28 corridor in a manner that provides for traffic safety and protection from incompatible adjacent uses.

**Goal:** Support public-private partnerships with groups, businesses, and organizations in the greater Munising/Alger County area to realize shared visions and goals.

**Goal:** Continue to identify ways the community can come together in shared projects and events.

**Goal:** Encourage home occupations that allow for more diverse employment, economic opportunity, and compatible use of property.

**Goal:** Provide, maintain, and continuously improve the efficiency and quality of community facilities and services in a cost-effective manner.

**Goal:** Provide a safe, well maintained, and efficient multimodal transportation network for all on-road and off-road users.

**Goal:** Maintain and improve access to recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

**Goal:** Protect and enhance the natural environment while providing for compatible development.

**Goal:** Increase community resiliency by identifying and mitigating hazards, and participate in the Alger County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**Goal:** Maintain the Township's scenic character by minimizing the impact of development on natural and wooded features and habitats.

**Goal:** Improve coastal resiliency and public access to the Lake Superior shoreline.

**Goal:** Encourage land use and development that does not adversely affect public health, safety, and welfare.

To achieve these goals, the Planning Commission has developed the future land use plan in the following chapter, and has been presented with an Action Table that is included in this plan as an Appendix. These should be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that the Township's goals continue to be expressed and achieved.



## Introduction

The land use and zoning plan is one of the most integral elements of a master plan. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 specifically requires the plan to address land use issues and recommendations for the physical development of the community 20 years into the future or more. As proposals for development are considered, the Planning Commission, Township Board, and Administration should refer to this section to ensure that the vision, principles, and the intent of zoning districts are followed as closely as possible or amended when a new direction is determined to be necessary.

Land use is described in the master plan and details how the existing land is currently being used. Future land use is a vision of development over time and may not line up with current regulations or existing uses in the Township's zoning ordinance. Zoning districts are described in the current zoning ordinance and illustrated on the zoning map; these state the current rules and standards for development within an area. The plan for future land use in the master plan is intended to guide the creation and alteration of these zoning districts, and the approval of certain types of development.

The Future Land Use Map, along with its associated descriptions for future land use classifications make up the Future Land Use Plan. The map serves as a guide for making decisions on the rezoning of land. However, the Planning Commission and Township Board should consider the map to be one of the many tools available to help them in

making land use decisions and addressing rezoning requests. The information presented on the map should be complemented by site-specific information as considered necessary by Township officials prior to any final decisions.

Future land use classifications are not the current zoning. They are a described vision of land use in anticipation of changes to the zoning ordinance. Future land use classifications are described with intended uses and character in order to relate them to the current zoning districts and areas on the Future Land Use Map. In many cases, future land use districts may remain unchanged from the current zoning; in others, districts may be created, combined, or split to accommodate new uses and development trends.

This chapter is intended to:

- Describe the intent and character of the Township's current zoning;
- Identify trends in land use that may be better accommodated through updates to the zoning ordinance;
- Establish goals for future land use;
- Predict any changes to the schedule of regulations for lot sizes, setbacks, heights, etc.; and
- Outline a Zoning Plan on which to base updates to the ordinance on.



## Existing Zoning

*The following districts and intents are taken directly from the current Au Train Township Zoning Ordinance.*

### District R1/R2 Residential One/Two

*Intent:* The Residential One/Two District is intended for the establishment and preservation of quiet neighborhoods for single-family and two-family dwellings free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents in this district.

### District RR1/RR2 Rural Residential One/Two

*Intent:* The Rural Residential One/Two District is established to provide for a transition zone between more densely settled residential areas and the more sparsely developed rural, agricultural, and forested areas of the Township. Such areas are accessible by all-season roads and provide for a mix of moderately intensive compatible uses from surrounding zones. The Rural Residential District is designed to provide rural residential opportunities for those who are willing to assume the costs of providing their own services.

### District TD Town Development

*Intent:* The Town Development District is intended to preserve a district for residential, retail, and services establishments, and certain governmental uses that are compatible with a small-town setting, serving residents and tourists. This district is designed for small unincorporated town areas where a mix of residential and retail is in accord with established patterns of land use and the needs of nearby residents.

### District LS/R1 Lakeshore and River One

*Intent:* The Lakeshore and River One District is intended for the preservation of existing commercial resort developments and single-family and two-family residential use. Existing state regulations are: PA451 of 1994, and PL 92-500.

### District LS/R2 Lakeshore and River Two

*Intent:* The Lakeshore and River Two District is intended for the preservation of existing quiet neighborhoods free from other uses except those which are compatible and convenient to the residents in this district. Existing state regulations are: PA 451 of 1994, and PL 92-500.

### District T/RP Timber Resource Production

*Intent:* The Timber Resource Production District is established to maintain low-density rural areas which, because of their rural character and locations, accessibility, natural characteristics, and the potentially high cost of providing public services, are suitable for a wide range of forestry, agriculture, natural resource, and recreational uses.



# FUTURE LAND USE+ZONING



## District C Commercial

*Intent:* The Commercial District is intended to establish and preserve areas for commercial or light industrial uses which are more compatible with commercial activity than other industrial uses.

## District M Manufacturing

*Intent:* The Manufacturing District is designed and intended for manufacturing, assembling, fabricating, and processing businesses, storage, and other commercial activities which may require larger sites and isolation from many kinds of other land uses, and to make provisions for commercial uses necessary to service the immediate needs of an industrial area.

## Land Use Trends

The presence of vast forested land, inland lakes and rivers, and the Lake Superior shoreline were critical to the early development of the area and the extraction of natural resources. More recently, they have been developed to utilize their natural features and recreational opportunities, expanding on a history of rural residential and tourism-related activity. Changing lifestyles, demographics, and the desire of residents and businesses to expand upon both residential and commercial opportunities will affect future land use patterns. Au Train Township continues to absorb some of the residential growth from both the Munising and Marquette areas, and remains an attractive seasonal recreation destination. Mitigating the impacts of change in intensity and proximity of residential and commercial uses and the protection of natural areas are high priorities for the Township and its residents.

Residential land use continues to intensify in proximity to the available waterfront property and primary transportation routes. These uses are not yet of the intensity to require the installation or expansion of public infrastructure services. If development of that density comes to the Township, it is likely to be privately initiated. Because of growth around the city of Munising and along M-28, it may be likely that the Christmas area would be the first to have these needs. Most of the available waterfront properties are occupied by prior developments; coastal management and riverine flooding issues have caused property damage in the past several years. More intensive developments like commercial uses in proximity to water bodies may warrant additional consideration of the health and safety for the visitors that utilize them as natural hazards continue to occur.

The majority of the requests before the Planning Commission in the past several years have been related to conditional uses serving visitors and the tourism industry. Uses like short-term rentals, resorts, and campgrounds have proliferated in response to an increase in tourism numbers and destination marketing of the Upper Peninsula. This has increased the burden on the Township to review conditional use permits and enforcement measures, and has created conflict between the uses and long-term residents. New land use types including alternative energy generation and diverse home-based occupations have created



# FUTURE LAND USE+ZONING

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the need to carefully consider the pros and cons of each use type relative to the impact it will have on the community.

Au Train Township's available developable land is limited due to historic patterns, natural features, and the preservation of the Hiawatha National Forest. These factors mean that the Township must consider development strategies that maximize the efficient use of space while retaining the compatibility of neighborhoods and peaceful enjoyment of the area. Opportunities to redevelop existing properties are not presented often, and have occasionally been associated with remediation of issues due to prior activities.

A continuation of current trends may see additional small parcels used for a variety of mixed residential, commercial, and recreational development. It may be important then to examine the varied nature and impact of certain uses and associated activities, and apply mitigating conditions and buffers between uses deemed somewhat incompatible. However, in regulating these the Township may extend beyond its capacity, so it will be important to balance regulation with enforceable action, and the ability of the existing land and infrastructure to support additional development.

## Future Land Use

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act of 2006 provides the authority for communities in Michigan to use zoning as a tool for the regulation of land. The law states that zoning regulations in a community must be based upon a plan, and a zoning plan describes the ways in which the current existing land use may change in the future. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 describes that the community's Master Plan contains the zoning plan. The zoning plan is the legal basis for the zoning ordinance, which means any decisions contrary to what is stated in the plan could lack legal defensibility. The zoning plan is intended to guide all future rezoning activities and discretionary land use decisions in the community and should be consulted when these are under consideration.

