



WAKEFIELD TOWNSHIP

MICHIGAN

Master Plan 2020-2040



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Foreword

In 2019, the Wakefield Township Board of Trustees and Planning Commission committed to develop the Township’s first master plan, opening the door to a new era of forward-looking decision-making. The plan, with periodic updates as needed, is intended to guide growth and development for the next 20 years.

Members of the Wakefield Township Planning Commission:

Paula Koruga	Craig Talsma	Denice Laessig
Jim Spencer	Dale Marten	

Members of the Wakefield Township Board of Trustees:

John Cox, Supervisor	Shelly Nordine, Deputy Treasurer
Mandy Lake, Clerk	Jim Spencer, Trustee
Mabel Wanink, Deputy Clerk	Jerry Niemi, Trustee
Joan Dalman, Treasurer	

Members of the Wakefield Township Zoning Board of Appeals:

John Cox	Jeff Pikka	Robert Drier
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Survey Takers:

Austin Ahonen	Niko Hewitt
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This plan was prepared with assistance from:

Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region Commission (WUPPDR)
400 Quincy St 8th Floor
Hancock, MI 49930



With a mission to foster stable and diversified economies in the Western Upper Peninsula, WUPPDR provides technical assistance, information services, and grants administration and implementation in the counties of Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon.

A NOTE ON CAPITALIZATION:

In general, throughout this plan, the word “township” when used alone refers to Wakefield Township. When lowercase, it refers to the township area and community in general. When capitalized, it refers to township as a governmental entity specifically.

Introduction to Planning

Urban Planning

Urban or city planning has evolved over the course of hundreds of years. The field began with artistic physical design of cities in antiquity, a paradigm that continued on and off through the 1800s. Modern urban planning began around the turn of the 20th century, when the focus shifted toward support of legal control of development with the advent of zoning. Planning is no longer “urban” per se - it applies to counties, county subdivisions (including townships), municipalities of all types and sizes, and even regions.

Today’s comprehensive or “master” planning, which is the focus of this document, consists of broad guidance of future development through a tiered set of issues, goals, objectives, strategies, and actions, supported by data and a comprehensive overview of the community. Generally, issues are identified, broad goals are set, and several manageable objectives and actions are identified to satisfy each goal. (The terminology of these tiers can vary.)

Any actions pertaining to public works infrastructure such as roads and water and sewer systems become part of a capital improvements program (CIP). This is where the initiatives in a master plan may become more visible to the public and have a direct impact on budgeting. A CIP is not required by law for Wakefield Township since the Township does not operate a water or sewer system, but a CIP is recommended as a best practice.

Zoning

As a practical matter, a plan is often initially developed to be the basis of a zoning ordinance. A traditional zoning ordinance is a legal mechanism to control land use along with characteristics of lots and buildings. In some cases, use zoning has been displaced or supplemented by form-based zoning, which regulates external building and lot characteristics rather than the activities that take place on them. Alternatively, a hybrid use/form-based code may be adopted. Regardless of the type, zoning promotes stability and predictability in a community, especially where land values are concerned.

Zoning leverages the “police power” in order to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of residents and landowners. Though zoning can be controversial in regulating activities of landowners on their own property, many units of government consider this necessary to protect others’ rights.

Basis in Michigan

The State of Michigan first authorized city planning in the 1931 Municipal Planning Act. In 2008, this outdated law, which existed alongside separate laws authorizing township and county planning, was replaced by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA, P.A. 33 of 2008). Zoning, first authorized in 1921, was reauthorized in the 2006 Zoning Enabling Act. A master or comprehensive plan is required in order to conduct zoning, and a planning commission, where one exists, is required by statute to develop a master plan.

Planning Process

Development of this plan began in April 2019, when notices of intent to develop a master plan were distributed to entities required by MPEA. Wakefield Township had contracted with Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region (WUPPDR) the previous month to assist with preparation.

Staff of WUPPDR met with the Wakefield Township Planning Commission, including the Supervisor, on April 24. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis and solicit feedback on issues and priorities. See **Appendix 1** for the results.

Following this meeting, WUPPDR assisted with developing a public opinion survey. Beginning in July, survey data was collected mainly door-to-door from residents by Township staff. A total of 49 responses were obtained, of which 46 were residents in person, 2 were part-time residents submitting electronically, and 1 was a business. See **Appendix 2** for the full report of results and a summary of highlights.

Using this feedback and other data, in consultation with the Township Supervisor, WUPPDR developed a first draft of the plan to be considered and discussed at a joint Township Board of Trustees and Planning Commission meeting on December 10, 2019. Feedback from the two bodies was incorporated into the plan's second draft, which became the proposed master plan presented to the Planning Commission in February 2020.

On March 18, 2020 the Planning Commission approved submission of the proposed plan to the Township Board, which approved it for 63-day review on April 7, 2020. The plan was then distributed to recipients required by MPEA and posted on the Township website at www.wakefieldtownship.com and the WUPPDR website at www.wuppdr.org.

With no comments received, the Planning Commission adopted the Master Plan on August 11, 2020.

Other plans consulted during development of this plan:

- *Gogebic County Hazard Mitigation Plan* (draft versions) (WUPPDR, 2020)
- *Gogebic County Recreation Plan* (Gogebic County Forestry & Parks Commission and WUPPDR, 2018)
- *Western Upper Peninsula Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (WUPPDR, 2017)
- *Gogebic County Retail Target Market Analysis* (LandUseUSA, 2017)
- *Gogebic County Residential Target Market Analysis* (LandUseUSA, 2016)
- *Western Upper Peninsula Regional Road Maintenance Study* (WUPPDR, 2016)

Most of these documents may be accessed via the WUPPDR website, www.wuppdr.org.

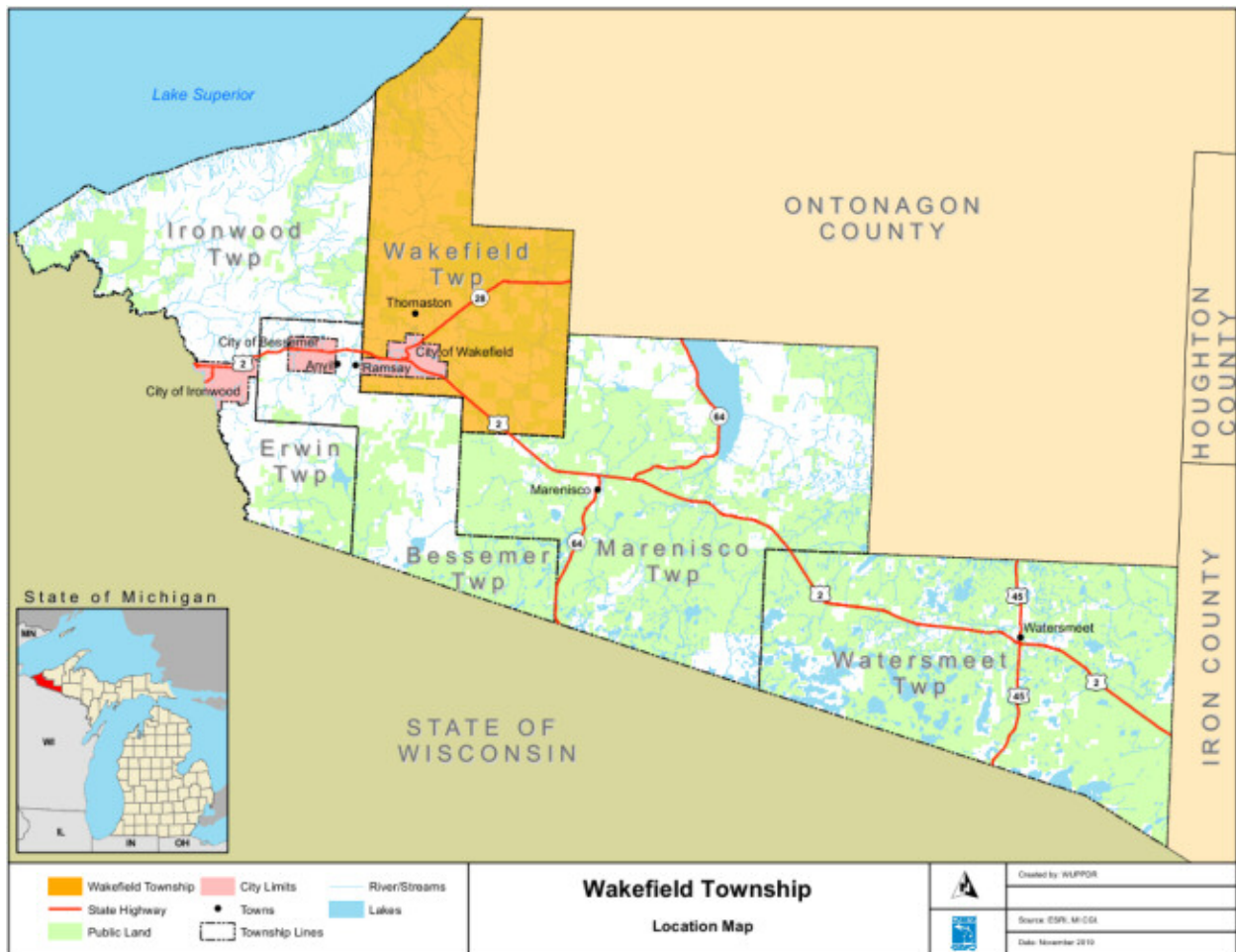
Location and Region

Location

Wakefield Township is located in Gogebic County near the western tip of Michigan's Upper Peninsula (see **Map 1.1**). Wakefield Township is bordered by the townships of Ironwood, Bessemer, and Marenisco in Gogebic County and the townships of Bergland and Carp Lake in Ontonagon County. The northern border of Wakefield Township is the coast of Lake Superior, the largest and deepest of the five Great Lakes.

Wakefield Township surrounds the City of Wakefield near the township's southwest, except at the city's western border which abuts Bessemer Township. The City of Wakefield is a separate unit of government, not part of Wakefield Township.

Map 1.1: Location



Region

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is at the northern border of the contiguous United States - so far north, in fact, that it is often confused with Canada. The six-county region of the Western

Upper Peninsula may be perceived as the most remote of the peninsula, having generally the longest driving distances to any metropolitan area.

The Western U.P. is predominantly rural and over 90% forested. Over half of forestland is privately owned, but over half of that is enrolled in the Commercial Forest Act, allowing public access for certain uses, and the remaining public land offers an abundance of opportunities for recreation and other economic uses. Natural resources are a critical asset of the economy, primarily related to tourism and other recreation but also with an important resource extraction component.

The region's population is widely dispersed: 80,000 residents are distributed over 6,026 square miles of land - a density of 13.3 persons per square mile. Most counties in the region have one or two cities or villages, or clusters thereof, that hold large concentrations of residents. This is true for Gogebic County, where 60% of the population resides within three cities along an approximately 13-mile highway corridor. Ironwood, the westernmost of these, is the second-largest city in the Western U.P. Wakefield Township has by far the lowest population density of Gogebic County's six townships but is representative of much of the region's undeveloped rural area.

Owing to factors such as the low population density, remoteness, harsh winter climate, limited infrastructure, and challenges in economic development including historical boom-and-bust cycles, residents of the region have a reputation of being self-sufficient and resilient, with a good work ethic and a drive to maintain quality of life. Paradoxically, though, there is a tendency toward complacency - acceptance of the status quo. Thus, planning and visioning are essential to foster growth and prosperity.



The region is characterized by long highways cutting through vast forests to connect distant areas of development.

Human Environment

People are Wakefield Township's greatest resource. Residents are the reason this plan - and the Township itself, for that matter - exist. In order for the plan to be effective, it is important to know the profile of residents and households. Besides serving as a useful data source, these population characteristics will help to determine how residents can best be engaged to implement the plan.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Data

Total

The total population of Wakefield Township was 305 as of the 2010 Census. This is a decrease of 59, or 16.2%, since the 2000 Census population of 364. The population was 304 based upon the 2013-2017 American Community Survey (ACS).¹ Thus, the total population has been essentially static over the past several years. Wakefield Township represents approximately 2% of Gogebic County's total population (15,577 in 2017; this does not account for a decrease of over 1,000 residents with the December 2018 closure of Ojibway Correctional Facility [OCF] in Marenisco Township²).

Age and Race

The median age of Wakefield Township residents in 2010 was 51.1 years, compared to 46.8 years in Gogebic County, 38.9 in the State of Michigan, and 37.2 in the U.S. In Wakefield Township, 22.3% of residents are age 65 and older, compared to 21.4% in the county, 13.8% in the State, and 13.0% in the U.S.

Most age brackets of the township parallel the county fairly closely, the outlier being the 20-29 years range, which was disproportionately large in the county largely due to the OCF population in Marenisco Township until 2019. However, the township's percentage of residents 29 years and younger is much smaller, and percentage of residents 50 years and older is much larger, than the same age bracket percentages in the state and U.S. In general, the township, and to a lesser extent the county, have fewer young residents and more old residents than the

¹ Population in the United States is counted through two main instruments of the U.S. Census Bureau: the Decennial Census (hereinafter referred to as Census), which is an attempted actual count of the population every ten years (most recently 2010), and the American Community Survey (ACS), which collects a much wider range and greater detail of data (having replaced the detailed Decennial Census "long form" beginning in 2010).

The ACS is based upon statistical sampling rather than an actual count. Its relatively small sample size results in problems of inaccuracy (large margins of error) in small population units such as Wakefield Township. In addition, such small units have relatively long delays in release of data, which is based upon a rolling five-year period. The most recent ACS data for Wakefield Township is for the period of 2013-2017; herein it will be referred to as **2017 ACS**. Despite these issues, ACS data is much more recent than Census data and for many indicators is the only option. Once 2020 Census data becomes available, the Planning Commission should consider incorporating it into this plan where applicable.

² A 2010 Census group quarters population of 1,159 (7.1% of county population) resided in OCF.

state or U.S. The 2017 ACS “age dependency ratio”³ of township residents was 45.8, versus 40 in the county, 26.6 in Michigan, and 23.9 in the U.S. One-third of seniors live alone

Comparisons to Gogebic County, the state, and the U.S. are in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1: Age (2010 Census unless noted)

	Township		County		State		U.S.	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Median age (years)	51.1		46.8		38.9		37.2	
Age depend. ratio	45.8		40.0		26.6		23.9	
Under 5 years	13	4.3%	765	4.7%		6.0%		6.5%
5-19 years	42	13.8%	2,454	14.9%		20.8%		20.4%
20-29 years	16	5.2%	1,802	11.0%		12.7%		13.8%
30-49 years	76	24.9%	3,985	24.3%		26.3%		27.2%
50-64 years	90	29.5%	3,907	23.8%		20.4%		19.0%
65 years and over	68	22.3%	3,514	21.4%		13.8%		13.0%
Living alone (2017 ACS)	23	33.8%						

The township’s 2010 racial makeup is almost entirely White of one race, with a single White and Hispanic resident counted.

Educational Attainment

Based on the 2017 ACS, educational attainment of Wakefield Township residents age 25 and over compares favorably to the county, the state, and the U.S., with the township having a similar percentage of residents with an associate’s degree or higher and a larger percentage of residents who have graduated from high school. However, the township has a much smaller percentage than the state or U.S. of residents with a graduate or professional degree. (Attainment of township residents age 18 to 24 cannot be meaningfully compared due to a very small number of residents in this range.)

Comparisons to the county, the state, and the U.S. are in **Table 1.2**.

Table 1.2: Educational Attainment, Age 25 and Over (2017 ACS)

	Township		County		State	U.S.
	#	%	#	%	%	%
Less than 9th grade	0	0.0%	200	1.7%	3.0%	5.4%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	12	4.9%	708	6.0%	6.7%	7.2%
H.S. graduate (incl equivalency)	91	37.3%	4,594	38.9%	29.3%	27.3%
Some college, no degree	50	20.5%	2,947	24.9%	23.6%	20.8%
Associate’s degree	28	11.5%	1,201	10.2%	9.3%	8.3%
Bachelor’s degree	53	21.7%	1,434	12.1%	17.1%	19.1%
Graduate/professional degree	10	4.1%	739	6.3%	11.0%	11.8%

³ Calculated by dividing the number of residents 65 years and older by the number of residents 18-64 years and multiplying by 100.

Income and Poverty

Based on the ACS, Wakefield Township's 2017 median household income was \$38,015. An estimated two households were receiving cash assistance benefits, 101 receiving earnings, 80 receiving Social Security income, and 55 receiving retirement income. Per capita income was \$24,875.

Incidence of poverty in both families and individuals of Wakefield Township is lower than in the state and the U.S. and much lower than the county overall. Just 11.8% of people in Wakefield Township are in poverty, compared with 20.4% in the county and around 15% in the state and U.S. 12.5% of the township's families with children under 18 years related to the householder are in poverty, versus 29.7% in the county, 18.4% in the state, and 16.7% in the U.S. People 64 years and over in the township have a poverty rate of 4.9%, versus around 8 to 9 percent in the other units. See **Table 1.3**.

Table 1.3: Poverty (2017 ACS)

	Township	County	State	U.S.
All families	9.3%	13.7%	10.9%	10.5%
w/ children under 18 years related to householder	12.5%	29.7%	18.4%	16.7%
People	11.8%	20.4%	15.6%	14.6%
Under 18 years	18.6%	35.6%	21.7%	20.3%
18-64 years	13.4%	20.9%	15.2%	13.7%
64 years and over	4.9%	9.2%	8.2%	9.3%

Trends

Wakefield Township's population has been volatile over the past 100 years. The population in 1920 (the first Census after the City of Wakefield was incorporated and separated from the Township) was 533. The population increased by 78% from 1920 to 1930 and slightly more by 1940, to a height of 989 persons. After this, the population declined at a fast pace to 456 in 1970 and leveled off until 1990. Several large employers closed during 1990s, leading to a population decline to 364 in 2000 and 305 in 2010. Since then the population has been static. See **Table 1.4**.

Table 1.4: Wakefield Township Total Population (Census all years except 2017 ACS)

	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017
Population (#)	533	949	989	748	613	456	465	452	364	305	304
% Change since prev.		78.0	4.2	-24.4	-18.0	-25.6	2.0	-2.8	-19.5	-16.2	-0.3

Gogebic County's population, after reaching peaks of over 30,000 for the years 1920 to 1940, has dropped in every decade by a range of 3.8% to 15.2%. The net percentage decrease from 1940 to 2010 was 48.3%, with another drop of 5.2% from 2010 to 2017. In 2017 the County's ACS population was 15,577; later estimates will be impacted by the closure of OCF. Long-term countywide population loss can be attributed to the decline of mining from the 1940s through 1980s and then to economic stagnation and an aging population with little natural increase.

Meanwhile, the State of Michigan’s population increased by double digit percentages every decade from 1890 to 1970, followed by increases in single digits from 1970 to 1980 and 1990 to 2000. The state’s population changed little from 1980 to 1990 and from 2000 to 2017. Decreased population growth, and in some years decline, since 1970 can be attributed largely to the slow decline of the auto industry and other manufacturing.

