



# Rapid River Township

MASTER PLAN 2022-2027

Adopted \_\_\_\_\_ -



# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: The Planning Process .....	1
When to Use This Plan .....	2
How Was the Plan Created?.....	3
Location and Jurisdictional Issues .....	3
Kaskaska County .....	4
A Brief History of Rapid River Township.....	4
Chapter 2: Demographics .....	6
Historical Population .....	6
Population Change 2000 - 2020 .....	6
Population Growth.....	8
Seasonal Population .....	8
Housing Types .....	9
Age Distribution.....	10
Personal Data .....	10
Employment .....	11
Household Income .....	11
Chapter 3: Physical Environment.....	12
Topography .....	13
Soils.....	13
Lakes and Streams .....	16
Wetlands and Watersheds.....	16
Vegetative Cover.....	16
Chapter 4: Existing Land Use .....	19
Generalized Land Use Categories.....	19
Land Ownership .....	21
Land Division.....	21
Septic Systems .....	23
Economy .....	23
Chapter 5: Guiding Principles .....	24
Transportation .....	31
Existing Roads .....	31
State Highways .....	31
Proposed Transportation Network .....	34
US-131 .....	34
Access Management.....	34
Transportation Policies.....	35
Chapter 7: Future Land Use.....	37
Forest Land Uses .....	39

Action Steps .....	40
Agricultural Land Uses .....	41
Action Steps .....	42
Rural Residential Land Uses .....	43
Action Steps .....	44
Resort Residential Land Use .....	45
Action Steps .....	46
Recreation Stream Corridor Land Use.....	47
Action Steps .....	48
Commercial/Highway Corridor Land Use.....	49
Action Steps .....	49
Zoning Plan .....	51
Chapter 8: Plan Implementation .....	52
Township Officials .....	52
Land Use Regulations.....	53
Relationship to Zoning .....	53
Relationship to Subdivision Regulations.....	53
Relationship to Capital Improvement Plans (CIP).....	54
Other Resources .....	54
Community Development Block Grant Program .....	54
Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) Programs .....	54
Land and Water Conservation Fund .....	54
Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund .....	55
The Recreation Bond .....	55
Recreation Improvement Fund.....	55
Local Facility Development Grants .....	55
Land Acquisition Grants .....	56
Waterways Fund .....	56
Road Funds.....	56
TEA-21 Funds .....	56
Public Works Financing.....	56
What To Do .....	57
Immediate Priorities .....	57
Priorities Within 5 Years.....	57
Priorities After 5 Years .....	57

# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS RAPID RIVER TOWNSHIP?

Rapid River Township is a rural, residential kind of place filled with pristine rivers, rich forests, and open farmland. Urban development is not found. The Township contains much forest cover and has cottage-like development patterns. State-owned land is prominent throughout the Township. This amount of public land allows for vast opportunities in recreation, especially snowmobiling, hunting, camping, and ATV riding. The Rapid River and Rugg Pond provide many opportunities for recreation, especially fishing and canoeing.

Although agriculture is not the dominant land use, it is visually expressive of the township's heritage. Housing is affordable, which is important. Housing types vary, also making the Township accommodating to residents, second homeowners, and visitors alike.

Commercial and industrial sites are located along highway corridors from "Mom & Pop" businesses to Fortune 500 companies with opportunities for all.

Rapid River Township is not an urban place, nor does it want to be. Rapid River Township wants to retain its serene, rustic and open spaces sort of atmosphere.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*(Who to thank)*

## **Rapid River Board of Trustees:**

- Terry Williams, Supervisor
- Valerie Hansen, Clerk
- Rhonda Argyle, Treasurer
- Matt Brenner, Trustee
- David McKinnon, Trustee

## **Staff:**

- Robert Hall, Zoning Administrator
- Larry Nix, PCP, Planning Consultant
- Williams & Works, Mapping/GIS

## **Rapid River Township Planning Commission:**

- Stuart McKinnon, Chairman
- Todd Chwastek, Vice Chairman
- Rhonda Argyle, Township Board Representative
- Bob Baldwin, member
- Vacant, Secretary
- Cheri Williams, Recording Secretary

**Photo Credits:** Michael Moran & Robert Crosby

**Local Transportation Map:** Michael Moran

## **Bibliography:**

- U. S Census – 2000, 2010, limited 2020
- Kalkaska County Master Plan 2003
- U. S. Census 2009 - American Fact Finder
- History of Rapid River Township - Phyllis Senske
- Michigan Planning Enabling Act-Act 33 of 2008, as amended

# CHAPTER 1: THE PLANNING PROCESS

*(What is this document?)*

This Master Plan is intended to guide policy and decision-making for future land use, infrastructure, and public service decisions within Rapid River Township. The Plan identifies key planning issues, guiding principles, policies, and action steps that have been instrumental to its implementation. Background information, analysis and recommendations provide a context for informed decisions.

This plan is highly graphic to existing land use patterns and how development should be designed. Proposed future land uses and policies presented in this Plan were developed based on a combination of the natural capability of the land to sustain certain types of development; the important natural functions of unique land and water resources in the area; the future need for residential, commercial and industrial land uses; the existing land use distribution, including the State Forest areas; the relationship of undeveloped lands to existing community character; and the desires of local residents and public officials as expressed throughout this process.

This Master Plan is adopted pursuant to the authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 (P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, MCL 125.3801 *et seq*). This Act provides for the preparation of a basic plan to promote the community health, safety, and welfare through provision for the use of land and resources and the assurance of adequate public facilities and services. The Rapid River Township Master Plan is prepared as a foundation for, and depends primarily on, the Township's Zoning Ordinance and possibly subdivision regulations and a capital improvement program for its implementation. It is hoped that cooperation with local planning commissions and the County will result in compatible adjacent land use plans so that a coordinated approach will be achieved.

## WHEN TO USE THIS PLAN

(ALWAYS!!!)

- As the basis for developing Rapid River Township's Zoning Ordinance;
- As promotion of the public interest in and understanding of the planning process and Plan implementation;
- As a guide when reviewing, coordinating, or preparing specialized plans which address a particular subject (like housing) or geographic area (like a neighborhood within the township);
- As a guide in reviewing applications for rezoning, subdivisions, variances, and special use permits;
- As the basis for more detailed township development ordinances;
- As a frame of reference for private investment in the township;
- As a guide to township and county public facility and infrastructure decisions;
- As a guide to the Rapid River Township Planning Commission in fulfilling its responsibility to review proposed public facility expenditures consistent with the Master Plan;
- As a guide to preparing measures to protect sensitive environmental areas;
- As a guide in protecting air and water quality;
- As a guide to improved long-term resource management decisions, especially with regard to renewable resources and critical plant and animal habitats;
- As a base reference for joint or separate township and county grant activities;
- As an organizational plan for Township program expenditures;
- To stimulate and facilitate intergovernmental cooperation (i.e., among not only the County and local units of government, but also private and semi-private organizations, area schools, the DNR, the Soil Conservation Service, adjoining governments, etc.),
- To define issues of greater than local concern and establish appropriate mechanisms to deal with those issues, including but not limited to solid waste and recycling facilities, utility and sewage disposal sites, large-scale developments, fire and emergency services, and affordable housing.
- Every time the Rapid River Township Planning Commission meets.

## HOW WAS THE PLAN CREATED?

(Who wrote this document?)

The Rapid River Township Planning Commission (Planning Commission) is responsible for this document. In 2009, the Township Board of Rapid River Township adopted an interim Zoning Ordinance and set up a Zoning Commission. Using the Master Plan of Kalkaska County and several adjoining units of government, the Commission began to develop the framework of a Master Plan for Rapid River Township. Its intention is to develop a new master plan based on the concepts discussed in the Enabling Act and Kalkaska County, since both plans have a similar design layout.

Planning Commission members provided their input and finalized the Plan based on Public Input. The final version of this Plan reflects their findings and ideas about the preferred future development of Rapid River Township. The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments provided the mapping service for the original document and Williams & Works for the updated document. In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, this Master Plan was created during 2009/2012 and approved in 2013.

This document was extensively reviewed in 2021-2022. The Planning Commission conducted a thorough analysis of the document, adjusted the document, conducted an open house for public comments and input, and presented the document to the public at a formal public hearing.

## LOCATION AND JURISDICTIONAL ISSUES

(What's involved?)

Rapid River Township is one of thirteen local governmental units in Kalkaska County. Named in 1843, Kalkaska County was originally called Wabassee, which honored a Native American chief of the Potawatomi tribe. Located in the northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan, Kalkaska County is situated within some of the State's most beautiful natural settings, drawing many seasonal visitors to the area. Traverse City is located only 20 miles west of Kalkaska County and the City of Detroit is 230 miles southeast, or little more than a four-hour drive. Surrounding counties include Grand Traverse County to the west, Crawford County to the east, Antrim County directly north, and Missaukee County to the south. Major transportation routes through Rapid River Township include US-131 and M-66, traversing the township north and south.

The closest urbanized areas are the Village of Kalkaska and the Village of Mancelona located in Antrim County serving as the commerce centers for the township. There is a broad array of issues that extend beyond the boundaries of any one jurisdiction, and decisions made by one jurisdiction are often affected by the decisions made by other jurisdictions. For instance, air and water conditions in Kalkaska Township will impact the quality of life and natural environment in Rapid River Township.

Conversely, a large-scale industrial development in Coldsprings Township could have large impacts on Rapid River and other nearby townships. Intergovernmental communication and coordination are essential when planning for the future of a township. Effective integration of the

policies of this Plan with existing regulatory and planning documents within the County will require an ongoing commitment to intergovernmental cooperation.

Zoning issues are also important when thinking in terms of intergovernmental cooperation. It is important to keep all local governments informed of proposed changes to this Plan or of its regulatory instruments and to encourage their input prior to changes. Currently only four townships (Kalkaska Township, Garfield, Blue Lake, and Rapid River) and the Village of Kalkaska have master plans. Five townships (Garfield, Blue Lake, Clearwater, Boardman and Rapid River) and the Village of Kalkaska have adopted zoning ordinances. County zoning applies in the rest of the Townships.

## KALKASKA COUNTY

(Who's involved?)

Rapid River Township has its own master plan and is working with surrounding townships and County Governments.

- The Kalkaska County Master Plan affects all of the Townships and Villages in the County.
- Individual Township and Village Master Plans should be compatible with each other and with the County Master Plan.
- Kalkaska County administers the zoning for the following townships: Kalkaska, Coldsprings, Excelsior, Orange, Oliver, Bear Lake, and Springfield.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF RAPID RIVER TOWNSHIP

Rapid River Township in Kalkaska County has a unique history in relation to the other eleven townships. This township was originally organized, named and attached to Antrim County in 1868. The area encompassed what we know today as Blue Lake, Coldsprings, East Kalkaska and Rapid River townships. Kalkaska County was created in January 1871, and this area became the northern boundary abutting Antrim County. The 1898 county map shows the township boundaries as we recognize them today.

Three villages were recognized with post offices and retain some of their original buildings -- Leetsville, Rugg (originally named Mossback) and Westwood. The earliest post office (1871-1874) was named Rapid River. It was in a home on the north side of what is known as Seeley Road today and just east of Hanson Road. Leetsville and Westwood were served by the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad and Rugg by the Pere Marquette, providing them with passenger service, mail, and freight.

There are two cemeteries in the township, Westwood and Maple Grove. The original name for Westwood was "Seward" when the township was part of Antrim County. It is also one of the oldest cemeteries in Kalkaska County. The original township hall was located in Leetsville. There was a K-8 school there, as well as six other schools in the township.

One interesting feature located in the township was the Witness Tree on Smith Road with its historical marker. A Witness Tree was used by surveyors as a point of reference for determining property lines. This tree was removed in 2012. Another attraction is Rugg Pond, created in 1895 with the building of a dam on the Rapid River. A powerhouse was then erected that provided electrical service to the Village of Kalkaska and surrounding areas. The powerhouse was eventually taken down, and The Rugg Pond Natural Area has been established by Kalkaska County.

The history of the Township is directly linked to the natural resources found in the region. During the nineteenth century when Michigan was experiencing its lumbering boom, this area attracted individuals who harvested pine and hardwoods. After clear-cutting nearly the entire area, cutover lands were converted into farms. Potatoes, apples, and field crops became important to the area's economic base.

# CHAPTER 2: DEMOGRAPHICS

*(Who are we?)*

Historical population of the Kalkaska County and Rapid River Township is illustrated below.

