



# CROW WING TOWNSHIP

**PLANNING FOR 2030**  
Adopted May 2021





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### THANK YOU

Thank you to all who participated in the visioning and development of this comprehensive plan. Your local knowledge and guidance was instrumental in creating the vision for the Crow Wing Township.

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### CREATING A VISION

The residents of Crow Wing Township are farsighted and proactive when dealing with land use and planning within the township. The township created its first comprehensive plan in 1992, long before many municipalities in the area, and even the state, had thought to have a comprehensive plan. Many of the township's citizens have lived in the community their entire lives, while other residents have lived in the community just a few years, and still others are completely new to the area. This diversity brings a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and knowledge to the planning process that has helped the community create a vision for the future. Residents recognize the conflicts that can arise through the full exercise of an individual's property rights. They seek to have growth and development and be respectful of individual property rights without compromising the use and enjoyment of surrounding properties.

Recognizing the need to be prepared for increasing development pressures, the Crow Wing Township Planning Commission came together in 2020 to review the 2005 plan. The 2021 comprehensive plan carries forward most of the content from the 2005 plan, including goals and strategies from the previous plan. Strategic updates were made to content, graphics, goals, and the overall visual layout of the plan.

The 2021 plan consists of five core sections:

1. Introduction
2. Land Use
3. Natural Environment
4. Goals & Strategies
5. Implementation

It is important to note that the township has been engaging in the comprehensive planning process since 1992.

- 1992 — township adopts first comprehensive plan
- 2005 — township updates comprehensive plan
- 2008 — township begins administering its own land use ordinance and makes minor comprehensive plan updates
- 2021 — township updates comprehensive plan





## INTRODUCTION

### WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The comprehensive plan is the leading policy tool that can help citizens and local leaders work together to guide future growth and development more efficiently. At the same time, this document can aid in protecting the community's quality of life and identity.

Comprehensive planning is an important tool for communities to guide future development of land to ensure a safe and economical environment for residential, commercial, industrial, and public activities. In addition, planning can help:

- Preserve important natural resources, agricultural land, and other open lands.
- Identify issues, stay ahead of trends, and accommodate change.
- Ensure that growth makes the community better, not just bigger.
- Foster sustainable economic development.
- Provide an opportunity to consider future implications of today's decisions.
- Protect property rights and values.
- Enable other public and private agencies to plan their activities in harmony with the township's plans.

### PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

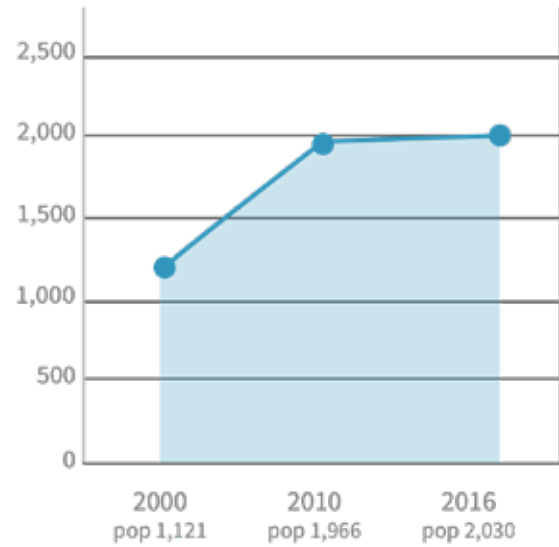
The plan provides a series of steps to help achieve the shared community vision. This plan will help citizens and local leaders work together more efficiently to guide future growth and development within the community. This document will provide the policy framework that the township will use to help guide future decision-making efforts. In addition, it honors and emphasizes past planning efforts and paints a future vision. The content in this plan is the blueprint for Crow Wing Township. All land use decisions need to be determined by the goals and strategies outlined in this plan. The goals, strategies, and action steps will help provide direction as to how to solve for current issues, future trends, and the desires and aspirations of the community.

### THE PLANNING PROCESS

Content from the 2005 comprehensive plan was reviewed in 2020, and it was determined that the vision for the township and the accompanying goals and strategies developed in 2005 remain the same and relevant for the future. Through the guidance of the Planning Commission, updates to the maps and demographic data and minor modifications to the goals and strategies were recommended.

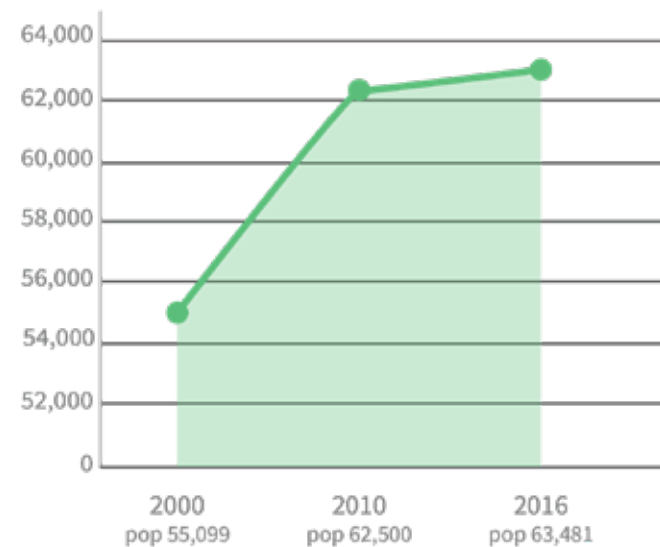
For the 2005 comprehensive plan, community input was gathered through a series of community meetings. At these meetings, citizens were invited to share their concerns, knowledge, ideas, and expertise about the township on how it has changed, its present state, and their vision for the future state of the township. This information was then used to develop the goals and strategies of the plan.

**Crow Wing Township  
Population Growth  
2000 - 2016**



Source: US Census, ACS DP05

**Crow Wing County  
Population Growth  
2000 - 2016**



Source: US Census, ACS DP05

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

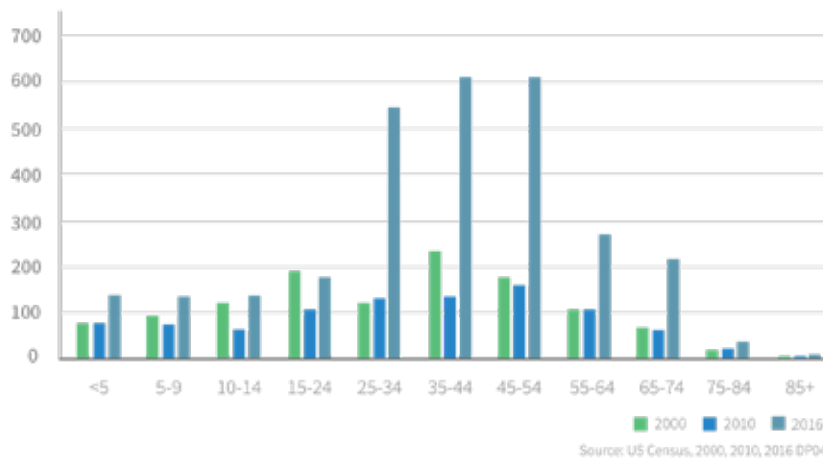
Located in the southwest corner of Crow Wing County at the gateway to the Central Lakes Region, Crow Wing Township is home to a variety of prairies, wetlands, and heavily forested areas. The township is divided by State Highway 371, bringing travelers and tourists to and through the area. Township residents and visitors have a multitude of year-round outdoor recreational opportunities. With its beautiful setting and prime location, the township has great potential for future growth.

The identification of trends in population growth and other demographic data is an important part of the comprehensive planning process. It can provide clues to future growth patterns and township needs. This section identifies high-level trends.

### Population

Crow Wing Township has experienced population growth at different rates in the past. 1960 through the 1980s saw steady growth. Starting in 1990, more aggressive growth began and continued through 2010, and from 2010 to 2016 minimum growth occurred. The total population estimate for Crow Wing Township in 2016 was 2,030. The median age is 38.7. According to a variety of sources, the township is expected to grow through 2030 with a change of 22 percent, estimating a population of 2,240. Crow Wing County is also expected to steadily increase in population through 2040 (Crow Wing County Housing Study, 2015).

**Crow Wing Township  
Age Distribution  
2000 - 2016**



Source: US Census, 2000, 2010, 2016 DP04

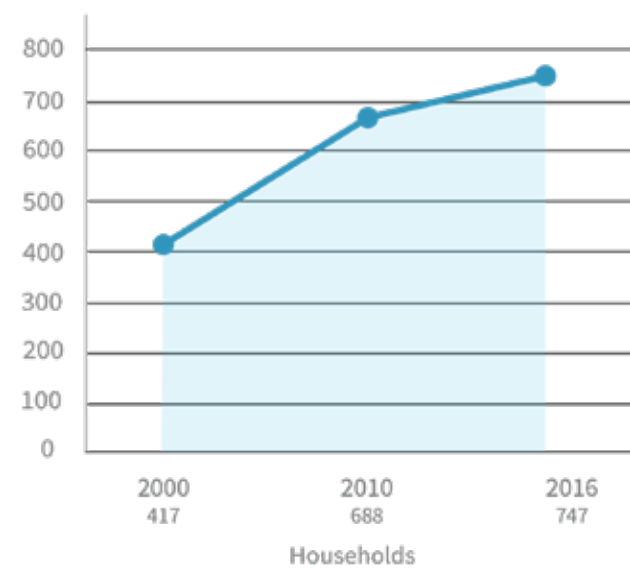
## Housing

Housing inventory can change year to year, but having a full understanding of the current inventory, along with future needs, will assist the township in retaining and attracting residents. The township saw the greatest numbers of new housing units built between 2000 and 2009, with a total of 396 units added during that time. The number of units is expected to continue to grow to 860 by 2030. The county is also expected to see a housing unit increase of 8.5 percent during that same timeframe.

Currently, there are 803 housing units in the township, with 747 of those occupied (called households). This is a slight increase in vacancy since 2010. Of the households, 679 were owner occupied (95%), and 88 were renter occupied (5%).