The Future Land Use Map, along with its associated descriptions for future land use classifications make up the Future Land Use Plan. The Future Land Use Map serves as a guide for making decisions on the rezoning of land. However, the Planning Commission and Township Board should consider the map to be one of the many tools available to help them in making land use decisions, recommendations and addressing rezoning requests. The information presented on the map should be complemented by site-specific information as considered necessary by Township officials prior to any final decisions.



## Future Land Use Classifications

Future land use classifications are not the current zoning. They are a vision of land use that can be used as a goal in anticipation of changes to the zoning ordinance. Future land use classifications are described with intended uses and character in order to relate them to the current zoning districts and describe areas on the Future Land Use Map. In many cases, future land use districts may remain unchanged from the current zoning; in others, districts may be created, combined, or split to accommodate new uses and development trends.

*The following districts describe the intent and vision for land use in the Township*

### Residential District (RD)

*Intent:* The Residential District is intended for the establishment and preservation of quiet neighborhoods for single-family and two-family dwellings free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents in this district. Homes in this area are more densely settled, and may be in proximity to more intensive uses requiring additional conditions to preserve the district character. Owner-occupied housing is the preferable model for these neighborhoods, of diverse and affordable types when appropriate.

### Countryside Rural (CR)

*Intent:* The Countryside Rural District is established to provide for a transition zone between more densely settled residential and mixed use areas and the more sparsely developed areas of the Township. Such areas are accessible by all-season roads and provide for a mix of moderately intensive, primarily residential uses. This rural residential district is considered to be of low-density, single-family homes and agricultural uses, with conditional uses limited.

### Mixed Use Development District (MU)

*Intent:* The Mixed Use Development District is intended to provide for a mix of residential, retail, and service establishments accessible from the primary transportation network. The mix of uses is in accord with the established patterns of land use serving residents and tourists, and allows for diversity of use and economic growth. This district will contain the majority of the commercial and economic activity of the Township, and will act as a buffer between less-intense residential use. A balanced mixture of permitted and conditional uses will be supported, but it is critical that additional residential housing is not lost in this zone where appropriate. Additional transportation infrastructure considerations, including access management regulations, off-road motorized and nonmotorized trails, and improved access to greenspaces and the shoreline should be considered when opportunities present themselves.

# FUTURE LAND USE+ZONING



Future Land Use Classifications and Associated Zoning Districts	
Future Land Use Classifications	Current Zoning Districts
Residential District (RD)	Residential One/Two District (R1/R2)
Countryside Rural (CR)	Rural Residential One/Two District (RR1/RR2)
Mixed Use Development (MU)	Town Development District (TD)
Waterways One (W1)	Lakeshore and River One District (LS/R1)
Waterways Two (W2)	Lakeshore and River Two District (LS/R2)
Forested Rural (FR)	Timber Resource Production District (T/RP)
Moderate Intensity (MI)	Commercial District (C)
	Manufacturing District (M)

### Waterways One District (W1)

*Intent:* The Waterways One District is intended for the preservation of existing commercial resort developments and single-family and two-family residential use of somewhat greater intensity with frontage or proximity to water features. The district will permit a mix of development, but take into consideration the impact to natural resources, visual appearance, and accessibility to water resources.

### Waterways Two District (W2)

*Intent:* The Waterways Two District is intended for the preservation of existing quiet neighborhoods with frontage or proximity to water features, free from other uses except those which are compatible and convenient to the residents in this district, and are of lesser intensity and density.

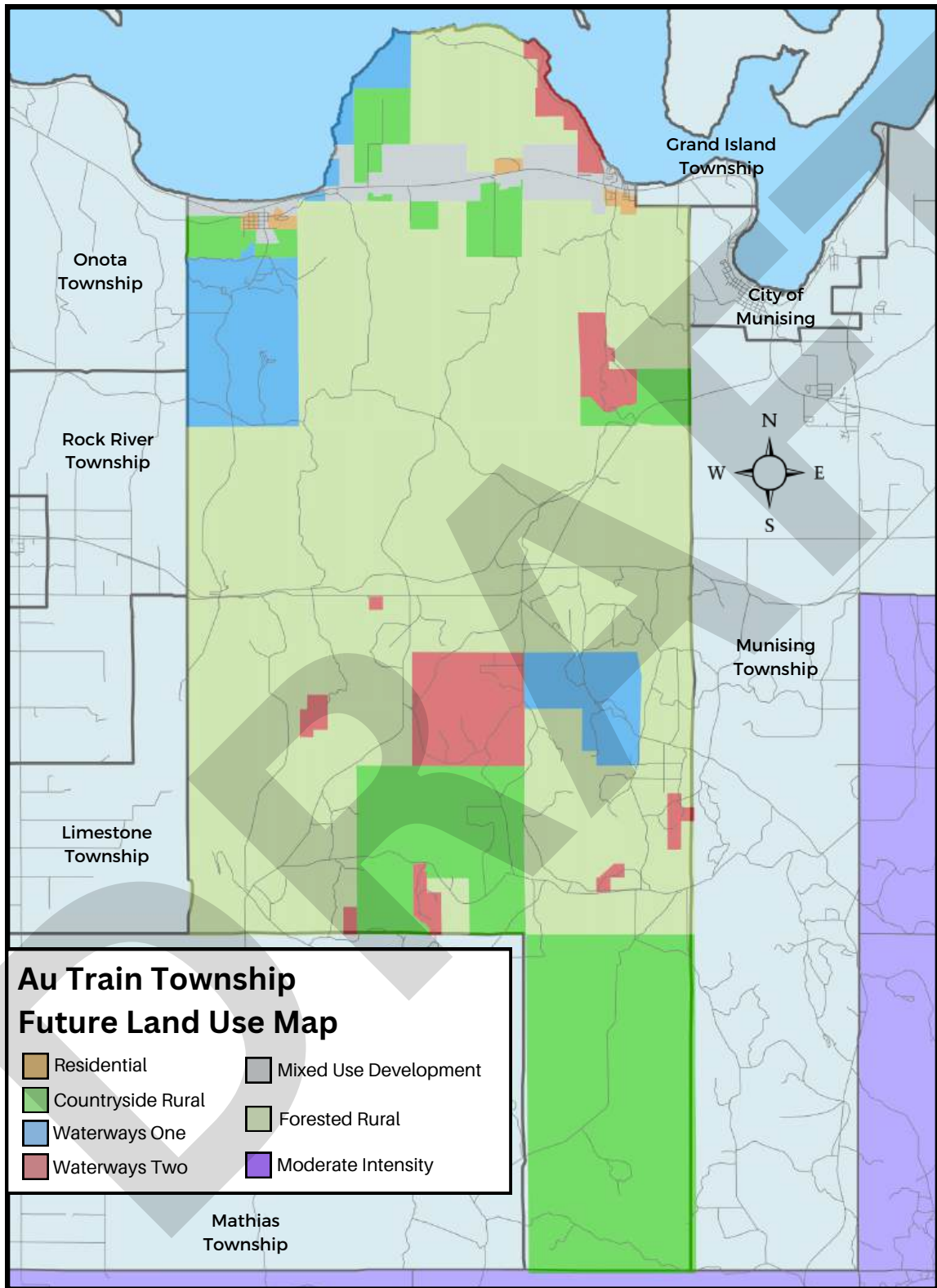
### Forested Rural District (FR)

*Intent:* The Forested Rural District is established to maintain low-density rural areas which, because of their rural character and locations, accessibility, natural characteristics, and the potentially high cost of providing public services, are suitable for a wide range of forestry, agriculture, natural resource, and recreational uses.

### Moderate Intensity District (MI)

*Intent:* The Moderate Intensity District is intended to provide for moderately-sized commercial, service, and light industrial businesses that may require larger sites and separation due to intensive activities. This area is intended to be incorporated with direct access and frontage on highway trunklines where sufficient services may exist. The implementation of such services may be dependent on the development proposed.

# FUTURE LAND USE+ZONING





## District Changes and Zoning Plan

As discussed throughout the Master Plan, zoning must be based on a plan. The plan is the guide for all zoning decisions along with the Future Land Use Map, and the existing conditions present in the area. The main purpose of zoning is to improve and protect the health, safety, and welfare of the population and to direct land use towards the implementation of the goals of the Master Plan. Through land use planning and regulation, including zoning, Au Train Township intends to allow for reasonable growth with minimal land use conflict or negative environmental impact.