## HISTORICAL POPULATION

Gov't Unit	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Rapid River Twp.	229	298	228	195	249	581	746	1,005	1,145	1,245
Kalkaska Co.	3,799	5,159	4,597	4,382	5,272	10,952	13,492	16,571	17,153	17,939

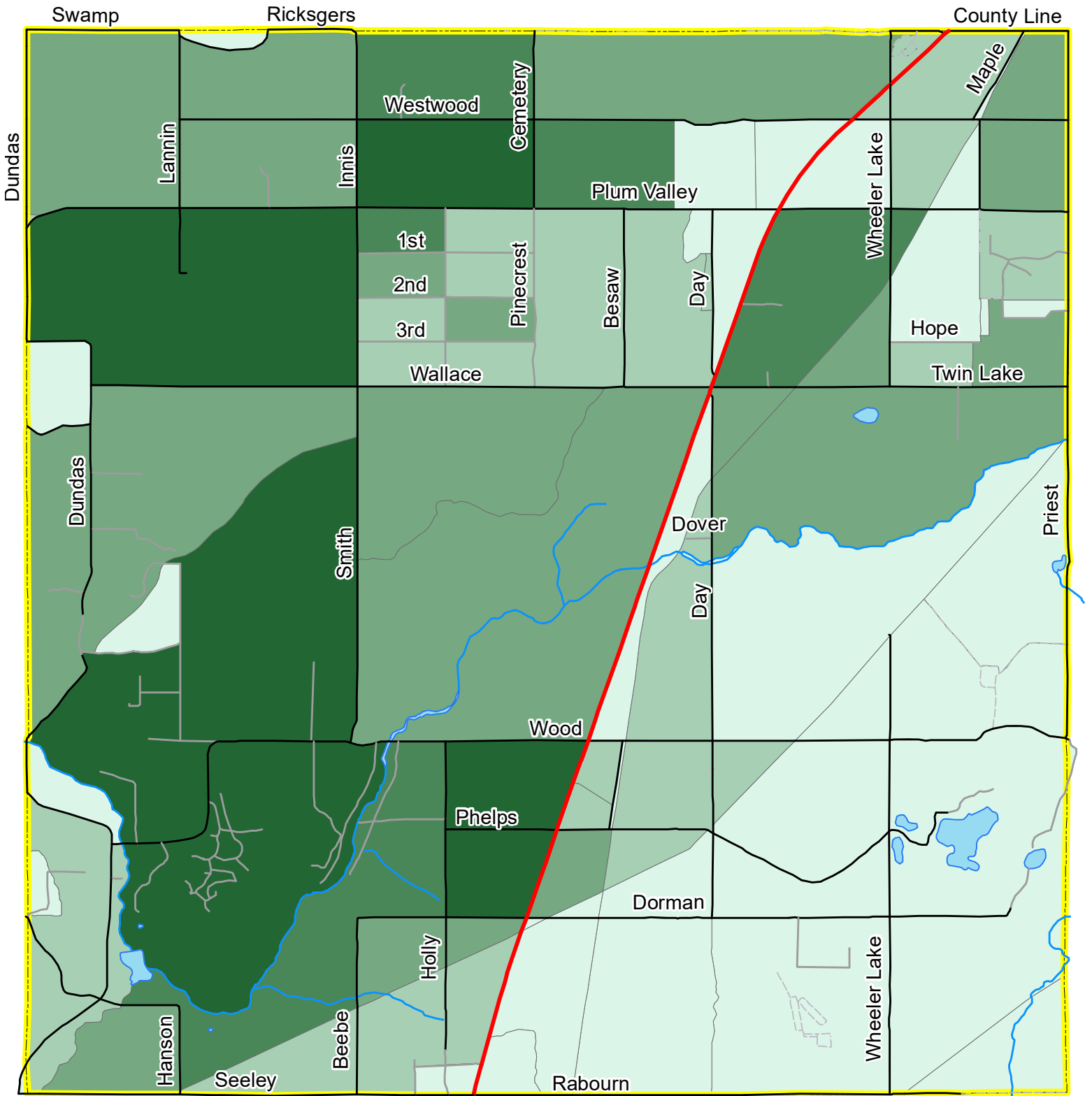
After 1900 as the lumbering boom began fading and moving further north, the County and the Township population declined until after 1960. Population in Kalkaska County and the Township began an upward trend beginning in 1970 and has continued to increase every decade since. It is expected to continue increasing into the future. See Map 1, 2020 Population Density.

The Township's growing population base attests to the increase in northern migration patterns, especially in and around areas with significant natural resources. Local government, manufacturing, the oil and gas industry, retail trade and tourism are the major employment sectors in the area. With abundant open spaces, forests, streams, rivers and inland lakes, seasonal tourism and recreational activities provide jobs and contribute to the overall economic well-being of the County and Township.

## POPULATION CHANGE 2000 - 2020

*(Did we grow?)*

Government	2000 Population	2010 Population	2020 Population	Number Change 2000- 2010	Percent Change 2000- 2010	Number Change 2010- 2020	Percent Change 2010- 2020
Rapid River Twp	1,005	1,145	1,245	140	13.9%	100	8.7%
Kalkaska Co.	16,571	17,153	17,939	582	3.5%	786	4.6%



Source: US Census Bureau

# Rapid River Township

Kalkaska County, Michigan

## Master Plan

Map 1. Population Density by 2020 Census Block

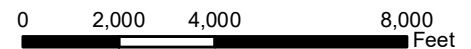
### Legend

#### Total Population

- 0 - 4
- 5 - 15
- 16 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 51



1 inch = 4,000 feet



# POPULATION GROWTH

(How much will we grow?)

The US Census Bureau projects population to assist local government in planning for growth. The most recent projections were developed in 2007 and show the following increases at the County level:

2010	17,153 - Actual Population Count
2020	17,939 - Estimated Population
2030	18,640 - Projected

Taking the population figures for the township beginning in 1970, the percentage of the township population compared to the county population has averaged 6.8%.

Therefore, the population of the township can be projected ahead for the years 2020 and 2030 based on the rationale that the ratio between township and county population will remain the same for the next twenty years.

This results in the following population projections for the township:

2010	1,145 - Actual Population Count
2020	1,245 - Estimated Population
2030	1,290 - Projected

In summary, it is projected that the township population will increase by 45 persons over the next ten years.

Another factor to consider is that while the population of the township has increased by 8.7 % between 2010 and 2020, the increase for the county is only 4.6 %. If that proportional rate of growth continues for the next twenty years, then the future population of the Township may be 1,353 for an increase of 108 persons.

# SEASONAL POPULATION

(Where are the seasonal homes?)

	2000	% of vacant	2010	Numeric change	%change 2000-2010
Government Township	142	70.4	190	48	33.8
County	3,827	83.0	4,326	499	13.0

Many seasonal homes are becoming year-round homes as people retire and move to the area. Seasonal homes should be thought of as year-round homes with respect to their impacts on the natural environment. The abundance of natural features and state-owned land will continue to make this area a desirable location for seasonal homes.

## HOUSING TYPES

(What are the housing characteristics?)

Only limited data is available from the US Census (Sept. 10, 2021)

	<b>Rapid River Township</b>	<b>Kalkaska County</b>
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	712	(12,469)*
<b>Occupied Housing units</b>	442 (62%)	10,299 (82.6%)*
<b>Vacant Housing Units</b>	270 (38%)	5,209 (43%)
<b>For Rent</b>	9 (3% of vacant)	158 (3% of vacant)
<b>Rented not occupied</b>	0	9 (0.2% of vacant)
<b>For sale only</b>	31 (12% of vacant)	288 (6% of vacant)
<b>Sold, not occupied</b>	3 (1% of vacant)	24 (0.5% of vacant)
<b>For seasonal use</b>	190 (70% of vacant)	4,326 (83% of vacant)
<b>All other vacant</b>	37 (14% of vacant)	404 (8% of vacant)
<b>Homeowner vacancy rate</b>	7%	5%
<b>Rental vacancy rate</b>	15%	12%

## AGE DISTRIBUTION

(How old are we?)

Updated Township data is not available from the US Census (September 10, 2021)

	2010	% of total	2000	change 2000/2010	% change
<b>Under 5 years</b>	66	5.8	68	-2	-2.9
<b>5-9 years</b>	89	7.8	75	14	18.7
<b>10-14 years</b>	83	7.2	96	-13	-13.5
<b>15-19 years</b>	84	7.3	78	6	7.7
<b>20-24 years</b>	57	5.0	45	12	26.7
<b>25-34 years</b>	132	11.5	135	-3	-2.2
<b>35-44 years</b>	164	14.3	198	-34	-17.2
<b>45-54 years</b>	211	18.4	120	91	75.8
<b>55-59 years</b>	79	6.9	56	23	41.1
<b>60-64 years</b>	67	5.9	49	18	36.7
<b>65-74 years</b>	74	6.5	58	16	27.8
<b>75-84 years</b>	29	2.5	24	5	20.8
<b>86 and over</b>	10	0.9	3	7	33.3

The median age of the population of the Township was 35.4 in 2000 and 38.4 in 2010, an increase of 3 years, or 8.5 percent in ten years.

A significant change from 2000 information is the loss of population in the age groups 10-14 years and 35-44 years. Another significant change is the increase in population in the age group 45-54 (76%) and in the age group 60 and up.

## PERSONAL DATA

(What are our characteristics?)

Updated Township data is not available from the US Census (September 10, 2021)

- 50.1% or 574 are male
- 49.9% or 571 are female
- 1,081 people are white (94.41%)
- 1 person is black or African American.
- 27 are American Indian (2.36%)
- 3 are Asian
- 22 are Hispanic or Latino (of any race) (1.9%) 21 are Mexican (95% of Hispanic/Latino)  
1 is other Hispanic or Latino (4.5% of Hispanic/Latino)

- 27 are two or more races (2.36%)
- 1,130 people live in family households (98.7%)
- 256 households have children (59%)
- 118 householders living alone (26%)
- Average household size 2.56 persons
- Average family size 3.03 persons
- 89 households have persons 65 and over (20.1%)

## EMPLOYMENT

(What do we do?)

2019 Total Employment - Kaskaska County – 55.4%

Average compensation per employee - \$24,358 (2019)

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

(How much money do we make?)

Median Household Income for Rapid River Township in 2009 - \$37, 857

Median Household Income for Kaskaska County in 2019 - \$46,898

# CHAPTER 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

*(What are the natural features?)*

A review of the physical environment in Rapid River Township provides the opportunity to look behind the scenes to review the conditions and factors that have influenced, and will continue to influence, the patterns of land use and development. These natural features offer aesthetic beauty, environmental protection, recreation, and functional land development options which can continue to reward present and future generations of residents for years to come. Efforts to conserve and protect will help ensure these valuable resources will be present for future generations to enjoy. A description of the individual elements of the Township's natural features include the topography, soils, lakes and streams, wetlands and drainage ways, and vegetative cover.



**Rugg Pond**

## TOPOGRAPHY

(How is the land shaped?)

The Township elevation is generally 1,000 feet above sea level, with portions in the eastern part of the Township over 1,100 feet.

The Rapid River valley goes diagonally southwest to northeast in the southwestern portion of the township. Elevations at the base of the valley range 700 to 900 feet above sea level, making the valley floor and the River at some 200 to 300 feet below the plain that makes up most of the township. See Map 2 Topography.

The Township, as is Kalkaska County, is located over a geological formation known as the Salina-Niagara Reef, located some 7,000 feet below the surface, one of the most successful oil producing basins of the state.

The township's surface geology is classified as hill-land, plains and upland plains, with level to gently rolling hills and slopes, with occasional steep ridges.