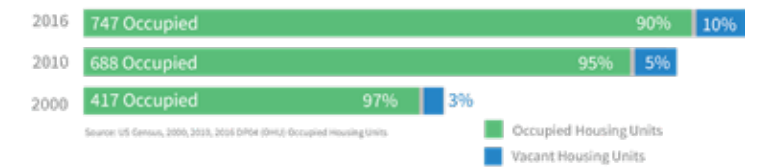
Many residents choose to live in the township because of its rural setting and because they feel that the township is a desirable environment to raise a family. A growing number of retirees in the area may also increase the demand for single-family homes. There are few seasonal housing units in Crow Wing Township, likely because of the lack of lakes that tend to be popular locations for this type of housing.

**Crow Wing Township  
Household Growth  
2000 - 2016**

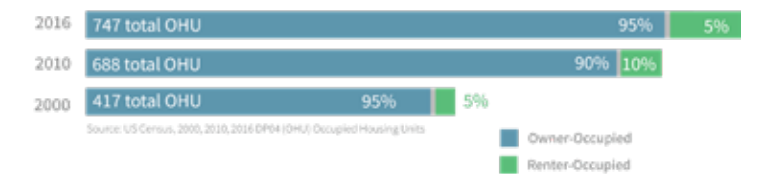


Source: US Census 2000, 2010, 2016 ACS (DP04)

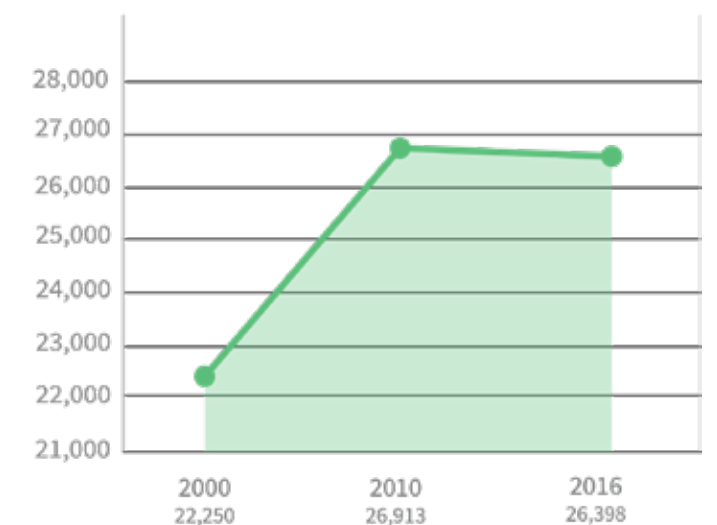
**Crow Wing Township  
Housing Tenure  
2000 - 2016**



**Crow Wing Township  
Comparison - Occupancy of Housing Units  
2000 - 2016**



**Crow Wing County  
Household Growth  
2000 - 2016**



Source: US Census 2000, 2010, 2016 ACS (DP04)



**Economy**

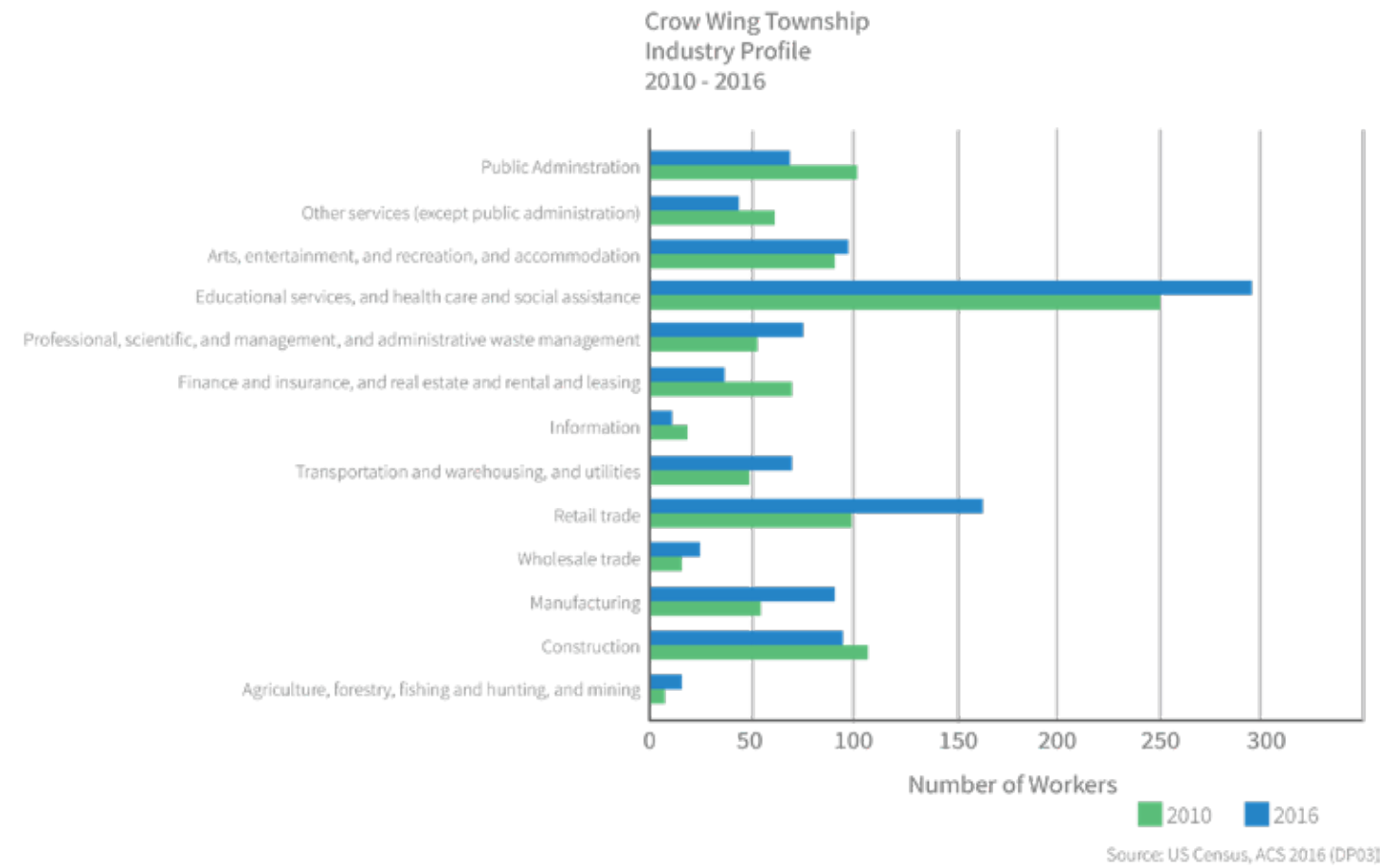
Crow Wing Township is situated at the entrance to the Brainerd-Baxter area and the internationally famous lakes and resort area but is not directly affected by the tourist and recreation industry to the north. The economic impact of all the tourist activity largely passes by the township, even though the regional economy is influenced by these expanding industries. On the other hand, the township is directly impacted by economic growth in the Brainerd-Baxter region. Employees of this region may seek housing opportunities in the township, and many residents work in Brainerd or Baxter.

**Income**

The median household income in the township has grown significantly in the last 20 years. Between 2000 and 2010, there was almost a 62 percent increase in the median household income, and since 2010, it has again increased by 3.3 percent. Today, the median household income for the township is \$61,696 and the county is slightly less at \$50,893.

**Employment**

There are 1,093 (16 and over) residents in the labor force, with educational services; and health care and social assistance category being the leading industry. Since 2010, several industries have seen growth including retail trade; manufacturing; educational services; health care and social assistance; ag, forestry, fishing and hunting; and mining seeing the largest increase. There have also been declines since 2010 in the construction; finance and insurance; real estate; rental and leasing; and public administration industries.



# DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

TOTAL POPULATION\*



2,030

TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS\*



747

TOTAL WORKERS



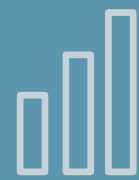
71.9%

HOUSEHOLD MEDIAN INCOME



\$61,696

POPULATION CHANGES\*



81%  
SINCE 2000

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS



803

PRIVATE WAGE WORKERS



77.6%

INCOME GROWTH RATE



-3.3%  
SINCE 2010

MEDIAN AGE



38.7

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE



\$177,700

SELF EMPLOYED



8%

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME



\$66,786

PERCENT OVER THE AGE OF 65:



11%

HOUSING UNIT CHANGES\*



83%  
SINCE 2000

AVERAGE COMMUTE



19  
(MINUTES)

LEADING INDUSTRY



27%

EDUCATION SERVICES, HEALTHCARE  
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

### ANNEXATION AND LAND USE

The rural setting of the township was the biggest strength that residents cited. Residents enjoy the undeveloped, natural appearance of the area and the many benefits afforded by this setting, including privacy, peacefulness, and a clean environment. The rural setting was also a topic of great concern because residents felt that it was being threatened by annexation from Brainerd. Annexation had occurred on lands in the northern part of the township bordering the city of Brainerd in the past, and residents feared that it would continue to the point where most of the township, if not all, had become a part of Brainerd.

Residents were concerned that properties might be annexed despite the unwillingness of the property owners. Many residents, particularly those with properties near Brainerd, did not wish to be annexed by Brainerd but worried that increasing growth and development in Brainerd would put them right in the path of annexation.