Au Train Township's residential zoning districts are expected to maintain similar development levels in the future. Residential land uses include single-family, multi-family, and manufactured homes in a low to moderate density pattern. The development of additional housing in these areas should serve to preserve the rural character and environmental integrity of the township. The Residential District is intended to provide for the character of a neighborhood in greater residential intensity, while the remaining districts provide for more scattered development. Single family and/or more diverse housing types may be appropriate as development intensity allows. Rural residential growth has typically occurred on allowable lot splits and land divisions along existing road systems. The Mixed Use Development District includes a wider variety of long and short-term housing options, reflecting the tourism-driven economy and clustering of uses. This district may be more appropriate for a wider variety of housing types, including multi-unit residential development, where services and infrastructure are more available to accommodate the additional use.

The condition of public roads in the Township has improved over the past several years, and these public roads are necessary for access by residents, visitors, and emergency services. Access to more intensive development should also be initiated from public roads with the capacity and maintenance condition to handle the increase in traffic. A new section of private road regulations may be incorporated to allow for determination of sufficient access and maintenance.

The Township recognizes the importance of the abundance of waterfront property and understands how precious these natural resources are. Therefore, the Waterways One and Two Districts have a separation of uses to allow for the preservation of existing commercial resort development and less intensive residences. Many of the lakes in Au Train Township have undergone residential development along their shores, and intensifying use of the Lake Superior shoreline may warrant additional consideration of these districts as appropriate. Other lakeshore and river areas in the Township are designated to preserve existing quiet residential neighborhoods free from other uses, except for those which are compatible and convenient to the residents in the area. The Township should continue to preserve the aesthetic and physical character of housing and residential sites, and provide for appropriate uses and conditions that maintain that character.



# FUTURE LAND USE+ZONING



Commercial development will continue to be encouraged along the major transportation corridor, M-28. The Mixed Use Development District has been incorporated between the Au Train and Christmas areas to encourage compatible residential, retail and service development, along with certain governmental uses. Development should be encouraged in this district serving residents and tourists. Mixed uses create opportunities for vibrant communities and may serve to help develop the Township's sense of place. New commercial development, particularly along M-28 should include access management standards to minimize curb openings and to discourage strip development. Additional consideration for active and motorized transportation use and access should be analyzed in this area.

The Township currently does not have any land designated for the existing Commercial and Manufacturing Districts in the zoning ordinance. In response, these have been combined into a more flexible Moderate Intensity District, which should service mid-size commercial and light industrial developments, when sufficient services are installed in the Township to accommodate them, which may include natural gas and three-phase electrical service. The Moderate Intensity District is intended to be incorporated along direct access to highway trunklines, where these services are most likely to be available if installed. Scattered industrial development will be discouraged and the Township should provide requirements that will protect adjacent forest production areas that may include residences from potential impacts of the allowed uses. Developers should preserve the rural character of the area by utilizing landscaping and natural features preservation, and sufficiently buffer between residential and non-residential use. Greater scrutiny should be given to proposals to apply this district to ensure that the use is justified and makes sense for the community.

The majority of the Township is part of the Hiawatha National Forest and is designated as the Forested Rural District on the Future Land Use Map. Forest production areas provide for a wide variety of forestry, agriculture, natural resource and recreational uses, which have long been the foundation of the Township's character. The National Forest limits the available land for development, and much of this land should ideally be kept for public recreational and commercial timber purposes.

The Township recognizes the importance of alternative energy resources in providing for a future against climate change and a locally resilient energy system. To the greatest extent possible, zoning standards for developing alternative energy resources should be based on established planning and zoning norms and regulatory standards, including Public Act 233 of 2023. In the case of utility-scale alternative energy development, the Township will encourage developers to use its permitting process, and involve residents in the development and benefits of construction. Zoning ordinance regulations for home scale and community scale alternative energy sources should be considered with appropriateness for the neighborhood and separation between the installation and residential uses.



# FUTURE LAND USE+ZONING



Schedule of Regulations						
District	Minimum Lot Size	Minimum Lot Width	Minimum Setback			Maximum Height
			Front	Side	Rear	
RD	15,000 sqft.	100	30	10 (A)	10	50
CR	2.5 Acres	165	30	10	10	50
MU	15,000 sqft.	100	30	10	10	50
W1	40,000 sqft.	<b>165 (150)</b>	30/50	10	25	50
W2	40,000 sqft.	<b>165 (150)</b>	30/50	10	25	50
FR	5 Acres	330	30	25	25	50
MI	20,000 sqft.	100	30	10	10	50

(A) An accessory building or structure may be located six feet from a side lot line in the R/R2 district.

(B) The front setback shall be measured from the road right of way, except where a parcel abuts a water body. In that case the front setback shall be measured from the ordinary high-water mark. See Section 404-Waterfront Development for front setbacks for districts LS/R1 and LS/R2.

(C) Any driveway/private road shall have a minimum clearing width of ~~14~~ **20** feet and minimum clearance height of ~~10~~ **15** feet.

The minimum lot widths in the Waterways One and Two Districts have been proposed to be increased from 150 to 165 feet in width. This change is expected to protect the further development of property along lakeshores to ensure proper well and septic placement, protect from non-point source contamination and nutrient overload from runoff, and provide ease of splitting larger parcels under the Land Division Act. Footnote C will be updated to match the requirements of the current trucks and equipment used by local fire departments to allow sufficient access to properties. No other changes to the schedule of regulations have been proposed, other than to resolve oversights with footnotes due to previous ordinance revisions.

The Planning Commission intends to continue their review of the zoning ordinance text, and has established the following priority areas to incorporate into a revision:

### Standardize and Modernize the Ordinance and Definitions

The Planning Commission recognizes the need for an update of the zoning ordinance to include a review of the definitions of terms to fit amended statutes and standards. In addition, several uses and regulations require readers to jump between sections for specific regulations, and others would be better served by inclusion in more relevant sections. A comprehensive update to the ordinance may include recodification and clearer formatting to increase readability. In cases where the ordinance defers to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, the relevant text should be incorporated into the ordinance in lieu of reference to specific sections of the Act, which may change over time.



# FUTURE LAND USE+ZONING

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## Conditional Use Permit Review

Conditional uses are often more impactful than permitted land uses and require additional discretion and review when allowing them to operate. A conditional use permit review involves a public hearing in front of the Planning Commission for their approval, and applications require additional plans and information demonstrating compliance with the zoning ordinance and conditional use criteria. The conditional use review criteria ensure that the use can operate without adversely affecting public health, safety and welfare. The Planning Commission will review the conditional use review criteria to ensure that each application is reviewed under a standard procedure, and that each demonstrates compliance with the Township's Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan. The Planning Commission will also review permitted and conditional uses, and determine whether the current uses described are appropriately regulated in their districts.

## Text and Map Amendments Process

As the Planning Commission explores revisions and opportunities to modernize policy, a proper procedure to amend the ordinance should be thorough and well-understood to reduce controversy or concerns. The current procedure outlined in the Township zoning ordinance conflates the processes for both zoning text and zoning map (rezoning) amendments. The Planning Commission will separate the processes for each to ensure that petitions for rezoning are done so through a formal procedure and in accordance with the guidance of the Township Master Plan.

## Zoning Enforcement Process

To ensure the Township Zoning Ordinance is being followed thoroughly and equitably, the enforcement process for violations of the ordinance will be reviewed, and a demonstrable procedure will be incorporated into the ordinance text and as Township policy. A violation of the zoning ordinance is a municipal civil infraction, a process enforced by the Zoning Administrator or the Township Board's designee, and subject to the collection of evidence and remedial fines before being referred to District Court.

## **Implementation and Plan Review**

Planning is intended to guide development in ways that encourage desirable outcomes while protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Development of this Master Plan took the effort of the Planning Commission, township staff, and residents. As the creators and most frequent users of this document, the Planning Commission should ensure that this Master Plan is used as a basis for decision-making, and should continue to communicate its goals long after the Plan is adopted. The Planning Commission should also incorporate the Master Plan and its review into its annual reporting requirements. Michigan law states that the Master Plan shall be reviewed at least every five years to determine if updating is necessary; however, a regular review schedule will ensure that the Plan is relevant to community needs, and up to date with the characteristics of the community.



# APPENDIX A - CITIZEN SURVEY



The Au Train Township Planning Commission conducted a public input survey with the assistance of CUPPAD in the Summer of 2024. The survey was presented in an online format through [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). 147 residents submitted their input. Aggregated and summary information is described below.