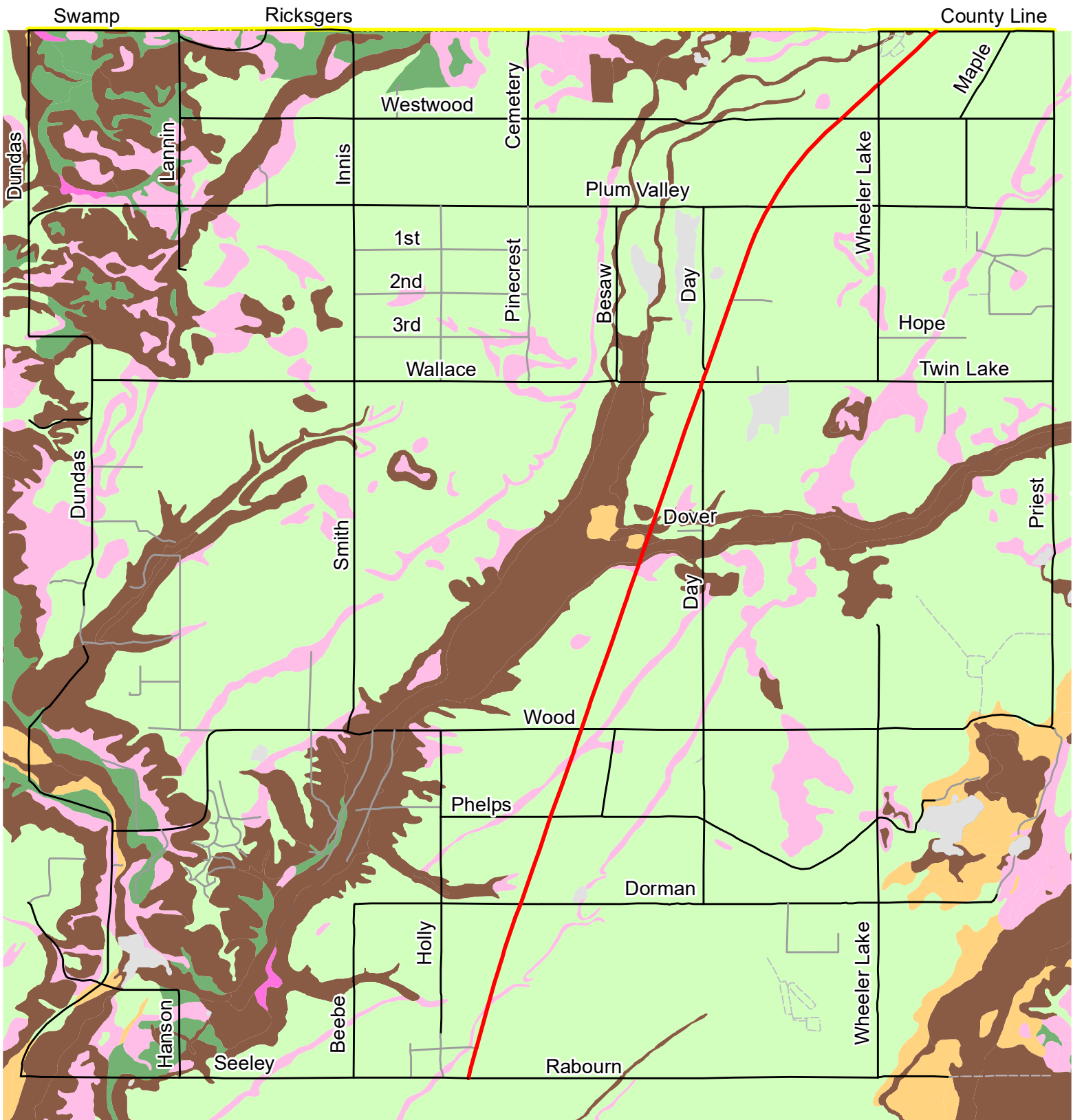
Drainage through the Rapid River is to the southwest portion of the township and into the Skegemog Lake system and thus into Grand Traverse Bay at Elk Rapids.

## SOILS

(How do they affect development?)

In determining the nature and extent of future land uses in Rapid River Township, soil limitations become an important factor. Soil types determine drainage conditions, erosion hazards, building suitability, plant fertility and the effectiveness of septic tank sewage disposal. The majority of the soils along the stream corridors and around the lakes are unsuitable for septic systems. The poor filtering capacity of Groups 4, 5, and 6 make them highly susceptible to groundwater pollution. See Map 3 Soil Drainage Characteristics.





# Rapid River Township

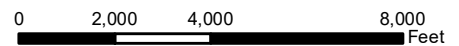
Kalkaska County, Michigan

## Master Plan

### Map 3. Soil Suitability for Septic Tank Absorption Systems



1 inch = 4,000 feet



- Group 1: Most unsuitable for septic systems, due to wetness and/or slope
- Group 2: Somewhat poorly and moderately well drained deep sandy soils
- Group 3: All clayey somewhat poorly and moderately well drained soils
- Group 4: All sandy well and moderately well drained soils with slopes between 6% and 18%
- Group 5: Deep sandy well drained soils with little or no substratumbanding or coarse loamy material 0% to 6% slopes
- Group 6: Sandy over banded (>6 inches) or coarse loamy substratum well drained soils with 0% to 6% slopes

Source: State of Michigan, National Resources Conservation Service

## LAKES AND STREAMS

Rapid River Township is a prime recreational area within the State. The Rapid River and other small lakes and streams are very important to the rural, natural quality of the Township. Croy Lake, Wheeler Lake, Rugg Pond and the Rapid River need special attention regarding building placement and allowed uses.

## WETLANDS AND WATERSHEDS

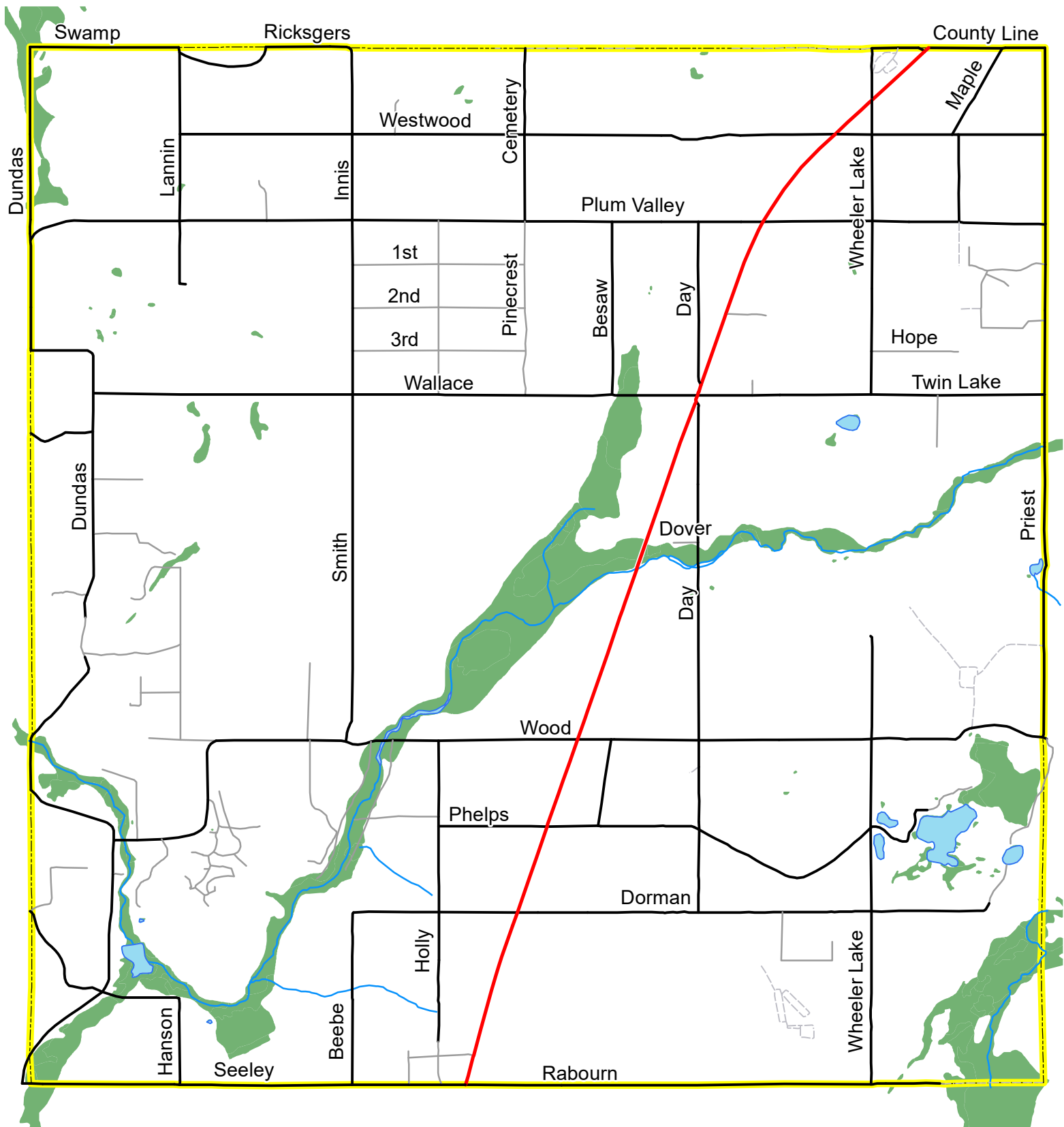
*(Where are the wetlands?)*

Scattered throughout Rapid River Township are wetland areas which are important to the biological diversity of plant and animal species living there. There are numerous acres of wetlands in the Township providing a distinctive network of natural areas, most often following rivers and streams. Wetlands are natural lowland areas where excess runoff from rainfalls, rivers and other natural cycles accumulate and provide habitat for many plants and animals, as well as for a wide-ranging migratory bird population. See Map 4 Potential Wetlands.

## VEGETATIVE COVER

*(What is the vegetation?)*

Forestland in Kalkaska County is bountiful. Rapid River Township is no exception. Originally, the Township was covered with heavy timber, primarily maple. Logging in the late nineteenth century cleared most of the timberland, leaving infertile soils and the landscape bare from clear-cutting. Much of the forest-covered land is protected by the State as part of the State Forest system. See Map 5 Green Infrastructure.






# Rapid River Township

## Kalkaska County, Michigan

### Master Plan

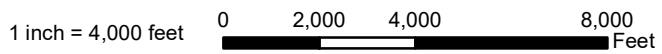
Map 4. Potential Wetlands

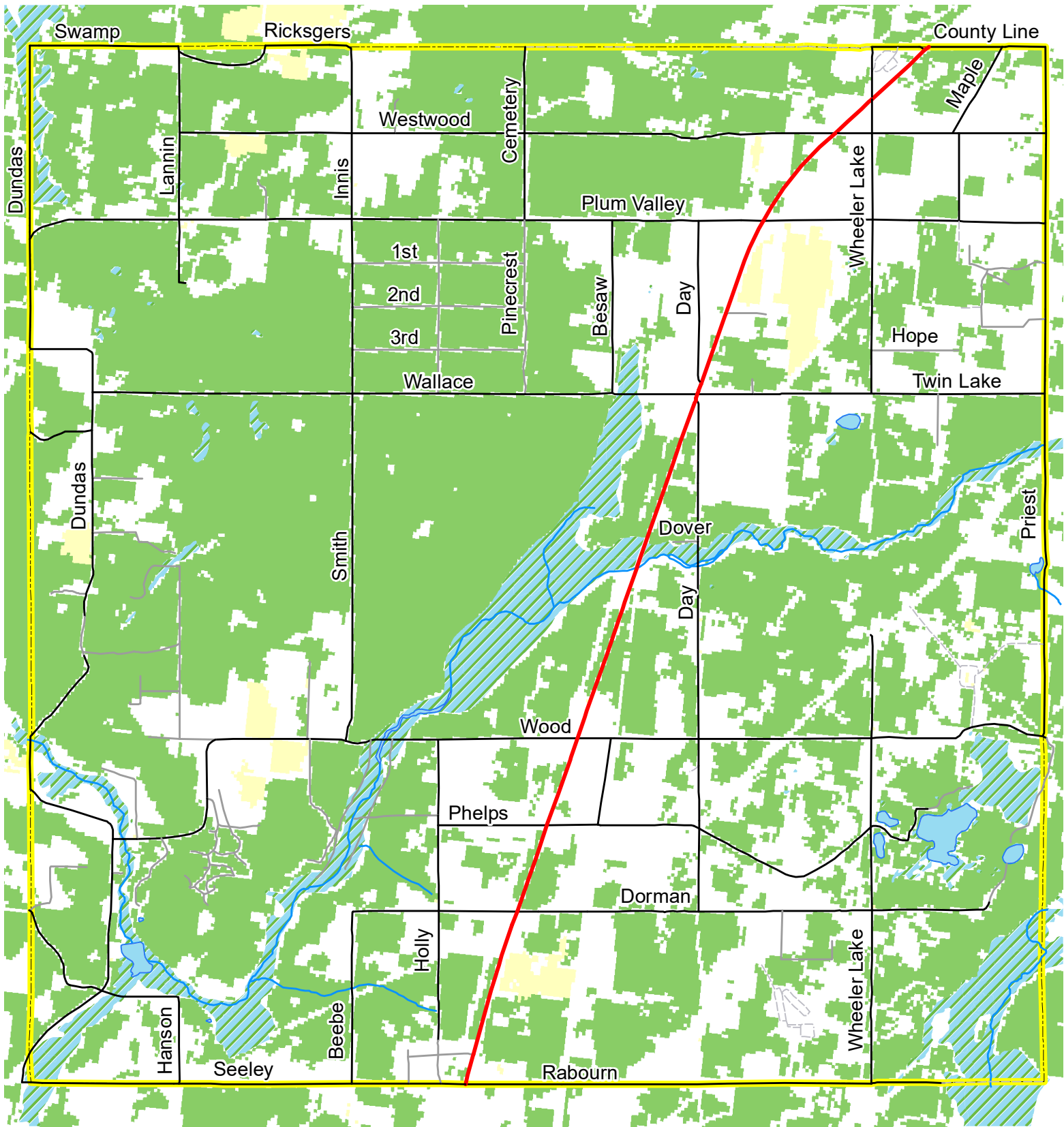
**Legend**

-  Open Water
-  Rivers & Streams
-  Wetlands

This Wetlands Map is intended to be used as one tool to assist in identifying wetlands and provide only potential and approximate locations of wetlands and wetland conditions.