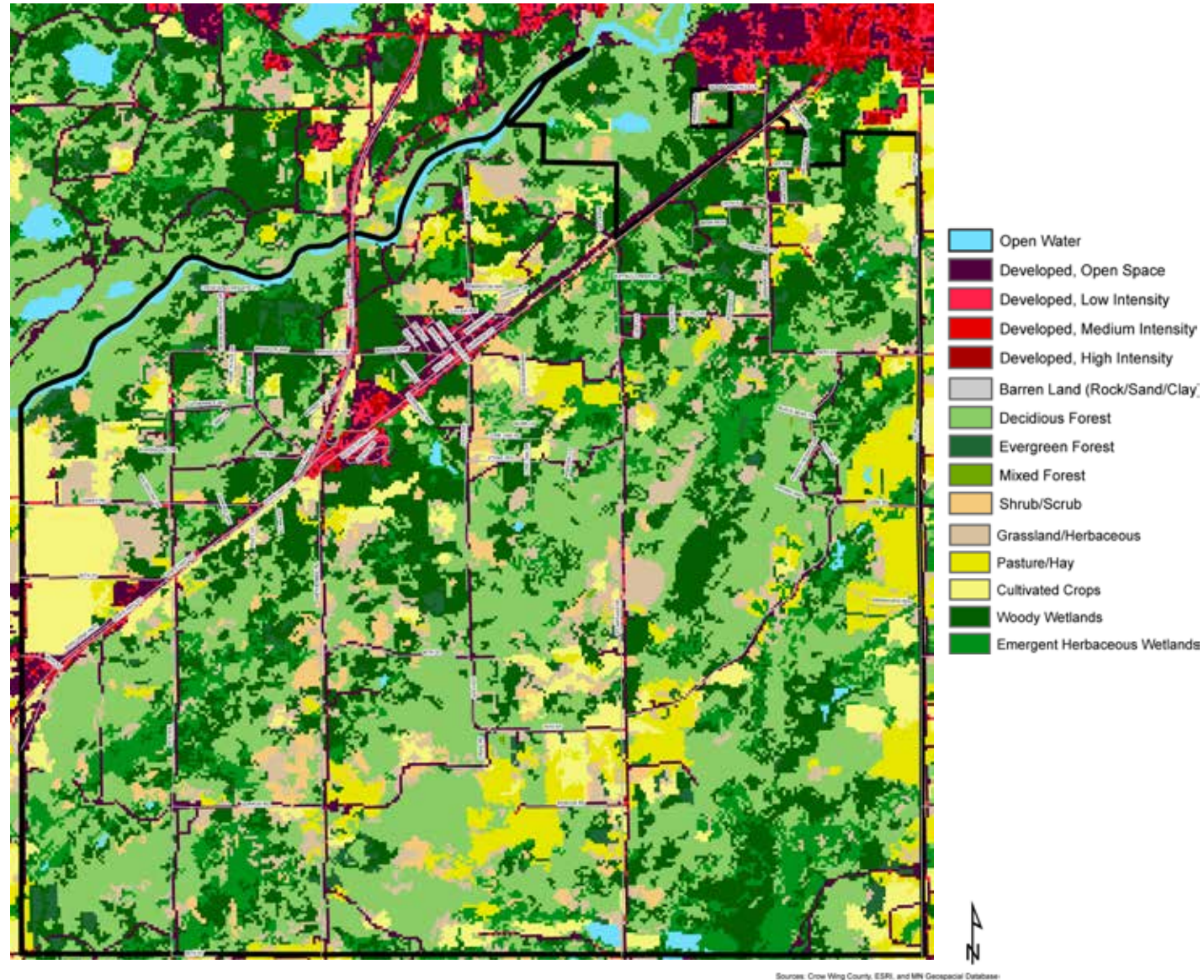
While forced annexation may be a possibility, most properties that had been annexed by Brainerd were annexed either by the request of the property owner or at least with the property owner's consent. Most property owners who request annexation seek to maximize the profit on subdividing their land. By requesting annexation, property owners can often build at higher densities, often serviced by municipal utilities, thereby increasing their profits.

Getting to the root of the fear of annexation reveals a slightly different picture. The concern was not so much with annexation itself, but rather with the development patterns that were occurring on annexed lands and other lands in the northern part of the township. Auto-oriented commercial buildings and residential subdivisions were constructed on these lands. Much of the original vegetation was removed to make way for expansive lawns and pavement. Residents feel that these development patterns degrade the rural character of the area in addition to the natural resources and privacy that they value. Residents do not want to see these types of development patterns engulf the rest of the township.

The township is facing intensive residential and commercial development. The challenge for the township is to employ strategies that maintain the rural character without compromising individual property rights.



## EXISTING LAND COVER, 2011



### FUTURE LAND USE MAP CLASSIFICATIONS

**Public Lands:** a designation for the preservation of publicly owned lands. Areas included in this classification are part of the Memorial Forest Program, and land owned by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Crow Wing County, and the township. These lands tend to be heavily forested or located in environmentally sensitive areas.

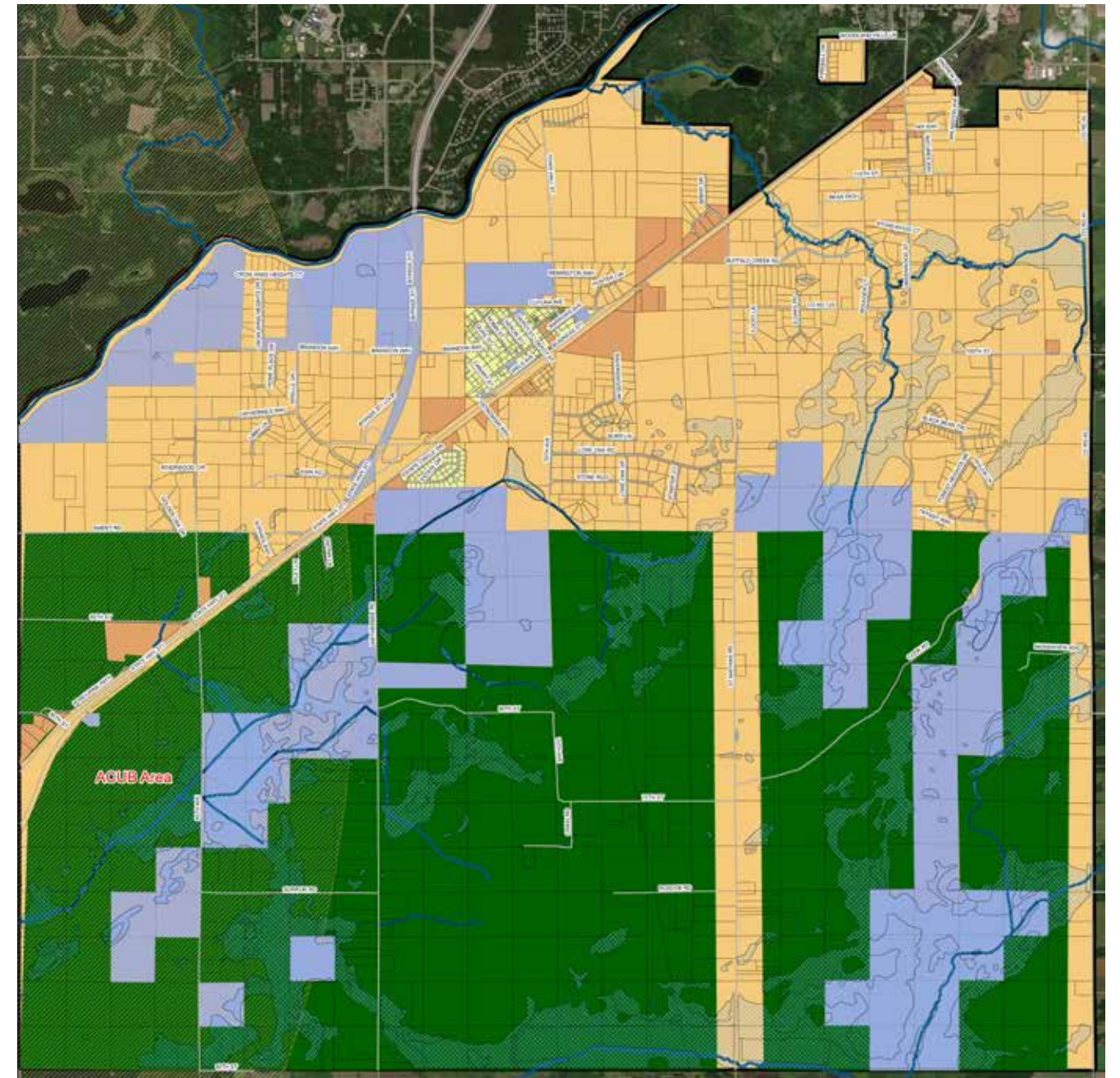
**Forested Residential:** a classification that provides low-density, rural residential development, and privately owned agricultural/forested areas. Parcels within these areas should be 20-40 acres.

**Rural Residential:** a designation that provides medium-density residential development serviced by existing roads. Suggested minimum lot size is 2.5 acres. Allowances could be made for higher-density developments as part of a rural cluster.

**Neighborhood Residential:** a designation for already developed properties, properties where infrastructure is in place for higher density development, and properties developed as a rural neighborhood cluster. Land in this zone could not be further subdivided unless the land is incorporated into a development on an adjacent property.

**Commercial:** a designation for property that is best suited for commercial development. Parcels should be adjacent to and have direct access to a state highway.

## FUTURE LAND USE, 2021



## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### THE ENVIRONMENT

Crow Wing Township is home to beautiful natural resources. Forests, wetlands, and grasslands cover the landscape of the community, and the Mississippi River serves as the township's northwestern boundary. Approximately half of the township is covered in forest, much of which is characterized by a mix of coniferous and deciduous trees. There are large tracts of core forest throughout the township, particularly along the Mississippi River in the northwest. These core forest tracts serve as vital habitat for migratory species, such as the bald eagle, and can support plant and animal species that can survive in only undisturbed interior forests. These include wolves, pine martens, and many songbirds.

More than a quarter of Crow Wing Township is covered by prairie grasslands. The prairies are interspersed between tracts of forest and wetlands and are often found on higher, drier ground. Prairie lands have become increasingly rare in Minnesota and the Midwest since most of the lands were plowed and converted to agricultural uses. Remaining prairies provide important habitat for migratory birds and many game species.

Wetlands and lakes constitute the next largest land use in the township. While there are few lakes in the area, there are large swaths of wetlands, particularly in the eastern and southern parts of the township. These wetlands may be difficult to discern since most of the wetlands are bogs and shrub swamps. These types of wetlands have heavy vegetation cover that makes them appear similar to their surroundings, when in reality, the soils beneath them are heavily saturated with water, or in some cases, may actually have standing water beneath their vegetation. Wetlands provide nesting habitat for many bird species, including ducks and other game birds. Deer, turtles, and other animals also rely on wetlands for water, breeding, and habitat.