Figure 1.1 shows trends in township, county, and state population percentage change during each 10-year period from 1890 to 2010 (Decennial Census) and to 2017 (ACS). The chart does not show *total* population numbers by decade; rather, it is a visualization of the patterns and magnitude of growth and decline that occur *during* each decade.

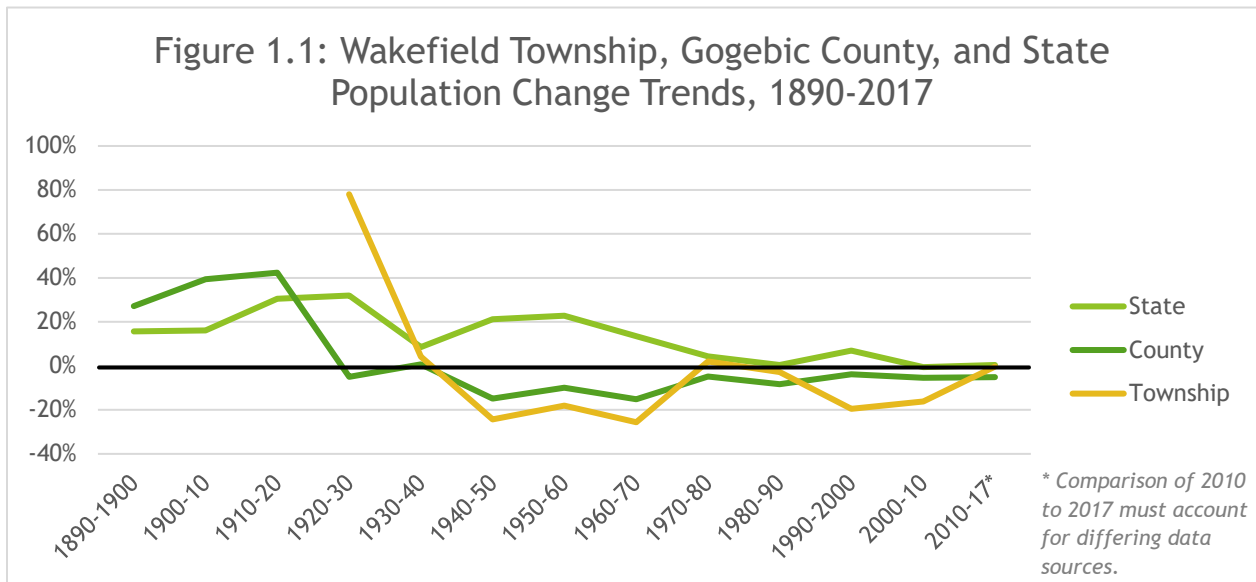
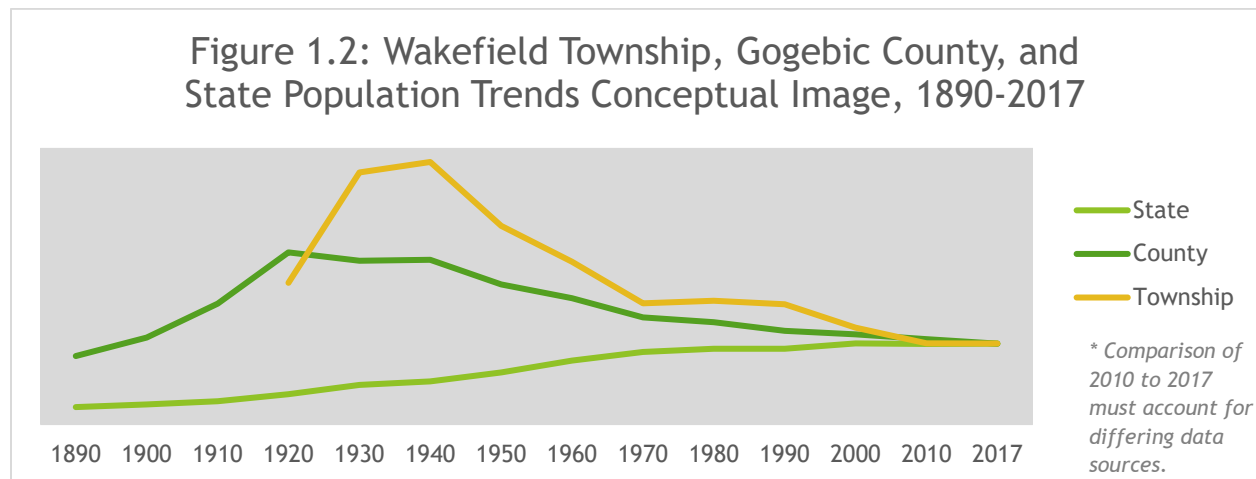
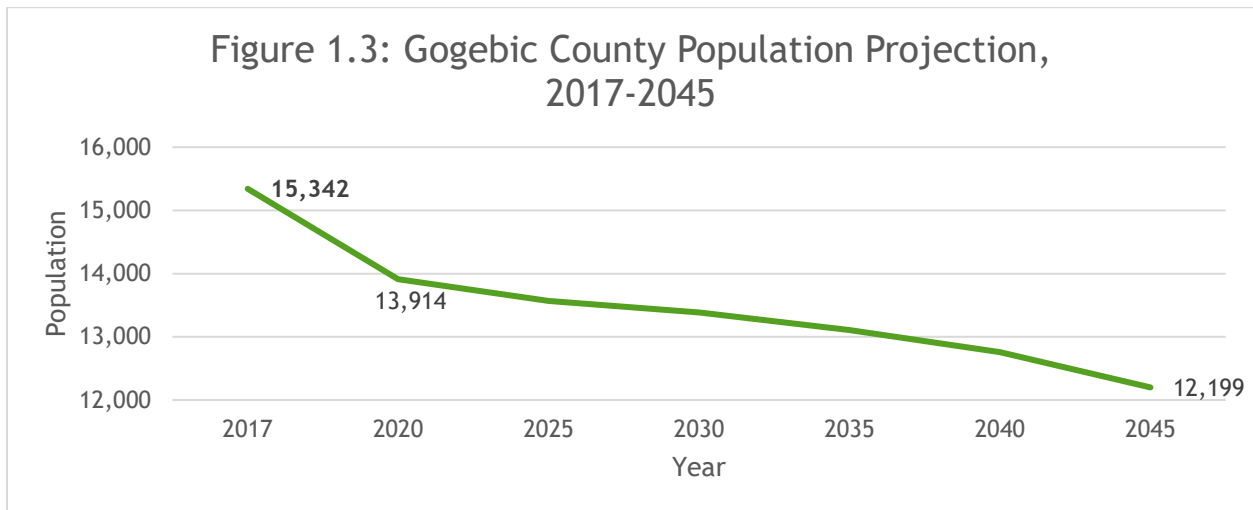


Figure 1.2 is a conceptual chart that shows, based on the Decennial Census, the general population trend “pathway” each unit of government took to get to its present state. The chart compares only trends, not total populations, which is why units are not displayed.



Projections

The State of Michigan Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives developed new county population projections in 2019. The projections show the county's population dropping 9.3% from 15,342 in 2017⁴ to 13,914 in 2020 - most of the loss resulting from closure of Ojibway - and by approximately 200 to 300 people every five years until 2040, leaving a total population of 12,199 in 2045. This would be a loss of 12.3% from 2020 to 2045. See **Figure 1.3**. Township-specific population projections are not available but can be expected to follow a similar trend from 2020 to 2045. These trends compare to an overall 2017-2045 population loss of 4.0% in the six counties of the Western Upper Peninsula.



Density and Distribution

With a land area of 179.7 square miles based on 2010 U.S. Census data, the township had an overall 2010 population density of 1.7 persons per square mile. **Map 1.2** shows population distribution throughout the township based on 2010 Census blocks.

Housing

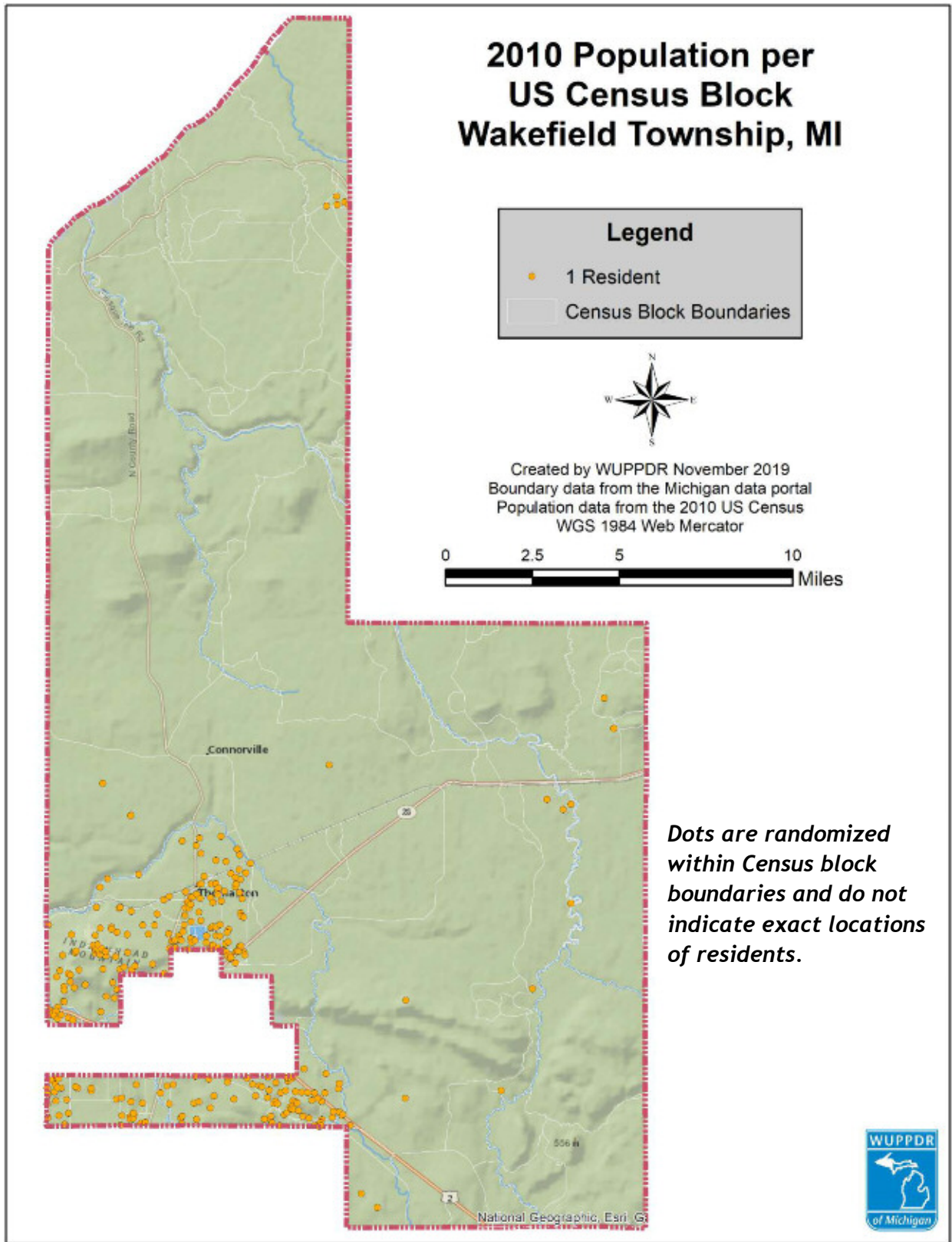
Housing data is presented here based on two sources: 1) Township staff and tax records, and 2) 2017 ACS. Data provided by Township staff are the most current and accurate, being based on extensive field visits, but are more limited in scope. ACS data are comprehensive, collected using standardized methodology, and directly comparable with other units of government, but suffer from limitations of statistical sampling. Township-collected data should be used for local purposes whenever possible, but for some purposes ACS is the only option.

Township-Collected Data

In October 2019, Township staff examined records of parcels with a principal residence exemption (PRE) to determine the number of full-time occupied single-family housing units.

⁴ This differs from the 2013-2017 ACS population due to use of a different data source.

Map 1.2: Population Distribution by 2010 Census Block



(There may be some residents who are institutionalized in other jurisdictions but maintain the PRE status of these properties.) Non-PRE residences were manually separated, based on staff knowledge and an address list, into part-time single-family (with services/utilities), part-time multi-unit condominiums, and camp/cottage/recreation properties (without services or utilities). Building permits are based on a November 2019 tabulation by the Township of permits for new residences including mobile homes. See **Table 1.5**.

Table 1.5: Housing Units (Wakefield Township, 2019)

	Units
All housing units	351
Full-time single-family	155
Part-time single-family	115
Part-time multi-family (condominiums)	38
Camp/cottage/recreation residences	43
Building permit issued 2010 or later	3
Building permit issued 2000-2009	14
Building permit issued 1990-1999	24

These actual numbers of existing housing units vary considerably from ACS data, particularly in the number of units in structures with more than one unit. The total number of units is 351 based on tax records versus 380 based on ACS.

Building permits indicate a much smaller number of residences built during 1990-2009 than the ACS year-built data provided below. This may be due to lax compliance with permit requirements in past decades. Additional permit data is in the Land Use and Development chapter.

ACS Data

According to ACS, the vast majority of occupied housing units in the township are owner-occupied single-family homes. Out of 157 occupied units, only 4 (2.5%) were rentals as of the 2017 ACS. This is a much smaller percentage of rentals than the county, state, or U.S., and owes partially to the absence of any multi-family public and senior housing complexes. The Planning Commission has identified a shortage of single-family homes for both homeownership and long-term rentals, along with some quality concerns among those that exist.

Of *all* housing units, both occupied and vacant (as defined by ACS), the township has a larger percentage than the county of units in structures containing more than one unit (percentages of these units are more similar to the state and U.S.)⁵. Many of these are due to a large number of multi-unit structures at Indianhead Resort that are only used seasonally. Indeed, of all housing units in the township, over half are considered vacant by the ACS, and of these, the vast majority are for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. These are progressively higher percentages than the county, state, and U.S.

⁵ The 93 such units based on ACS starkly contrast with the 38 units in multi-unit structures based on Township data.

Township housing stock is much newer than that of the county overall and slightly newer than the state and U.S., and more valuable than the county overall but much less valuable than the state and U.S. Among all units, 9% of structures were built in the year 2000 or later and 17.4% in 1939 or earlier (ACS). The median year built of all units was 1980 and median value \$89,700. In Gogebic County, 40.1% of structures were built in 1939 or earlier - largely due clustering of communities around mines outside of the township in the first half of the 20th Century - and the median value was \$70,100.

Occupied housing units account for a disproportionately large proportion of units built before 1940 in the township: 22.3% of owner-occupied units were built in that timeframe versus 17.4% of all units. This suggests that seasonal, recreational, or occasionally used vacant housing units are generally newer than occupied units. It may also be related to the long tenure of homeowners in their present homes: As of 2017, 26.8% of owner-occupied housing units in the township had a householder who moved into the unit in 1979 or earlier. The comparable percentage in the county is 19.8%; state, 13.8%; and U.S., 11.4%.

See Table 1.6.

Table 1.6: Housing Characteristics (2017 ACS)

	Township		County	State	U.S.
	#	%	%	%	%
All housing units	380				
Built 2010 or later	1	0.3%	0.6%	1.4%	3.2%
Built 2000-2009	33	8.7%	5.8%	10.0%	14.5%
Built 1990-1999	31	8.2%	7.3%	13.1%	14.0%
Built 1980-1989	128	33.7%	10.9%	10.0%	13.6%
Built 1960-1979	79	20.8%	20.9%	27.5%	26.3%
Built 1940-1959	42	11.1%	16.2%	22.9%	15.6%
Built 1939 or earlier	66	17.4%	38.3%	15.1%	12.9%
Median year built	1980		1955	1970	1977
Number of units in structure	380				
1 unit	273	71.8%	84.8%	76.9%	67.5%
2 units	28	7.4%	2.3%	2.4%	3.7%
3 or more units	65	17.1%	9.6%	15.4%	22.4%
Mobile home	14	3.7%	3.3%	5.3%	6.3%
Occupied housing units	157	41.3%	61.7%	85.1%	87.8%
Renter-occupied	4	2.5%	22.9%	36.2%	29.0%
Owner-occupied	153	97.5%	77.1%	63.8%	71.0%
Median value	\$89,700		\$70,100	\$136,400	\$193,500
Households	157				
1 person	56	35.7%	36.9%	29.2%	27.7%
2 persons	78	49.7%	41.6%	35.0%	33.8%
3 or more persons	23	14.6%	21.5%	35.8%	38.5%
Householder age 65+ living alone	23	14.6%	17.0%	11.3%	10.5%
Average number of persons	1.9		2.1	2.5	2.6
Vacant housing units	223	58.7%	38.3%	14.9%	12.2%
Seasonal/recreational/occasional use	200	89.7%	77.6%	42.6%	33.0%

Short-Term Rental Housing

For purposes of this section, a short-term rental (STR) is defined as a housing unit leased to an occupant by an absentee homeowner or landlord for a period shorter than a traditional lease - as short as nightly or as long as monthly. This arrangement has become popular for vacationers and traveling workers as an alternative that many consider more desirable, and sometimes less expensive, than other types of lodging establishments. And property owners can often receive much greater revenues from STR arrangements than from traditional long-term leasing.

The two most popular services for listing and finding STRs on the internet are Airbnb and VRBO (Vacation Rentals by Owner).

Despite their benefits to individual renter-occupants and property owners, STRs can cause a number of problems for communities, including:

- Removal of housing stock from the market for permanent residency
- Nuisances for adjacent property owners and residences (e.g. noise and parking)
- Evasion of certain code and licensing requirements
- Evasion of state-authorized lodging occupancy taxes

Several STRs can be found in Wakefield Township, mainly in the Indianhead Resort vicinity. Most of these properties - particularly the condominiums - have long been used seasonally, and no new negative impacts for the township have resulted from the recent trend toward STRs. However, the need for possible future regulation should be monitored. As of the writing of this plan, Michigan state legislation is under consideration that could preempt some authority of local governments to regulate these properties.



Classification of seasonal condominiums, such as these at Indianhead, is complicated. The Census considers seasonal properties “vacant,” the Township considers them part-time multi-unit, and they may be rented out as STRs or VRBOs.

Natural Environment

Land Cover

Wakefield Township has a total land area of 179.7 square miles⁶ or approximately 115,000 acres. The land is overwhelmingly forested, primarily with upland hardwoods. Wetlands are also prevalent, particularly in the southern two-thirds of the township. Small pockets of agricultural land are scattered around the City of Wakefield; these are not conducive to commercial use. The Gogebic Highlands, relatively mountainous terrain dominated by steep-sloped clay bluffs, extends across the north end of the township. Urbanized land is primarily along highways US 2 and M-28, County Road 519 (the Presque Isle Road), and adjacent to the City of Wakefield. See **Maps 2.1 and 2.2**.