This map is not intended to be used to determine specific locations and jurisdictional boundaries of wetland areas subject to regulation under part 303 Wetlands Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended. Only an on-site evaluation performed by EGLE in accordance with Part 303 shall be used for jurisdictional determination. A permit is required from EGLE to conduct certain activities in jurisdictional wetlands.





Source: State of Michigan

# Rapid River Township

## Kalkaska County, Michigan

### Master Plan

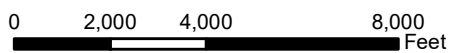
Map 5. Green Infrastructure

#### Legend

- Open Water
- Streams
- Potential Wetlands
- Forests
- Cultivated Crops



1 inch = 4,000 feet



# CHAPTER 4: EXISTING LAND USE

*(What exists now?)*

It is important to know and understand current land uses and development patterns for Rapid River Township when planning for its future. See Map 6 Land Use. As mentioned in previous chapters, current development patterns have been affected by the large amounts of state-owned land, the physical features such as the rivers and streams, and by the location of highways. Other factors that influence current development patterns and the future of the Township include land division, infrastructure, and the economy. These factors, along with the Transportation Plan, form the basis for the Future Land Plan described in Chapter 7.

## GENERALIZED LAND USE CATEGORIES

*(What are the descriptions?)*

These descriptions are not specific. They are meant to be used to give a snapshot of the type of development or land use that currently exists in a specified area. The descriptions are based on what is seen from the road. Much of the Township's existing character is determined by this view. These categories were used as a basis to develop the Future Land Use Plan.

### **Industrial Corridor**

Land uses north of Kalkaska Village on US 131 are primarily commercial and industrial. Commercial operations include motels, restaurants, and large-sized retail stores. Industrial uses consist of processing operations. Strip development patterns exist.

### **Lakes District**

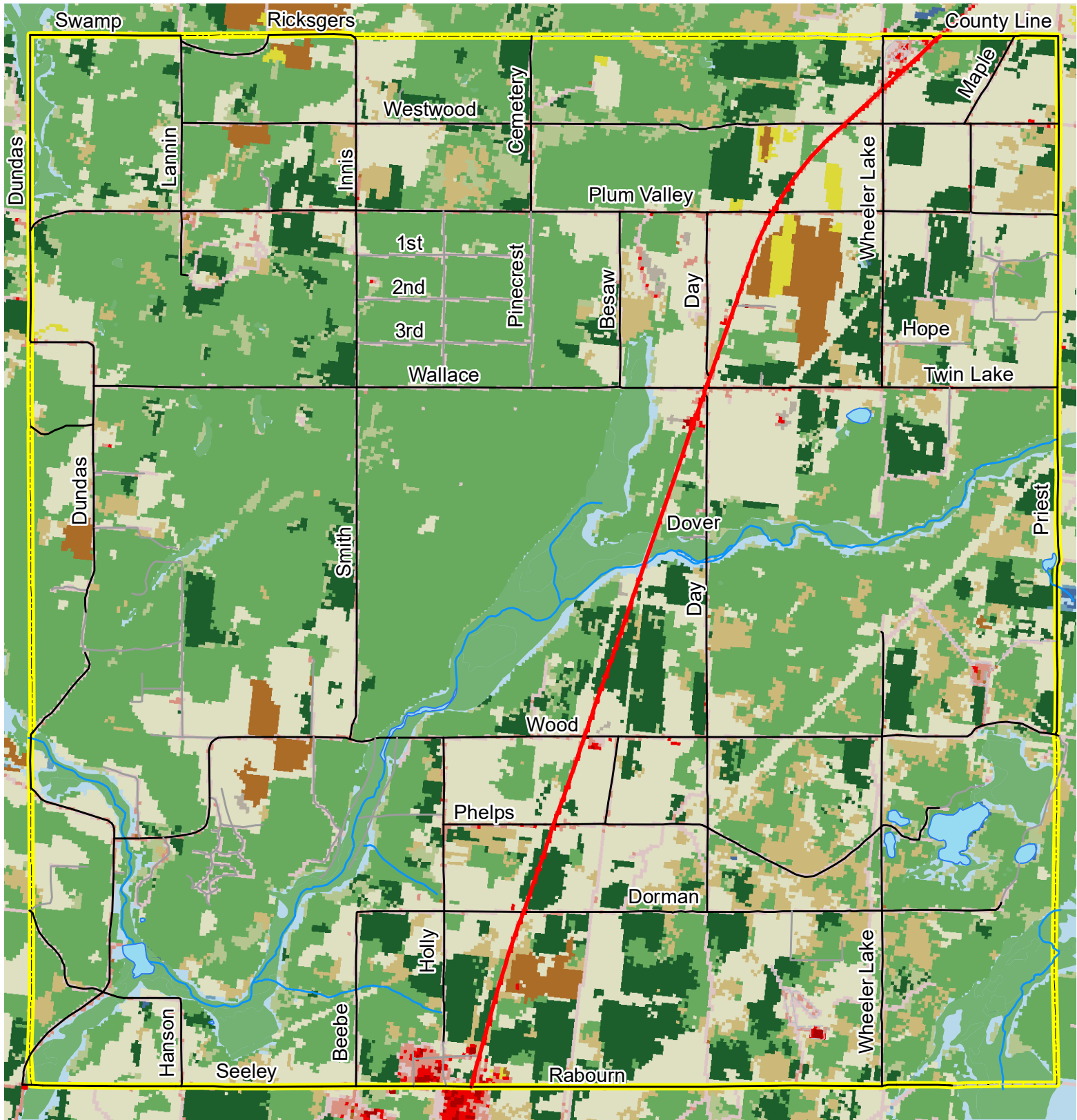
Development consisting of small and quaint houses along the lakeshores are along unimproved and gravel roads. Homes are tucked into the woods. This area is heavily forested. Tree canopies shade the roads. Small commercial operations serve the nearby population.

### **Forest District**

The majority of land is state-owned. This area is heavily forested with mature woodlands. Hunting and fishing cabins are throughout this area. Residential homes are tucked into the trees. Tree canopies shade the roads. Roads vary from unpaved local roads to paved arterial roads.

### **Agricultural**

Active farming consists of beef cattle and grazing. Views from the road are large, contiguous farm fields with barns and silos. Trees surround the farm field edges.



Source: State of Michigan
















# Rapid River Township

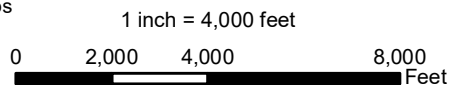
## Kalkaska County, Michigan

### Master Plan

#### Map 6. Land Cover

#### Legend

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Open Water                  |  Mixed Forest                 |
|  Developed, Open Space       |  Scrub/Schrub                 |
|  Developed, Low Intensity    |  Herbaceous                   |
|  Developed, Medium Intensity |  Hay/Pasture                  |
|  Developed, High Intensity   |  Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands |
|  Barren Land                 |  Woody Wetlands               |
|  Deciduous Forest            |  Cultivated Crops             |
|  Evergreen Forest            |  |



## LAND OWNERSHIP

The map on the right shows land ownership in Rapid River Township. Approximately 11,800 acres is owned by the State of Michigan. This amounts to just over 51% of the land in the township. A very small percentage is owned by Kalkaska County, the State Building Authority (Michigan State Police Radio Tower) and Rapid River Township. The balance is privately owned.

## LAND DIVISION

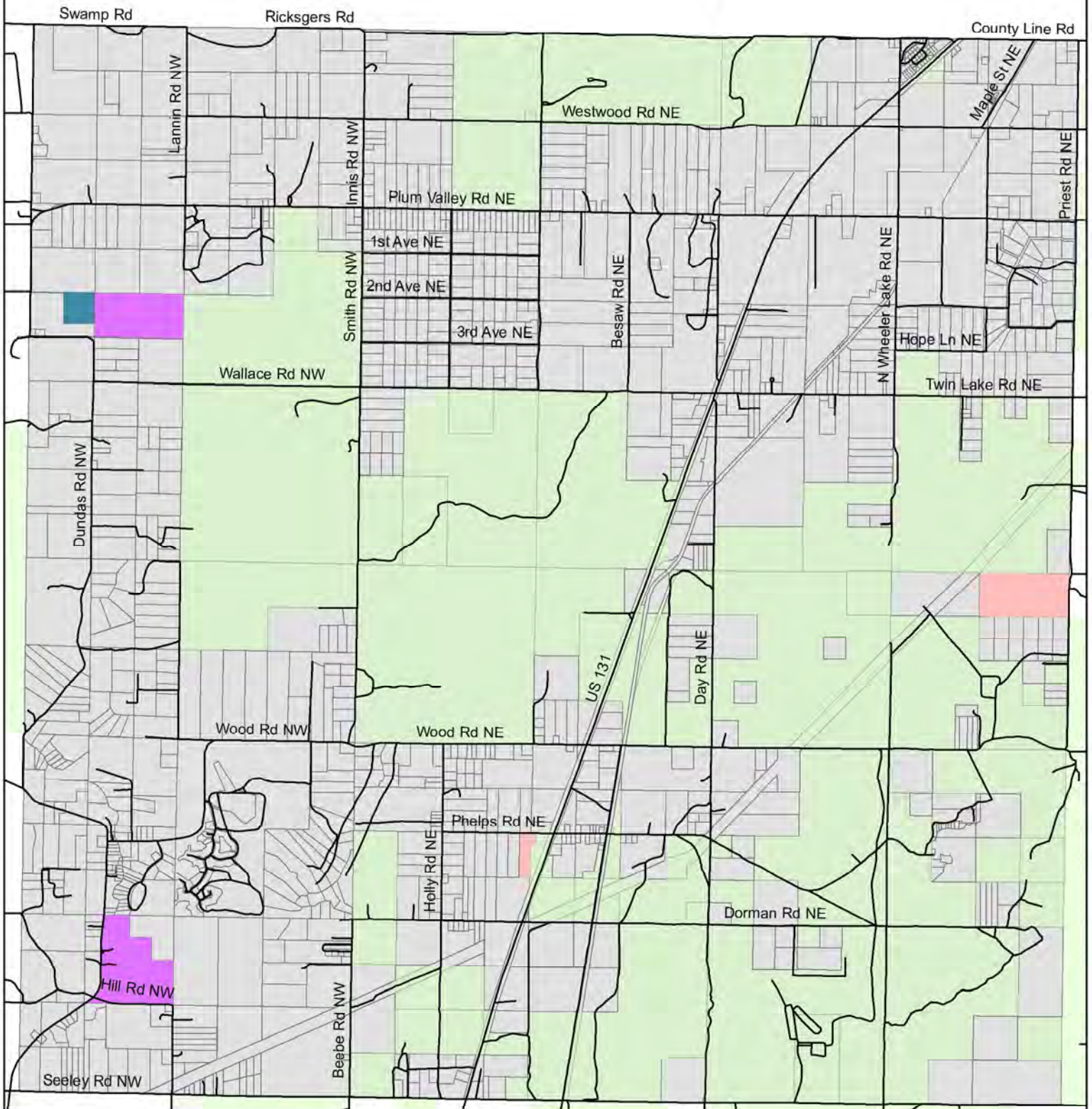
(What is happening to the land?)

The gradual, widespread subdivision of large parcels results in significant landscape change as new homes are built. Because lot lines are not visible on the ground, land fragmentation goes largely unnoticed by the public. Land division patterns largely dictate the opportunities and constraints for accommodating new land uses and preserving those that exist. There are many areas in the township where parcels as small as ten acres dominate development patterns, not including the smaller lots associated with platted subdivisions.

This land fragmentation can significantly impact natural resource systems. Woodlands and wetlands function best when they exist in natural conditions.

Fragmenting followed by road or home construction often diminishes the benefits provided by natural systems, including wildlife habitats, flood control and water purification. Knowing and understanding the results of this pattern is critical when planning for the Township's future.

# Rapid River Township Land Ownership



- Private
- Rapid River Township
- State Building Authority
- Kalkaska County
- Department of Natural Resources

— Roads

**017 - Township Section number**



## SEPTIC SYSTEMS

(What are the concerns?)

Residents within the Township rely on individual well and septic systems. Within the limits of soil capability, individual systems offer great flexibility in locational choices for new housing. At the same time, use of private systems imposes certain conditions that must be adhered to if the quality of the physical environment is to be preserved into the future. The Health Department is responsible for the proper placement and function of a septic system during the permitting process.

## ECONOMY

(What are our economic resources?)

Population and economic growth have, to a large extent, occurred as a result of the abundance of and quality of natural resources within the Township. The lakes, rivers and public lands offer a wide range of recreational opportunities for the visitor and permanent resident alike. The Township is truly a year-round tourist and resort center. Hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, skiing, swimming, and boating are all available as recreation opportunities. The accessibility of these features is the main reason people choose to live and work in the Rapid River Township area.