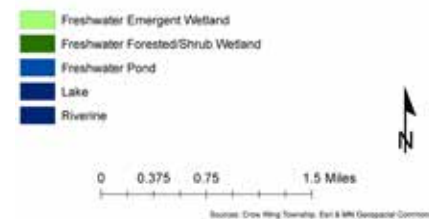
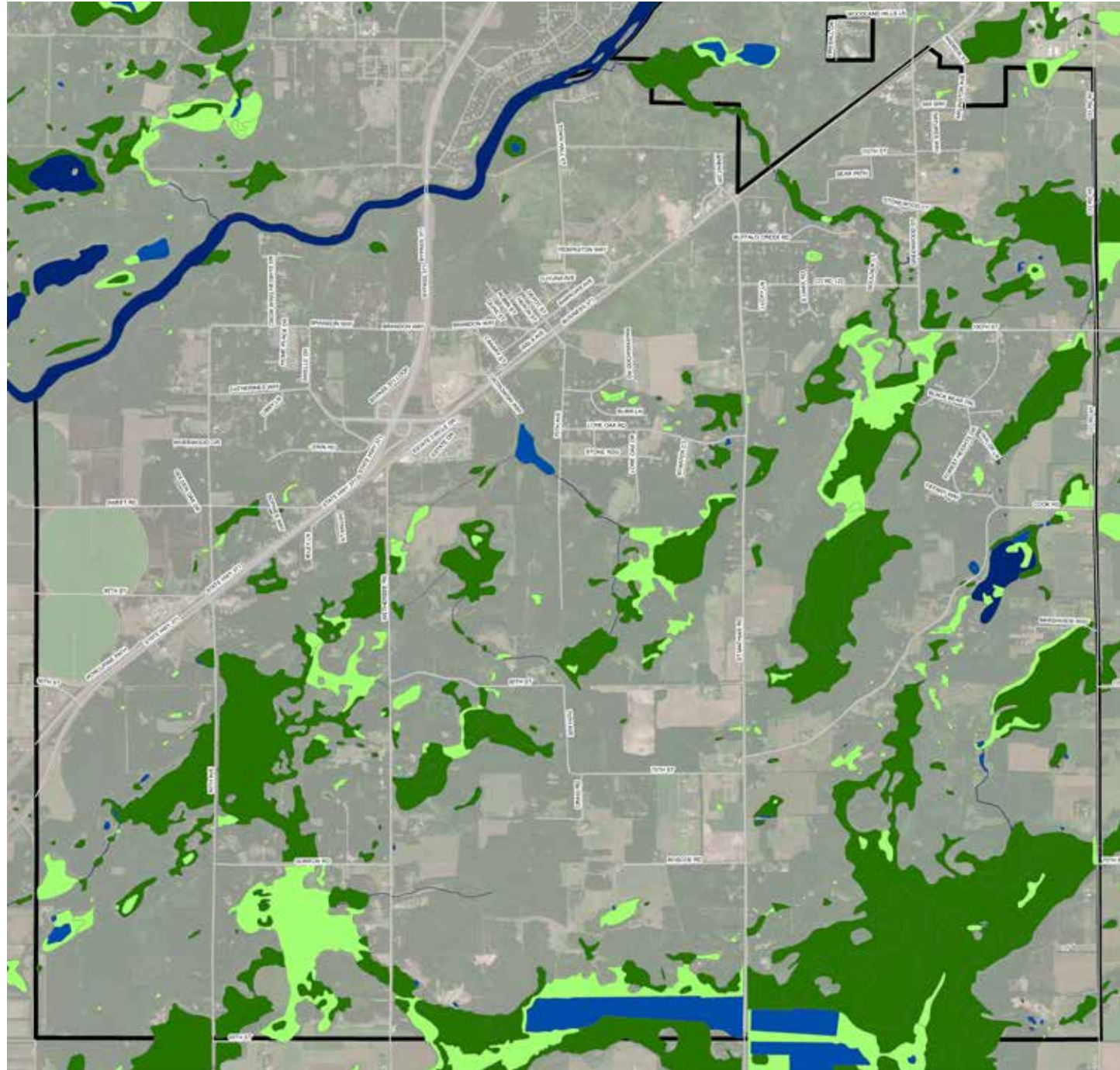
The edges between forests and other habitats, such as grasslands and wetlands, provide habitat for many types of game species, such as deer, ducks, and other upland game birds. Many residents value these areas because they provide valuable hunting lands.

### CAMP RIPLEY

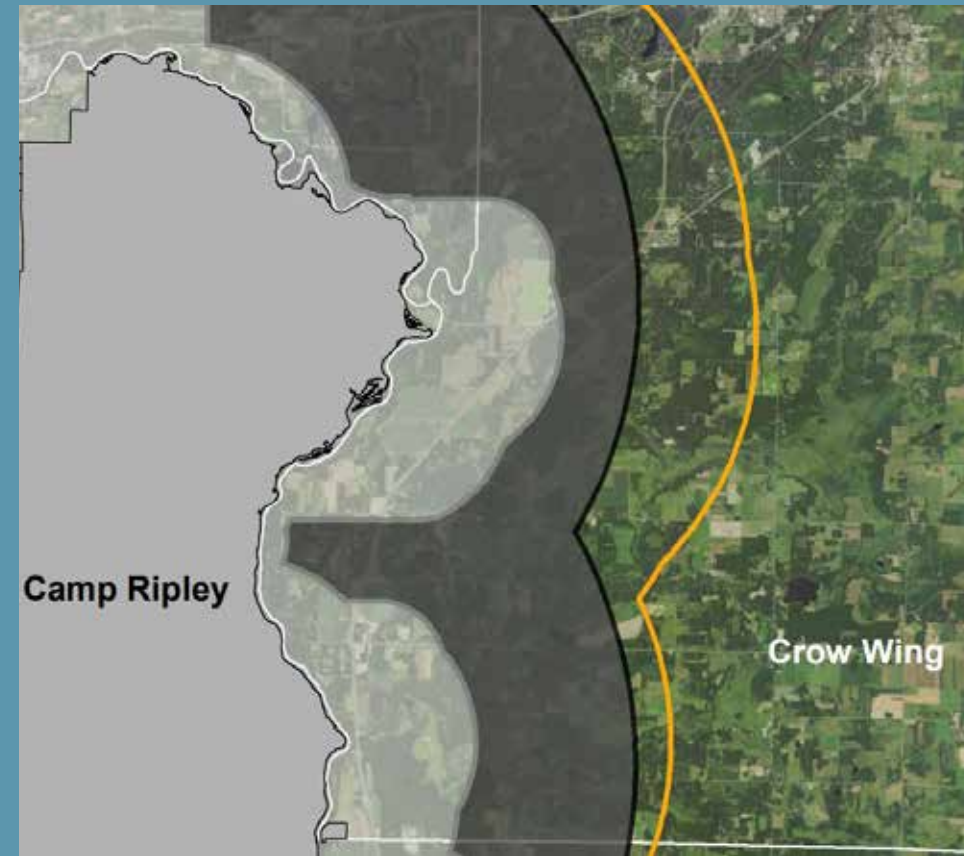
Camp Ripley is a military and civilian training facility operated by the Minnesota National Guard near Little Falls, approximately 20 miles south of the township. A portion of the township is in the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program area, which was established in 2004 to minimize intensive residential and commercial development within the designated area around Camp Ripley. Some of the township also falls within the area of the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape project, which seeks to protect wildlife management areas, watersheds, and agricultural resources.



# WETLAND INVENTORY, 2020



## ACUB EASEMENT AUTHORIZED WORK AREA MAP



Source: Morrison SWCD

### Army Compatible Use Buffer

In 2001, the National Guard Bureau initiated a project to address the growing concern of development and encroachment around the perimeter of Camp Ripley. In 2004, the National Guard Bureau and the State of Minnesota, acting through the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR), entered into a Cooperative Agreement to implement an Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program for Camp Ripley. Camp Ripley is a 53,000-acre regional training center hosting numerous ranges and state-of-the-art facilities to support the training requirements of military and civilian agencies.

The program is designed to minimize intensive residential and commercial development within a designated work area around Camp Ripley by purchasing the development rights through permanent conservation easements to reduce land use conflicts with military operations. Landowners are paid a one-time per acre sum to agree to leave the land open. They retain the right to use the property as they are presently but agreeing to not plat or develop the land with more residential or commercial building sites. The program is for willing landowners only.