## Question 1 - I live in the area of:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Au Train	50.00%	73
▼ Christmas	19.18%	28
▼ 16 Mile Lake	17.12%	25
▼ CR 440/Round Lake Road	1.37%	2
▼ Near M-94	5.48%	8
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 6.85%	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>146</b>

## Question 2 - I live in the Township:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ I live in the township year-round	67.81%	99
▼ 9-12 months a year	3.42%	5
▼ About half the year	13.70%	20
▼ 3 months a year or less	15.07%	22
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>146</b>

## Question 3 - What is your age?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Under 19	0.00%	0
▼ 20-34	4.79%	7
▼ 35-44	17.81%	26
▼ 45-54	17.81%	26
▼ 55-64	27.40%	40
▼ 65+	32.19%	47
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>146</b>

# APPENDIX A - CITIZEN SURVEY



## Question 4 - Where is your place of employment located?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ I'm retired	45.21%	66
▼ I'm in school	0.00%	0
▼ I work remotely from my home	10.96%	16
▼ I work within Au Train Township	3.42%	5
▼ I work in Alger County	22.60%	33
▼ I work in Marquette County	7.53%	11
▼ I work somewhere else	8.90%	13
▼ I'm unemployed	1.37%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>146</b>

## Question 5 - How important is it to you that the Township's population continues to be maintained or grow?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ I think it should grow a lot	11.56%	17
▼ I think it should grow a little bit	48.98%	72
▼ I think it should stay the same	30.61%	45
▼ I would prefer the population decrease	8.84%	13
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>147</b>

## Question 6 - What strategy would you prefer for growth of business or commercial opportunities?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Growth encouraged	30.14%	44
▼ Growth takes it own course	19.86%	29
▼ Planned and limited growth	42.47%	62
▼ No growth	7.53%	11
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>146</b>

# APPENDIX A - CITIZEN SURVEY



**Question 7** - If new businesses were able to locate in the township, what kinds would you like to see? [summary totals of like-answers]

<b>Restaurant</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Grocery</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Retail</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Good Jobs</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Services</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>3</b>

**Question 8** - Au Train Township should seek to maintain its rural character and protect the area from development which may cause that character to significantly change.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	44.90%	66
Agree	26.53%	39
Neither agree nor disagree	17.01%	25
Disagree	8.84%	13
Strongly disagree	2.72%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>147</b>

**Question 9** - Thinking about the overall housing stock available in the Township, to what degree to you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
There is an appropriate mix of housing options for residents	6.85% 10	18.49% 27	21.23% 31	38.36% 56	15.07% 22	146
My home has the appropriate conditions to allow me to occupy it into old age	30.34% 44	43.45% 63	13.10% 19	11.03% 16	2.07% 3	145
There is an appropriate amount of permanent residences compared to seasonal cottages and camps	2.74% 4	27.40% 40	22.60% 33	32.19% 47	15.07% 22	146
Residences used for short-term rentals offer additional economic opportunities that are appropriate for the community.	17.01% 25	31.97% 47	16.33% 24	19.73% 29	14.97% 22	147
Short-term rentals should have appropriate regulations to protect the health, safety, and welfare of occupants and the community.	55.78% 82	29.93% 44	7.48% 11	3.40% 5	3.40% 5	147

# APPENDIX A - CITIZEN SURVEY



**Question 10** - Thinking about infrastructure and land use, what are your priorities for the following?

	HIGHER PRIORITY	LOWER PRIORITY	NOT A PRIORITY	NO OPINION	TOTAL
Regulating wind/solar/battery energy options with appropriate scales and conditions	23.97% 35	21.92% 32	47.95% 70	6.16% 9	146
Increasing the availability and participation in recycling, hazardous waste, and other waste [bulk, tires, electronics] collection programs	64.38% 94	21.23% 31	8.22% 12	6.16% 9	146
Protecting the Lake Superior shoreline through responsible coastal management practices	86.30% 126	7.53% 11	4.79% 7	1.37% 2	146
Responsible timber management, protecting the natural beauty and economic value of forested lands	75.34% 110	17.12% 25	4.79% 7	2.74% 4	146
Walking/bicycling trails connecting various areas or other communities	51.37% 75	28.77% 42	17.81% 26	2.05% 3	146
Ensuring appropriate staffing and equipment on the Volunteer Fire Department	89.73% 131	5.48% 8	4.11% 6	0.68% 1	146

**Question 11** - What do you love about living in Au Train Township?  
[summary totals of like-answers]

<b>Character [adjective]</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Nature</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Rural</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Water</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Access to [places]</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	<b>4</b>

**Question 12** - In one word, what is the biggest issue in the area you live in or the Township as a whole?

<b>Short-term Rentals</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Tourism</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Social Issues</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Road Condition</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Governance</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Blight</b>	<b>15</b>

# APPENDIX A - CITIZEN SURVEY



**Question 13** - What issue(s) do you think have the greatest impact on the Township and its residents? [check all that apply]

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Access to healthcare and social services	29.86%	43
Access to healthy and locally-produced food	28.47%	41
Access to services (retail, professionals, home and childcare)	34.72%	50
Access to the internet or cell service	43.06%	62
Access to educational or social opportunities for children	20.14%	29
Access to transportation or transit services	21.53%	31
Loss of population	16.67%	24
Blight	44.44%	64
Environmental contamination issues	25.00%	36
Natural hazards (flooding, lakeshore erosion, wildfire, extreme weather)	30.56%	44
Lack of infrastructure investment (roads, power, etc.)	26.39%	38
Community safety and police presence	31.94%	46
Tourism	43.06%	62
Other (please specify)	Responses 15.28%	22
<b>Total Respondents: 144</b>		

**Question 14** - Under the current zoning regulations, do you feel you are:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Over-regulated	17.24%	25
Properly regulated	31.72%	46
Under-regulated	18.62%	27
I don't know enough about the current zoning	32.41%	47
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>145</b>

**Question 15** - What change would you like to see within Au Train Township? [summary of like-answers]

<b>Governance</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Short-term Rentals</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Blight</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Roads</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Natural Protection</b>	<b>6</b>

# APPENDIX A - CITIZEN SURVEY



**Question 16** - Is there anything else you would like to add that was not addressed by the questions? If you would also like to expand on any of your previous responses, please do so here. **[open response]**

- #12 Tourism, we can't live without it and it's very hard to live with it at times. It brings money to the area but the county as a whole doesn't have the infrastructure to support it at the levels we are seeing. More motels/hotels being built. More residential homes turned vacation rental. As a local it's hard to enjoy the natural surroundings as they've been over run and over used/abused by the massive numbers of folks who visit the area.
- Again, get some recycling and ATVs are ruining all the back roads and trails and need to be banned. Our fragile sandy ecosystems cannot take much more. Eco damage is horrific on two tracks. Focus on silent sports!!!!
- Appreciate all the folks making au train run.
- AuTrain is a beautiful community that I'm proud to be a part of. Wow, currently I'm only here seasonally my husband, family and I plan to make Au Train our permanent home soon.
- Balance! We must have a different type of employment here in the Township without destroying the rural flavor and environment. We need to update infrastructure to prepare for the new normal in climate. We need to invest in renewable energies locally.
- Better control of noise, unkempt yards, old cars and junk spread around empty lots, wooded areas
- By the issue of "ignorance" I mean the lack of research into current issues by residents and their willingness to accept conspiracy theories such as the impact of alternative energy sources. I am also dismayed by the trash in the woods which is clearly local (sinks, tires, appliances) and not placed there by tourists. However, I also believe that the majority of AuTrain residents love the beauty of this area and do respect it.
- Clean up that mess in the center of town where the Yack shack is. It's everywhere. Growing, a mess, that sewer pipe is still exposed in his yard just behind a fence and it makes town look like a dump. Perry and Lakeshore were paved when there are more year round residents in Curtis and Norlin. No police- they try to talk you out of needing a cop.
- Clean up the blight please. It affects us all
- Continuing support for residents along the river and working towards a long term solution for flooding when the river mouth is blocked. We can't control Mother Nature but we can make commitments, both financially and planning, to relieve the distress. As the township administration changes we need this issue to stay in focus and not dropped as has happened in the past. Let's build on the progress we've made.
- Couple of things...could we be informed about what is being planned/created behind the gate on national forest land? Also, perhaps the three kayak outfitters in AuTrain could spare some employees to clean up the trash between the two bridges several times a summer. I picked up three 55 gallon garbage bags full of trash this spring between the bridges...it was terrible (lots of mini booze bottles, beer cans, food wrappers, etc)
- Create rules that are fair and always benefit the greater good. Administer those rules fairly, consistently, and expeditiously.
- Every short-term rental is the loss of another neighbor and another customer for a local grocery store, specialty store or dining facility. Rental customers don't use local grocery stores, they stock up in Munising or Marquette. The number of vacant days throughout the year do not lead to financial support for the community. This is not a complaint against the owners of short-term rental owners, who are my neighbors and friends, but short-term renters are not neighbors and are typically the antithesis; overpopulated residences, unwelcome pets, over-celebratory and loud activities. Personally, we live next to people we love dearly and wouldn't trade for the world on one side, and on the other side we have a vacant "home" for most of the year, and the rest of the year we have an often large group of strangers. Fortunately for us, the rental owners next to us have managed the property well and have responded to every concern, yet, it is still a rental. Given a choice, we'd much rather have another permanent neighbor; and another potential year-round customer for a local restaurant, proper grocery store, convenience store or more. Oh, and proper pickleball courts!
- Gravel roads should be graded weekly
- Housing is an issue. But I don't believe it is related to short term rentals. Houses sat on the market for multiple years prior to Covid. I believe the issue is lack of jobs that can support full time employees in the township. Hard to attract young families if they can't make a living here.
- How about redo the basketball courts kind of like the ones I have seen in Wetmore. The playground area is pretty lacking.
- I love living in AuTrain Township. I just really don't want to see it exploited and turned into a circus.