A number of locational advantages contribute, and will continue to contribute, to the Township's economy into the future. Proximity to Traverse City (within twenty miles) has been identified as a major asset. Firms locating in the area can have the benefit of low taxes, little congestion, and proximity to the attractions of Traverse City. Major highways, rail service, pipelines and the nearby Cherry Capital Airport have also been identified as important assets shaping the area's economy.

Complementing locational advantages include a low tax rate compared to surrounding counties, a competitive and capable labor force, low wage rates compared to other Michigan counties, and lower cost land.

Locational and economic factors are advantages, not assurances that the area will have a strong and viable economy in the future. The timing and future realignment of US-131 and of other improved infrastructure will greatly affect the economic future of the County and township.

While improving the infrastructure basis for new businesses and pursuing new business development are important, the area must also strive to maintain its existing employment base. Ongoing population growth and subsequent commercial development will provide the opportunity to strengthen the local economy, as will continuing investment by various entities in infrastructure and enhancement of recreational opportunities.

# CHAPTER 5: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*(What is our direction?)*

Guiding Principles are statements that guide decision-making relative to land use, transportation, and public improvements.

These fourteen (14) Guiding Principles were developed by the Planning Commission and are the crux of this Master Plan. Each one is tailored to aid the Township in guiding growth. These Principles were developed with input from the citizens of the township should be looked at when reviewing development proposals, administering, or amending the zoning ordinance, and considering public input. Each principle includes a list of policy statements to be considered in applying the guiding principle.

**Guiding Principle #1: Preserve the rural character of the Township.** Rural character is central to the Township's identity, and maintaining it is important to the future. Rapid River Township is not known as an urban area and wants to stay that way.

Understanding and encouraging land use patterns that promote this characteristic is critical.

**Policies: The following are the policies to preserve rural character:**

- Save as many trees as possible; replace them whenever possible.
- Minimize road infrastructure to provide a basic system with cooperation from the Kankaska County Road Commission.
- Discourage outside lighting to the minimum necessary in commercial areas.
- Encourage developments to be designed around common elements such as a park, open space, or civic building, etc.
- Preserve the continuity of natural features and greenway infrastructure such as woodlands and wetlands as a means to preserve permanent open space.
- Promote natural vegetation.
- Establish incentives to encourage the incorporation of desirable views and vistas, woodlands, farmlands, and the protection of ridgelines into development plans.
- Manage and control growth; do not allow it to control the Township.
- Carefully regulate things that could have a negative visual or character impact on the Township such as sexually oriented businesses and communication towers.
- Discourage spot-zoning and "leapfrog" zoning as these practices are contradictory to the preservation of rural character.
- Additionally, encourage approval of development applications only when the proposal would not undermine the Township's rural character and only when the proposal is viewed as a logical expansion of an adjacent district that is consistent with the Master Plan.

**Guiding Principle #2: Maintain the rural character and appearance of highway and road corridors.** The views people see while driving on highways and roads affects their feelings about the Township. Preserving beautiful vantage points, forested areas, and rustic settings is one of the highest priorities of the Township. Current zoning and land use patterns allow residential development along these corridors, which can change their character. Every effort should be made to protect them from inappropriate development or ill-suited development such as signage, billboards, multiple access points, obtrusive building placement, and ridgeline development.

**Policies:** The following are the policies to maintain the rural character and appearance of highway and road corridors:

- Preserve viewsheds; don't allow zoning to permit obtrusive development in areas having a high visual quality.
- Preserve the existing tree lines and canopy along the roads. Maintain the trees and replant them when needed.
- Place all structures and buildings within and adjacent to tree lines and wooded field edges and minimize vegetative clearing.
- Keep the long vistas of open space and wooded areas along the roads; do not allow them to be broken up.
- Retain the treed area between structures and roadway. Have deep setbacks from the road.
- Minimize driveway cuts. Implement access management.
- Keep it clean, control signage, and limit billboards.

**Guiding Principle #3: Maintain the natural corridors and patterns and weave them into the plan.** Natural features and resources add to the quality of life and affect the character of the Township. Sensitive areas such as wetlands, rivers, streams, and water bodies are the fabric around which development is formed. Guidelines and criteria that encourage development consistent with air, water, land, woodlands, and sensitive environmental protection objectives are important.



Rugg Pond



Wallace Road

**Policies:** The following are the policies to maintain the natural corridors and patterns and weave them into the plan:

- Preserve and connect the valuable resources that define Rapid River Township and give it character, such as the wetlands, rivers, streams, and water bodies.
- Create a variable width, naturally vegetated buffer system along all perennial streams that also encompass critical environmental features such as the 100-year-old floodplains and wetlands.
- Enforce measures to preserve natural features, control pollution, and limit erosion.
- Respect and protect wildlife corridors and habitat. Respect and protect the unique natural vegetation and sensitive forestlands.
- Provide incentives to establish continuous natural corridors.
- Regulate land uses within this area.
- Encourage renewable energy that is compatible with and helps to preserve natural systems in the Township. Foster the continual evaluation of methods to improve sustainability and evaluate "green" technology as it emerges.

**Guiding Principle #4: Although agriculture is not a prominent land use, it has played an important role in the history of the Township.** Existing farming operations are encouraged to continue operation for as long as possible. Tree farms also play an important role visually and economically. Barns, silos, and old farm homes are fundamentally significant to the appearance of the Township.

**Policies:** The following are the policies for agricultural lands:

- Encourage the incorporation of existing agricultural structures such as barns, silos, and old farmhouses with new developments.
- Promote conservation initiatives such as PA-116 and work with farmland preservation groups and land conservancies to retain the agricultural lands to the extent possible.
- When reviewing development proposals adjacent to existing agricultural operations, be sensitive to issues in order to limit land use conflicts and reduce potential complaints.
- Proactively help farmers continue agricultural operations. Permit uses that allow the sale of agricultural products, bed and breakfasts, and other complementary uses.
- Understand that agriculture is changing; allow nurseries, U-pick operations, Agri-tourism and other uses in agricultural areas.
- Permit non-farm development only where it can coexist with farming and encourages its longevity.
- Work with farmland preservation programs to obtain low interest loans and grants for barns, silos, and farmland restoration.

**Guiding Principle #5: Respect the Township’s needs but focus on the big picture.** Of the twelve Townships in Kalkaska County, seven are under County Zoning; therefore respecting the County’s issues and concerns is imperative. However, the Township also has the responsibility to consider issues and concerns on a regional level. Decisions, policies, and land use guidelines affect everyone, necessitating always thinking about the big picture.

**Policies:** The following are the policies for relationships with other Zoning Authorities:

- Always consider the regional implications of local decisions, no matter how small that decision may seem, and act responsibly in the entire region's best interest.
- Understand that no community exists in a vacuum, and what happens in one community goes beyond its borders.
- When making or reviewing a land use decision, read and be aware of communities' Master Plans and policies.
- Plan and communicate infrastructure and road improvements with adjacent communities.

**Guiding Principle #6: Foster coordination among governing bodies.** Coordination and cooperation among State, County and local jurisdictions is critical for the well-being and quality of life for current and future Township residents. Effective communication is a necessity.

**Policies:** The following are the policies for fostering coordination among governing bodies:

- Understand that lack of coordination among jurisdictions, boards and agencies cause inefficiencies in public investment, incompatible land uses, and intergovernmental conflicts.
- Look beyond the borders of the Township and beyond a five-year timeline when planning for regional projects. Recognize their overall impact.
- Work together on the US 131 realignment.
- Work with school districts, the road commission, and county agencies, knowing that they all serve the same population.
- Coordinate infrastructure improvements to maximize efficiency and minimize costs.
- Recognize current and future studies, plans, and opportunities promulgated by local and regional entities that may assist, influence or impact Rapid River Township.

**Guiding Principle #7: Provide for diverse housing types.** Certainly not everyone wishes to live in the same type of dwelling unit, nor will everyone want to live in the dwelling unit for as long as they live. Some decide to move away from familiar surroundings when their housing needs change. A broad range of housing opportunities that meets the various economic, family and lifestyle needs of residents and tourists needs to be provided.

**Policies:** The following are the policies for providing housing:

- Provide opportunities for a wide range of housing types.
- Disperse affordable housing, rather than concentrating it in large developments.
- Know that some areas are better suited for certain residential structures than others.
- Permit mixed-type developments and accessory units.
- Preserve and maintain structures having historical importance or extraordinary architecture and craftsmanship.
- Respect historical development patterns. Identify them, understand them, and promote development that complements them.
- Provide adequate infrastructure for development.

**Guiding Principle #8: Respect private property rights while planning for the public interest.** When development occurs, everyone and every property is affected. Maintaining the value of land in the Township is important. Policies, guidelines, and land use decisions need to consider their impacts on individual landowners and residents. The basis for these decisions, however, needs to be the community as a whole and its future.

**Policies:** The following are the policies relating to private property rights and planning for the public interest:

- Allow people to develop and use land to their benefit as long as negative impacts are minimized to neighboring properties, the environment, and the community.
- Enhance land values by minimizing the impact of development on adjacent land.
- Provide a clear understanding of permitted uses and the approval process.
- Provide the flexibility of clustered and mixed-use developments, which allow for the preservation of large, contiguous open spaces.
- Keep an open mind when listening to property owners, applicants, developers, neighbors and concerned citizens.
- Keep the public informed of land use issues. Go beyond the normal required public hearing requirements when there is a major issue of concern.
- Program and design public involvement as a regular component of all decision-making. Do not just rely on public hearings.
- Understand the whys and wherefores of NIMBYS (Not In My Backyard Syndrome). Try to address the concerns of individual citizens as much as possible.
- Provide reasonable regulation of sand and gravel mining to the extent allowed by Act 110 of 2006, as amended (Zoning Act).

**Guiding Principle #9: Safeguard the historical and significant features of the Township.** Rapid River Township has a rich history and is full of distinct features that add to its sense of place and character. Among others, Rugg Pond and the Rapid River are critical elements that need to be protected and enhanced.

**Policies:** The following are the policies for safeguarding historical and significant features of the Township:

- Use planning and zoning to protect these features. Ensure that the Township Master Plan addresses these features and their protection.
- Require development projects to highlight these features as an integral part of their plan and to preserve them for future generations.
- Participate in and promote organizations that can safeguard these features, such as Michigan Historical Marker, National Register of Historic Places, Centennial Farms, and local preservation groups.

**Guiding Principle #10: Establish a sense of unity in Rapid River Township.** The Township is known as a rural area, and citizens pride themselves on this description. This characteristic helps to distinguish the Township from surrounding areas. This sense of pride and the current rural land use patterns need to be promoted to help residents fashion a unified feeling of the Township.

**Policies:** The following are the policies for establishing a sense of unity in the Township:

- Highlight the different qualities of diverse land uses and celebrate individualism.
- Reinforce the knowledge that people work, live, and play in different ways within the township.
- Educate children about rural lifestyle and Rapid River Township's history. Help them understand the area and take pride in it.
- Support county and rural events.

**Guiding Principle #11: Highlight the fact that Rapid River Township is a recreation-oriented community.** People live in and visit the Township to enjoy the many recreational amenities such as snowmobiling, fishing, hunting, camping, canoeing, hiking, biking, cross country skiing, rafting, and ATV riding. The huge amount of State-owned land and the pristine rivers provide these great recreational opportunities and add to the quality of life.

**Policies:** The following are the policies highlighting Rapid River Township as a recreation-oriented community:

- Prevent the over-development of these resources.
- Promote regulations that respect and protect the quality of the land, water, plants, and animals.
- Ensure that the Master Plan addresses these amenities and their protection.
- Utilize the County Parks and Recreation Master Plan when making land use decisions and purchasing land.
- Use land conservancies and conservation easements to protect open space and recreation-oriented areas.
- Be familiar with the State's plan for State-owned lands and support initiatives for land preservation.

- Support eco-tourism (tourism based on natural resources) as an economic support for the Township but do not overuse the resources.
- Maintain the quality of the rivers and streams to continue to provide pleasant recreational experiences.
- Encourage the development of State, County, and Township improved parks and facilities within the Township.

**Guiding Principle# 12: Common Water Usage:** Maintain surface and ground water quality.

**Policies:** The following policy is designed to protect the natural resources of the Township:

- In order to ensure that the general welfare of the residents of Rapid River Township, now and for years to come, is not infringed upon, the unnecessary removal or use of water from its watershed or aquifers which has no direct benefits to the residents of the township, and which does not increase public safety, health, or welfare shall be prohibited.

## TRANSPORTATION

(How do roads affect us?)

In its broadest sense, a transportation system includes all forms of mobility. Vehicular mobility, however, has been the predominant method of movement for residents, businesses, and visitors within Rapid River Township. The transportation network in the Township has been shaped by the fundamental necessities of today, including employment, recreation, schools, shopping, and tourism. The Township has minimal control or influence over the improvements to the road system in the Township. The Kalkaska County Road Commission oversees the maintenance and upkeep of the road system throughout Kalkaska County while the Township participates in the summer application of dust control on Township unpaved roads.