Waters

Lake Superior, the largest of the Great Lakes and the largest freshwater lake in the world by surface area, forms the northern border of the township. Lake Superior offers rich recreational and sightseeing opportunities along with some commercial fishing.

The entirety of Wakefield Township's Lake Superior coast, as well as most of the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park (commonly referred to as the "Porkies"), is within a Great Lakes Coastal Zone designated by the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE). This can limit development opportunities due to natural hazard risks, ecological sensitivities, and recreation and cultural factors, but may also offer economic potential from both water- and land-based resources. Regardless, Township control of the coastal zone is limited since it is entirely under DNR ownership.

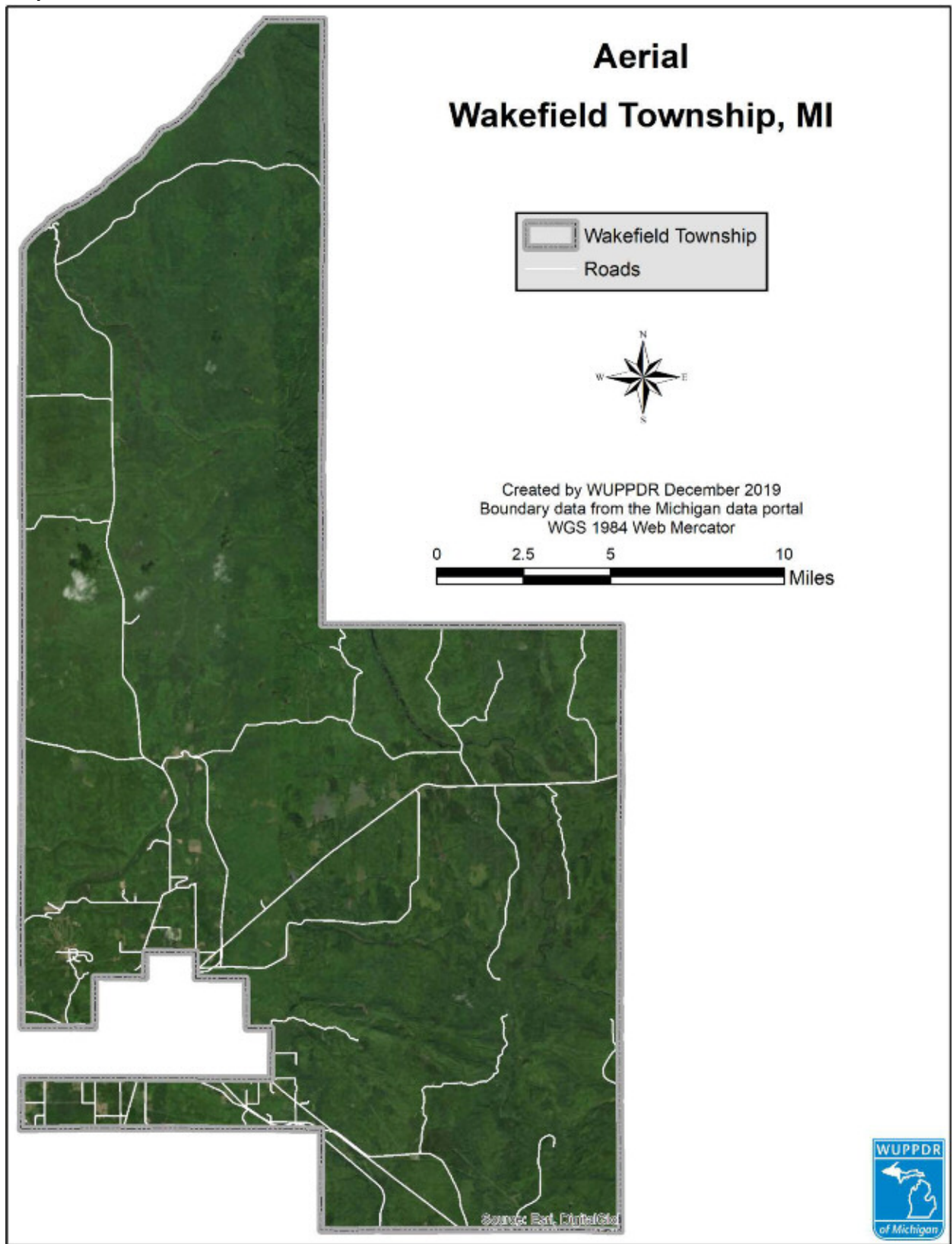
By far the most prominent inland watercourse is the Presque Isle River. Parts of the Presque Isle extend to the southern edge of the county, but most of the mainstem is in the northern and eastern parts of Wakefield Township, running generally north-northwest. The river mouth at Lake Superior is located in the state park at the township's northwest corner. The river is a great asset for recreation such as kayaking, rafting, and fishing, and contains some of the region's largest and most picturesque waterfalls. The river has been within the federal **Wild and Scenic Rivers** System since 1992, with the portion upstream of M-28 classified as Recreational and a portion downstream of M-28 classified as Scenic.

There are no notable inland lakes in the township, the closest being Sunday Lake within the City of Wakefield.

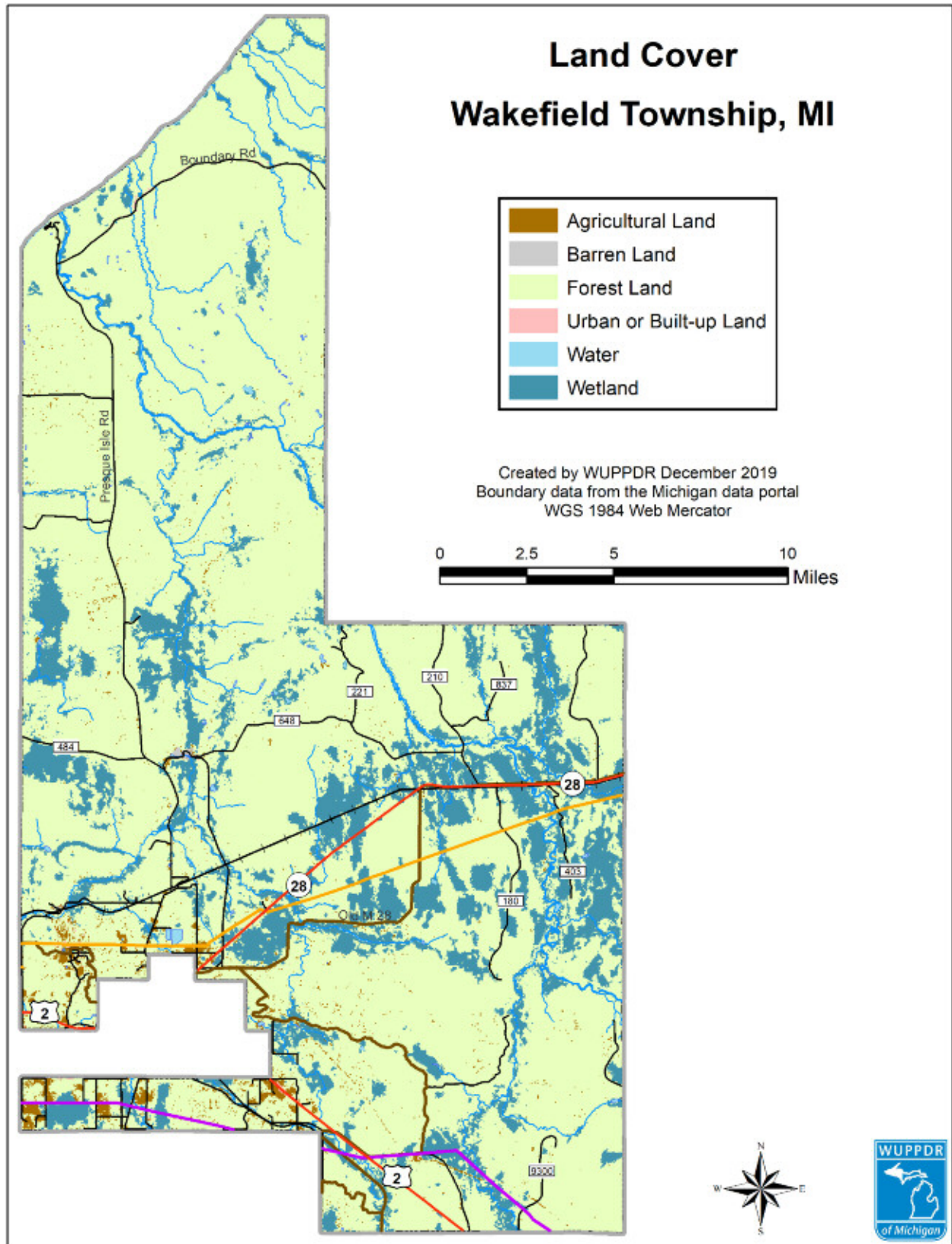
All of the township is within the Black-Presque Isle watershed of Lake Superior.

⁶ Water area is an additional 0.8 miles.

Map 2.1: Aerial



Map 2.2: Land Cover



Soils

The northern part of the township is comprised of the Watton-Alstad association of clayey soils; the southern part, the Tula-Pleine association of wet clayey and loamy soils; and a band in between of the Iron River-Champion-Gogebic association of loamy soils.

Soils with high concentrations of clay, especially in areas of steep slopes, can limit building opportunities somewhat due to low stability. Loamy soils are relatively more stable. These differences need to be considered case by case on building sites.

Wildlife

Wildlife are typical of forest areas of the Upper Great Lakes and Canadian Shield. Whitetail deer and ruffed grouse support a rich hunting heritage. Sport fishing focuses on various salmonids in Lake Superior and the Presque Isle River system, including brook trout in upstream tributaries, and occasional warmwater species such as smallmouth bass. Waterfowl such as ducks, geese, cranes, and great blue heron are common, and bald eagles are present in limited numbers. Other species of note include coyote, fox, beaver, rabbit, black bear, and the occasional gray wolf.

Climate

The Lake Superior Basin, in which the township is located, has a typical humid continental climate characterized by cold, dry winters and warm, humid summers. However, Lake Superior exerts a strong microclimate influence on the immediate shoreline, generally resulting in cooler summers and milder winters than those experienced just a few miles inland. This is due to the effect of Lake Superior on air temperatures and the prevailing westerly winds.

The moderating effect of the lake is experienced in spring and summer months when the cool water tends to level out temperature extremes and reduces the likelihood of frost. Another effect of the lake is the formation of considerable cloudiness when cold air passes over the lake in late fall and early winter. This causes early and heavy snow possibilities, referred to as the lake effect. Both of these effects lessen with increasing distance from Lake Superior.

Where the lake effect is weaker, the township experiences frequent and sometimes rapid weather changes caused by storms from the west and southwest. There are extreme seasonal temperature variations, a fairly uniform annual distribution of precipitation, and large amounts of snow in the winter months.

The nearest National Weather Service measurement station is in Ironwood. There, since 1981, January temperatures have been an average high of 20.3 degrees Fahrenheit and an average low of 2.9 degrees. In July the average high has been 76.1 degrees and average low 55.5 degrees. Average annual precipitation is 34.93 inches, with snowfall averaging 188.2 inches.

Natural Hazards

Hazards in the Western U.P. are, in both perception and reality, most commonly associated with weather. One of the severest threats is winter storms. Residents are accustomed to these but may not be accustomed to some of their infrequent impacts. Storms bring higher probability of transportation accidents and risk of infrastructure failures - particularly electricity. In addition, with prolonged cold temperatures, any loss of natural gas or propane supply due to transportation difficulties could have severe impacts. Generally such incidents have been minor, but they should not be ignored.

Flooding is increasingly a concern. Spring runoff from rapid snowmelt in spring has long been a threat, and frequency of rainstorms has increased in recent years, due in part to a changing climate. The most severe past impacts of flooding in Gogebic County have been in the cities of Wakefield and Ironwood and in Ironwood Township, and severe flooding in those areas in 2016 and 2018 led to state and, in the latter case, federal disaster declarations.

Wakefield Township could be impacted if the Presque Isle Wildlife Dam were to fail. This dam is on the Presque Isle River in Marenisco Township to the south, and it has partially failed twice since 2002 but thus far has not caused significant impacts in Wakefield Township. The Little Black River, which is in a flood zone and has historically contributed to flooding in the City of Wakefield, runs through a small sliver of the township south of the city. The township could also suffer secondary impacts from flooding in the City of Wakefield, since the city provides some township services.

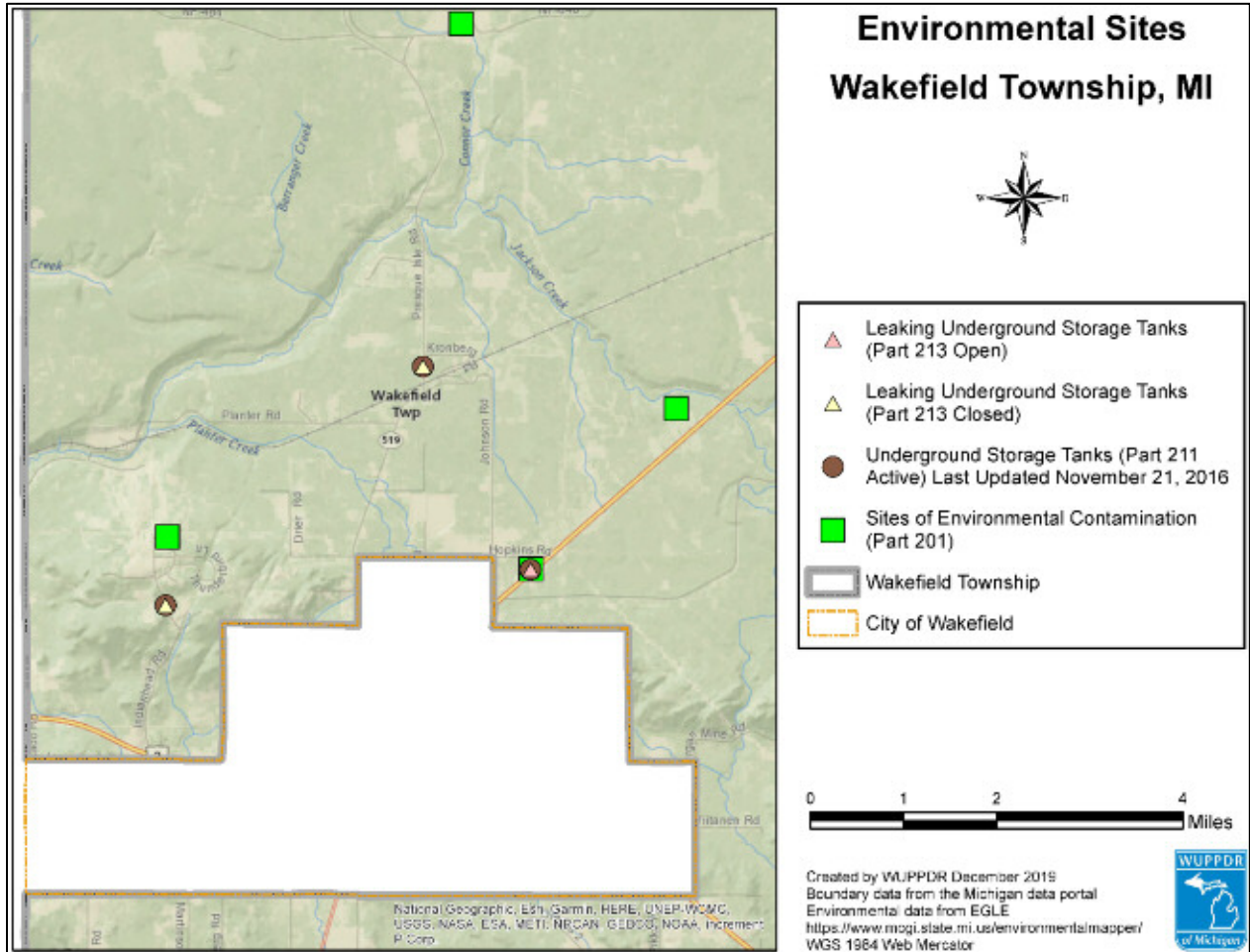


The Presque Isle Wildlife Dam south of the community of Marenisco, in Marenisco Township, was repaired after flooding in 2002 and 2013. Wakefield Township is at minor risk of flood impacts from a future failure.

Environmental Issues

EGLE has identified several sites with environmental issues in Wakefield Township based on various regulations. The sites, shown in **Map 2.3**, include one actively leaking underground storage tank at the former Bingo's store, bar, and motel site on M-28 just northeast of the City of Wakefield; two formerly leaking tanks; and three other contamination sites.

Map 2.3: Environmental Sites



Numerous other sites with environmental issues are within the City of Wakefield and do not directly impact the township.

Land Use and Development

Current Land Use

The vast majority of the township’s land is undeveloped and used for recreation, agriculture, and resource extraction (currently only forestry and some quarry activity; there is no active underground mining). Residential development is concentrated around the City of Wakefield. Other, more dispersed residential development, both full-time and seasonal, is along county roads to the north and along the two highways. The few non-industrial commercial properties are also concentrated near the City. Industrial development is centered on the Wakefield Industrial Park and immediately north of it in the vicinity of Presque Isle Road.

Current land use is shown in **Map 3.1**. For simplicity, the map is generalized so that some contiguous blocks of color (uses) contain scattered parcels of different uses.

Ownership

There are eight general property ownership classifications in Wakefield Township. They are listed in **Table 3.1** with a descending amount of acreage⁷. See also **Map 3.2**.

The vast majority of land is in categories with limitations on taxing. Commercial Forest Reserve, which makes up approximately half of land, grants landowners reduced tax rates (under the Commercial Forest Act, or CFA) if they manage their land for commercial timber harvesting and allow public access for fishing, hunting, and trapping. Most CFA land is owned by institutional investors, so large acreages can change hands at one time if investment goals change or corporate acquisitions occur.