# APPENDIX A - CITIZEN SURVEY



- I think Au Train is an amazing place for tourism and short term rentals. But it appears to be in the process of being taken over by a few businesses turning it into one large tourism town. I don't know exactly what the \*right amount\* of short term rentals should be, but I think we're pretty darn close.
- I understand the tourist attraction and welcome tourists but it's very important for it to be kept unique, quaint and in balance.
- I would like the board members to be more respectful at meetings. Gossip and talking about others should be prohibited
- I would like to see the residential and rural areas preserved for the residents residing and owning property there and no additional short term rentals approved in those areas. Also, any further business development and approval of more short term rentals should be limited to the town development and resort areas as they were originally years ago. WAY TOO MUCH development and short rentals creeping into residential and rural areas.
- I would really like to see the noise ordinance amended to include a reasonable daytime decibel limit. There was an incident in Christmas this weekend where multiple people called the sheriff around 9pm for extremely excessive noise(music). The items on our walls were rattling from across M28 and 3 homes down. The police refused to respond stating that it was not illegal until 11pm. By 11pm tempers around here were very hot and it could have been prevented had the police been able to stop by and ask them to turn it down.
- If the locals voice TRULY matters and is the basis for land use over the next 20 years, this survey should've been mailed to ALL residents and taxpayers to ensure their voice was included. Depending upon the internet or township website is not enough. People don't constantly check those tools for requested information and to say there isn't enough time to mail paper surveys is absolutely terrible.
- If the Township would hire someone full time to work on blight and zoning infractions. By ticketing offenders, the Township could raise a large percentage of the salary for the person hired.
- Is there any hope for paving or graveling reindeer run?
- It seems to be less and less a community and more individuals looking out for themselves
- It's a great place here, and tourism has its place, but at unlimited numbers does long term damage to the ecosystem for a temporary boost for a few business owners, that don't hire from within the community
- Keep garbage pick up under property taxes. Love the convenience.
- Limiting short term rentals may limit growth, but also ensure there is adequate housing to maintain a work force, a neighborhood and community. What would we be if every other home/cabin/house was a rental. Who then supports the community when the tourists go home? You hate to see your property rights limited, but you also need to weigh when is enough enough. You also need to encourage people to come to be part of the workforce, but then where do they live?
- Litter on the River
- Loud unnecessary music, noise at night snowmobiles and atvs and side by sides at all hours of the night.
- Lower speed limit by bridges, its a very dangerous area for pedestrians.
- Manage the percentage of short term rental properties to the percentage of existing residential properties.
- More recreational activities.
- More retail shops for tourist!
- No
- Not at this time!
- People should be able to respond to decisions made by zoning officials before a final vote
- Please pave Reindeer Run. Incredibly high taxes on all homes and the road needs to be paved
- Police to do something about meth problems and dog abuse
- Reindeer run needs to be paved
- request a quarterly or at least seasonal simple survey to obtain the pulse of property owners and impressions of visitors (( incentivize visitors to leave comments via electronic or paper (( set up a drop box at the Midway Store or other retailer ))).
- So many things are not available to seniors, families or children. One must go to Munising or Marquette.
- Stock more fish. Control the speed limit on Forrest Lake Rd. Speedbumps?
- The Alger county road commission Munising garage seems to be more responsive and perform better road grading and maintenance than limestone garage. 16 mile lake road and doe lake rd east will be maintained 20x before doe lake west even gets touched. There's way too many residents to ignore these roads. Trout lake is horrible most days too. There's not many ways to be politically correct here but being blunt the limestone garage is horrible