## EXISTING ROADS

(Where do they go?)

- Local roads serve as major and minor collectors for area residents.
- Local roads include both paved and unpaved roads and seasonal roads.
- Paved roads are generally connected to other communities or to the State Highway.
- 71 miles are County Roads.
- 6 miles are State Highways.
- 12 miles of roads are paved.
- 19 miles of roads are unpaved.
- 26 miles of roads are unpaved and seasonal.

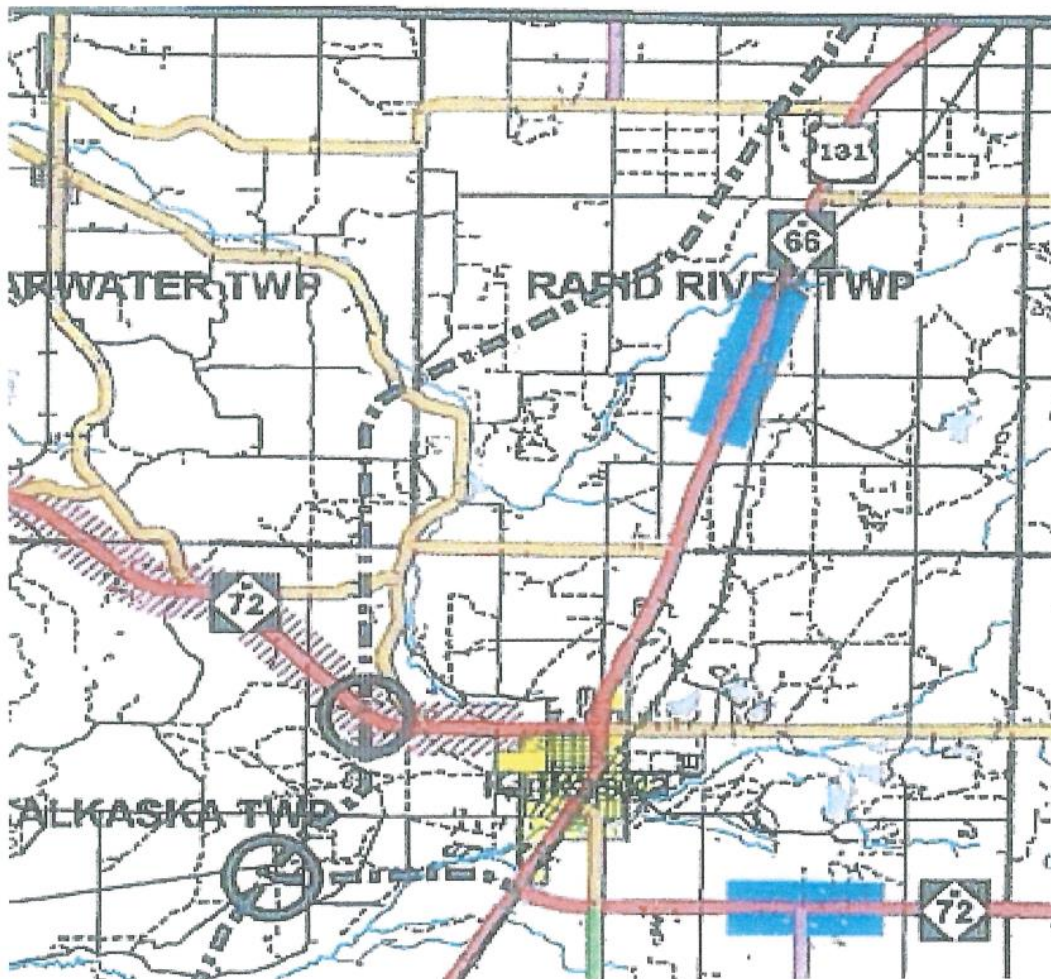
## STATE HIGHWAYS

(What are volumes?)

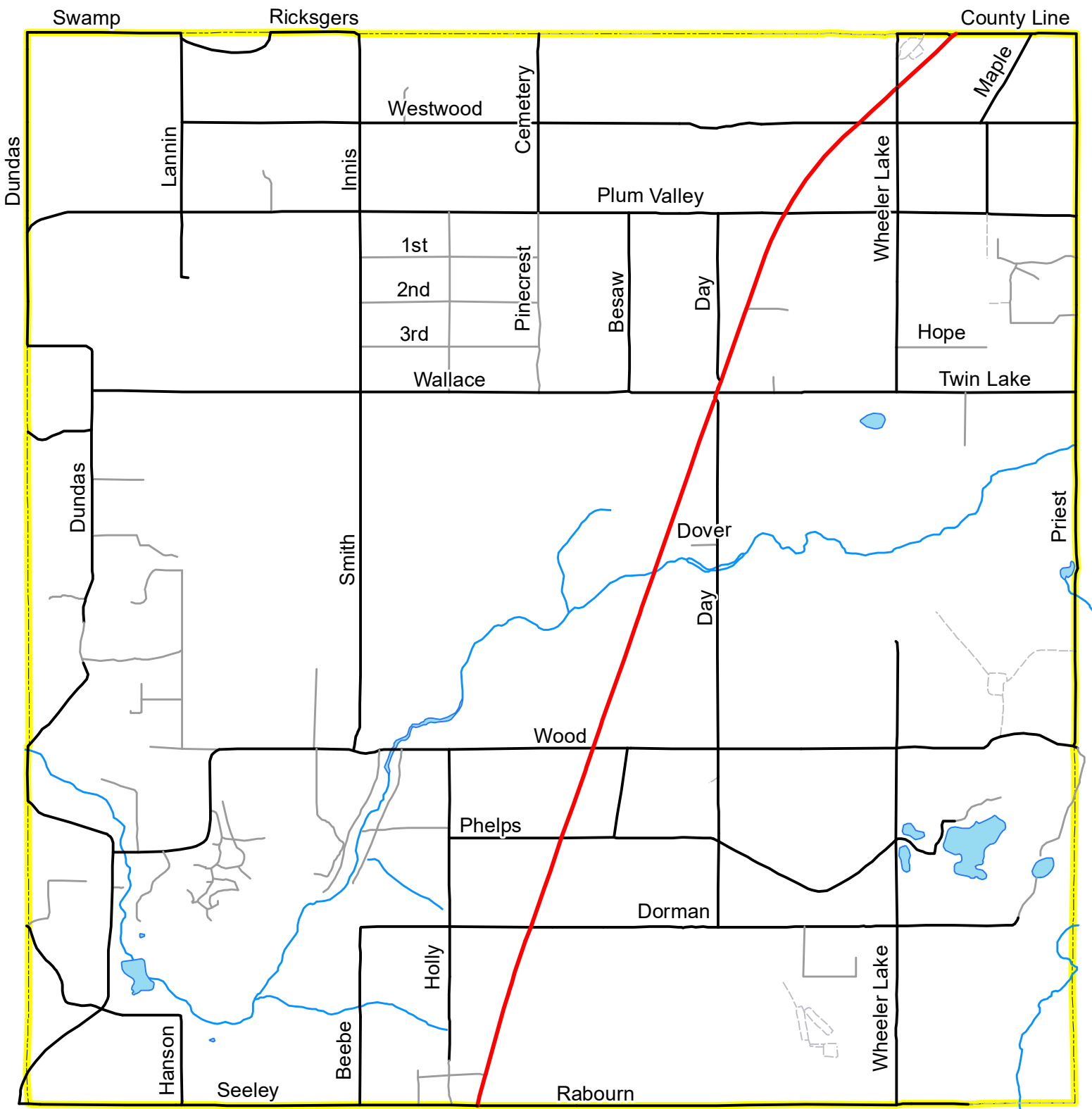
The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has classified roads within the County using the National Functional Classification System. The primary purpose of this classification is to create a uniform criterion that organizes roads by function, right-of-way and design. Two highways within the County are classified as principal non -freeway highways, US-131 and M-72.

- US -131 is a major State trunkline traversing the Township between the City of Petoskey to the north and the City of Cadillac to its south. This highway is undivided and is 22 feet wide with 9-foot shoulders. Average daily traffic along the County's segment of this highway was approximately 8,900 vehicles in 2000.
- Both US-131 and M-72 are experiencing operational problems under current conditions, particularly during peak summer tourism months. In some instances, it can be attributed to the lack of a passing lane, but in others, it is more appropriately related to surface condition and road configuration. Continuous improvements have been made to enhance traffic flow.

- Every other year, the Michigan Department of Transportation inventories the condition and operation of the entire State trunkline system. In both the rating of road surface conditions and safety, sections of US-131 between Kalkaska and Mancelona were identified as critical concerns in 1993. This is in part due to the growing travel demand within Kalkaska and surrounding counties. Passing lanes and other improvements have been made in this section.
- As part of their trunkline assessment program, MDOT has also compared 1993 traffic volumes for trunk lines with projected volumes for the year 2020 and concluded that US-131 and M-72 highways will likely experience dramatic increases in the traffic volumes according to these projections.



**Proposed US 131 Alignment**



Source: State of Michigan

# Rapid River Township

Kalkaska County, Michigan

## Master Plan

### Map 8. Road Classification

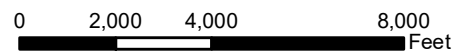


**Legend**

**Framework Classification Code (FCC)**

- US / State Highway
- Principal and Minor Arterials
- Non-certified Roads
- Unnamed/Unclassified

1 inch = 4,000 feet



## PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

(What are the plans?)

- The proposed US-131 alignment is west of the Village of Kalkaska and traverses the west side of Rapid River Township.
- Passing lanes are proposed on US-131.
- MDOT's current policy is to have passing lanes and to implement access management.

### US-131

(What are the plans?)

In a 1994 study, the Michigan State Department of Transportation indicated that the County's principal arterial, US-131, had serious deficiencies based upon traffic volumes and current highway density. At that time, MDOT determined that a new freeway was the most appropriate means for correcting the deficiencies. MDOT planned that the freeway would follow, although be separated from, the existing US-131 highway.

Alternative designs have placed this freeway both on the east and west sides of the current highway. The final determinations regarding a specific location are yet to be made. Based upon input from local leaders and citizens, it appears the western alignment has captured the greatest amount of local support because a western route will fragment existing farms less, create fewer dead-end roads (with less detriment to school bus routes and emergency vehicle access), and provide better access for new business development.

Further evaluation will be required, however, before a definitive position can be taken. If a western alignment were selected, the alignment closest to the Village would offer the greatest economic benefits.

No matter what alignment is chosen, the realignment of US-131 will be expensive. Currently there are no funds for this project, and the realignment may not occur for another twenty years or more. MDOT's policy is to use passing lanes and access management to achieve better capacity within the existing infrastructure,

If and when realignment does occur, the Township will do its part to ensure impacts of the relocation are positive.

## ACCESS MANAGEMENT

(What can the Planning Commission do?)

Access management is a set of proven techniques that can help reduce traffic congestion, preserve the flow of traffic, improve traffic safety, prevent crashes, preserve existing capacity, and preserve investment in roads by managing the location, design, and type of access to property.

Access management focuses on the number, location, and design of driveways as they relate to the following elements within the road right-of-way: travel lanes, medians, by-pass lanes, dedicated turn lanes, and signal operations. Access management should be applied to all county and state roads. The following points should be addressed in the zoning ordinance and during development reviews and rezoning:

- Limit the number of driveways to each lot.
- Restrict the number of lots fronting on highways and on busy roads.
- Regulate the location, spacing, and design of driveways.
- Encourage shared access to parcels and consolidate driveways where possible.
- Provide adequate sight distance.
- Separate driveways from intersections.
- Locate driveways away from other driveways.
- Restrict turning movements into and out of driveways.
- Offset driveways.
- Use passing lanes.
- Restrict turns onto the roadway.
- Provide alternative accesses.
- Encourage front or rear access drives (frontage roads).
- Connect streets, roads, and access easements.
- Promote internal connections.
- Adopt an access management provision that limits the number of allowed driveways on a road.

## TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

(What else can we do?)

- Play an active part in road improvements and consider their broad impacts to the Township's future development.
- Ensure the protection of the high-quality scenic views and preservation of the critical natural features during any road expansion.
- Promote access management.
- Encourage the development of non-motorized transportation systems and connect to non-motorized trail systems in adjacent areas.
- Embrace context sensitive design road standards. Support different design standards for different roads. Know that roads in rural areas should differ from roads in urban areas with respect to their width, placement, and paving.
- Involve the public in road improvement projects.
- Have a curb and gutter in urban areas, ditches in rural areas.
- Use private roads to minimize impacts on the natural environment.
- Work with MDOT to conform to the policies listed in the Township Master Plan.
- Support public transportation programs.
- Endorse gravel roads in rural areas except where this policy would conflict with township road improvement plans.