Table 3.1: Property Classifications (Wakefield Twp)

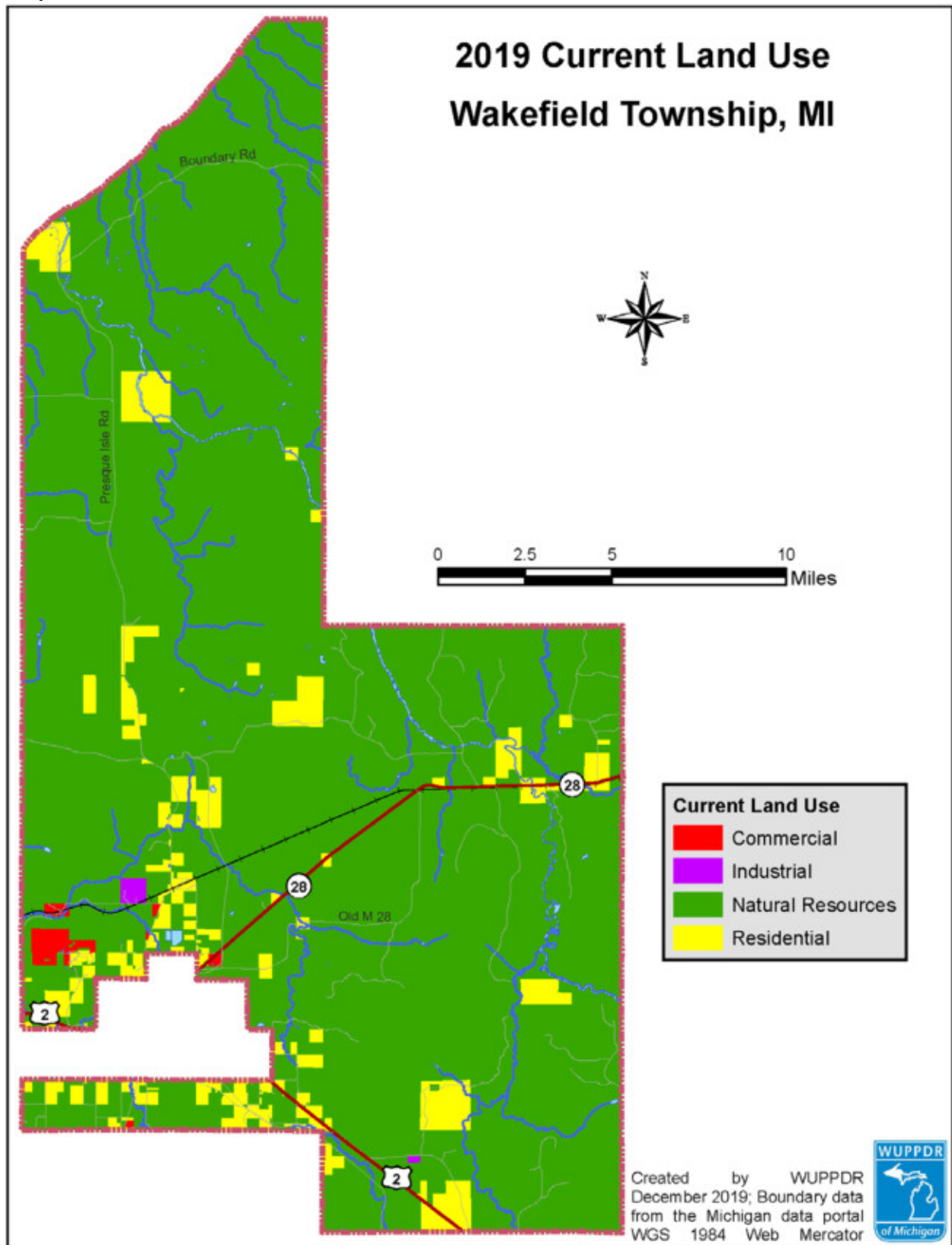
	Acres	% of Total
Commercial Forest Reserve	51,775	48.2%
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)	23,744	22.1%
Timber Cutover (Private)	9,438	8.8%
Michigan Dept of Natural Resources (DNR)	8,238	7.7%
Residential	8,090	7.5%
Gogebic County Forest	5,008	4.7%
Commercial	718	0.7%
Industrial	349	0.3%
Total	107,360 ⁷	

Most DNR forestlands in the township are concentrated in the Porkies. Federal lands are scattered throughout the statutory boundaries of the Ottawa National Forest owned by U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The township is compensated for federal and DNR forestlands through “payments in lieu of taxes” (PILT) which are lower than private property taxes. However, PILT for DNR lands can, depending on category, be higher than CFA tax revenues.

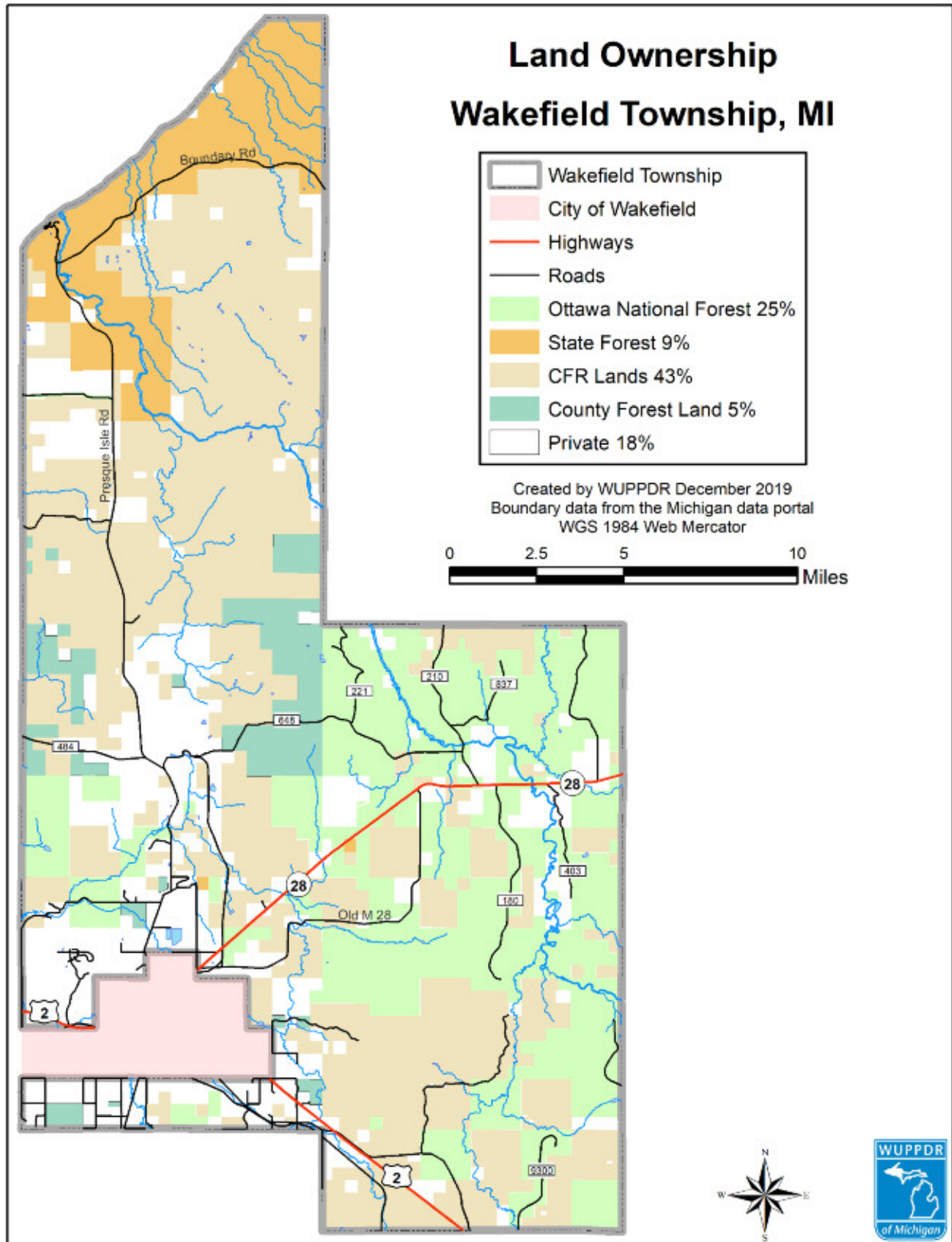
Ownership along the Presque Isle River corridor is of particular interest due to its high environmental and recreational value and classification as a Wild and Scenic River. In 2019, largely due to this designation, USFS purchased several commercial forest parcels from Keweenaw Land Association within Township 48 North, Range 44 West to add to those it already

⁷ This acreage, calculated by Township staff for a specific purpose several years prior to this plan, differs slightly from the 2010 Census-defined land area of 119.7 square miles or 115,000 acres.

Map 3.1: Current Land Use



Map 3.2: Land Ownership



owned within the corridor. This will help to preserve long-term access to the river corridor and may improve prospects for water recreation. See **Map 3.3**.

Despite the prevalence of accessible public land, there is some distaste among area residents about limitations on access, particularly with road closures on the Ottawa.

Zoning Districts

Wakefield Township's three zoning districts correspond generally to the land use categories and geographic areas previously described. Undeveloped land which is intended to remain undeveloped, or developed in harmony with natural resources and recreational use, is in the Natural Resource District, which currently covers the vast majority of the township. The Residential/Restricted Commercial District covers most residential areas and permits many commercial uses. The Industrial and Commercial District is intended for other types of commerce and industry. Additional detail is below; also see **Map 3.4**.

Natural Resource District (NRD)

This district is designed to promote the proper use, enjoyment, and conservation of the forest, water, land, topographic, geologic, historic, and other natural resources of the township, peculiarly adapted to recreational, agricultural, and/or resource extraction uses.

Permitted uses in this district are plant nurseries and greenhouses; farm buildings and structures; seasonal recreation facilities, including camps and cottages used for fewer than 90 days per calendar year; production of geologic resources, and; production of forest products. Conditional uses are flexible based on discretion of the Planning Commission.

This district encompasses the vast majority of land area: approximately 91%.

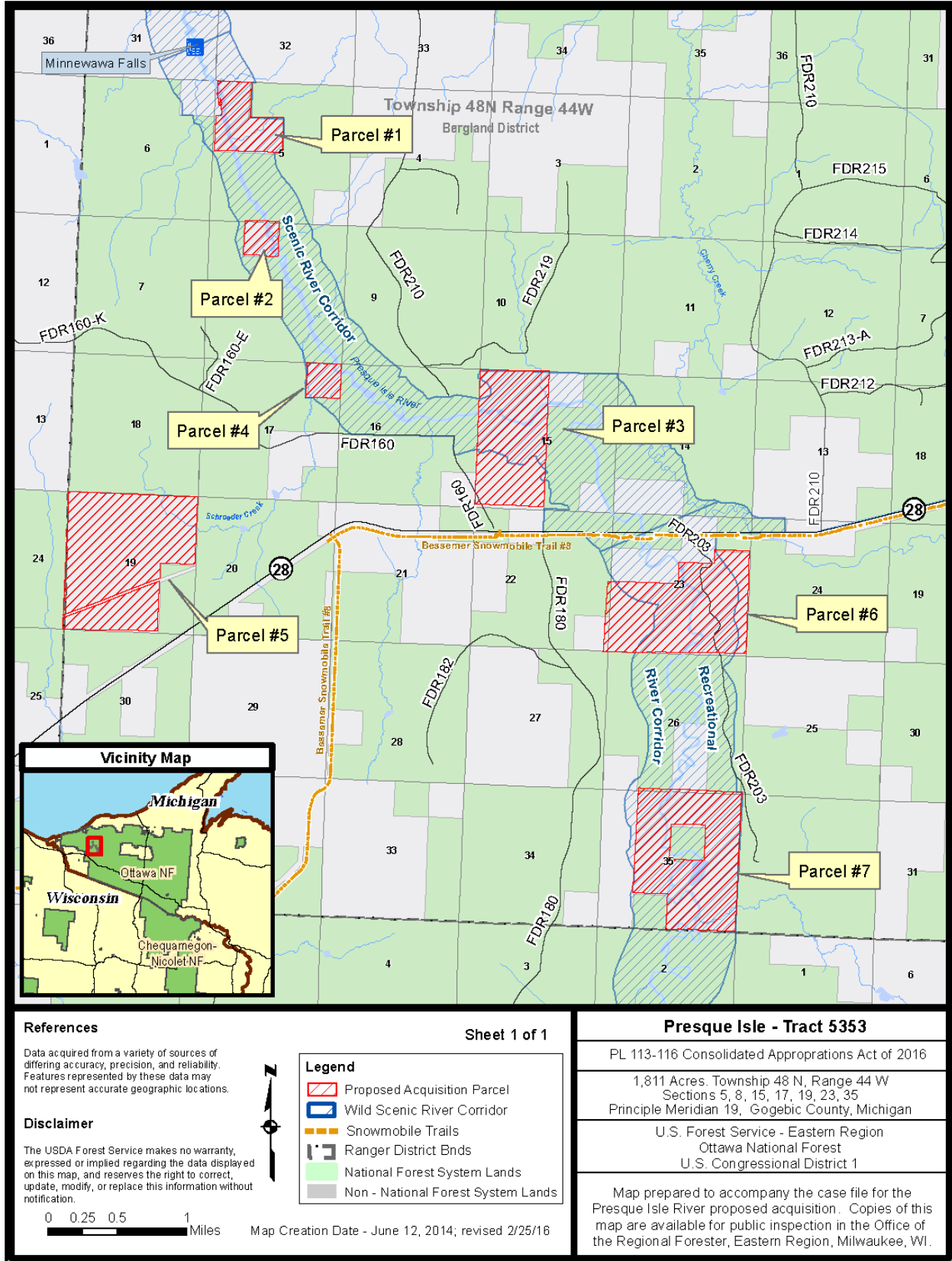
Residential and Restricted Commercial District (RRC)

The purpose of creating this district is to provide accommodations and services essential to fill the needs of a higher-density residential district and the basic commercial needs normally associated with commercial areas. The requirements are intended to protect and stabilize the basic qualities of the District, and to provide suitable and safe conditions for residential living. The essential difference between this and any other residential district is that a moderate density of urban-type residential development will be permitted along with limited commercial activities on moderately sized lots.

Permitted uses in this district include: dwellings up to three units; small daycare facilities; recreational facilities; certain home occupations; professional offices; retail and personal service businesses; campgrounds; public utility services; farms, harvesting, and food stands; and most state-licensed residential facilities. A group childcare home is a conditional use.

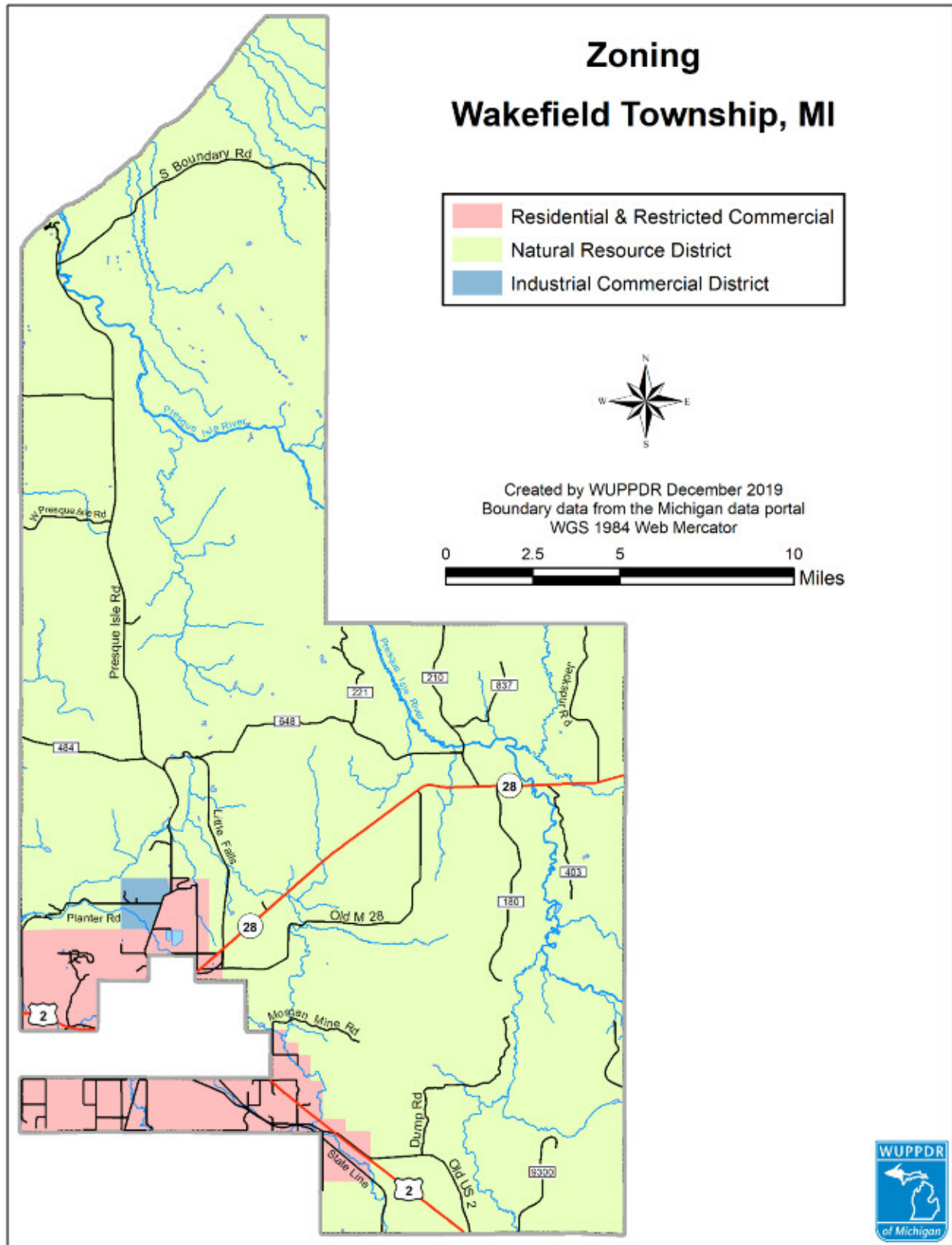
This district encompasses approximately 8% of land area.

Map 3.3: USFS Presque Isle River Land Purchase



T:\FS\NF\Ottawa\Program\5400 Landownership\GIS\5420 Purchase\Keweenaw\PresqueIsleRiver\MXD\Keweenaw\PresqueIsleRiver20160127.mxd S.Burns 6/12/2014; edited 2/25/2016

Map 3.4: Zoning Districts



Industrial and Commercial District (IC)

This district is designed to permit industry and commercial business to develop. This district will provide greater land areas for each use and catering to business and industrial customers as well as the general public. This district is also designed for manufacturing, servicing, compounding, assembling, and commercial businesses which require greater outdoor storage or activities and which, accordingly, require larger sites and may have a greater adverse effect on adjacent properties and other uses.

Permitted uses in this district include: veterinary hospitals, outdoor commercial recreation facilities, wholesale sales, warehouses, farming and agricultural operations, nurseries and greenhouses, gasoline and petroleum storage, concrete and asphalt plants, lumberyards, auto body and paint shops, manufacturing and assembling facilities, and other manufacturing operations that would not be a nuisance or annoyance to surrounding premises. Conditional uses are flexible based on discretion of the Planning Commission.

This district encompasses less than 2% of land area.

Code Enforcement

The Township Board appoints a zoning administrator to implement the property development provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. The Township Supervisor serves as blight officer, who coordinates blight enforcement in accordance with the Ordinance.