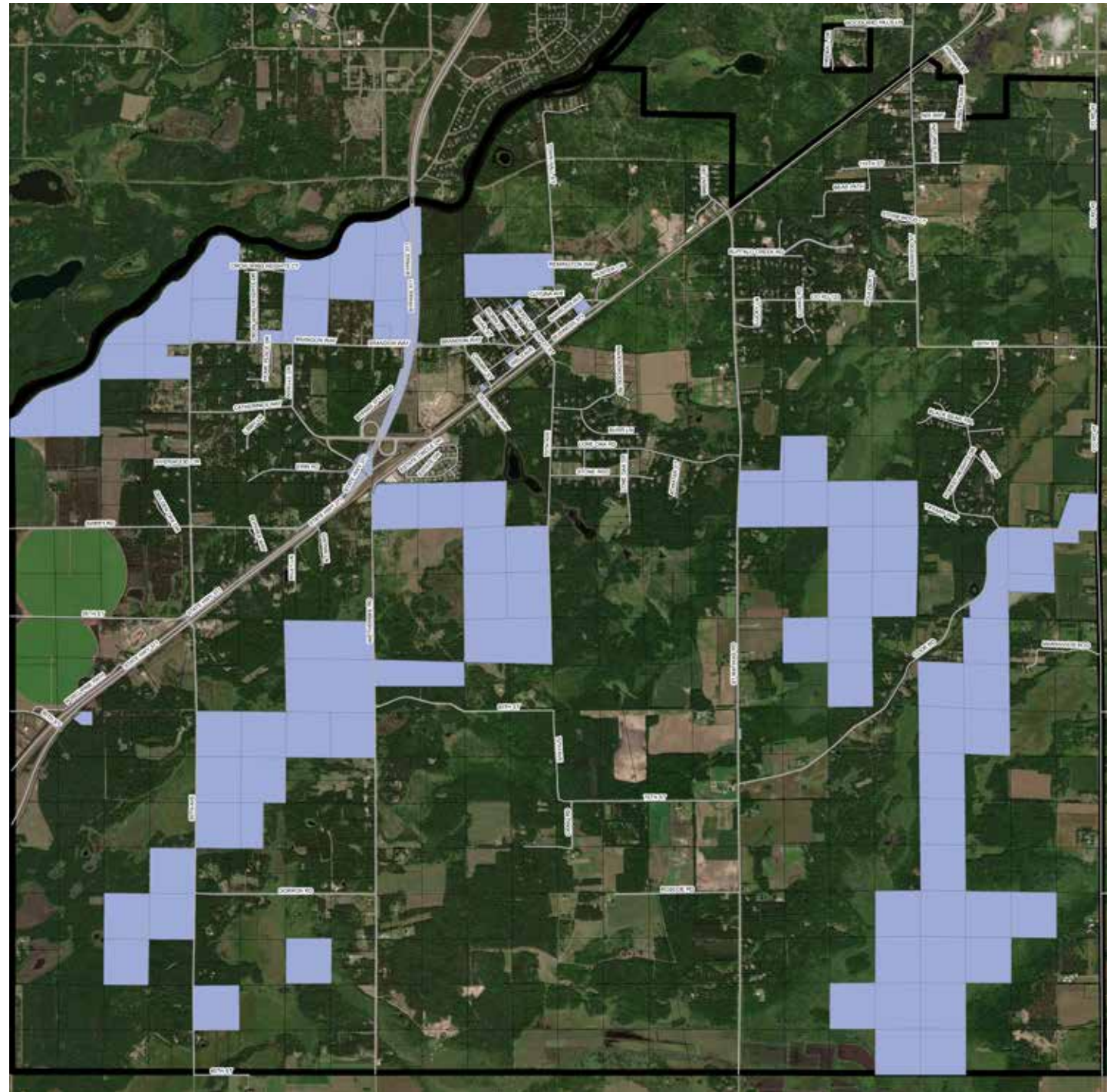
### Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape

Located along the northern stretch of the Mississippi River, Camp Ripley is the primary National Guard Training Center for units from Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota,

Wisconsin, Iowa, Ohio, and Illinois. The agricultural and forested lands surrounding Camp Ripley have enabled the installation to conduct aircraft, live fire, artillery, IED, and winter training with limited restrictions. The large unfragmented landscape protects water quality of the upper Mississippi River and its four major tributaries. However, the rural character of the area is threatened by development that could significantly affect Camp Ripley's ability to fulfill its mission; convert historic farms, ranches, and forested lands into other uses; and adversely affect one of the most ecologically rich environments and important source water areas in the Midwest.

Recognizing the need to protect this landscape, the Minnesota legislature passed state law 190.33, which was signed into law by Governor Mark Dayton in May 2015. Under the law, the adjutant general convened a Sentinel Landscape Coordinating Committee to identify the boundaries of the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape and develop a suite of tools and programs that could provide technical and financial assistance to interested landowners within the Sentinel Landscape. With input from local government, stakeholders, and Federal agency partners, the Coordinating Committee identified the desired outcomes of the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape partnership: protecting the installation's military training mission and the landscape's wildlife management areas, watersheds, and agricultural resources.

# PUBLIC LANDS, 2021



## RECREATION

Citizens of Crow Wing Township enjoy opportunities for a variety of recreational activities. Citizens appreciate the opportunity to walk or bike on low-traffic roads, hunt and view wildlife in their backyards and on public lands, including the memorial forests, ride recreational vehicles such as ATVs and snowmobiles, or visit nearby Crow Wing State Park just outside their western boundary.

Residents value these opportunities and would like to see them protected and enhanced where possible. They are concerned about the irresponsible use of ATVs and snowmobiles that not only disturb that peacefulness of the area but also degrade the natural resources of the area. Another challenge is the pressures that development places on recreational opportunities. Unplanned and poorly planned growth can fragment species habitat, reducing opportunities for hunting and wildlife viewing.

Residents are also concerned that public lands within the township are underutilized for recreation and hunting, and that the full benefit to the community is not realized. Almost all the public land within the township is owned by the state of Minnesota and Crow Wing County. Both the state and county have done a good job over the last decade developing and promoting use of the public lands. Township residents are encouraged to find more information regarding these lands online or by contacting the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or Crow Wing County.



# 04

## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

This chapter contains goals and implementation strategies that should be utilized as a guide and considered during the many decisions made by the township each year.

# LAND USE

## **Goal 1: Require that new growth and development, especially in the areas adjacent to Brainerd and Baxter, maintain a rural development pattern.**

As the population in the Brainerd-Baxter Region continues to grow, increasing development pressures will be placed on Crow Wing Township, particularly by new residents seeking homes outside the urban areas in a rural setting. Without appropriate planning, these pressures can lead to development patterns that destroy the very thing that new residents are seeking and current residents would like to preserve: the rural character of the area. Rural character in Crow Wing Township consists of undeveloped open spaces, farmlands, woodlands, clean air and water, wetlands, tree-lined roads, and dispersed development. Maintenance of native vegetation and the protection of privacy are just a couple of the facets of the rural character that residents value.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Create choices for development. Allow different lot sizes, gross densities, and development options, including smaller lots and cluster developments.
- Allow standard (nonclustered) lot sizes to range between 2.5 acres and 15-20 acres. Do not limit development to standardized lot sizes.
- Support development policies to ensure protection and preservation of rural areas, open space, and recreational uses
- Apply and enforce ordinances for screening and buffering of new commercial and industrial development
- Support a mix of housing types and a range of housing values so that residents are not limited in their housing options.
- Continue to allow the keeping of livestock (animal husbandry) on parcels 2.5 acres and larger with provisions to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

## **Goal 2: Work to keep Crow Wing Township a safe and peaceful place to live.**

One of the reasons residents of Crow Wing Township live in the community is that they enjoy the peaceful setting the township provides. The use of ATVs and snowmobiles has become a popular recreational activity among residents of all ages. The use of these and other vehicles, however, has become a problem because some operators are operating in careless, and sometimes unlawful, ways. Irresponsible vehicle operators exceed speed limits, drive their vehicles in prohibited areas, and trespass on private property. In addition to these problems, crime is also becoming a problem, particularly vandalism. Because the township does not have a police force of its own, immediate resolution of these issues has been challenging.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Develop innovative ways to encourage slower traffic speeds such as deploying traffic calming techniques, working with the Crow Wing County Sheriff's office, and limiting development density.
- Educate community members on how to report crimes anonymously to local law enforcement.
- Improve road connectivity for safety purposes, especially in the eastern part of the township. There are few roads that run east-west, making emergency vehicle travel difficult. Consider future road connectivity when reviewing proposed plats.
- Promote and encourage neighborhoods to form neighborhood watches and coordinate with the Crow Wing County Sheriff's Department.
- Educate residents about the proliferation of methamphetamine use and production, particularly among teenagers.
- Maintain visibility along roadways by regularly trimming vegetation in roadside ditches. This is especially important at intersections and on high-traffic roads.

## **Goal 3: Ensure that new subdivisions and developments are designed to maintain privacy for adjacent properties.**

For generations, residents of Crow Wing Township have enjoyed a level of privacy on their properties that cannot be found in typical urban or suburban settings. Residents have become accustomed to having homes tucked away on wooded or otherwise vegetated properties. Residents do not worry about a passerby seeing into the windows of their homes or about hearing the neighbor's radio or television blaring. With increasing development, especially of suburban-style patterns, this level of privacy is declining. Open lawns and reduced vegetation make homes appear closer together and limit the level of privacy afforded to neighbors.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should continue to be implemented:

- Require buffers of vegetation and screening around commercial and industrial developments.
- Upgrade roads in areas likely to develop and likely to have increased traffic flow.
- Enforce side-yard setbacks to protect neighbors' privacy.
- Apply minimum road frontage or lot width ordinances, except on the end of cul-de-sacs.
- Enforce ordinances that regulate setbacks, lot sizes, and type of development.

## **Goal 4: Ensure that all annexations are done with the property owner's agreement and that properties are only assessed for improvements where they are requested.**

Residents of Crow Wing Township live in the area because they want to have the rural character and privacy afforded within the township. Many do not wish to live in an urban area or be forced to have their property annexed by a neighboring city. Nor do residents wish to pay for infrastructure improvements that often come with annexation when they were content with what they already have.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Collaborate work with neighboring townships to ensure common goals are met.
- Support property owners who want to fight being annexed.
- Negotiate payments with the city in lieu of lost tax base.
- Establish orderly annexation agreements with neighboring cities.

## **Goal 5: The township government should work to make financially sound decisions that do not lead to unplanned tax increases.**

In an age of dwindling government resources and increasing demands on government for public services, funds for public improvements and services may be difficult to acquire. The township government will face increasing demands for public services as the population grows and residential development spreads. Tax increases may be necessary to accommodate some of the increased demand, but residents do not want to see taxes rise because the government did not budget or plan appropriately.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Require development agreements and bonds with plats to make sure that road work is completed in accordance with the township's standards.
- Identify roads that need to have more capacity in the future, and build that into the township's budget and capital improvement plans.
- Plan for more growth where roads are in place, especially along roads that already have higher traffic capacity.
- Enforce and increase road standards so that roads are built to last.
- Charge a fee for the township's inspection of new roads being constructed.
- Plan for major improvements and where they will be needed, and work to secure the property needed for those improvements.

- Perform a cost-benefit analysis on new developments to ensure that the township is not taking on a financial burden that it is not equipped to handle.
- Offer incentives and develop ordinances that encourage new growth along existing roadways.
- Based on available information, anticipate state and federal mandates in the budget.
- Post signs on roads that designate the weight capacity of the road. Enhance enforcement of load limits to prevent excessive road damage.