- Plant and maintain trees along the roads.
- Work with the appropriate entities to ensure that any future road(s) avoids productive agricultural operations and center-pivot irrigation systems.
- Provide for safe and efficient movement of people and goods by motor vehicles, bikes and other legal users of transportation systems in accordance with Act 340 of 2010.

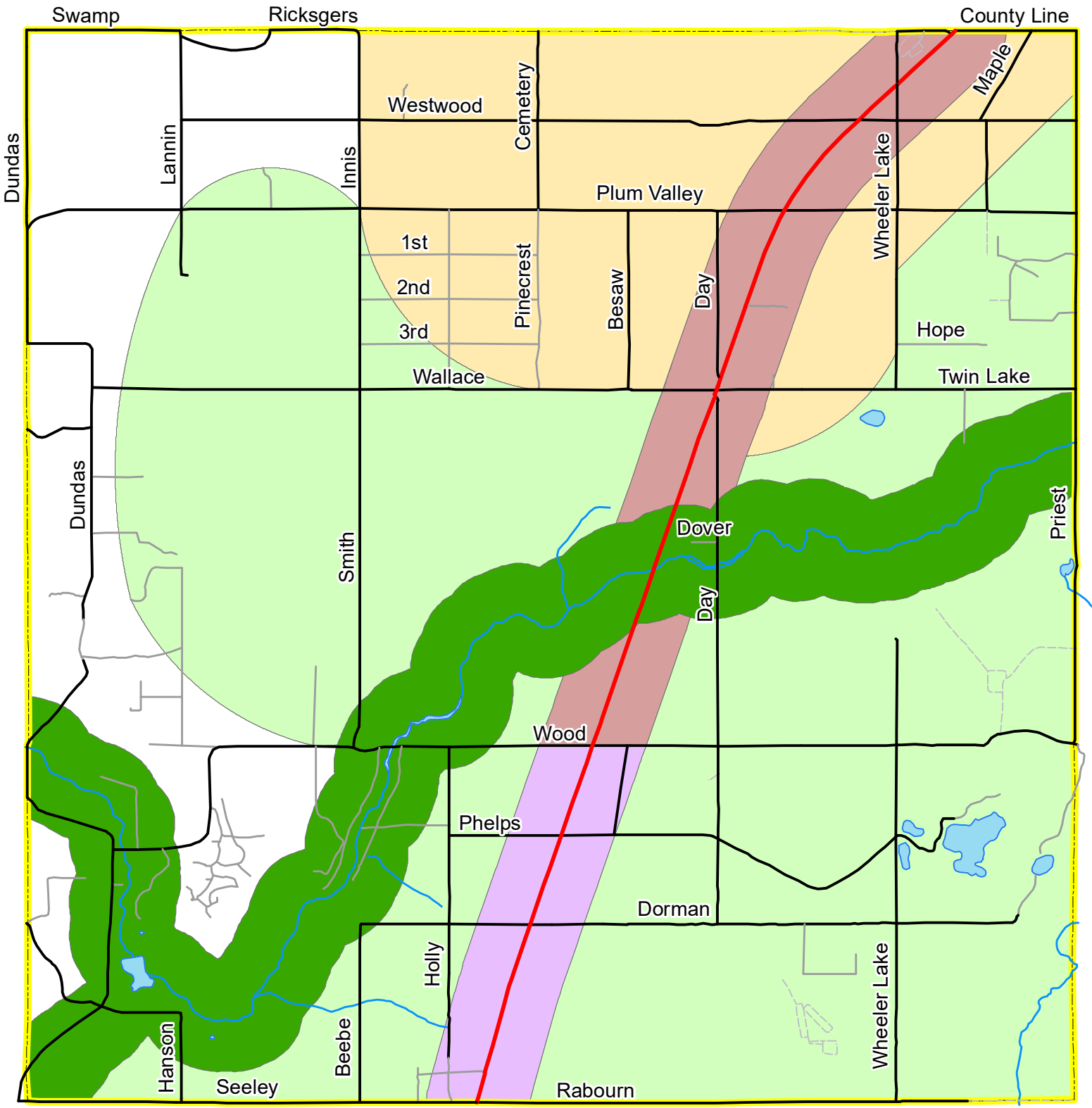
# CHAPTER 7: FUTURE LAND USE

*(What do we want to see in twenty years?)*



Rapid River at Day Road

*It is the overall principle of the Plan that the township will retain its rural, natural character over the next twenty years.*



# Rapid River Township

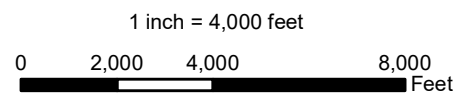
Kalkaska County, Michigan

## Master Plan

### Map 9. Future Land Use

#### Legend

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  AG, Agricultural      |  SC, Stream Corridor     |
|  FR, Forest Recreation |  HC, Highway Corridor    |
|  RR, Rural Residential |  EC, Employment Corridor |



## FOREST LAND USES

Now	2040
<b>Forest Land characteristics:</b>	<b>What we want to see in 20 years:</b>
Majority is state-owned land and undeveloped	Majority is state-owned land and is undeveloped
Primary use is open space and recreation	Primary use is open space and recreation.
Some scattered single-family homes	Some scattered single-family homes
May be a location for oil and gas exploration	May be a location for oil and gas exploration
There is limited access and infrastructure	There is limited access and infrastructure
Is a beautiful and heavily forested area	Is a beautiful and heavily forested area
Critical area for wildlife and water quality	Healthy wildlife and excellent water quality
Miscellaneous privately owned proper ties scattered within this area	Minimal development has occurred.
Major factor in defining the Township' s land use patterns	Continuing factor in Township's land use patterns

### What we don't want to happen in 20 years:

- Loss of the forested area and natural resources
- Scattered homes and roads dominating the area
- Conflicts between developments and recreational land uses, reducing recreation opportunities
- Rapid River Township no longer perceived as a place to play

## ACTION STEPS

(What can be done to preserve the forested areas?)

- Limit the visual impact of development.
- Explore and implement regulations for ‘tiny’ houses.
- Use existing vegetation to screen development from the road.
- Minimize infrastructure improvements; only allow them when public health and safety warrants them, not to increase density.
- Promote primitive driveways and roads.
- Encourage gravel roads, driveways, and parking areas in coordination with township road improvement plans.
- Discourage street lighting.
- Control signage and limit billboards

## AGRICULTURAL LAND USES

<b>Now</b>	<b>2040</b>
<b>Agricultural characteristics:</b>	<b>What we want to see in 20 years:</b>
Few active farms in the Township.	Farming still exists.
Farming contributes to the local economy.	Farming is a desired activity.
Much formerly productive farmland is lying fallow.	Agricultural lands are productive and fertile. Community gardens and small farming operations support locally grown food.
Old barns, silos, and farmhouses exist and define the area.	Some barns, silos, and farmhouses have been maintained or refurbished.
Large, contiguous open fields are visible from the roadside.	Large, contiguous open fields are visible from the roadside.
Historically, farms and farmers have been an important part of the Township's character.	Residential developments have been clustered, preserving large amounts of farmland. These farmlands are actively cultivated and are part of a contiguous open space corridor.
Residents support farming.	Residents support farming.
Permitted uses include agricultural and low-impact single family residential.	Permitted uses include agricultural and low-impact single family residential.

### **What we don't want to happen in 20 years:**

- All of the farmlands have been developed.
- Large, contiguous open fields have been lost.
- Agricultural landscape as viewed from the road has been lost.
- Farming virtues and character have been lost.

## ACTION STEPS

(what can be done to maintain farm lands?)

- Have a separate agricultural zoning designation and continue to allow agricultural operations as a permitted use.
- Amend the zoning ordinance to have clustered housing as a permitted use in the Agricultural-zoning district. Make the clustering process simple. Allow the open space within clustered subdivisions to be farmed.
- Minimize the impacts of development. Encourage clustering. Allow density bonuses of up to 50% when the undeveloped land is placed in a conservation easement or irrevocable conveyance.
- Allocate a density bonus if a development incorporates, maintains, and uses existing agricultural features, such as barns, silos, and farmhouses structures.
- Approve PA 116 applications and projects that incorporate farmland preservation mechanisms.
- Have tree buffers between roads and residential subdivision developments in planned projects.
- Develop an Open Space/Farmland Preservation Plan.
- Control and limit signage.

## RURAL RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

<b>Now</b>	<b>2040</b>
<b>Rural Residential Characteristics</b>	<b>What we want to see in 20 years</b>
Developments with natural vegetation exemplify the rural character.	Developments with natural vegetation exemplify the rural character.
Permitted uses include single family residential.	Permitted uses include single family residential.
Scattered homes have gravel driveways.	Scattered homes with gravel driveways
Homes are not visible from the road.	Homes not visible from the road
Long distances between driveways	Long distances between driveways
Serviced by well and septic systems	Low impact infrastructure
Homes hidden in the trees	Homes hidden in the trees
Exemplify the rural character	Exemplify the rural character

### **What we don't want to happen in 20 years:**

- Subdivision developments dominating the landscape
- House, after house, after house along the road
- Increases in roadways and paved surfaces
- Loss of the large, contiguous wooded view from the road
- Loss of the tree canopy along the roadside
- The costly extension of infrastructure
- Loss of the rural character and community pride
- Undeveloped or partially developed Planned Unit Developments and Cluster Developments

## ACTION STEPS

(what can be done to preserve the rural character of the area?)

- Use existing vegetation to screen houses from the road. Encourage additional trees between houses and roads if needed where no vegetation exists
- Have wide frontage requirements.
- Discourage street lighting.
- Minimize road-widening projects; keep roads primarily two lanes.
- Allow a density of one unit per acre.
- Permit different types of housing.
- Encourage developments to be located out of view sheds to minimize their visual impact.
- Control and limit signage.

# RESORT RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

**Now**

**2040**

**Resort Residential characteristics:**

**What we want to see in 20 years:**

Areas surrounding inland lakes

Highly attractive, quaint communities

Small residential cottages

Historically seasonal occupancy, now intermixed with year-round occupancy

Narrow roads, pedestrian friendly

Existing concerns about degradation through shoreline erosion, septic field leaching, and sediment discharge

Shared driveways

Minimal infrastructure, no water or sewer services

Limited commercial and residential uses are permitted here.

Narrow lots

Limited growth of these communities

Highly attractive, quaint communities

Small to medium size residential cottages

Mixed seasonal and year-round occupancy of homes

Narrow roads, pedestrian friendly

Healthy shoreline and pristine water quality

Shared driveways and limited number of driveways

Infrastructure has improved, but it has not encouraged growth

Commercial operations that serve single-family dwelling units

Wide frontage along the lakeside

**What we don't want to happen in 20 years:**

- Loss of the unique character and community feel
- Densely populated areas around the lakes
- Degradation of water quality
- Road dominated landscape
- Large size (trophy) homes

## ACTION STEPS

(what can be done to maintain the Resort Residential as it is now?)

- Minimize infrastructure improvements. Only permit improvements for environmental or public health and safety reasons, not to increase density.
- Minimize road-widening projects; keep roads primarily two lanes and, where needed, turning lanes at intersections.
- Disallow increases in density
- Only allow single-family homes and small commercial operations serving the homes in these areas.
- Use building envelopes to minimize site disturbance and to locate development in suitable areas.
- Have wide frontages (approximately 100 feet) along the lakeshore.
- Prepare and implement a water quality protection plan.
- Prohibit keyholing.
- Have development setbacks from the water's edge.
- Encourage the use of natural vegetation in developments.
- Divert drainage of impervious surfaces such as driveways, sidewalks, and rooftops away from the water's edge.
- Prohibit exploration or production of oil, gas, brine, sand, gravel, or other minerals that would require the disturbance of the surface within 300 feet of the water's edge.

# RECREATION STREAM CORRIDOR LAND USES

**NOW**

**2040**

**Recreation Stream Corridor characteristics:**

**What we want to see in 20 years:**

More or less a 200-foot-wide area on each side of the Rapid River and its tributaries

Minimal development along the Rapid River

Visually appealing area

Visually appealing area

Intermixed public and private owned lands along river edges

Intermixed public and private owned lands along river edges

Initial development was resort and seasonal, now becoming year round residential. Single family uses permitted here.

Mix of year-round, seasonal, and resort occupancy. Single family development permitted here.

Bountiful fish in the rivers and streams

Bountiful fish in the rivers and streams

Sensitive environmental area

Sensitive and sustainable environmental area

Critical wildlife corridor

Critical and protected wildlife corridor.

Natural vegetation exists to provide shade for the river and tributaries.

Preservation of natural vegetation to provide shade for rivers and tributaries.

**What we don't want to happen in 20 years:**

- Massive development of the corridors
- Loss of water quality
- Loss of wildlife, fish, and natural resources
- Aesthetically unappealing area

## ACTION STEPS

(what can be done to protect and enhance the recreation stream corridors?)