With perseverance, blight enforcement can greatly improve community aesthetics and welfare. The photo below shows a different part of the property above after a cleanup by a new owner.



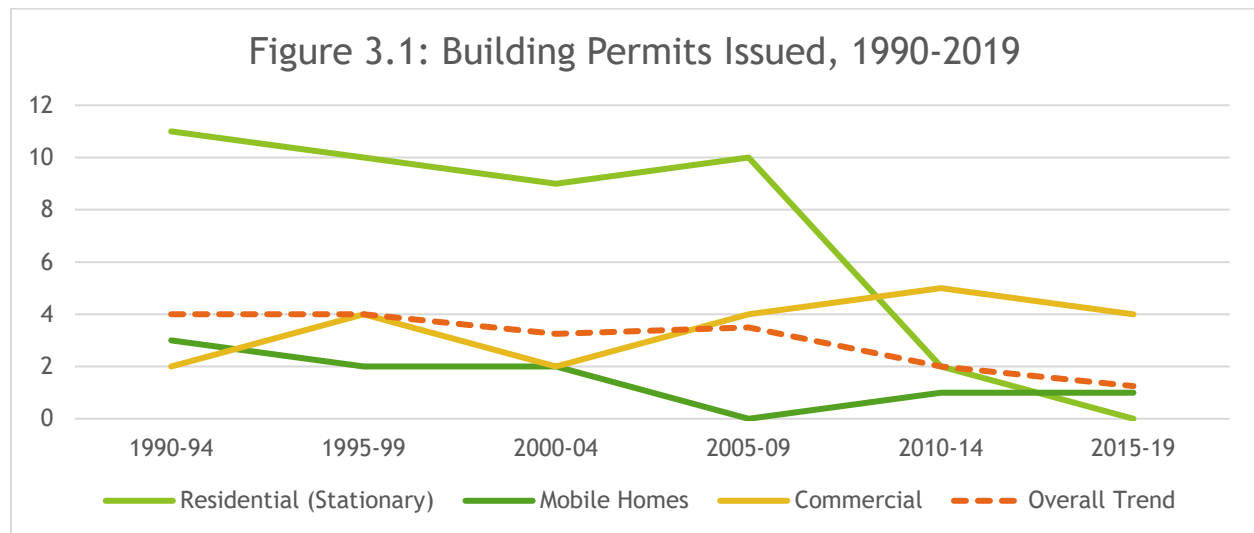
Building Permit Activity

Wakefield Township issues building permits for a variety of building construction and modification activities. The Township has tabulated all building permits issued since 1990 for newly installed mobile homes (“place trailers”), other new residences, major residential additions of living space, and construction of and additions to commercial buildings.

In general, the 1990s had the most permits issued for new home construction and mobile home placements. Residential construction and additions continued at a healthy level until 2009 but sharply decreased after that, consistent with national trends. However, commercial activity has remained high since 2009: 43% of commercial construction since 1990 has occurred from 2010 to present - an encouraging trend. See **Table 3.1** and **Figure 3.1**.

Table 3.1: Building Permits Issued (Wakefield Township, 2019)

	1990-94	1995-99	2000-04	2005-09	2010-14	2015-19	TOTAL
Residential: New Construction	9	8	6	6	1	0	30
Residential: Major Addition	2	2	3	4	1	0	12
Mobile Home: New Placement	3	2	2	0	1	1	9
Commercial	2	4	2	4	5	4	21
TOTAL	16	16	13	14	8	5	72



Future Land Use

No significant change in land use is expected in the near future. If mining prospects change and the Copperwood project is eventually built out, that area will change from relatively undeveloped land to intensive resource extraction. This can be accommodated within the existing zoning district and is not expected to unduly impact any other nearby properties.

Map 3.5 designates intended future land uses. The map is generalized to create larger contiguous areas of various uses over the long term, mainly based on the primary current uses within those areas. Notably, parcels along U.S. 2 west of the city would preferably become commercial over the long term, and the industrial park utilization area is expected to expand.

Zoning Plan

Current zoning is generally consistent with current and desired future development patterns. There are some areas within NRD where future residential, commercial, and industrial uses are intended, but NRD is flexible enough to accommodate these changes when appropriate. Similarly, although the future land use map separates residential from commercial areas in an ideal scenario, for zoning purposes the Township prefers to retain a more flexible combined commercial and residential designation.

During plan development, certain zoning modifications were considered, the first of which was implemented prior to adoption of the plan:

1. Two former zoning districts that were associated with and created primarily for the defunct Michigan Renaissance Zones program were eliminated. The districts, Highway Commercial (CRZ-1) and Light Industrial (LIRZ-1), were absorbed into the three remaining zoning districts based on the current and intended future land uses.
2. Addition of a Highway Commercial *overlay zone* to address conditions related to automobile-oriented development within any primary zoning district was considered to add flexibility to the current CRZ-1 but was deemed unnecessary.
3. Rezoning of a portion of the M-28 corridor northeast of the Wakefield city limits to a district that expressly allows commercial service businesses was considered and deemed not consistent with desired future land use at this time.
4. Addition of single-family residences as an express permitted use in NRD, due to the presence of many such properties in the district, was considered but determined not necessary since the district’s current provisions are flexible enough to allow this use.

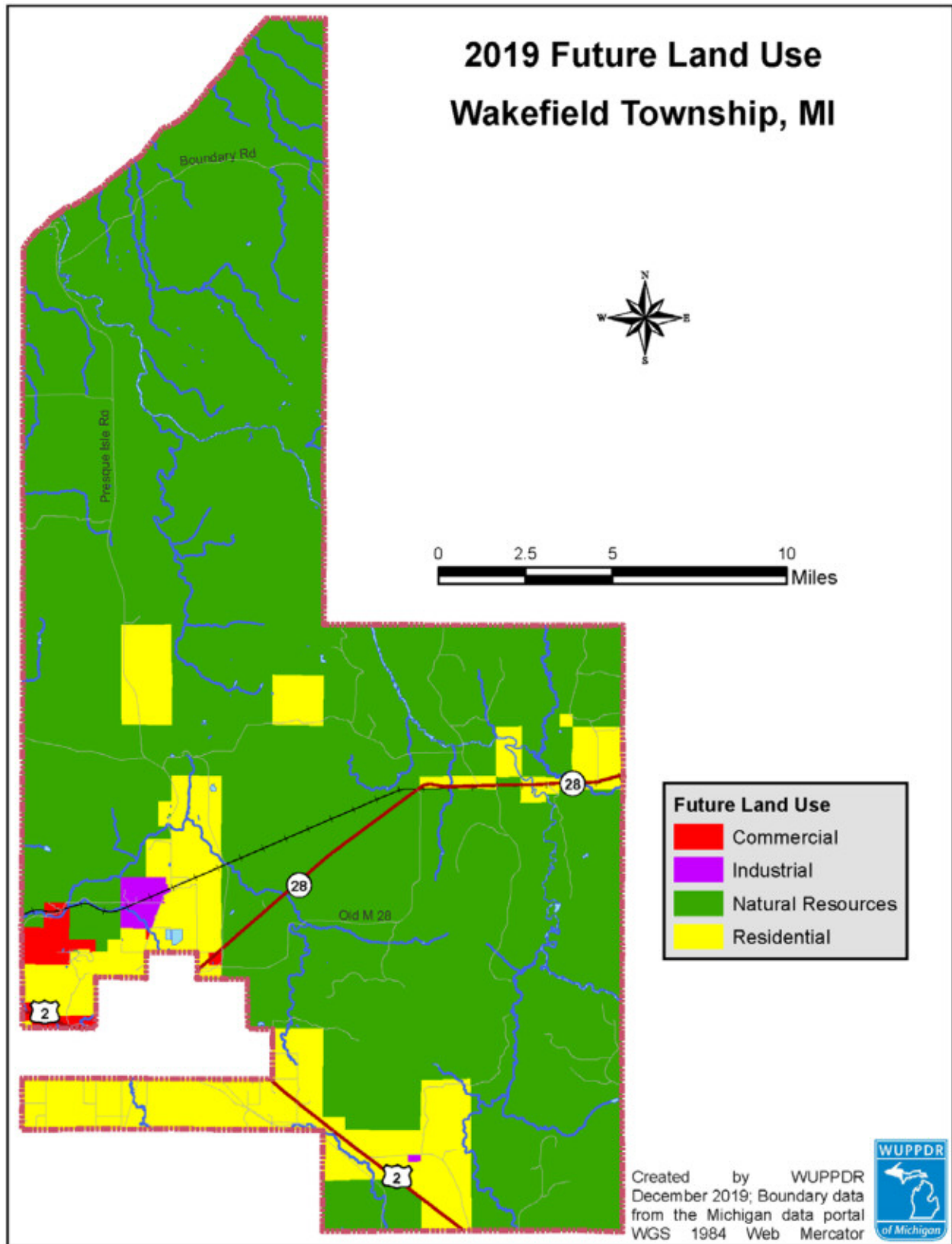
No changes to dimensional provisions in the Ordinance are planned at this time.

Table 3.2 shows the relationship of future land use categories to current zoning districts. Most future land use areas incorporate parts of more than one current zoning district.

Table 3.2: Future Land Use and Current Zoning Districts

Future Land Use Category	Current Zoning District
Residential	NRD (parts)
	RRC (parts)
Commercial	IC (parts)
	RRC (parts)
Industrial	IC (almost all)
	NRD (1 parcel)
Natural Resource	NRD

Map 3.5: Future Land Use



Public Services and Infrastructure

Township Government

Wakefield Township is a general law township governed by a five-member elected Board of Trustees, comprised of a supervisor, clerk, and treasurer (all part-time paid staff), and two trustees.

Other boards appointed by the Board of Trustees are:

- Planning Commission
- Zoning Board of Appeals
- Construction Board of Appeals
- Business Member Coalition

The Township appoints one or more representatives to each of the following multi-jurisdictional boards:

- Gogebic Range Solid Waste Management Authority
- Gogebic Range Water Authority
- Gogebic County Veterans Affairs Council
- Section 32 (Indianhead Subdivision) Sewer Authority

Unelected township staff are deputy clerk, deputy treasurer, deputy supervisor, custodian, and as-needed seasonal employees. Other internal titles under purview of the township are the assessor, blight officer, zoning administrator, and an attorney under contract.

The Township Hall, where staff are based and meetings held, is the Township Government's only building. It is located at 414 North County Road 519.

Finances

The Township's Fiscal Year 2019-20 initial budget is \$259,772. The greatest category of expenditures is board and staff/officer expenses, at \$86,536 or 33%. The second category is road maintenance, at \$50,000 or 19%. Property taxes account for over half of revenues, and of these, over half are paid by petroleum products transmission lines traversing the township, owned by Northern Natural Gas, Enbridge Energy, and Trans Canada. State revenue is a distant second-place source, at 11%.

The 2018 millage rate for PRE and agricultural exemption is 26.8955 mills. This rate and all other millage classifications in the township are the lowest of all units of government in Gogebic County. The township portion of the millage as adjusted for 2019 is 3.0 mills.

2019 survey results indicated widespread satisfaction with tax rates and the overall state of Township finances. Low taxes are a strong attraction and retention tool for both residents and businesses, especially when the quality of public services remains high.

Public Services

For a primarily rural township, Wakefield offers a wide variety of services to residents. Many of these are shared with the City of Wakefield. The Township contributes funding to the City for access to its **library, cemetery, parks, and fire protection**; and a small portion of township **street lighting** cost (the remainder purchased from Xcel).

Gogebic Range Solid Waste Management Authority provides curbside **refuse collection** to full-time township residents under a three-year competitively bid contract with the Township, and **recycling** drop-off is available at the Authority’s transfer station. The Township also offers a **spring cleanup** for drop-off disposal of miscellaneous waste at no cost to residents. Township residents receive service from Beacon **Ambulance** through a countywide millage.

Energy and Utilities

Electricity

Xcel Energy, a.k.a. Northern States Power Company, which is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, services Wakefield Township. Xcel is known for having relatively low residential electric rates among Western Upper Peninsula utilities.

Heating Fuels

Among occupied housing units, according to 2017 ACS, the most common home heating fuel in Wakefield Township is bottled, tank, or LP gas, serving 63 units (40.1%). These fuels are readily available from area suppliers, but prices can be volatile depending on seasonal demands and occasional supply constraints. The second greatest most prevalent fuel is wood, serving 39 units. Firewood is supplied either by residents themselves or by local suppliers. See **Table 4.1**.

Table 4.1: Home Heating Fuel Sources (2017 ACS)

	Number
All occupied housing units	157
Bottled, tank, or LP gas	63
Wood	39
Electricity	24
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.	20
Utility (natural) gas	9
Other fuel	2

Natural gas is available from Xcel Energy primarily along County Road 519 (C.R. 519/Presque Isle Road), with a line that extends to Wakefield Township Industrial Park and serves a small number of residential customers. Service may be available in some locations along the periphery of the City of Wakefield. Natural gas is also provided to Indianhead Resort and serves its many recreational/seasonal housing units not reflected in ACS fuel source data.

It is possible for customers to connect into the high-pressure natural gas transmission line along Highways U.S. 2 and M-28, but the requirement for costly pressure conversion equipment makes this financially infeasible. The Township has worked with Xcel in an attempt to expand utility natural gas to these highway corridors and the Johnson Road corridor in the south of the township, but costs and low customer concentrations have thus far made prevented this.

Water and Sewer

Needs are met by on-site wells and/or septic systems in most of the township and are the responsibility of individual property owners. These systems are regulated by the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department; there is no local wellhead protection district or ordinance. Some township properties on the periphery of the City of Wakefield are connected to the City water utility, but no township properties are connected to the City sewer system.

Indianhead Subdivision (the resort and associated condominiums) has a drinking water system operated by the Gogebic Range Water Authority (GRWA). Water is sourced from multiple wells throughout the county. The 2018 state “Lead and Copper Rule” enforced by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) will require water testing at a sample of properties served by community drinking water supplies such as GRWA and lead service line replacement up to individual properties over the next several years. This will modernize systems and improve public health but will present financial challenges to communities.

Indianhead also has a sewer system not associated with GRWA. The small system is operated and managed by Gogebic County but governed by the Section 32 Sewer Authority, half of whose members are currently appointed by Wakefield Township and half by the County. The Indianhead systems are sufficient for the resort in its current state, but given the small scale and self-containment of the Section 32 sewer system, its capacity should be monitored to ensure future needs are met. It is expected that any future development elsewhere in the township would be of a scale sufficiently served by on-site well and septic systems.

In order to improve data and facilitate asset management, Wakefield Township is exploring options for geographic information systems to inventory these water and sewer systems.

Although Wakefield Township is represented on the boards of both GRWA and the Section 32 Authority, it is not considered a joint operator of either system.

Broadband Internet

Broadband service is critical to residents’ quality of life and to economic development. Broadband is now demanded to the extent that it is not uncommon for people to reject a potential residence where broadband is not available, and the market value of a house can be dramatically decreased by lack of broadband. In commerce and industry, most business types today are not viable at all where broadband is not available, and many types require higher speeds or greater reliability than available in most of Wakefield Township.

Broadband is perhaps most important for home-based “remote” workers who need to perform large file transfers in industries such as marketing and media production - and these types of workers are otherwise among the township’s best prospects for population growth and economic development.

The public opinion survey conducted for this plan collected information about broadband satisfaction, services, and providers. Not all respondents answered every question, but of 31

respondents, 24 (77%) indicated they were subscribed to broadband internet service. On a satisfaction scale of 1-5, with 1 being least and 5 being most satisfied, the average score was 2.7 (slightly less satisfied than average, overall). See **Table 4.2** for more data on internet service and technology ownership.

Each respondent could only indicate one broadband provider serving his or her property. AT&T DSL/U-Verse was most prevalent, with 41% of respondents. AT&T may be phasing out this service, as AT&T does not market availability even in the vicinity of addresses that are currently served by it. Second most prevalent was AT&T LTE hot spot, with 18%. Charter/Spectrum is available in limited areas, with 3 respondents or 9%. Another 3 respondents subscribed to GogebicRange.net, a small fixed-wireless (line-of-sight towers) provider.

Table 4.2: Internet Subscriptions (% of occupied households)

	2017 ACS	Public Opinion Survey
Subscribes to any internet	62.4%	
Subscribes to broadband	56.7%	77.4%
Cellular data plan	28.0%	20.6% (LTE hot spot)
Cable, fiber optic, DSL	40.1%	50.0%
Satellite	10.2%	8.8%
Owns any computing device(s)	75.8%	
Smartphone	42.7%	
Only smartphone	1.3%	

Notes: 1) 34 respondents to the public opinion survey indicated a broadband type/provider vs. 31 who responded they subscribed to broadband; 2) each respondent to public opinion survey could only indicate one broadband provider; 3) respondents to ACS could indicate more than one type of broadband

The Township Hall on Presque Isle Road receives service from the Merit Fiber Network as a public facility. Residential fiber service is not available. However, the Township has an arrangement with GogebicRange.net to provide customer access to the fiber connection via towers within a certain range. Merit charges the Township for data usage that originates from GogebicRange customers, and GogebicRange reimburses the Township from customer fees. This service and other GogebicRange towers provide high-quality service, but only within a small range; hilly terrain presents a major obstacle to line-of-sight transmission.

Area stakeholders from Gogebic County and Iron County, WI participate in the Gogebic Range Broadband Committee, which meets monthly to discuss broadband service issues and opportunities in the area. The Connect Michigan nonprofit organization works with the committee, other community leaders, and WUPPDR on an ongoing basis to improve the quality and availability of geographic data about broadband service availability and demand. This will assist providers with meeting market demand and will improve accuracy of information that may be incorporated into broadband grant applications.

Telephone Service

Landline service is provided by AT&T. AT&T and Verizon cellular networks are available in some parts of the township, mainly in the south; signal quality varies dramatically throughout.

Education

There are four K-12 school districts in Gogebic County; the township is located in the **Wakefield-Marenisco public school district**, which has a single building in the City of Wakefield with a 2018-19 student enrollment of 286. Enrollment has fluctuated somewhat over the past 16 years for which data are readily available, but there has been no meaningful net change since the 2002-03 enrollment of 279. Over the past three years the school has generally had higher rates of graduation, postsecondary enrollment, advanced coursework, and attendance than peer districts and the state average.⁸

All K-12 districts in Gogebic and Ontonagon counties are part of the **Gogebic-Ontonagon Intermediate School District (GOISD)**, based in Bergland (Ontonagon County). Intermediate school districts in Michigan provide a variety of multi-district support and instructional services. Many ISDs offer student special education, career & technical education (CTE), and teacher continuing education.

There are state and national trends to improve participation in skilled and technical trades that require CTE coursework but not a four-year college degree. CTE programs tend to cause less student debt and provide access to well-paying jobs. These programs also fulfill workforce needs of many employers around Wakefield Township. As of the 2019-20 school year, GOISD offers eight CTE courses to Gogebic County students (located at various the Ironwood school and Gogebic Community College):

- Agriculture
- Business Management
- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)
- Computer-Aided Drafting/Design (CAD)
- Computer Programming/Robotics
- Construction Trades
- Health Careers
- Welding⁹

GOISD is also supporting development of a “maker space” at the Wakefield-Marenisco School that will support career pathways in STEM (science, technology, math, engineering).