# APPENDIX A - CITIZEN SURVEY

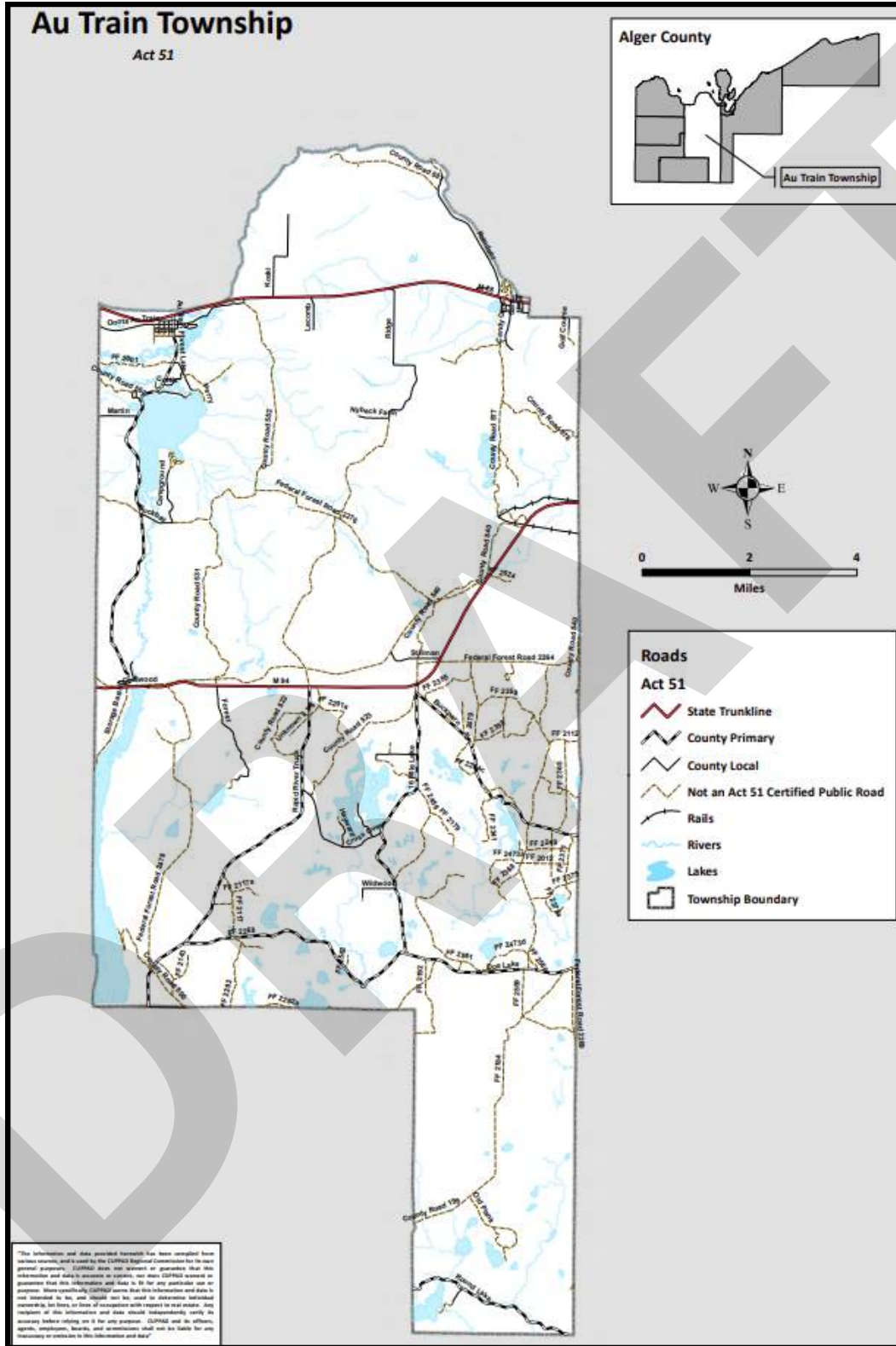


- The biggest issues in my opinion blight, too many short-term rentals, enforcement of short-term rental regulations (which there need to be some regulations or enforcing what is on the books) and members of the planning commission need to make sure what they are doing is in the benefit of the whole community, not only a few which may include themselves.
- The township needs to stop focusing on what it can do to come up with excuses for raising taxes and start paying more attention to the people that actually live here and not the vacation tourists. We need the tax hikes to stop and the resort people need to be stopped from buying more land and buildings for tourists.
- There is already a lot of tourism within the township. Protect residential zones as residential.
- These days tourists are the bread and butter for the residents of this community, without them most businesses would not operate. Not only do we need good short term rental options but also long term for the employees of these businesses.
- Tourism, travel and outdoor activities are the life-blood for many in this area to make a living. However, those that do not earn a living in this manner and live here year round are impacted by the decisions made such as with snowmobile trails, side-by-side trails, use of county roads, and short term rentals. All must be considered.
- Township is run like a private "Club"
- Very sad to witness the change in AuTrain with kayak businesses and short term rentals having changed a quiet town into an ugly, busy area.
- We have enjoyed living here for the past 13 years, but now there are some who just don't care about what they do.
- Whenever something can be brought up again and again until it is accepted. If it has been denied it shouldn't be allowed to be overturned.
- Wind, solar, battery should be prohibited period! Can't think of a better way to ruin the natural beauty of the U.P., and Au Train Twp.
- Yes fix the roads.

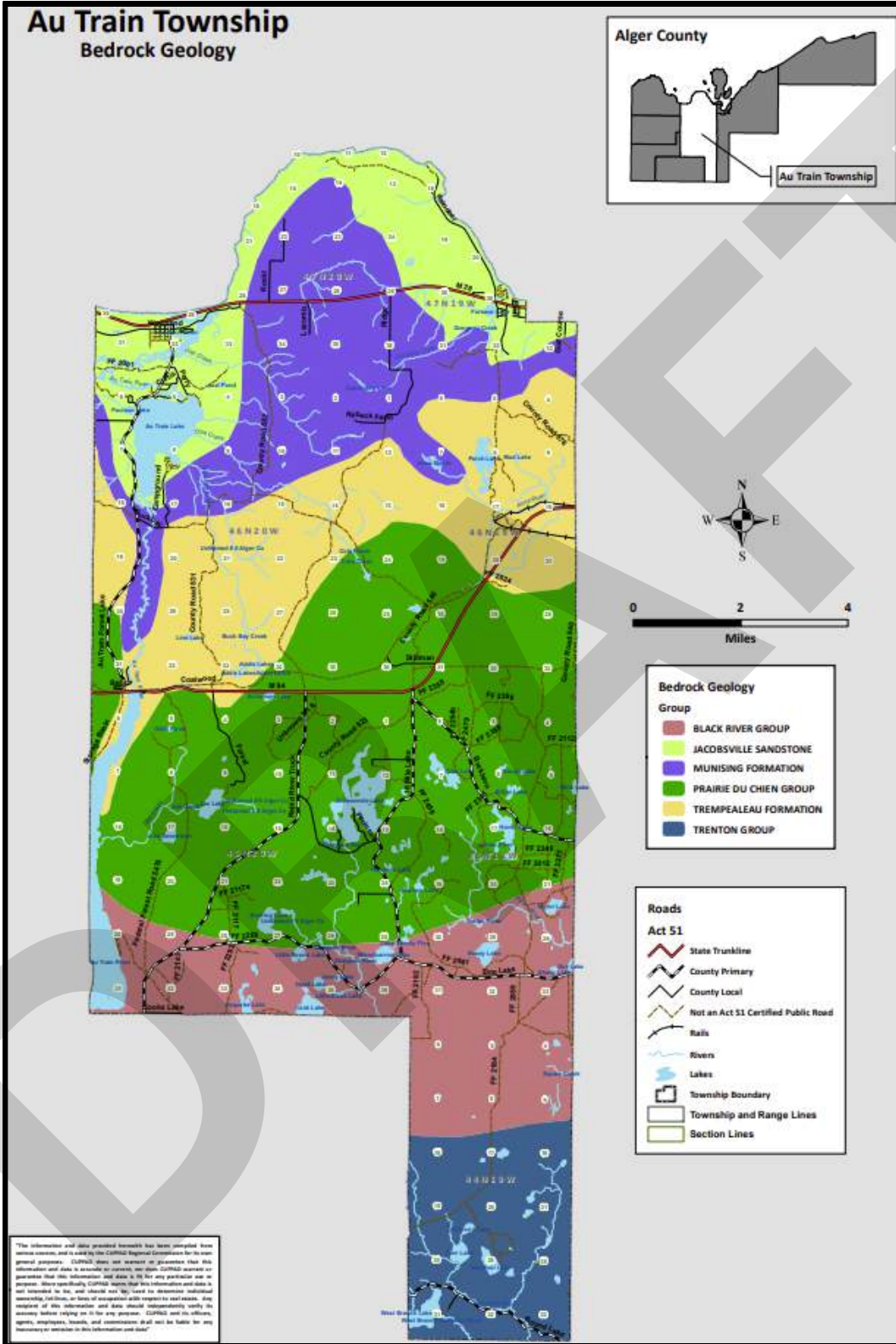
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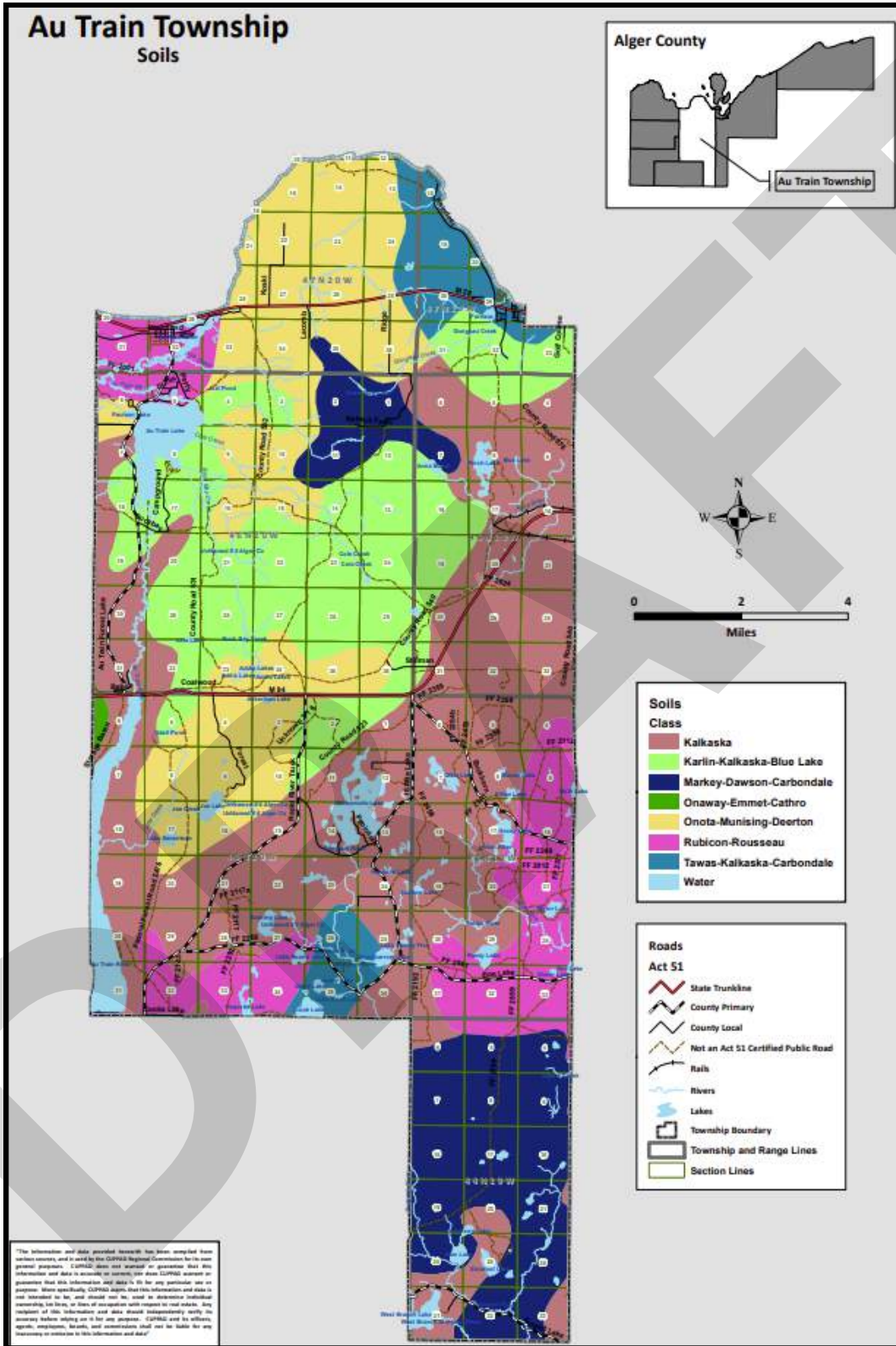
# APPENDIX B- MAPS