- Think of the area as primarily open space and recreation, secondarily as residential.
- Establish a township-wide corridor protection plan.
- Establish a no-soil-disturbance zone along the water's edge (25 to 100 foot wide).
- Maintain a natural vegetative buffer area (approximately 25 to 100 feet) along the water's edge.
- Keep impervious surfaces such as driveways, sidewalks, and rooftops away from the water's edge.
- Minimize infrastructure improvements. Only permit improvements for environmental or public health and safety reasons, not to increase density.
- Develop and use a wildlife and water quality protection plan.

## COMMERCIAL/HIGHWAY CORRIDOR LAND USES

<b>Now</b>	<b>2040</b>
<b>Commercial corridor characteristics:</b>	<b>What we want to see in 20 years:</b>
Primarily industrial and commercial operations	Primarily industrial and commercial operations
Along US-131	Along US-131
Adjacent or close to the existing uses	Adjacent or close to the existing uses
Strip development	Compact, not strip development
Larger parking areas	Landscaped parking lots; smaller parking lots
Important to township' s economy	Successful businesses are located in these areas.
Meet specific market demands	Meeting Market demands
Gateway to Northern Michigan	Proud gateway to Northern Michigan
Mixed Signage	Small and limited signage
Single user business to a depth of 500' with some exceptions	Single user business on a parcel adjacent to US-131 to a depth reasonable to accommodate the use

### **What we don't want to happen in 20 years:**

- Strip development shopping centers along the entire highway corridors
- Closed and abandoned shopping centers
- Parking lots dominating the view
- Spreading into forested and/or residential areas
- Billboards and signs dominating the roadside
- Strip development along highway corridors

## ACTION STEPS

(what can be done to enhance the Commercial Corridor)

- Enact access regulations and spacing and encourage alternative accesses.
- Regulate parking lot sizes and placement.
- Landscape parking lots.
- Regulate the size, location, spacing, and number of signs and billboards. Be proactive with signs and billboards.
- Limit the number of common points of ingress/egress.
- Understand how critical the Highway Corridor is to the public perception of Rapid River Township.
- Discourage further commercial expansion or creep along highway corridors that is not consistent with this Master Plan

## ZONING PLAN

State statute requires that a Master Plan include a "zoning plan." The purpose of a zoning plan is to describe how the future land use categories coincide with the current zoning districts of the Township. The following table includes the zoning plan for Rapid River Township. However, it is important to note that the designations and the districts may not exactly correspond, and adjustments may be necessary to bring the Zoning Ordinance up to date with the policies expressed in the Master Plan. As such, the following table is simply meant to depict a general relationship between the designations and the districts.

<b>Future Land Use Designations</b>	<b>Corresponding Zoning Districts</b>
Forest	Forest/Recreational
Agricultural	Agricultural Residential
Rural Residential	Residential; Resort Residential; Lakefront Residential
Resort Residential	Resort Residential
Recreation/Stream	Forest Recreational
Commercial/Highway Corridor	Commercial; General Industrial; Lt. Industrial

# CHAPTER 8: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

*(Let's go!)*

The generation of a Master Plan is the important first step in a two-step planning process. This chapter discusses the strategy for proceeding with step two of the process: plan implementation.

Achieving the goals, objectives and policies of this Plan, as represented in the preceding chapters, is dependent upon a multifaceted implementation process. Effective coordination of local and county efforts is required; public, private and civic support is important, and interaction between agencies responsible for various components of the Plan (public works, economic development, transportation) is a key element of the implementation formula.

As important a benchmark as this Plan is for the Township, the ideas, concepts and initiatives it contains can only be carried from concept to reality through the active involvement and support of citizens, elected officials, local and county planners, private business and other administrative officials.

Implementation success is also dependent on, and will involve, a variety of techniques and tools, including capital improvement plans, zoning and subdivision regulations. Successful implementation will be dependent on the ability to achieve coordination among agencies, as well as the coordinated use of the respective tools available to key public agencies.

## TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS

*(Let's talk!)*

This Plan is based upon the concept that each jurisdiction is better able to address its unique economic, social and physical development problems and opportunities if a common framework can be established for making individual decisions. This kind of interdependence can maximize benefits for all through the coordination and cooperation of local governmental units on future land use and infrastructure decisions. The result will be a strong direction for land use planning which will enhance the quality of life for all residents.

- With the adoption of this Master Plan by the Planning Commission and the Township Board, local officials will be in a position of
- knowing the future of the Township,
- knowing the future path, the Township will take to pursue these plans,
- knowing the priorities being pursued on a Township level and,
- knowing the basis behind planning and physical development decisions.

There are broad arrays of land use issues in which there are significant public interests that extend beyond the boundaries of an individual jurisdiction. Public interests that are broader than simply local interest include, but are not limited to the following:

- air quality protection;
- watershed management for water quality protection;
- groundwater protection;
- protection of sensitive environments (e.g., wetlands, floodplains);
- protection of natural resources necessary to sustain resource-based industries such as agriculture and forestry;
- sustainable economic development to provide jobs for present and future residents;
- use of public access sites;
- establishment of new public parks and access sites on waterfronts and existing public parks (national, state and local);
- safe, efficient and environmentally sound roads and highways;
- public sewer and water services that extend beyond a single jurisdictional boundary;
- land use along municipal borders;
- quality community image which reflects the characteristics desired by residents;
- large scale development impacts beyond local boundaries (e.g., large resorts, industrial facilities, and large shopping facilities);
- LULUs (locally unwanted land uses) that meet a regional need, such as junk yards, landfills, and communication towers, etc.

Intergovernmental cooperation and coordination are key to successfully dealing with issues exceeding those of local concern. Another key is successful implementation of the respective roles and responsibilities of the various bodies responsible for local planning and development decisions.

## LAND USE REGULATIONS

(Let's coordinate!)

### **Relationship to Zoning**

Many of the recommendations set forth in this Master Plan relate to zoning issues within the Township. Upon the adoption of this Master Plan, the Township can review existing ordinances and amend these documents, where appropriate, to reflect the contents of the Master Plan.

The Township will need to review and update its Zoning Ordinance to implement many of the land use recommendations of this Plan. This activity should be initiated soon after the Master Plan's adoption and following any subsequent Master Plan updates.

### **Relationship to Subdivision Regulations**

The Subdivision Control Act of 1967, also known as PA 288, sets forth the authority of a community to establish design standards and requirements for the orderly layout and parcelization of property within its jurisdiction.

Presently, subdivisions are being reviewed only from the perspective of satisfying County roadway standards, drain commissioner standards, Health Department Standards and State of Michigan standards. Subdivision orientation, parcel configuration and layout, the relationship between utilities, roads, lots and residences, the open spaces, the relationship to external activities, the entry/image and the retention of natural features is each subdivision consideration which cumulatively have a potentially significant impact upon community character.

However, proposed subdivisions are not presently being reviewed with these considerations in mind. The need for the Township to adopt subdivision and related land division regulations is critical to the successful implementation of this Master Plan.

### **Relationship to Capital Improvement Plans (CIP)**

Public facilities are not planned for at present but may be needed in the long-term future.

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

(Let's use them!)

A variety of programs are available for use in implementing this Master Plan. Whereas the focus is on grants from State and Federal sources, these sources are limited and are often targeted to address specific programs or problems. Nevertheless, these programs are summarized below for educational and possible future use.

### **Community Development Block Grant Program**

The Community Development Block Grant program was authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The Act had the effect of combining several Federal categorical grants such as Urban Renewal and Model Cities into one program. Grants under the program must principally benefit low and moderate-income families. Limited funds are available to rural communities through the Michigan Department of Commerce.

### **Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) Programs**

To help preserve Michigan's older existing housing, Public Act 130 was passed in 1977 to allow MSHDA to begin a home improvement loan program that offers reduced interest rates to eligible low- and moderate-income families. Consequently, MSHDA created the Home Improvement, Neighborhood Improvement, and Community Home Improvement Programs (HIP/NIP/CHIP). To obtain a loan, residents need to apply to one of the banks, savings and loans, or credit unions that participate in HIP/NIP/CHIP. Elderly housing programs are also available. MSHDA can be contacted through the Michigan Department of Commerce.

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant program was authorized by Public Law 88-578, which became effective on January 1, 1965. The purpose of the program is to provide

Federal funds for acquisition and development of facilities for outdoor recreation. The LWCF Program is administered jointly by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. To be eligible for support, a Park and Recreation Plan must be submitted to and approved by the DNR every five years.

### **Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund**

The Kammer Recreational Land Trust Fund Act of 1976 (Public Act 204) was passed by the Michigan Legislature and signed by the Governor on July 23, 1976. This Act created the Michigan Land Trust Fund and provides funds for the public acquisition of recreational lands through the sale of oil, gas, and mineral leases and royalties from oil, gas, and mineral extractions on State lands. On November 6, 1984, Michigan residents cast their vote in favor of Proposal B, a constitutional amendment that created the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), Public Act 101 of 1985. The MNRTF officially replaced the Michigan Land Trust Fund on October 1, 1985 and assists State and local governments (including school districts) in acquiring land or rights to land for recreational uses, protecting land because of its environmental importance or scenic beauty, and developing public recreational facilities.

### **The Recreation Bond**

The Recreation Bond calls for money to be spent on DNR and local recreation facilities in four categories:

- Recreation infrastructure
- Waterfront recreation
- Community recreation
- Tourism-enhancing recreation

Communities with proposals for projects in which the community is below the standards identified by DNR will get funding priority over similar projects proposed in non-deficient communities. The minimum number or size of selected recreation facilities to be considered toward bond funding is established by specific DNR criteria.

### **Recreation Improvement Fund**

The Recreation Improvement Fund was created from State fuel tax revenue. About \$750,000 per year is being targeted for development of non-motorized trails (hiking, bicycle, cross-country, and nature trails). Contact the Recreation Division of the DNR for information.

### **Local Facility Development Grants**

These grants come from a few funding sources and are available for planning, design, or development of local recreational facilities. They are administered by the DNR.

## **Land Acquisition Grants**

Land acquisition grants are available for projects aimed at open space preservation; park creation or expansion; acquisition of environmental resources such as sand dunes, woodlots, or wetland areas; waterfront access sites; and many other land acquisition projects intended for (passive or active) recreational purposes. They are administered by the DNR.

## **Waterways Fund**

The Waterways Division of the Department of Natural Resources offers grants for the purpose of developing public boating facilities. The emphasis is on creating boat access sites and supporting facilities.

## **Road Funds**

In 1992, PA 149 was passed to provide a continued source of revenue for cities, villages, and county road commissions. PA 149 replaces Act 231, 233 and 237 by changing the State's matching fund from 25 percent to 20 percent. The Act will be in effect for five years, when it will be reviewed for continuation by the Legislature. Detailed information on PA 149 can be obtained from MDOT's Transportation Economic Development Office at 517-335-1069. The Township also has a road millage to help in the maintenance of the Township gravel road system.

## **TEA-21 Funds**

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 created a new era of Federal transportation policy, and, as a result, a new opportunity for funding local transportation improvements. Authorized with a 20 percent local match requirement, funds may be sought for construction activities on any Federal aid road, any bridges or other transportation related projects, including but not limited to transit, carpool, parking, bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

## **Public Works Financing**

In addition to using general fund monies, it is often necessary for a community to bond to raise sufficient funds for implementing substantial public improvements. Bonding offers a method of financing for improvements such as water and sewer lines, street construction, sidewalks, and public parking facilities. Special assessments for benefiting property owners are another common funding mechanism.

## WHAT TO DO

(Let's use and update!)

Listed below are a series of follow-up studies and activities the Planning Commission should undertake once the Master Plan has been adopted. These activities are listed into three categories, namely immediate priorities, priorities within five (5) years, and priorities after five (5) years.

### Immediate Priorities

- Distribute copies of the Master Plan to all local interest groups and other governmental and county agencies.
- Initiate review of the Zoning Ordinance to identify changes necessary to be consistent with the Master Plan. Secure monies and hire a consultant to perform this work and to prepare amendments for adoption.
- Prepare and adopt subdivision and land division regulations.

### Priorities Within 5 Years

- Update this Master Plan once the final alignment of new U.S. I 31 has been established.
- Prepare a detailed land use plan and zoning regulations for lands around the intersections of new U.S. 131 once they have been formally identified.
- Identify specific state-owned parcels for possible land exchange or acquisition consideration that would either establish a logical extension to accommodate new commercial, industrial, or residential development, or establish new State land boundaries without internal fragments.
- Special emphasis should focus on State land that may be bisected by the new U.S. 131.

### Priorities After 5 Years

- Review and Update this Master Plan.
- The general rule of thumb is that Master Plans should be thoroughly reviewed and updated at least once each five (5) years OR when a substantial change occurs. At a minimum, the Master Plan should be thoroughly reviewed and revised, if necessary, once MDOT decides on the final route realignment for U.S. 131.
- A review may also be necessary if one of the adjacent townships adopts a Land Use Plan or major zoning change that is inconsistent with this Master Plan.