Gogebic Community College is a public 1- to 2-year college with its main campus in Ironwood. GCC offers 30 career programs resulting in an Associate’s Degree or Certificate, in addition to transfer programs (Associate’s Degree coursework transferrable to many four-year institutions) and high school/college dual education opportunities. GCC recently hired a Director of Workforce Development who will focus on workforce needs in relation to college programs.

The nearest four-year institution to Wakefield Township is **Northland College**, a private liberal arts college in Ashland, Wisconsin. The nearest state university is **Michigan Technological University** in Houghton, which is nationally recognized for engineering and technology programs up to the doctoral level. Michigan Tech is also the largest employer in the Western U.P.

⁸ See www.mischooldata.org

⁹ A common skilled workforce need anecdotally indicated by area employers is for welders. It is notable that five respondents to the public opinion survey were credentialed welders.

Healthcare

Gogebic County is served by Aspirus Ironwood Hospital, a 25-bed critical access hospital with 24-hour physician-staffed emergency department. The hospital provides on-site access to around 80 doctors either full time or on a rotating basis. The hospital offers typical rural hospital services, including access to MRI and other diagnostics; surgeries; inpatient obstetrics and coronary intensive care services; and a variety of community health education programs. No medical offices or services are located within the township.

Recreation

The only recreation facility owned by Wakefield Township is a basketball hoop in the paved Township Hall parking lot. However, the City has some developed facilities, and the Township has a regionally recognized winter sports resort; an abundance of public land along with the developed facilities of the Porkies; and innumerable recreation opportunities in the surrounding area. The township and surrounding area pride themselves on having four distinct seasons that allow a wide variety of activities, and winter recreation in particular is magnetic for a certain group of people - which attracts visitors, some of whom may become residents.

City of Wakefield

The City, with some support from Township funds, has a basketball court for public use within the City of Wakefield office building (a former school) and a popular park and campground,



Wakefield City Hall, a former school building, has a well-maintained basketball court for public use.

Eddy Park. The park, located on the north shore of Sunday Lake, has a sandy beach with swimming area and water amenities (play structures), pavilions, boat launch, large playground, and a campground. The campground has 71 sites, around 20 of which have full hookups (electric, water, sewer), and most of the remainder have electric and water hookups. There are also

10 “walk-in” tent sites. Much of Sunday Lake is encircled by a paved pathway that provides additional recreation opportunities.

Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park (Porkies)

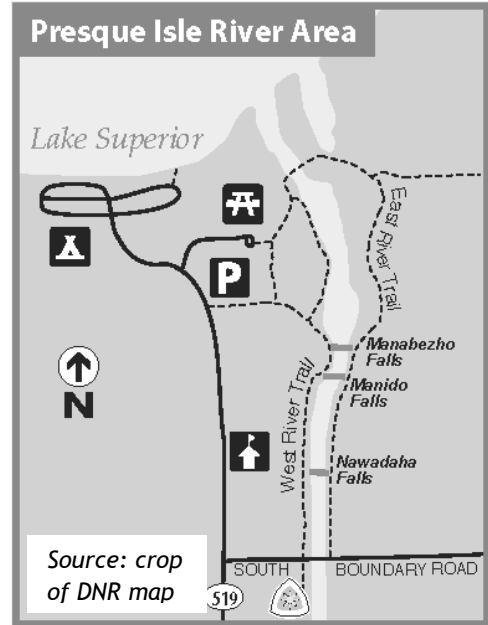
The Porkies is the largest state park in Michigan, with 60,000 acres, most of which is undeveloped; the designated wilderness portion of the park does not allow any mechanical

vehicles. The eastern end of the park in Ontonagon County, is most developed, with a visitor center, modern 100-site campground (Union Bay) with a boat launch on Lake Superior, and winter sports area with downhill skiing. There are also two rustic “outpost” campgrounds and two scenic overlooks with picnic areas, including the popular Lake of the Clouds. Of many cabins, yurts, and a lodge available for rent, the vast majority are in this part of the park. Backcountry camping is also permitted.

The western arm of the park, terminating at the Presque Isle Scenic Area, is in Wakefield Township. This area has a rustic 50-site campground and picnic area. There is no running water or electricity. With its few developed facilities, this part of the park is quieter and has some of the most scenic features, including spectacular waterfalls and a rugged coastline. See **Map 4.1**.

Big Snow (Indianhead) Resort

One of two interconnected resort areas - the other being Blackjack to the west - Indianhead accommodates many year-round activities and provides seasonal housing (almost all “vacant” multi-unit housing in the township is in one of Indianhead’s several condominiums). Winter activities and facilities include downhill skiing, snowboarding (terrain park), snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, skating (rink), snowmobile trail access, and equipment and snowmobile rentals. Other amenities include a pro shop; ski school;



Skiing is available in the township for every level of experience and intensity.



daycare; art studio; several eating and drinking establishments; lodge/hotel; health club; and indoor pool, sauna, and hot tub.

North Country Trail (NCT) and Iron Belle Trail

The NCT hiking trail, a national recreation trail from North Dakota to New York, passes through the township mainly near Lake Superior. This section of NCT is part of the Porkies network of trails. It is also part of the Iron Belle Hiking Route which begins in Ironwood and ends in Southeast Michigan. This connectivity improves awareness and exposure of Wakefield Township as a recreation destination.

Part of the Iron Belle Bicycle Route, the better known of the two legs of the Iron Belle, is a dedicated pathway from Ironwood to Ramsay west of the City of Wakefield. The pathway may eventually extend to the City; there has been no discussion of continuing it into the township east of the city, but the Township recognizes that may be a possibility at some point. This route is under purview of the Western Gateway Trail Authority.

Motorized/Multi-Use Recreation Trails

Wakefield Township hosts parts of an extensive network of off-road vehicle (ORV) trails established and maintained by MI-TRALE in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. ORVs are also permitted to travel on the extreme right edge of county roads. ORV routes, along with snowmobile trails, are critical assets for the township, and every effort should be made to continue trail access. Snowmobile trail connectivity from the City of Ironwood to City of Wakefield has been a challenge at times, but east from the cities, trails are fairly well established and less at risk due to lower levels of land development. Despite the value added by these trails, noise and other negative impacts on adjacent property owners should be considered and mitigated when necessary. Snowmobile trails are maintained by the Gogebic Range Trail Authority.



Trail recreation opportunities are abundant in all seasons.

Water-Based “Trails”

The Presque Isle River is an ample resource for water-based recreation. Along with relatively low-intensity activities like fishing and canoeing, parts of the river are revered for whitewater paddling or rafting up to Class 5¹⁰. There is an opportunity to promote and improve the river as a “water trail”: an established route set up to facilitate water travel recreation. This could include additional access points, campsites, and wayfinding signage, though Wild and Scenic River status and Ottawa National Forest priorities impose some limitations on development.

The existing “Western U.P. Water Trail” follows the Lake Superior shore of the township and to its west and east. The Presque Isle River Campground in the Porkies was designated as one of three access points for the route in Gogebic County. The Western U.P. Water Trail has not been actively promoted in recent years, but there is a possibility of renewed funding for planning and implementation in the future, and this brings a possibility to promote it in conjunction with a Presque Isle River inland water trail.

Ottawa National Forest

One of four national forests in Michigan, the Ottawa is made up of nearly a million acres spanning parts of six counties in the western half of the U.P. Wakefield Township is on the western end of the forest, and the U.S. Forest Service is by far the largest owner of public land in the township. There are no developed amenities of the Ottawa in the township, but a small parking area provides access to **Wolf Mountain**, a scenic viewpoint that is the highest point in Gogebic County, located the south end of the township. Other parts of the forest to the south and east offer dozens of boat launches, campgrounds, trails, and other amenities.

Commercial Forest Reserve

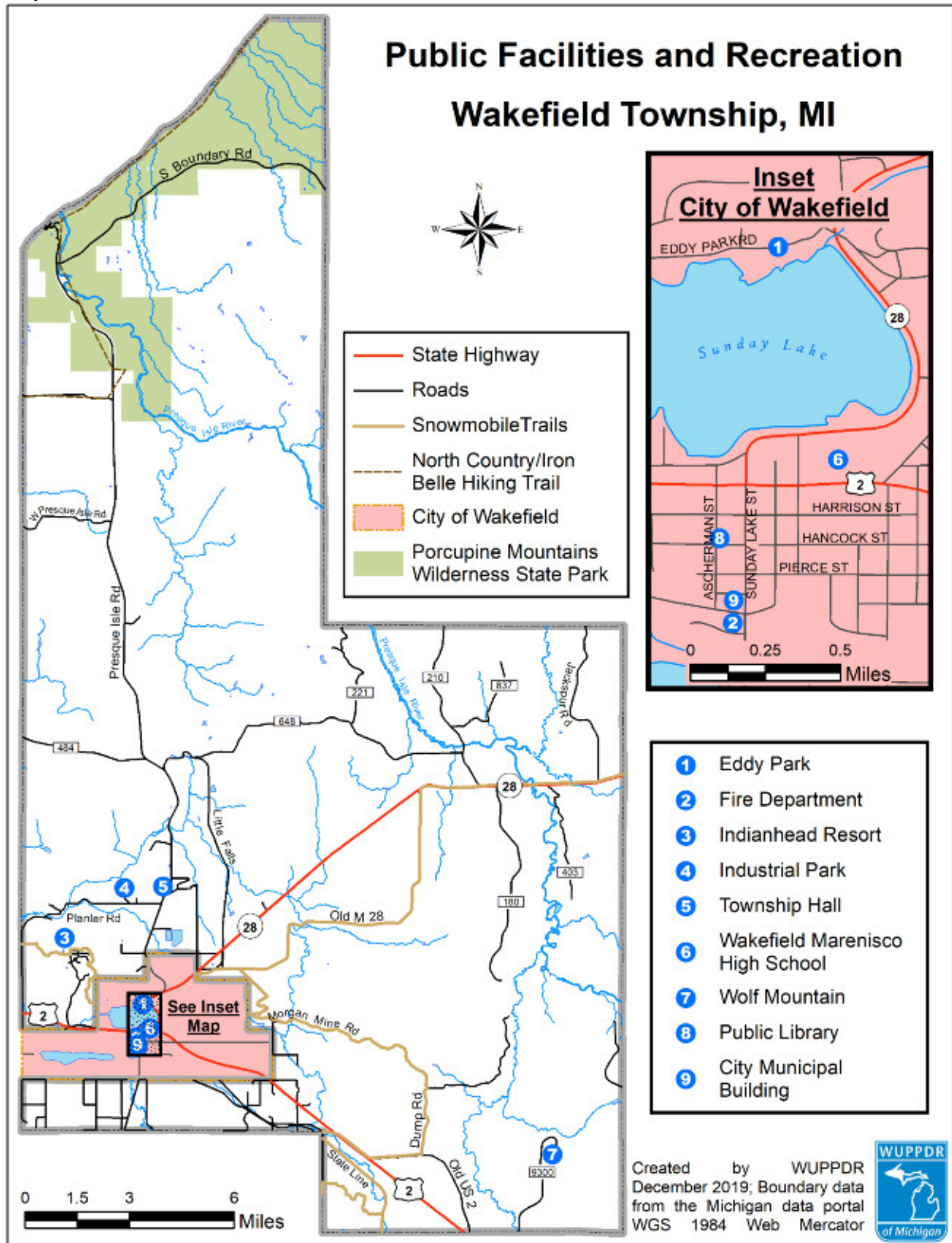
Michigan’s Commercial Forest Act (CFA) lowers property tax for landowners on the condition that they manage their properties for commercial forest harvesting and allow public access for fishing, hunting, and trapping. Access is not required to be provided for any other reason, and road access is not required, but many large landholders allow other types of recreation, including ORV and snowmobile use. This land is collectively known as Commercial Forest Reserve, and it makes up nearly half of township land.

Broad public land access has come to be accepted by residents of Wakefield Township and U.P. overall, but this access is never guaranteed, and land can change ownership and CFA enrollment status at any time.

Key public facilities and recreation assets are shown in **Map 5.1**.

¹⁰ <https://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/detail/id/3834/>

Map 5.1: Public Facilities and Recreation



Roads

County Road Network

As in all townships in Michigan, Wakefield Township has no roads under its jurisdiction. All public roads within the township, other than the State Trunkline (Highways M-28 and U.S. 2) and minor access roads within the Porkies, are under jurisdiction of the **Gogebic County Road Commission (GCRC)**, an independent local unit of government responsible for managing rural roads. GCRC's main facility is adjacent to the Courthouse Annex building in the City of Bessemer. Other garages are in Marenisco and Watersmeet townships.

Wakefield Township provides supplementary funding to GCRC under contract to expedite and improve road maintenance on minor township roads. For Fiscal Year 2019-20, \$50,000 is budgeted for this purpose. An important factor in project funding is the material used for resurfacing: gravel, asphalt blacktop, or asphalt "chipseal." Chipseal costs approximately one-tenth as much as blacktop and has recently been favored. Regular maintenance of gravel roads is also important to accommodate travel in particularly rural areas of the township.

County roads are classified in two different ways. One classification is the state-level Michigan Transportation Fund categories of 1) primary, 2) local, 3) urban primary, and 4) urban local. Of these, 26 miles are classified primary and 40 miles local. No roads in the township are in either urban categories.

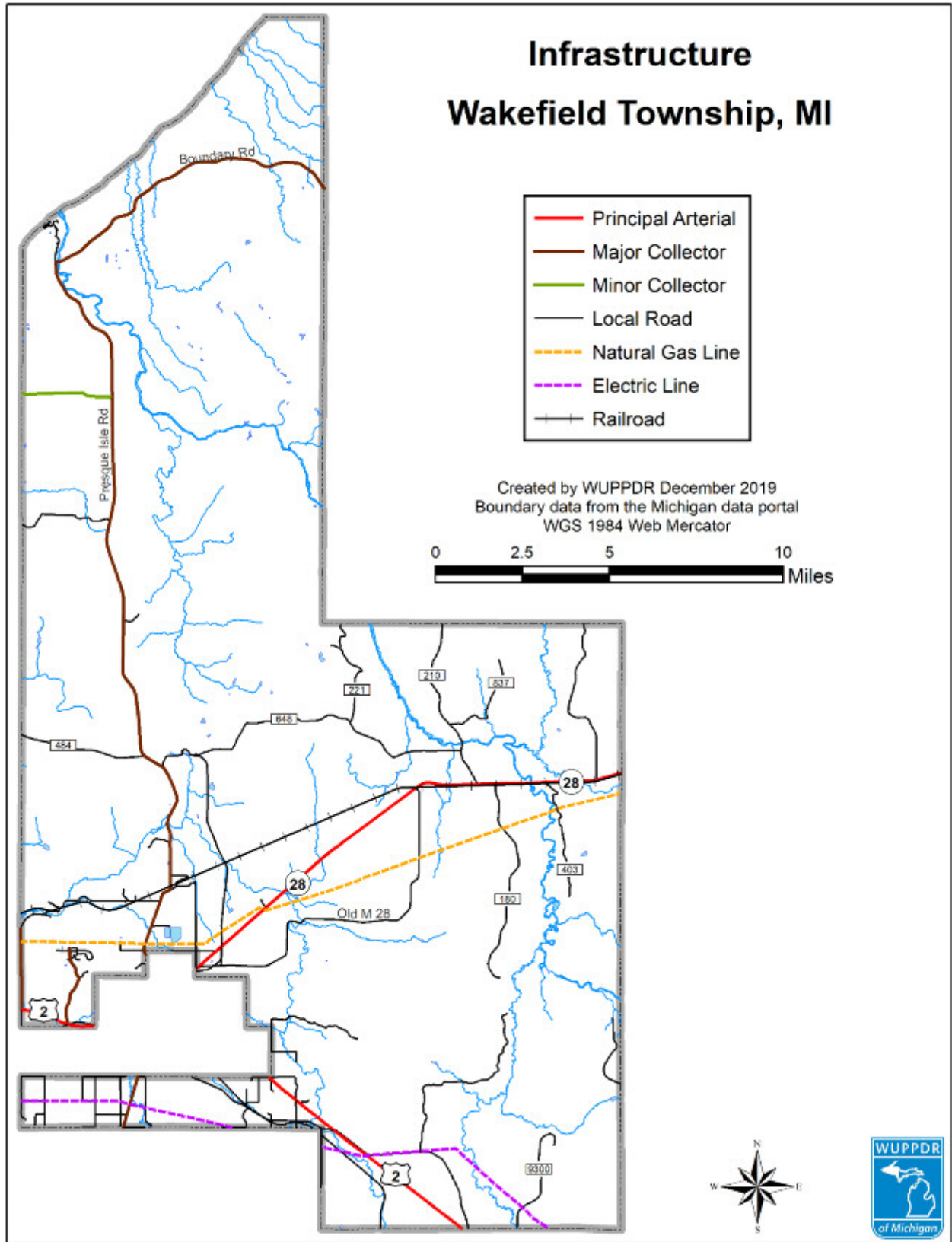
The other classification is National Functional Classification (NFC), with 7 hierarchical classifications, level 7 (Local) being lowest. Other roads are classified as Non-Certified (0). In Wakefield Township, classifications are as follows:

- Level 3 (Other Principal Arterial): M-28 & U.S. 2
- Level 5 (Major Collector):
 - South Boundary Road
 - Thomaston Road/County Road (C.R.) 519/Presque Isle Road
 - Indianhead Road
 - Asteroid Mine Road (on western township border)
- Level 6 (Minor Collector): Unnamed Road (west from northern portion of C.R. 519)
- Level 7 (NFC Local):
 - Jackspur Road
 - Old M-28
 - Old U.S. 2
 - Most roads within two miles of City of Wakefield
 - Two small segments off C.R. 519

In addition to roads themselves, the Road Commission is responsible for maintaining bridges and drainage systems, including culverts and free-flowing roadside ditches, integrated within the road network.

See **Map 5.2** for road classifications and other infrastructure.

Map 5.2: Infrastructure



County Road Projects (as of 2020)

The largest county road project planned in the township through 2022 is reconstruction of 13 miles of C.R. 519. The road would be fully reconstructed to all-season standards, in addition to installation of upgraded guardrail, drainage improvements, and paved shoulders, from the northern Wakefield city limit to the site of the proposed Copperwood mining project (see the **Economy** chapter for more information), to facilitate year-round shipment of copper ore concentrate. The C.R. 519/Johnson Road intersection would also be widened. The total project cost is approximately \$8 million, with 60% of funding from **Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)** Transportation Economic Development Fund Category A and the remainder from Copperwood Resources. The project is currently on hold pending future activity by Copperwood.