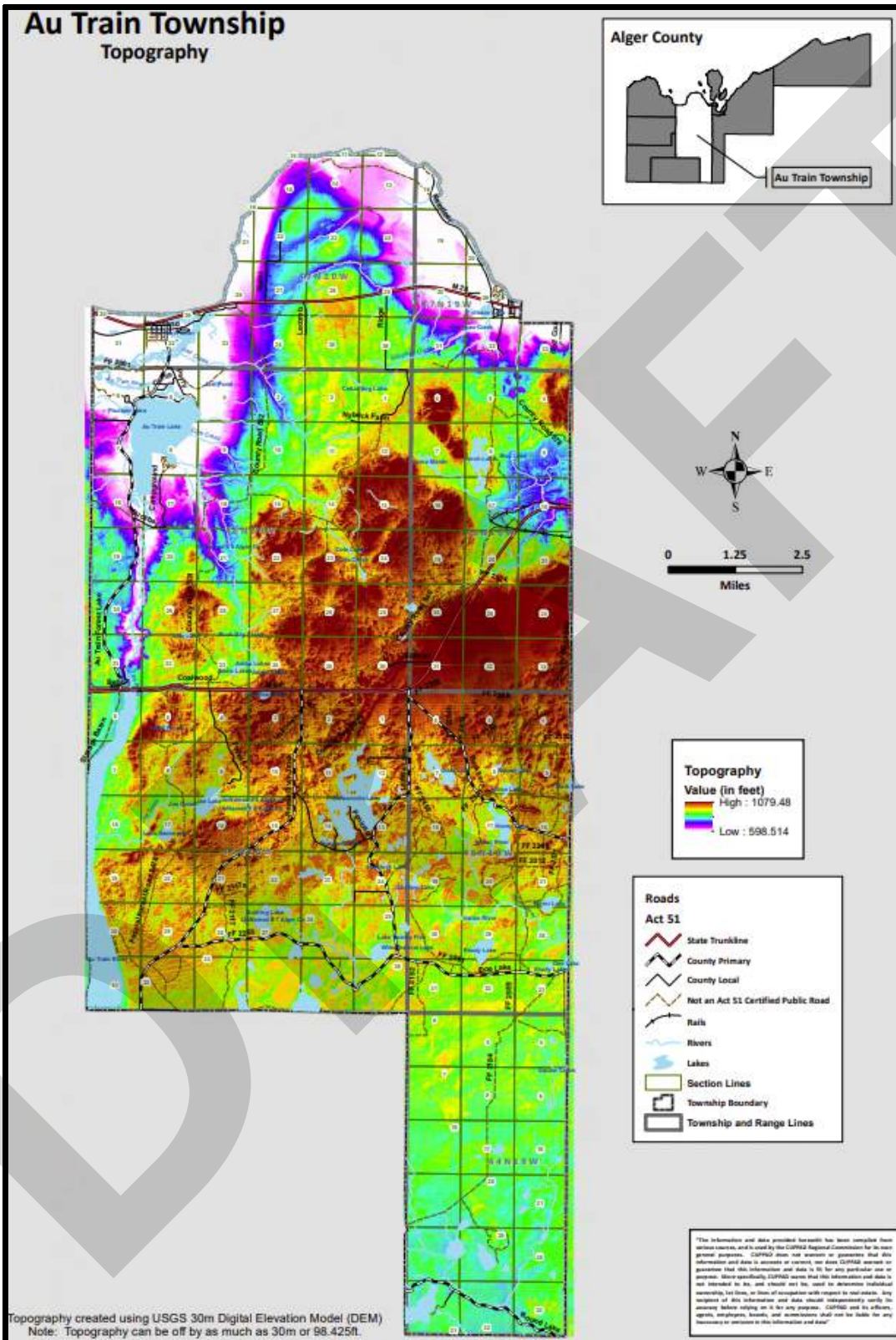
# APPENDIX B- MAPS



# APPENDIX B- MAPS



# APPENDIX B- MAPS



# APPENDIX C - GOALS



## Master Plan Goals and Strategies

Tracking	Description	Timeline	Partners	Progress Comments	Next Steps
<b>People and Community</b>					
<b>Goal</b>	Encourage opportunities to retain current population density by responding to demographic changes and understanding community needs				
PC-1	Identify ways to include younger residents in projects and planning for quality of life.		Schools, youth organizations		
PC-2	Support workforce development and education programs through local schools, ISDs, and higher education institutions that can attract and retain young persons to stay in the community with good-paying jobs.		Schools, MMU, LP Michigan Works!		
PC-3	Work with major employers in the area to identify housing types and affordability that may be attractions or barriers to potential employees, and support projects that identify workforce housing as a component.		large employers, housing stakeholders		
PC-4	Promote the development of skills-based jobs related to the character of the area, including manufacturing, natural resource extraction, transportation, and tourism and recreation.		Schools, local employers		
PC-5	Reduce barriers to childcare business creation by identifying local needs and supporting efforts to increase childcare availability.		Childcare operators, businesses, Marquette-Alger RESA		
PC-6	Continue to promote the Township's proximity to unique recreational opportunities and public and private attractions.		Greater Mumsing Bay Partnership		
PC-7	Identify unserved and underserved households with insufficient internet access, and work with ISPs to facilitate last-mile or wireless connections that will allow these households to better participate in the digital economy.		Partnership		
<b>Goal</b>	Continue to identify ways the community can come together in shared projects and events.		Jamabots, MMU		
PC-8	Increase public involvement and volunteerism by promoting programs and developing more opportunities for public engagement and community building.		Township Board		
<b>Goal</b>	Recognize that the population of the Township is aging, and prioritize projects that promote accessibility and community to allow people to age in place in their homes.				
PC-9	Pursue funding programs from State and Federal agencies that provide funds for improvements to accessibility in homes and businesses.		MSHDA, MEDC, Community Action Alger-Marquette		
PC-10	Develop an accessibility upgrade plan and incorporate it into future recreation plans and capital improvements.		Superior Alliance for Independent Living		
PC-11	Encourage and support local businesses in actions that improve facilities for barrier-free access.				
PC-12	Provide more senior-friendly attractions, events, and services.		Community Action Alger-Marquette		
<b>Housing and Neighborhoods</b>					
<b>Goal</b>	Provide housing options that are affordable for all members of the community, and reflect a diversity of types and forms				
HN-1	Explore possibilities for the highest and best use of limited land and vacant lots to support the growth of housing in the Township				The Planning Commission should identify and review these areas and their associated zoning districts
HN-2	Residential zoning districts should provide for a variety of densities and dwelling types and sizes, including multi-unit where suitable sites exist.				The Planning Commission should review best practices for missing-middle housing development
HN-3	Encourage housing subdivision and/or planned unit developments to incorporate clustered units with reserved open space for environmental protection and recreation opportunities				The Planning Commission should review best practices for Planned Unit Developments
HN-4	The Township should continue to work with housing stakeholders, local employers, the Greater Mumsing Bay Partnership for Commerce Development, and the Alger County Land Bank to identify housing needs and opportunities.		Greater Mumsing Bay Partnership, Alger County Land Bank, stakeholders		
HN-5	Encourage the rehabilitation and maintenance of existing housing stock to provide safe living conditions, prevent deterioration and blight, and protect the health and safety of the public.		Township Board, MSHDA		