**Goal 6: Ensure that any township land use regulation meets the goals of the comprehensive plan and is also understandable, applied, and has a clear process for approval.**

Residents of the township value their individual property rights but recognize the need to have regulations to ensure that environmental assets are protected, property values do not decline, and property uses do not conflict with one another. The residents want to be treated fairly in the land use regulation process and do not want certain property owners or developers to receive preferential treatment because of personal connections, money, or some other reason. Land use regulations should not stray from the ideas and goals set forth in the comprehensive plan developed by the residents.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Ensure that there is a consistent distribution of information to all residents in the township.
- Enforce codes and educate the residents about land use regulations.
- Evaluate the cost of development through a cost-benefit analysis that the township will face in the future for all proposed developments.
- Whenever a proposed development includes private roads or common driveways, encourage the developer to organize and establish a homeowner’s association. The association would be responsible for maintenance of the private roads or common driveways. Require the developer to pay for the construction of public roads in new developments.
- Use the township’s power to increase land use regulation standards where applicable.
- Ensure that any new regulations and ordinances reflect residents’ priorities and are applied in a fair and consistent manner.
- Establish a consensus among residents that supports the comprehensive plan.

**Goal 7: All properties in the township should maintain a basic level of appearance that is neat and nonoffensive.**

While the appearance of a property can be difficult to objectively quantify, township residents recognize that excess trash stored in people’s yards not only detracts from community pride, but also makes the community appear less attractive, depresses property values, and potentially poses a threat to public health and the environment. Residents would like their community to be clean and to have everyone take pride in the appearance of their property. However, without regular garbage pickup service or the equipment to dispose of some household items, such as appliances, some residents may be unaware of where or how to get rid of household waste.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Pursue community garbage pickup or cleanup days.
- Seek opportunities to partner with agencies and groups to help offset the burden of recycling and to help with challenging items such as appliances and tires through reduced fees or bulk removal days.
- Ensure the township’s ordinances effectively address potential safety and health hazards, along with nuisance conditions such as old cars and junk piles.
- Create a clear process for enforcement
- Work with residents and partner agencies or groups to help enhance the appearance of properties.
- Partner with the county and other groups to clean up problem properties.

**Goal 8: Position the township so that it is thoroughly involved in annexation decisions by adjacent municipalities.**

In the past, properties in the northern part of the township, adjacent to the city of Brainerd, were annexed with little or no consultation with the township. The township would find out about the annexation well into the actual process and then had little opportunity to affect the annexation results. Residents would like the township to have a greater role in any future annexations to ensure that the properties being annexed are done so with the full consent of the property owner and to ensure that future development on the annexed properties would not adversely affect the residents of the township.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Work with the cities of Baxter and Brainerd to create an orderly annexation policy. The orderly annexation policy shall address timing of potential annexations, taxes, assessments, and control over development, utilities, and services.
- Create effective communication strategies between the township and cities of Brainerd and Baxter, and surrounding townships (e.g., joint planning board made of city and township reps).
- Encourage property owners to work with the township ahead of the annexation process.
- Support legislation that grants townships more authority in the annexation process.
- Appoint a liaison to attend city and county meetings to keep up to date on events in the region.
- Develop a media strategy for politically opposing forced annexation.
- Ask for the county board’s support on the annexation policy and any proposed annexations (if in alignment with said policy).
- Communicate fully with those living in areas where annexation would likely occur.
- Present the township’s plan to those likely to request annexation and inform them of development options available without annexation.
- Increase communication with the county officials.
- Hold a township public hearing on all annexations.
- Work with the township’s legal team to resolve cases of conflict.
- Keep detailed records of any annexation discussions or proceedings and make the records available to the public.

**Goal 9: Work to establish better communication between the Crow Wing County government and the township government.**

The residents of the township would like to have more control over land use decisions and development patterns in their community. Currently, Crow Wing County administers planning and zoning for the township, and residents do not always agree with decisions made by the county staff. Residents would like to maintain an open line of communication between the township and the county to ensure that land use decisions meet the goals of the comprehensive plan.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- The town board should seek to have township residents serve on county committees. These committee liaisons should be appointed by the county commissioners.
- Support county decisions that are transparent and result in consistency between county and township goals and plans.
- Mediators should be employed to resolve conflicts between governments.

# NATURAL RESOURCES

## Goal 1: Define and protect Crow Wing Township's environmental assets.

Only 2.8 percent of the land in Crow Wing Township is covered by agricultural, residential, or urban/suburban-type uses. The remaining land in the township is covered by forests, prairies, and water resources. In the face of an increasing residential development demand, it is imperative that the township have the information and data needed to protect the environmental assets of the community. These assets contribute to the rural character of the area as well as provide opportunities for recreation, wildlife habitat, and other environmental and social benefits.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Encourage growth and development in areas where roads are already in place. This method will help prevent habitat fragmentation in addition to reducing the need for new road construction and maintenance.
- Maintain a responsive comprehensive plan and accompanying ordinances to protect rural areas.
- Educate residents about the environmental assets that are within the township and what they can do to help protect those resources.
- Educate residents on the opportunities for recycling within the township and the county.
- Educate residents about the environmental and health impacts of burning household waste per Minn. Stat. 88.171. Work to increase enforcement on the illegal burning of household waste.
- Maintain public lands in public ownership. Work to prevent lands from being sold to private owners.
- Continue to administer and enforce subsurface sewage treatment systems requirements that are consistent with Crow Wing County provisions (required by Minnesota Pollution Control Agency).

## Goal 2: The township should work to preserve hunting opportunities within the township while safeguarding township residents.

Crow Wing Township is home to great wildlife habitat that residents have enjoyed for generations and value for its hunting and recreational opportunities. With increasing demand for residential development, residents fear that this valuable habitat will be fragmented and destroyed, reducing hunting opportunities as habitats become smaller and houses and people become too close to safely hunt game. Residents would like to see environmental assets protected, while at the same time protecting residential areas from possible harm resulting from hunting.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Keep high-density development near Brainerd and already-developed areas to maintain large tracts of natural open space more amenable to hunting.
- Improve safety by marking trail use so that hunters know that other people with ATVs and motorcycles are using trails.
- Designate public land for hunting use where appropriate.

## Goal 3: For the benefit of township residents, increase the influence of the township government on the use and management of public lands.

Nearly a quarter of the land in Crow Wing Township is publicly owned. These lands constitute most of the large tracts of undisturbed natural areas in the township and have provided recreational opportunities to area residents for generations. Because of the multitude of agencies managing these lands, coordination between management practices and availability to the public has been patchwork. Residents would like to see a consistent management plan for all the public lands within the township and would like to have more involvement in the management planning process.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Partner with the agencies managing the public lands to ensure consistent management and to develop recreational opportunities for the public.
- Support the development of a regional multimodal (motorized and nonmotorized use) trail connection through the township.

## Goal 4: When making land use related decisions, be cognizant of the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program and the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape project and their impacts on potential future developments in the township.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented:

- Review the land use controls to ensure they are compatible with the ACUB program and Sentinel Landscape project.
- Request feedback/comments from appropriate governing agencies for proposed projects that might have an impact within their jurisdictions.



# 05



## IMPLEMENTATION

In January 2007, Crow Wing Township undertook the responsibility of developing and implementing their own land use regulations. This was primarily in response to residents' desire to protect the rural character/natural environment and to clean up the appearance of the township. When local zoning authority was taken from the county, several land use violations were inherited. The township has used various methods to make progress toward cleaning up garbage, junk vehicles, and other debris throughout the township.

Even though the township administers its own land use ordinance, it should still work closely with the county and neighboring entities to determine priorities for growth and impacts of decisions. Reviewing comprehensive plans of those entities whose boundaries border or overlay the township is good practice to ensure there are not competing goals. Similarly, if there are corresponding goals and strategies between plans, partnerships may be formed to help both entities reach the desired outcome.

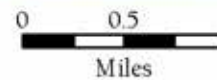
In the future, if the township determines already-taken steps have been ineffective in giving them the authority they were seeking, they could consider incorporating into a municipality. If incorporation is seriously contemplated, the township should study the ramifications in depth before beginning the process. This is not a simple process without risk. According to the Minnesota Association of Townships, Crow Wing Township could, by state order, eventually become part of Brainerd and/or Baxter if it chose to try to incorporate. Even if Crow Wing Township could incorporate into its own city, the responsibilities of running a fast-growing municipality are numerous.