The only major project currently planned on a federal-aid road in the township through 2022 is at the Planter Road and Chippewa Drive. This will include removal of the railroad crossing on Planter, repaving of Planter from C.R. 519 to Chippewa, and repaving of Chippewa. The project is planned for 2020, with GCRC funding 20% of the cost and state funds the remainder. Federal-aid road projects are prioritized within a three-year time horizon through the Rural Task Force program managed by MDOT.



This inactive railroad crossing near the Industrial Park is set to be removed in a 2020 road project.

State Trunkline

The Trunkline is under jurisdiction of MDOT, but GCRC conducts winter maintenance and some other maintenance activities on these routes within the county under contract. For a variety of reasons, MDOT requires winter maintenance to be conducted to a relatively higher standard than county roads. However, to address concerns of county residents, GCRC recently decreased its county road snow plowing threshold for the morning shift from four inches to two inches (sometime prior to 2015 the threshold had been six inches). Overnight, the Trunkline remains the priority.

Wakefield Township is a member of the **U.S. 2/M-28 Corridor Access Management Team**, which, facilitated by MDOT, reviews and makes recommendations related to traffic patterns and site plans for new developments along the highway corridor. The Township has adopted an Access Management Ordinance to supplement the Zoning Ordinance in regulating development along the corridor. The Township intends to continue to participate in this process and enforce

the ordinance to enhance traffic safety and improve efficiency and aesthetics along the corridor.

Rail

The **Canadian National Railroad** originates at the former White Pine Mine in Ontonagon County at its east end and traverses Wakefield Township east to west, paralleling M-28 for about four miles from the eastern border of Wakefield Township and Gogebic County, then continuing generally west-southwest to the western border of the township. From there the railroad continues west through western Gogebic County and into Wisconsin.

The railroad is not currently in use, and removal of the Planter Road track crossing will impede future use, but the railroad can restore the road crossing in the future if necessary.

Air

The **Gogebic-Iron (WI) County Airport** is located five miles north of the City of Ironwood. The airport is available for general aviation as well as commercial passenger service under the Essential Air Service program. Facilities available include a modern terminal, fuel, tie-down parking, hangars, mechanics on call, and local rental cars. Most operations are general aviation, split fairly equally between local and itinerant/transient. From June 1, 2018 through May 31, 2019 there were 5,766 total enplanements, 1,706 of which were air carrier (passenger).¹¹

Currently passenger service is provided by Boutique Air, an independent regional carrier with 18 round-trip flights per week to Minneapolis and Chicago.



The airport's passenger terminal building was constructed in 2010. Among the newest in the U.P., it offers free passenger conveniences such as wi-fi, coffee, and parking.

¹¹ <https://www.airportiq5010.com/5010web/dashboard/basedaircraft>

Passenger Ground Transit

Indian Trails offers daily scheduled intercity passenger bus service with a stop at Holiday Stationstore in the City of Wakefield. The bus traverses U.S. 2 west to a hub in Duluth, MN, and east to a hub in Escanaba then continuing into the Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

Gogebic County Transit Authority offers “flex route” passenger bus service along U.S. 2 from the City of Ironwood to City of Wakefield Monday through Friday. Service is from 6 am to 6 pm with a frequency of one bus per hour. The bus route departs slightly from the



Gogebic County Transit serves Wakefield along the U.S. 2 corridor.

U.S. 2 corridor as needed to serve passengers, so pickups should be scheduled in advance. On-demand door-to-door service within the cities outside of the regular schedule is also available with advance notice. The Transit Authority’s main facility is in the City of Ironwood.

Infrastructure Hazards

Infrastructure in the southern half of Wakefield Township results in notably high risk of some hazards. Hazardous materials and passenger transportation incidents are risks owing to highways U.S. 2 and M-28, which branch out northeast and southeast from the City of Wakefield. Both highways are primary east-west passenger and commercial thoroughfares across the Upper Peninsula, and they could carry a wide variety of hazardous materials without township officials’ knowledge.

Petroleum and natural gas pipeline incidents (leaks or explosions) are a slight risk due to the three pipelines that traverse the township along the two highway corridors. Today’s pipelines incorporate sensitive leak detection and response systems to address any potential problems, as well as routine flyovers.

In addition, township officials and its contracted first responders attend annual safety trainings designed to establish protocols should there ever be a need for evacuation. The Township has an evacuation plan with Big Snow Resort to rescue and evacuate skiers, employees, and others should there be a pipeline emergency. Training also helps the Township to raise awareness for residents, and residents living near the pipelines receive regular mailings about pipeline safety.

A long-distance electrical transmission line also traverses the township south of the City of Wakefield.

Other Public Agencies/Organizations

There are no governmental or community agency offices located in the township. Many federal, state, and regional district agencies have local offices in one of Gogebic County's three cities. Most departments and agencies are listed below with their primary locations.

United States Post Office

The Post Office in the City of Wakefield serves Wakefield Township and provides motor route delivery service to occupied residences.

Gogebic County Community Mental Health

Public mental health services in Michigan are provided to eligible persons through local Community Mental Health Services programs. Gogebic County Community Mental Health provides these services to township residents from offices in the City of Wakefield.

Gogebic County Government

The Gogebic County Seat is in Bessemer, where the Courthouse and administrative Annex building are located. These buildings house offices of the County Administrator, Clerk, Courts, Emergency Manager, Equalization, Prosecutor, Register of Deeds, Sheriff, Soil Conservation District, Treasurer, and Veteran's Services. Michigan State University Extension also has an office in the annex.

Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action Agency

The Community Action Agency serving Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization funded by multiple state and federal agencies to implement programs such as Head Start; food assistance; senior meals and other assistance; financial management counseling; housing rehabilitation, weatherization, and financial assistance; and community development. The agency's main office is in Bessemer, but the agency provides various services at 20 sites throughout the two counties.

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

The Department, known as EGLE, regulates air, water, land, and energy in Michigan. More specialized regulatory areas are underground resources (mining and fuel extraction), wetlands (authority delegated from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers), and solid waste or materials management. EGLE also provides project-specific grant funding for programs such as brownfield redevelopment. Gogebic County is in the service area of the Marquette District Office.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

The Department provides and regulates a wide variety of services and programs related to health and wellness of Michigan residents. These include targeted adult and children's support

services, social and cash assistance, healthcare coverage, emergency preparedness, and behavioral health. The nearest office to Wakefield Township is in Bessemer.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Among the Department's roles are to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation; regulate fish and game; and manage habitat, state forestlands, and other land-based resources. The nearest customer service center to Wakefield Township is in Baraga, but many services are available online. DNR's premier state park in Gogebic County, the Porkies, dominates the northern end of the township.

Michigan Secretary of State

The Department of State provides such diverse functions as driver and vehicle regulation, consumer protection, records integrity, and management of elections. Most residents come into contact with the office through driver's licensing. The nearest office to the township is located in Bessemer.

Michigan State Police

Michigan State Police is the law enforcement agency nearest to Wakefield Township, with a post in the City of Wakefield. The post is one of seven in the Upper Peninsula.

Michigan Works!

Michigan Works! provides services to both job seekers and employers to meet employment and workforce needs. Most people utilize Michigan Works! when applying for jobs, but the agency can also help with resume development, interview skills, and other capacities. The nearest "one-stop service center" is in Bessemer.

Western Upper Peninsula Health Department

The Western U.P. Health Department, serving five counties in the Western U.P., provides public health programs and services, including environmental health, emergency preparedness, food licensing and inspection, well and septic permitting, and direct preventative services to members of the public. The nearest office is in Bessemer.

Economy

Economic development is a challenge in any rural area, and especially one as isolated as Wakefield. However, with its industrial park that hosts one large company and two smaller tenants, the township has a disproportionately large number of jobs versus workforce. And vacant space remains for future development. Both residents and businesses must strike a balance between appreciation of the region and acknowledgement of the limitations of location and infrastructure.

Commercial Centers

Wakefield Township is located a long distance from any metropolitan area. Nearest are Duluth, MN and Wausau, WI, each of which is 119 miles from the City of Wakefield - a driving time of around over two hours. Compared with much of the U.P., though, this detachment is relatively minor: Marquette is approximately three hours from its nearest metro area (Green Bay, WI) and Houghton is slightly farther to its nearest (Wausau). The Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area is an easy half-day drive of about four hours from Wakefield.

Most services needed by township residents on a regular basis are available in Ironwood or closer. There is a small grocery store, discount store, a few restaurants, two fuel stations, and a bank in the City of Wakefield. Most personal and medical services, many eating and drinking establishments, additional banks, a golf course, small movie theater, public auditorium, other general merchandise stores (including Walmart), hardware stores, limited clothing stores, and a supermarket are located in Ironwood¹² and/or Bessemer. Some headline entertainment is available less than an hour's drive from the City of Wakefield at two casinos: Northern Waters in Watersmeet and Lake of the Torches in Lac du Flambeau, WI.

Services and activities that require travel to metro areas include advanced medical care; more specialized and larger-variety shopping, most notably for clothing; most dine-in chain restaurants; professional sporting events; and major performance/cultural venues.

Businesses

Wakefield Township has 16 private business operations or facilities. Seven of these are owner-operated with no employees, and two of the others employ 100 or more employees. Based on this information reported by Township government, there are at least 183 year-round employees in the township, and this increases by about 130 in winter. See **Table 6.1**.

Indianhead Resort is a destination winter recreation area that draws both customers and winter employees from a large region. The fluctuating workforce needs of such seasonal businesses can be a challenge, but the township itself sees limited impact from these patterns. Extreme Tool, a machined parts fabricator located in the Wakefield Township

¹² A target market analysis developed for the City of Ironwood by LandUseUSA in 2017 has implications for the county as a whole: http://www.wuppd.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/01-W-UP-GOGEBIC-01-08-17_red.pdf

Industrial Park, is one of the County’s largest manufacturers and draws many workers from the surrounding area.

Table 6.1: Businesses in Wakefield Township

	Employees
Big Snow (Indianhead) Resort	150 winter / 20 summer
Extreme Tool and Engineering	105
G.A. Dalbeck Logging	21
Northland Basement Systems	12
Western U.P. Recycling Center	9
Northwoods Motel	2+
Northern Natural Gas Compressor Station	2
Trans Canada Compressor Station	2
Crockett’s Chainsaw Critters	1+
Floral Gardens	1+
Gogebic Range.NET	1+
Indianhead Valley Condominiums	1+
Lakes Flower Cabin	1+
Schneck Builders Inc.	1+
Shelley Nordine Accounting	1+
Silver Creek Excavating and Trucking	3

“1+” businesses are owner-operated with no employees

Employment and Commuting

U.S. Census “OnTheMap” (OTM) analysis indicates that in 2017 there were **186 jobs in Wakefield Township**. Only eight (4.3%) of the 186 jobs were filled by residents of the township. The City of Wakefield was home to 17.7% of people working in the township, and the cities of Bessemer and Ironwood accounted for another 27.4%. In total, 7 in 10 people with jobs in Wakefield Township lived within Gogebic County. The remainder were dispersed over a large area. See **Map 6.1**.

By far the largest number of jobs in the township by industry sector were (and are) in manufacturing, followed by arts, entertainment, and recreation (23.1%) and retail trade (17.2%). See **Table 6.2**.

Map 6.1: Home Locations of Wakefield Township Workers

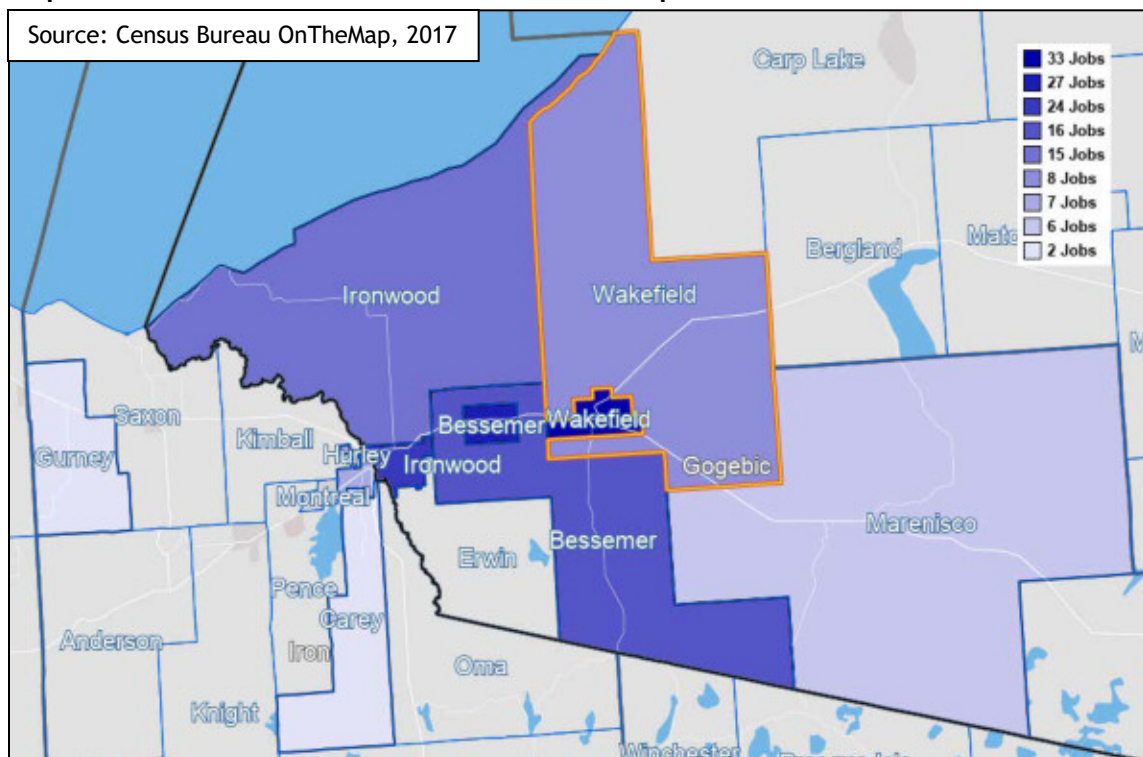


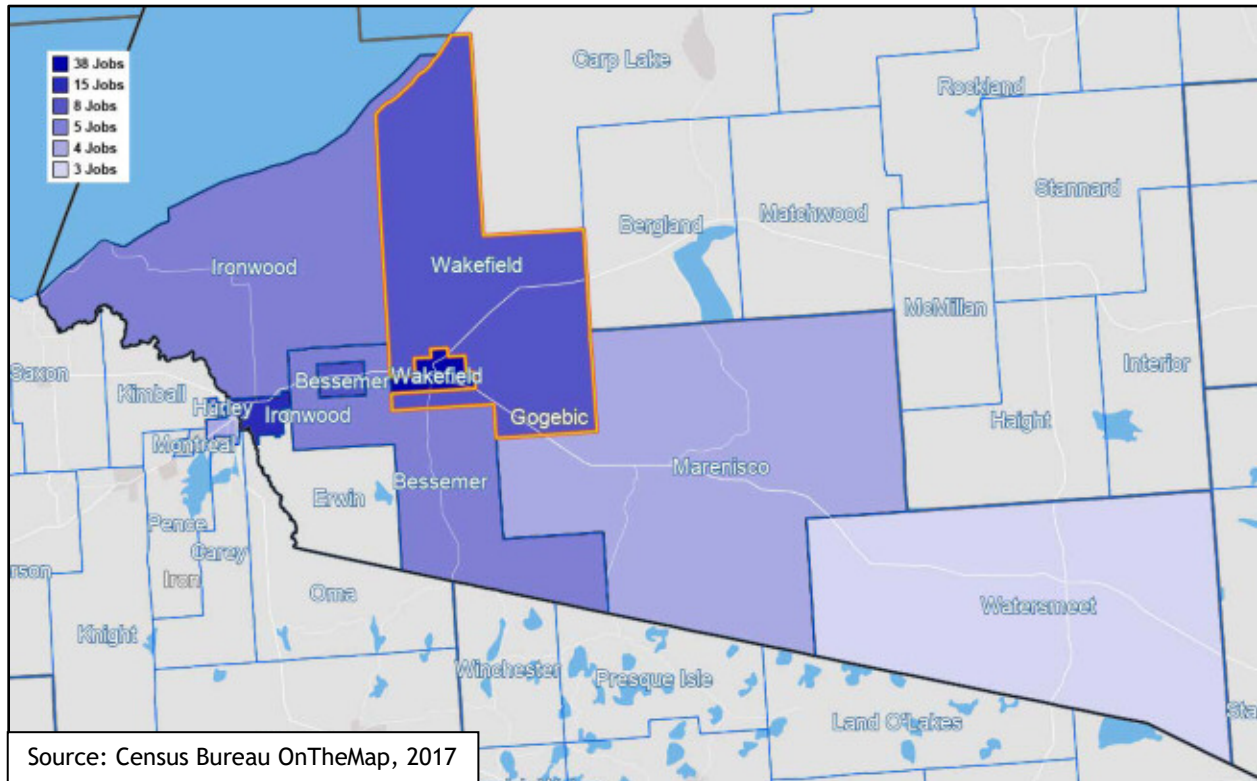
Table 6.2: Jobs in Wakefield Township by NAICS Industry Sector

	#	%
Manufacturing	76	40.9%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	43	23.1%
Retail Trade	32	17.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	14	7.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	14	7.5%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	4	2.2%
Public Administration	3	1.6%

Source: Census Bureau OnTheMap, 2017

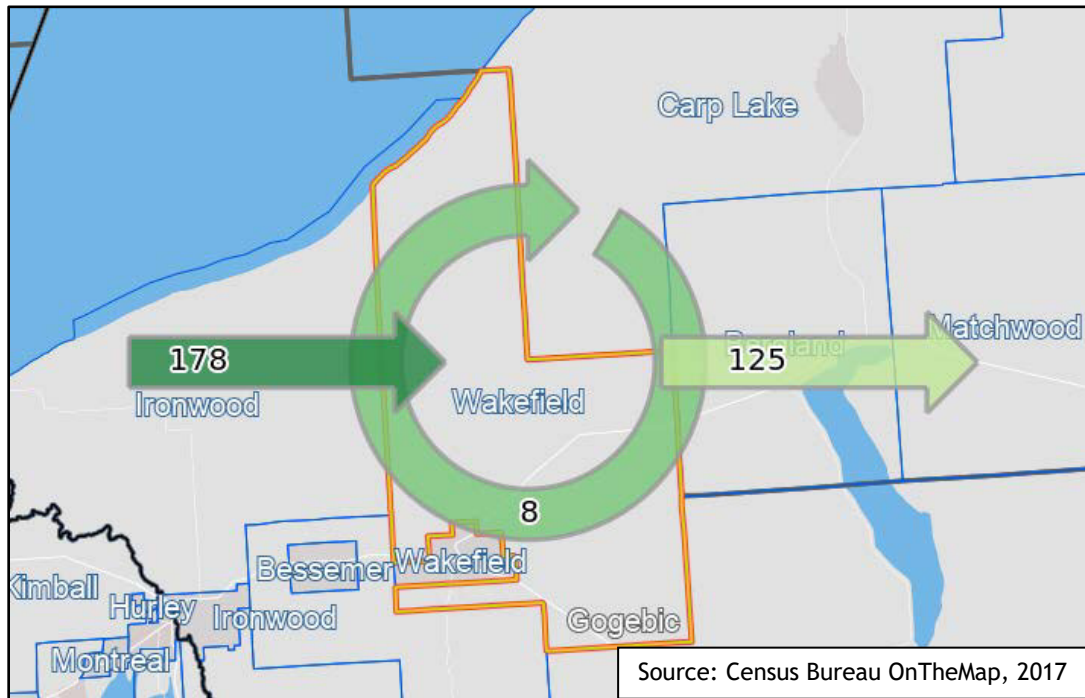
In 2017, **133 Wakefield Township residents had jobs** as defined by the OTM application, 28.6% of whom worked in the City of Wakefield and 11.3% in the City of Bessemer. A total of two-thirds worked in Gogebic County. See **Map 6.2**. The 2017 ACS indicates that 10 of 133 in the labor force were **unemployed - a rate of 3.7%**, slightly higher than the Gogebic County rate but slightly lower than the U.S. and State of Michigan rates. With a population of 267 residents at least 16 years of age, the **labor force participation rate was 49.8%**. This was approximately the same rate as Gogebic County but much lower than the U.S. at 63.4% and State at 61.2%. Much of the discrepancy is likely due to age.