# APPENDIX C - GOALS



<b>Goal</b>	<b>Continue to document and review issues identified with short-term rentals, and explore additional options for regulation and enforcement.</b>			
HN-6	The Planning Commission should assess regulations for short-term rentals by including an inventory of existing stock and issues encountered.	Township Board, Zoning Administrator		
HN-7	Establish a regulatory framework separate from the zoning ordinance for permitting short-term rentals that does not adversely affect property owners and long-term residents.	Township Board, Zoning Administrator, legal counsel		Determine the feasibility and Township's capacity to implement a police power regulatory ordinance.
HN-8	The Planning Commission should incorporate a review of the short-term rental list and any enforcement cases into its Annual Report. Assess the proportion of tourism-related businesses to others to determine if an appropriate mix and qualities exist, and if not develop zoning ordinance amendments or police power ordinances to address that.			
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Promote participation in plans and programs that offer assistance in housing development, renovation, energy efficiency, and other needs to residents.</b>			
ED-2	Encourage the development of energy-efficient housing, including winterization and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock to improve energy efficiency.			
<b>Economic Development</b>				
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Support public-private partnerships with groups, businesses, and organizations in the greater Munising/Alger County area to realize shared visions and goals.</b>			
ED-3	Continue to partner with economic development agencies to engage with the public and private partners in identifying local barriers to development, and pursue joint grant opportunities.	GMBPCD, Invest UP, UPEDA, LSCP, CLPPAD, UP Michigan Works!		
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Continue to expand compatible development along the M-28 corridor in a manner that provides for traffic safety and protection from incompatible adjacent uses.</b>			
ED-4	The Planning Commission may consider access management standards for sites in proximity to highways.			
ED-5	Promote visual enhancements along highways; discourage signage that is redundant or in poor condition.			
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Provide reasonable opportunities to establish commercial and light industrial uses which meet the needs of Township residents and provide gainful employment.</b>			
ED-6	Development of new light industrial uses should consider the adequacy of existing infrastructure and examine the impact of truck traffic, noise, etc. when located near residential areas.			The Planning Commission should review the uses outlined in the Commercial and Manufacturing Districts
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Encourage home occupations that allow for more diverse employment, economic opportunity, and compatible use of property.</b>			
ED-7	Support the establishment of local produce stands and community markets for residents to offer grown-in and made-in Au Train Township goods.			
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Continue to enhance the physical appearance of the community by explore reuse of vacant or underutilized property, remediating nuisances, and protecting viewsheds.</b>			
ED-8	Review and consider amendments to the blight or zoning ordinances to determine if updates are necessary to improve the community's appearance.			
ED-9	Support the elimination of blight by educating the public on the process and enforcement procedures; engage with state-level programs to support blight elimination and the redevelopment of vacant properties. Support the Alger County Land Bank to identify blight elimination and Brownfield remediation programs and funding.			
ED-10	Encourage the preservation of historic sites and features within the Township that communicate and preserve the area's history and character.			
<b>Recreation, Transportation, and Community Facilities</b>				
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Maintain and improve access to recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.</b>			
RT-1	The Township should continue to maintain a current Recreation Plan in accordance with Michigan DNR guidelines that includes public input and identified goals and actions. Identify projects that would qualify for available state and federal recreation grants.			
RT-2	Review the internet capabilities at recreational facilities, and consider incorporating public wireless internet access points at existing facilities.			
RT-3	Ensure that, to the extent possible, recreational facilities are developed and maintained for multipurpose or year-round uses.			
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Provide a safe, well maintained, and efficient multimodal transportation network for all on-road and off-road users.</b>			
RT-4	Support the efforts of the multiuse trail groups in developing recreational trail systems, maintenance plans, and promoting mobility throughout Alger County.			
RT-5	The Township should continue to plan and budget for local road improvement projects and work with the Alger County Road Commission to schedule these as appropriate. Development of private roads should be completed to Road Commission standards and include provisions for long-term maintenance.			

# APPENDIX C - GOALS



RT-6	Where economically feasible, install improvements that accommodate multi-modal transportation options that promote interconnections between communities. Coordinate with local stakeholders to identify local projects and funding programs to mitigate safety concerns.			
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Provide, maintain, and continuously improve the efficiency and quality of community facilities and services in a cost-effective manner.</b>			
RT-7	Ensure that township-owned facilities are safe, clean, and accessible to users of all ages and ability, and encourage the efficient use of existing facilities before building new.			
RT-8	Continue to identify energy-saving opportunities to replace lighting, heating and cooling, and other utilities that can realize cost-savings in township-owned facilities.			
RT-9	Understand operational, financial, and potential climate vulnerabilities and incorporate them into existing plans as part of a broader risk management strategy.			
RT-10	The Planning Commission should periodically review the Township's existing infrastructure and issues to ensure an appropriate level of service. A multi-year Capital Improvement Plan should be used as a long-range planning and budgeting tool.			The Planning Commission may consider the development of a Capital Improvement Plan
RT-11	Continue to ensure adequate fire coverage and emergency medical service to all areas of the township; work to actively recruit and train new members for the fire department.			
RT-12	Examine the level of service for refuse coverage and explore options related to materials management and recycling programs.			
<b>Natural Resources and Environment</b>				
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Protect and enhance the natural environment while providing for compatible development.</b>			
NR-1	Promote programs and improvements that create energy efficiency, climate resiliency, and preserve natural features and resources.			Review the setbacks and uses in the Lakeshore/River Districts to determine if updates to the zoning ordinance are needed.
NR-2	Ensure the quality of the inland lakes and rivers by continuing to maintain buffers and setback regulations for uses in proximity to major bodies of water.			
NR-3	Identify programs and funding sources facilitated by the Superior Watershed Partnership to implement best practices for improving water quality.		Township Board, SWP	
NR-4	The Township should encourage residents to test the water quality of private well systems regularly, and conduct regular maintenance of septic systems as directed by the LMAS District Health Department to prevent contamination of water sources in the community.		Township Board, Alger County Building Codes, LMAS Health Dept.	
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Maintain the Township's scenic character by minimizing the impact of development on natural and wooded features and habitats.</b>			
NR-5	Continue to support the efficient utilization, management, and development of existing mineral and forest resources.		Environmental stakeholder groups, local businesses	
NR-6	The Township should continue to identify and enact measures to ensure the protection and enhancement of environmentally sensitive areas.		EGLC, Superior Watershed Partnership, Alger Conservation District	
NR-7	The location, type, and density of development should take into consideration the physical capacity of the land and water to accommodate its proposed use without adverse effects to air, groundwater, surface water, soil, and sensitive areas.			The Planning Commission should determine where possible or existing development may have an effect on natural resources, and determine if zoning ordinance updates are needed
NR-8	Continue to work with MSU Extension, the Alger Conservation District, Kiawatha National Forest, and local foresters to identify and mitigate tree disease and pest issues.		MSU Extension, Alger Conservation District, Forest Service, local landowners	
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Increase community resiliency by identifying and mitigating hazards, and participate in the Alger County Hazard Mitigation Plan.</b>			
NR-9	The Township should continue to participate in the development of the Alger County Hazard Mitigation Plan under Federal Emergency Management Agency guidelines, identifying hazards to the community and creating a mitigation action plan.		Township Board, Alger County LEPC	
NR-10	The Township should continue to identify and communicate issues and hazards along the Au Train River, including the M-28 bridge, and propose mitigation actions and projects that can be implemented when funding sources are identified.		Township Board, Alger County LEPC, MDOOT, EGLC, Alger County Road Commission	



# APPENDIX C- GOALS



<b>Goal</b>	<b>Improve coastal resiliency and public access to the Lake Superior shoreline.</b>				
NR-11	Work with EGLE, Superior Watershed Partnership, and other stakeholders to review best practices for shoreline development, and ways to implement low-impact shoreline preservation projects			EGLE, SWP	
<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Encourage land use and development that does not adversely affect public health, safety, and welfare.</b>				
<b>Goal</b>	Update the Zoning Ordinance to improve compatibility of uses, provide for modern uses, and reduce inefficiencies in the development approval and enforcement processes.				
LU-1	The Planning Commission should regularly review patterns of land use and the current zoning district designations and descriptions to ensure suitable areas are appropriate for different types of development.				Incorporate an annual Master Plan Review into the Planning Commission's Annual Report
LU-2	Ensure the individual rights of property owners while protecting the public interest by maintaining a fair and consistent Zoning Ordinance and approval process.				
LU-3	Planning Commission members and the Zoning Administrator should regularly engage in trainings and planning and zoning workshops for education and best practices			Township Board MSU Extension, Michigan Association of Planning, CLUPPAD	
LU-4					