# APPENDIX

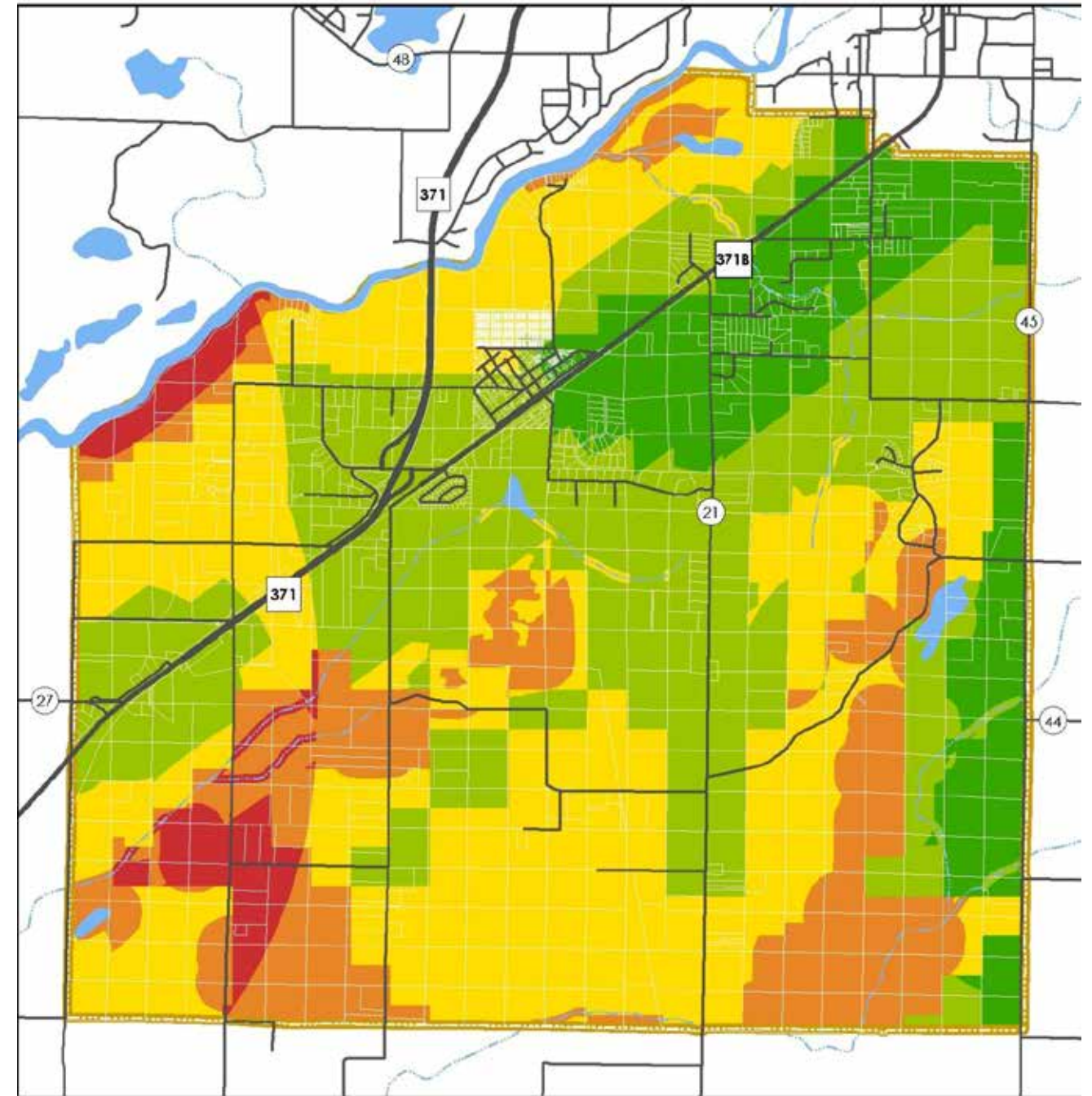
Maps located in this appendix were originally created for the 2005 update by the Community Growth Institute to facilitate a better understanding of the township's land and characteristics. These maps assisted in developing many of the goals and strategies contained in this document and guided the development of the future land use map and the accompanying policies.

# TOPOGRAPHY



Data sources: National Wetlands Inventory.

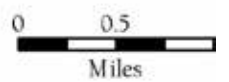
# SUITABILITY



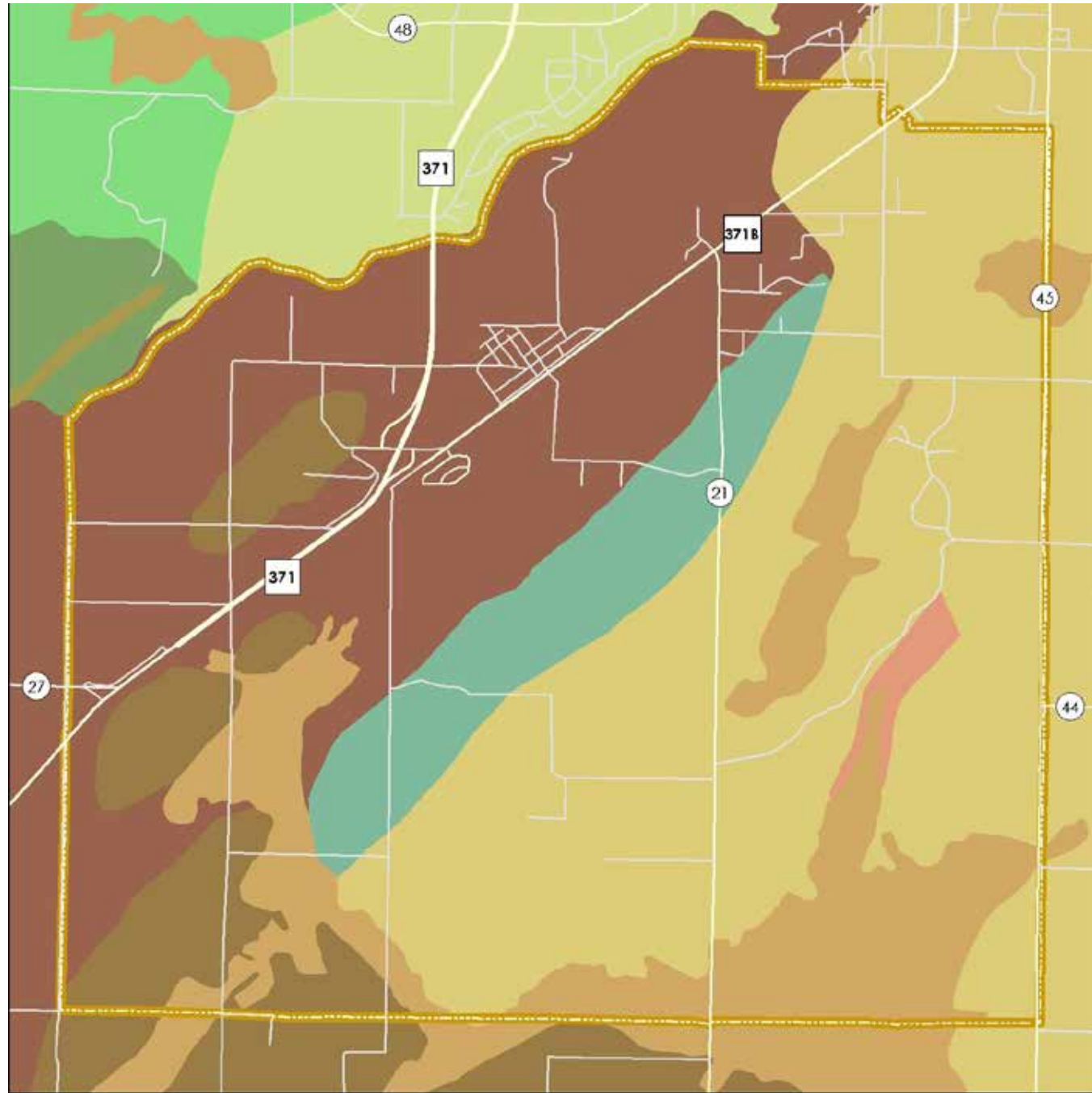
The suitability index was created by rating several factors influencing commercial and residential development including groundwater contamination potential, ISTS suitability, proximity to existing roads, road functional classification, Camp Ripley Army Compatible Use Buffer, erosion susceptibility, and potential conservation areas\*. These numerical ratings were then combined and classified, resulting in the suitability index. This map is not intended for site-specific planning, but rather should be used as a guide for land use development in the Township as a whole.

\* Potential Conservation Areas data was supplied by the Brainerd Lakes Area Conservation Collaborative and was originally created for the publication "Inventory and Assessment of Natural Resources in Crow Wing County: A Framework for Conservation and Recreation Planning."

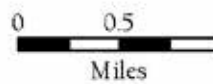
Prepared August 2004  
 Data sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, MN Department of Transportation, Brainerd Lakes Area Conservation Collaborative.



# GEOMORPHOLOGY

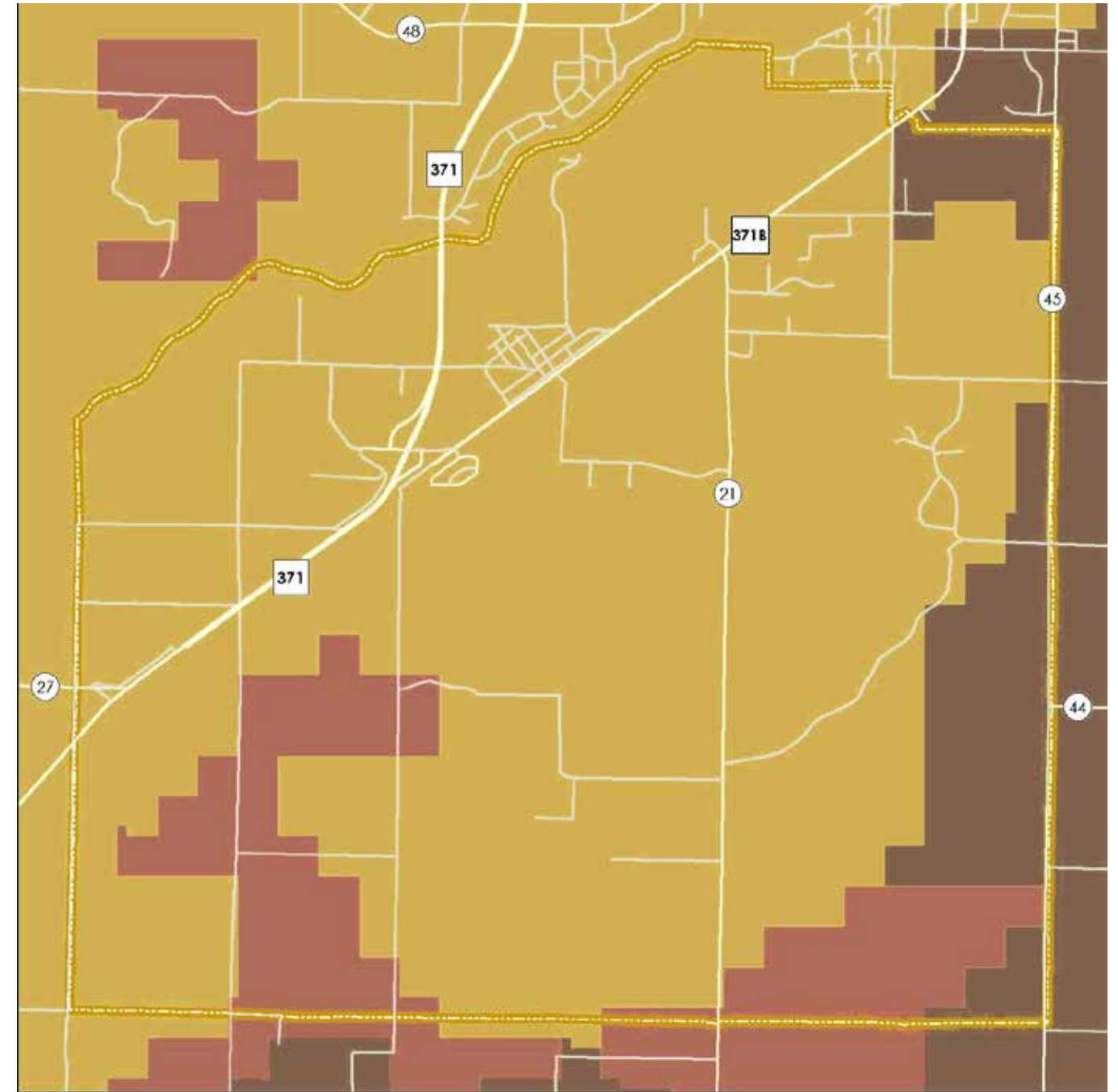


- Legend**
- Peat, level
  - Outwash, level
  - Outwash Channel
  - Undulating Till Plain
  - Drumlin
  - Esker
  - Hummocky, Ice contact
  - Shallow Water Facies, level
  - Shallow Water Facies, hummocky
  - Superglacial Drift Complex, hummocky