Map 6.2: Work Locations of Wakefield Township Residents



Map 6.3 shows the inflow and outflow of people who travel to and from Wakefield Township to work and the eight who live and work within. Arrows do not indicate direction of travel.

Map 6.3: Employment Inflow/Outflow



The public opinion survey conducted for this plan had 13 respondents employed part-time, 9 of them working within the township; another 13 full-time, 3 of them working within the township; and three respondents working elsewhere who did not specify full- or part-time. Five were self-employed and 19 retired. No respondents indicated seasonal employment.¹³

Development Prospects

The Wakefield Township Industrial Park is one of four in the county. The park as currently developed is nearly full, with two vacant parcels of 1.5 acres each ready for occupation. There are also dozens of acres of undeveloped County Forest land adjacent to the park that would likely be available for purchase if expansion of the park were justified.

The greatest limitation to development in the industrial park is lack of high-speed broadband internet. Past experience has suggested the best, but



The Industrial Park has additional space for new occupants to build upon existing success.

¹³ Respondents could indicate more than one status for these questions. Respondents were representing only themselves, not other household members.

far from ideal, option for businesses in the park is very expensive on-site wireless tower infrastructure. AT&T T1 service can be made available, but this early form of high-speed internet over copper phone lines can achieve only 1.5 Mbps per line versus 100 Mbps which is now standard for residential cable internet.

Resurgence of metal ore **mining** has been a hope of residents of the county and region for many years. For approximately 10 years, buildout of the Copperwood project in Wakefield Township has been planned, but copper market prices have not been high enough for the project to be profitable. Corporate owners have also at times cited regulatory impediments. Copperwood Resources reduced its Wakefield office staffing in mid-2019. At the time of development of this plan, the future is unclear.

Another development prospect in recent years has been a possible hotel and second casino of the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Chippewa Indians at Big Snow (Indianhead) Resort. However, the casino site would have had to be put into tribal trust status, which is an obstacle at both the federal and state levels. Changing policies and tribal priorities may change prospects.

Values, Issues, and Goals

Having examined the full range of characteristics of Wakefield Township, this chapter is the heart of the plan. It begins with value statements, followed by several concerns that warrant specific attention. The end point is a set of general goals the Township will work toward over the next 20 years. Each goal is supported by objectives and action items.

Values

Based on input from the Planning Commission and township residents, the general preferred direction of development and character of the township is clear. This is established through several value statements. At times, these values can conflict with each other, but by understanding the nuances of residents' preferences, generally township leaders can reconcile an appropriate level of government involvement and set policies accordingly. Together, the values are integral to maintaining the township's high quality of life.

Rural character

Residents prefer to maintain the township's rural character of large lots and dispersed homes, supplemented by infrastructure adequate for mobility.

Private control

Most residents acknowledge there is a need to regulate the activities of other property owners such that they do not unduly impact any individuals and the values of other properties, but overall, residents desire limited government control.

Public services

Though residents prefer to control their and their properties' own destinies, they appreciate provision of certain public services not easily obtainable on their own, such as curbside refuse pickup and access to parks and libraries. Residents also believe the Township Government should have a role in providing public tools to support business development and success.

Sense of community

Residents value opportunities to build and maintain a community with fellow residents of the township in order to support each other when needed and to foster social opportunities.

Notable Issues

Through the planning process, the Planning Commission, township officials, and residents expressed several concerns that warrant discussion. This paints a picture of where the township is "coming from" in the present as it considers future goals and opportunities.

Aging Population

Rural communities throughout the United States have aging populations with rates of natural increase (births) that are not sufficient to sustain the number of residents. Wakefield

Township is unfortunately a prime example, with a median age over 10 years higher than the state and national averages and with over half of residents age 50 and older. In the public opinion survey, in a question about five impediments to development in the township, by far the greatest percentage of respondents (nearly two-thirds) selected aging or declining population as the “biggest”¹⁴ impediment.

These trends present an existential threat to communities - but dire threats can result in creative and transformational approaches to retain young adults and to increase in-migration through targeted promotion of assets and opportunities unique to the individual communities.

Industry Trends, including Mining

Based on Gogebic County’s historic prosperity owing to the mining industry, many see mining as one of the best opportunities for job creation in the area. In the public opinion survey, 91% of respondents expressed support for mining; only one person was opposed. The industry objectively holds some promise and could result in a degree of economic resurgence, but probably not to historic levels of employment, and commodities market trends have not been favorable.

With manufacturing trends toward automation, limited transportation infrastructure, and some concern about negative environmental impacts of resource extraction, other residents and observers have concluded that a shift in focus is needed to newer prospects such as tourism, healthcare, information technology, other service industries, along with some specialized fabrication similar to Extreme Tool and Ironwood’s Waupaca Foundry.

Broadband

Poor broadband quality is a severe impediment to community and economic development. Some causes of it are inherent to the township’s character, such as physical terrain limitations and a small, dispersed population. But it is critical that community leaders take advantage of any opportunity to work with providers in facilitating infrastructure development and expanding information about market opportunities.

Housing and Blight

Several survey respondents and Planning Commission members expressed concerns about the township’s housing stock and blight issues. Although the Township Government can have little impact on housing quality or availability, blight enforcement pertaining to aesthetics and safety is a top priority. Officials have been proactively addressing nuisance properties but cleaning up or fixing problem properties can be a lengthy process. The Township will continue these efforts.

Marihuana (Marijuana) Establishments

Communities throughout Michigan have been deliberating whether to allow any type of commercial marijuana facilities under either the Medical Marihuana Facilities Licensing Act of

¹⁴ Many respondents selected more than one option, however.

2016 or the Michigan Regulation and Taxation of (recreational use) Marihuana Act of 2018. Wakefield Township prefers not to host any such facilities. The Township Board declined to opt into any of the five medical marihuana facility types in 2017 and then opted out of (prohibited) all recreational marihuana establishments in 2019.

Goals and Implementation

Through input from the Planning Commission, other Township officials, and the public opinion survey, residents spoke clearly about what they wanted to see in the future, both to address major threats and to pursue new opportunities. Goals are listed below, along with realistic actions to achieve them.

1. Mitigate the Aging and Declining Population

There are three primary and interrelated routes that the township can take to attract, and in some cases retain, residents:

Home-based entrepreneurship and telecommuting (for employees permitted to work remotely) will be promoted and facilitated in several ways:

- ❖ Target resources toward specialized and financially lucrative professions that do not require dedicated office space or production facilities, such as:
 - Consulting that requires little travel (in addition to resident attraction, this may provide continuing employment to some retired residents)
 - Technical writing and editing
 - Marketing and media design (graphic, video, audio)
- ❖ Capitalize on interactions with companies based outside of the area to discuss their policies and encourage accommodations for remote work.
- ❖ Encourage and assist broadband providers with maintaining and expanding service:
 - Support Connect Michigan and WUPPDR in collecting and disseminating data about broadband availability, demand, and build-out opportunities.
 - Provide data to providers that demonstrates continued and growing demand for DSL and cable internet service, focusing on the south end of the township where most residents live.
 - Assist with identifying and making available vertical assets for placement of fixed-wireless transmitters (by GogebicRange.NET) wherever there is a critical mass of customers within range and line of sight.
 - Pursue opportunities to extend direct residential access to the Merit fiber network.
 - Encourage service providers to pursue grant opportunities for broadband infrastructure extensions.

Variable climate, with a focus on winter recreation, will be first promoted as a tourism draw, with a secondary objective to turn some tourists into residents. Methods include:

- ❖ Create and distribute a professionally designed brochure about the logistics and tangible benefits of living in Wakefield Township or the surrounding area, **possibly**

- in collaboration with the City of Wakefield.** The cities of Bessemer and Ironwood each have a local brand and promotional campaign, and the Wakefield Township/City area should find and consider jointly promoting their own niche.
- ❖ Advocate for and participate in an updated countywide branding effort, which was a goal in a recent county strategic planning process.
 - ❖ Engage the Western Upper Peninsula Convention and Visitors Bureau to assist with better using tourism as leverage to attract new residents.
 - ❖ Support and participate in volunteer groups and public agency initiatives that focus on connectivity, expansion, and maintenance of trail networks: ORV, snowmobile, land-based non-motorized, and water.

Homeownership advantages of the township will be promoted, including:

- ❖ Low property taxes
- ❖ Streamlined permitting
- ❖ Isolation from neighbors
- ❖ Affordable large lots
- ❖ Public access to surrounding land

2. Pursue New Development Opportunities

Wakefield Township is well positioned for new industry development, particularly in the Industrial Park with its large amount of available land, but strong support has been shown during development of this plan for the following other developments:

- ❖ As explained in the Economy chapter, a **casino and hotel** at Indianhead Resort has been considered. A casino would further diversify the resort’s wide range of activities and may draw in a new subset of tourists. Casinos can be controversial; however, in the public opinion survey, **three-quarters of respondents said a casino would be a strength** versus a weakness or “other.”
- ❖ A large, **community or utility-scale solar array** could be located in the Industrial Park or elsewhere in the township. Such an array can be owned and operated by a utility and feed the overall electrical grid, or it can be developed and operated by a different entity to serve a certain user group.¹⁵ In the public opinion survey, about **three-quarters of respondents supported a large-scale solar array**; only one person was opposed. A solar array can slightly increase tax base and can create some new jobs, at least temporarily, but also demonstrates progressive thinking and environmental stewardship. More information is in **Appendix 3**.
- ❖ **Value-added resource** use in general.

In addition, the Wakefield Township recognizes that Gogebic County is one of only two in the Upper Peninsula that does not have a local, private sector-oriented and fully staffed **economic development organization**. Various community leaders in the County have

¹⁵ Implications of any possible project would need to be discussed with Xcel Energy, as explained in Appendix 3.

been exploring an organizational framework and sustainable funding mechanism. The Township supports these efforts in concept and will assist when possible.

Finally, as detailed previously, Wakefield Township views increased utilization of the Presque Isle River corridor for water-based recreation as a key opportunity. This could involve development of low-impact physical amenities or simply increased promotion of the river as a natural and recreational asset.

The Township will pursue all potential development opportunities under this Goal.

3. Enhance Public Services and Neighborhoods

Township residents expressed overwhelming satisfaction with public services in the public opinion survey. However, there are some opportunities for improvement to be pursued:

- ❖ **Blight:** Continue to identify and address problem properties and work with the attorney to take legal action when necessary. Aside from aesthetics and safety issues, there is a strong desire to maintain property values near blighted properties. Adoption of the International Property Maintenance Code as a basis for enforcement through civil infractions is one option to consider for quicker results.
- ❖ **Natural gas** is by far the preferred heating fuel in the region, but few areas in the township have utility service available to housing units and businesses. The Township should work with Xcel Energy to periodically assess the cost of gas line extensions along certain residential corridors - Johnson Road in particular.
- ❖ **Road maintenance:** Survey respondents recognized the Township and Road Commission were doing well with available resources, and no concerns were raised about the road maintenance program in general, but two possible issues were noted and should be addressed when warranted:
 - **Ditching** is insufficient in certain areas, causing drainage problems
 - Logistics of **boundary road maintenance** along the Wakefield city limits should be revisited

In general, regular maintenance of roads, culverts, bridges, and associated infrastructure should be continued in the current manner. Efforts should be made to coordinate road projects with utility providers when warranted.

- ❖ **Collaboration with the City of Wakefield** is a strong point, particularly through shared financing for public services offered by the City. The efficiency of and satisfaction with coordinated public services can be further improved through:
 - An annual meeting of the Township Supervisor, City Manager, and possibly Road Commission manager, to discuss the status of coordinated services and address any issues that have arisen.
 - An annual joint meeting of the Wakefield Township Board and City Council to discuss matters of mutual interest that may be most effectively addressed through a multi-jurisdictional approach.

Township officials should consider discussing with their City counterparts to determine whether there is mutual interest in this approach.

Conclusion

Development of Wakefield Township's first master plan is a critical first step that lays the groundwork for thinking progressively and slowing the decline of the population and economy. It also provides a valuable information source about the township's residents, facilities, and natural environment that did not previously exist. But planning is the "easy part."

Future actions to keep this plan relevant include:

1. Even though this plan is intended to be relevant for a 20-year period, it should be reviewed annually and shall be evaluated every five years to determine whether a major update is needed, as required by state law. Development and maintenance of a master plan is a mandated role of a planning commission in Michigan.
2. The Planning Commission should regularly discuss the goals and strategies at future meetings and should assign responsibilities for implementation at such time as implementation becomes feasible.
3. The plan should be widely publicized to make residents/property owners and other area stakeholders aware of the Township's goals, such that they might contribute to implementation items they may be interested in.
4. The Township should implement the Zoning Plan incrementally in accordance with desired future land use.

Change in the Township will likely be slow, but with establishment of this plan and continued focus on implementation and updates, the Township is now better equipped to be a player in the regional ecosystem.

APPENDIX

1. Planning Commission SWOT Analysis and Issues Feedback
2. Survey Highlights and Report
3. Solar Development Information and Resources

Appendix 1

Planning Commission SWOT Analysis
and Issues Feedback

Appendix 2

Survey Highlights and Report

Appendix 3

Solar Development Information and Resources

Solar Development Information and Resources

This plan intends to make its goals as easily implementable as possible, and most of the goals and associated strategies are fairly straightforward. Some of the strategies have already been initiated, and others can be initiated based on existing experiences and expertise within Wakefield Township and the surrounding area. However, solar development in particular is a new concept, so further explanation and resources are included in this appendix.

Types

This plan references both “community” and “utility” solar. Below is an explanation of the distinctions, along as two other types of solar generation: individually owned and off-grid.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, there are three models that may be referred to as **community solar**: utility, special-purpose entity (SPE - an investor group), and non-profit organization (see reference on following page). Generally the savings from solar generation are distributed through billing by the area utility (whether investor- or publicly owned) in all three models. The savings are directly rebated to utility customers in the utility model, but savings are distributed to the SPE or nonprofit in the other two models and passed along to any individual subscribers as applicable.

The term **utility solar**, for purposes of this plan, is differentiated as a solar system that is owned and operated by a utility as part of its overall generation mix, *without attribution or buy-in from any individual customers*¹⁶ - thus not community solar. Corporate decision-making would internally drive this type of solar array rather than a grassroots or Township effort. However, the Township can still take steps such as land use permissions and granting of incentives, such as *brownfield tax increment financing*, to lower the regulatory and financial burdens in case an opportunity arises.

Prospects of both community and utility solar systems are highly dependent on the priorities of individual utilities and on state and federal mandates. Under Michigan law, utilities have mandates to generate a certain level of power from renewable sources. But some utilities have greater priority or interest in renewable generation and in some cases exceed their mandates. These utilities are more likely to establish their own solar systems for overall grid generation, and they may be more likely to actively engage in a community solar initiative.

A third type of solar installation is individually owned solar, which serves a single property (business or residential) and sometimes may be rebated by a utility through a practice called “net metering” when generation exceeds the utilization on that property. Fourth, a property owner who has limited and flexible energy needs can develop a closed solar system with generation and storage capabilities not connected to a utility or grid. These two types of solar are of limited interest to the Township for economic development, but interested property owners would be well-served by zoning regulations that accommodate solar arrays.

¹⁶ Some utilities offer “green power” programs to customers, under which they can opt to pay a premium power rate in order to have their power come from utility solar generation.

What the Township Can Do

Wakefield Township as a government entity has limited capacity to undertake or “push for” a solar development, and has little control over utility decision-making, but the Township can take steps to make itself more attractive to potential investors, institutions, utilities, and even community members that are interested in large-scale solar development.

Flexible land use regulation, which is already in practice, is a significant benefit. Additionally, the Township has an opportunity to donate Industrial Park land or sell it at below market rate and to grant tax abatements. Finally, the Township can set itself up for success by fostering and maintaining strong relationships with utility staff and with any institutions or residential developments that may be interested in establishing a solar array.

Resources

Below is a list of resources that can be consulted on the path to community solar generation, and engagement of utilities.

- U.S. Department of Energy: *A Guide to Community Solar: Utility, Private, and Non-profit Project Development*, 2010. Accessible at <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy11osti/49930.pdf>
- Solar Energy Industries Association/Coalition for Community Solar Access: *Residential Consumer Guide to Community Solar*, 2016. Accessible at <https://www.seia.org/sites/default/files/Residential%20Consumer%20Guide%20to%20Community%20Solar%20-%20FINAL.pdf>
- National Renewable Energy Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy/Alliance for Sustainable Energy, LLC: *NREL PVWatts Calculator*. Accessible at <https://pvwatts.nrel.gov>
- Studies that led to development in 2019 of a community solar array in the Village of L’Anse, Michigan:
 - Michigan Technological University Community Solar Applications Class, Social Sciences Department: *L’Anse Community Solar Social & Economic Feasibility Study*, 2017. Accessible at <https://www.mtu.edu/social-sciences/research/publications/reports/lanse-cs-report2.pdf>
 - University of Michigan Dow Sustainability Fellows: *Sun Power: Examining the Costs and Benefits of Community Solar in the Keweenaw Bay Region of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula*, 2018. Accessible at <http://sustainability.umich.edu/media/files/dow/CommunitySolar-UP-Team4-2018-Report.pdf>

Robert LaFave, the current manager of the Village of L’Anse, would have a wealth of information on planning and development of the village’s community solar array, located in its industrial park.