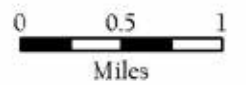


Prepared May 2004  
 Data sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation

# SOIL LAYERS

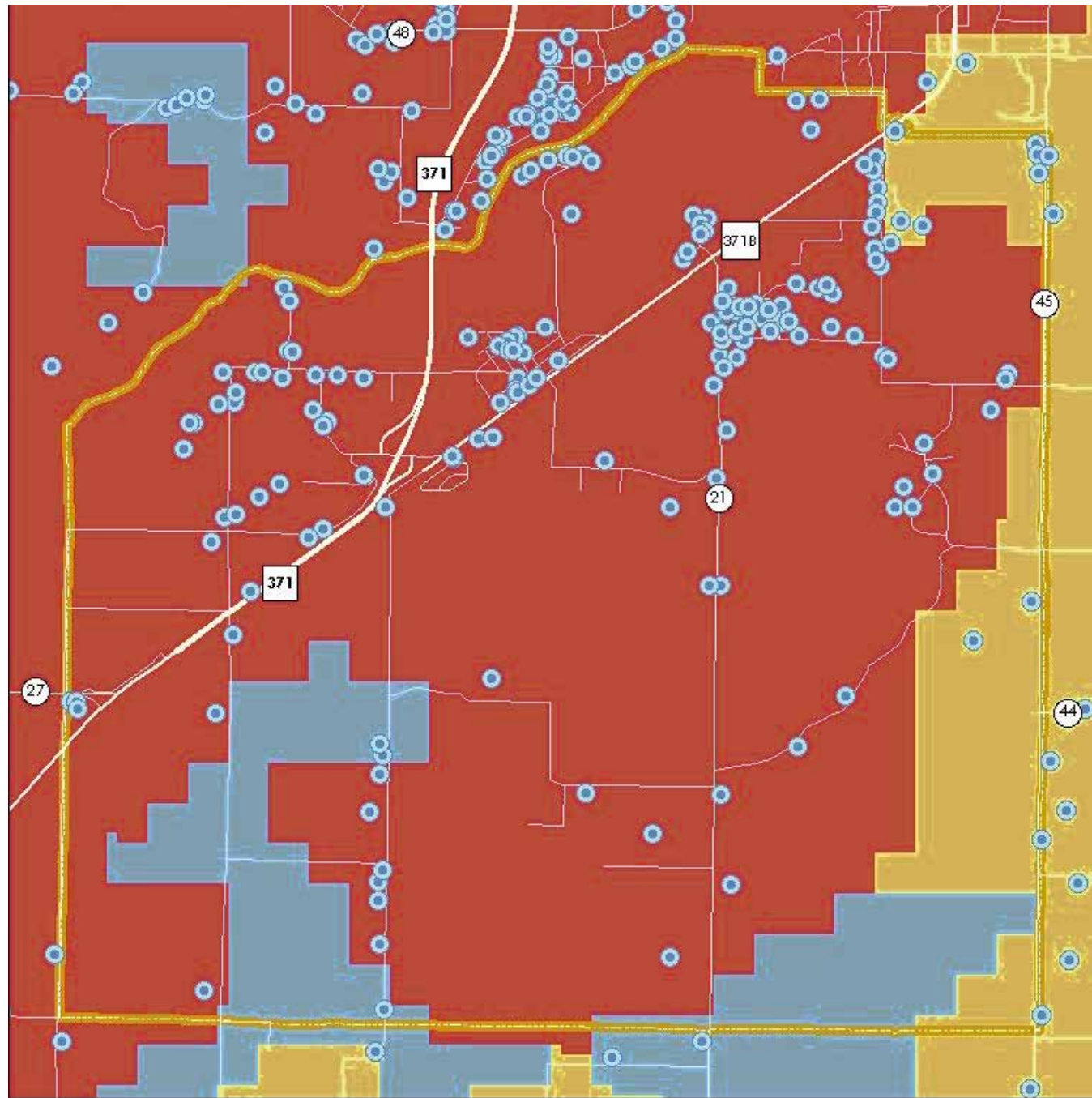


- Legend**
- Loam over loam
  - Sand over sand
  - Water and Wellands

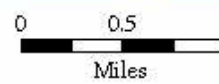


Prepared May 2004  
 Data sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation

# GROUNDWATER VULNERABILITY

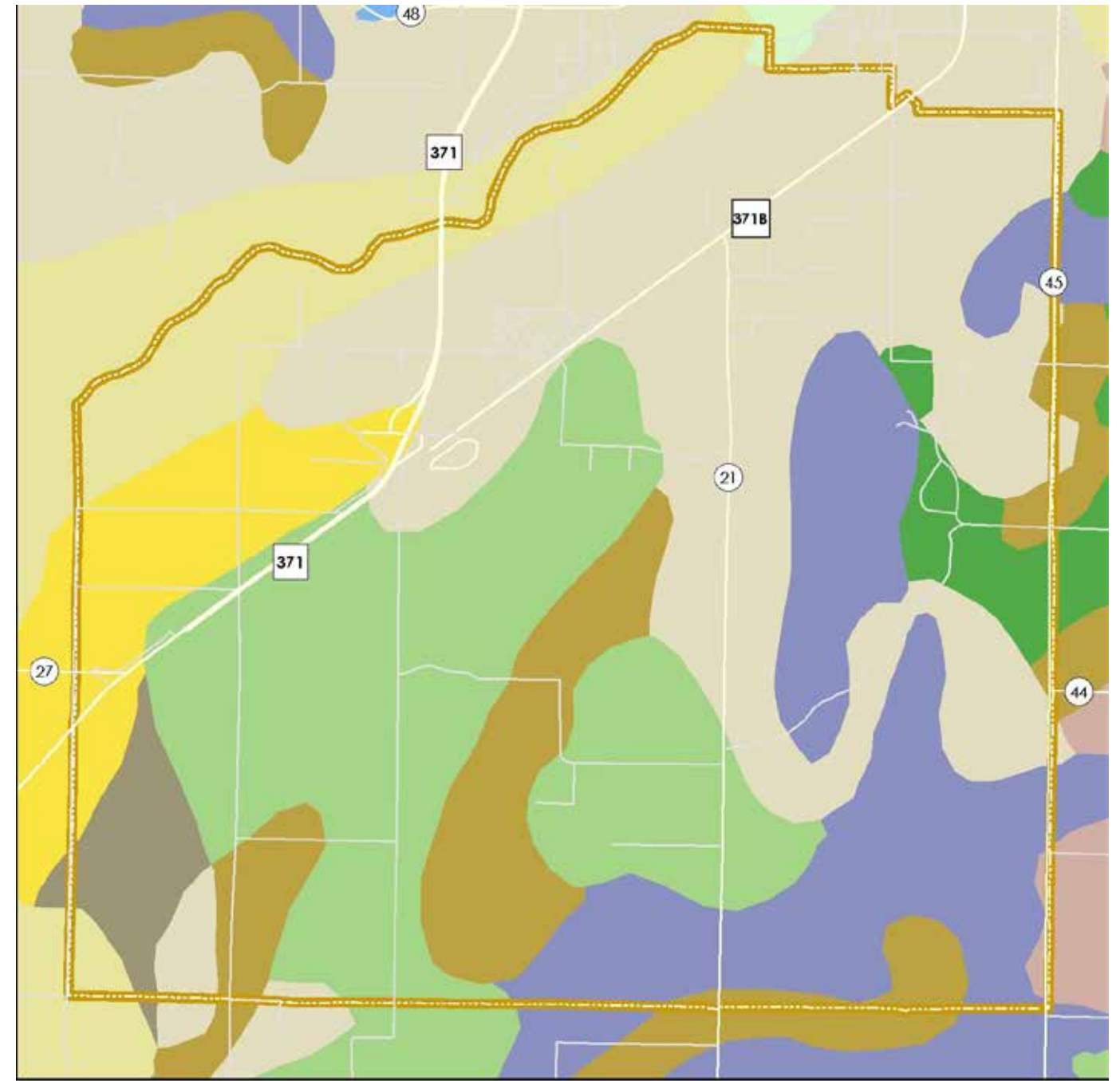


- Legend**
- Low
  - Moderate
  - High
  - Water/wetlands, marsh, peat, alluvial
  - Wells

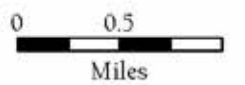


Prepared May 2004  
 Data sources: University of Minnesota,  
 Minnesota Department of Transportation

# PRESETTLEMENT VEGETATION



- Legend**
- Prairie
  - Brush Prairie
  - Wet Prairie
  - Aspen-Oak Land
  - Oak Openings and Barrens
  - Jack Pine Barrens and Openings
  - Lakes (open water)
  - Conifer Bogs and Swamps
  - River Bottom Forest
  - Mixed Hardwood and Pine
  - Big Woods



Prepared May 2004  
 Data sources: Minnesota Department of Natural  
 Resources, Minnesota Department of  
 Transportation