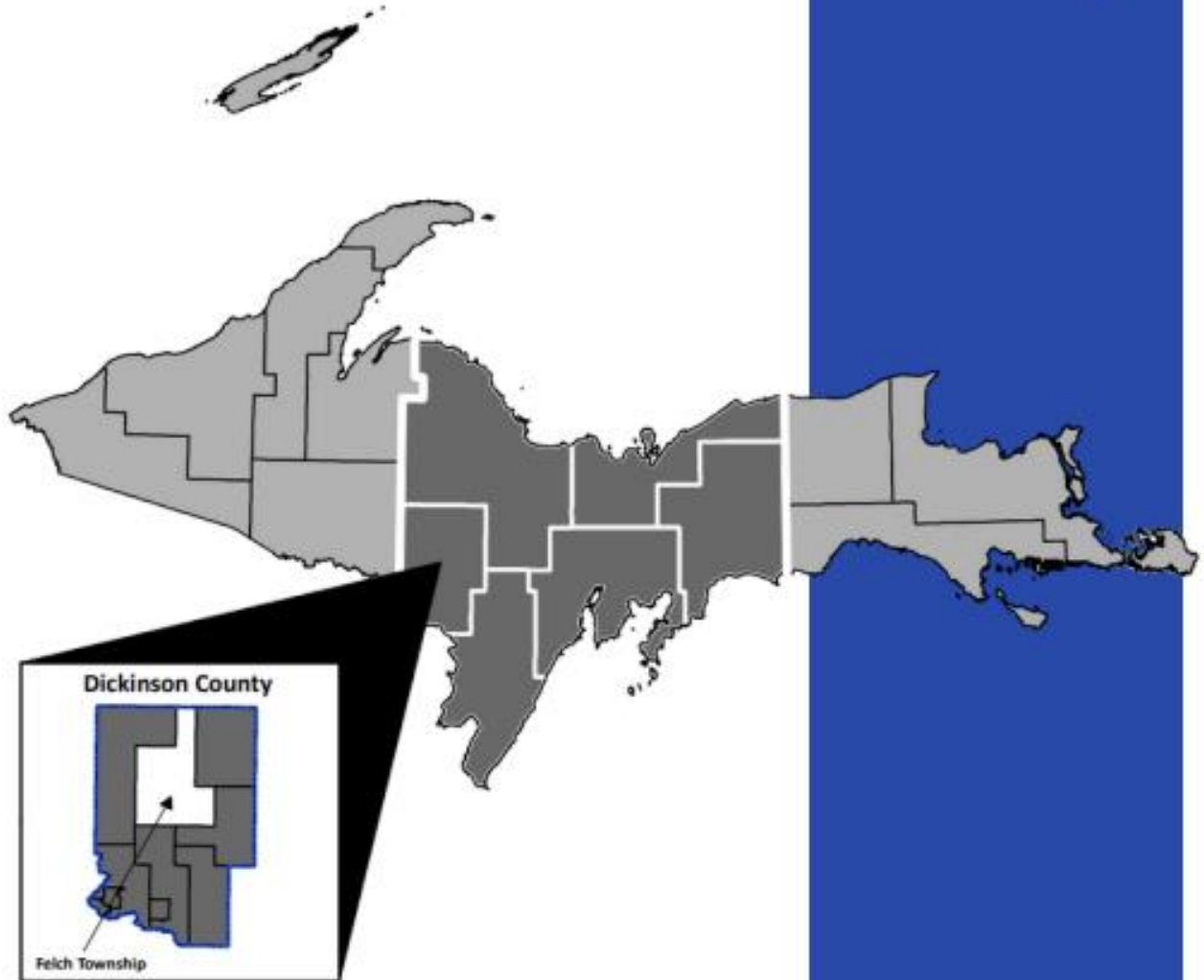


# Felch Township



## Master Plan

2023

Prepared by:  
The Felch Township Planning Commission  
and  
Felch Township Board

Adopted: August 7, 2023



**CUPPAD**  
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**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE FELCH TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN**

**Resolution 08072023-1**

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (or MPEA, also known as P.A. 33 of 2008) authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare and adopt a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared a proposed Master Plan and submitted the plan to the Township Board for review and comment at its regular meeting on April 26, 2023; and

WHEREAS, on May 1, 2023, the Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan and authorized distribution the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA for a public review period of 63 days which ended on July 10, 2023; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA on May 3, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission provided notice of a public hearing in a newspaper of general circulation on July 17, 2023 and held a public hearing for Master Plan adoption on August 2, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission passed a motion to approve the Master Plan and recommend its adoption to the Township Board during its regular meeting on August 2, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the MPEA authorizes the Township Board to assert by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed Master Plan and the Board initiated this action; and  
WHEREAS, the Township Board, following an affirmative vote the majority of its members will be the final approving body for the Master Plan.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, The Felch Township Board hereby approves and adopts the Felch Township Master Plan, as per the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008.

I Darrell J. Oman, duly elected and acting Clerk for the Township of Felch, County of Dickinson State of Michigan do hereby certify that this resolution 08072023-1 was approved by a roll call vote of the Felch Township Board at its regular meeting held on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023



Darrell J. Oman  
Felch Township Clerk

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**Appendix A Base Map**

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## Chapter 1.0 Introduction and Brief Historical Background

### 1.1 Planning Overview

This Master Plan is the result of extensive data collection and analysis providing a method to address issues throughout Felch Township. Community input has played a critical role in the formation of this plan to ensure that it represents the needs of the residents. The initial sections of the plan present an analysis of the current conditions in the Township, including demographic statistics, economic climate and the existing land use. The remaining chapters of the plan are designed around the key issues highlighted by residents and community officials. Recommendations for Township officials addressing key issues are outlined in detail.

By analyzing the current condition of the area and factoring in desired outcomes, the plan provides a clear view and direction toward achieving the proposed goals. A future land use chapter will present the “preferred future” of how Felch Township would like to grow and will include recommendations on how development will be carried out. The future land use discussion will also include a zoning plan, which will guide the implementation of a zoning ordinance revision for the Township.

To summarize, this plan is intended for use as a guide by local officials when considering matters related to development and land use. Planning is a process that requires ongoing review and analysis. This plan will remain a work-in-progress and will require timely and thoughtful revision to be of the greatest benefit.

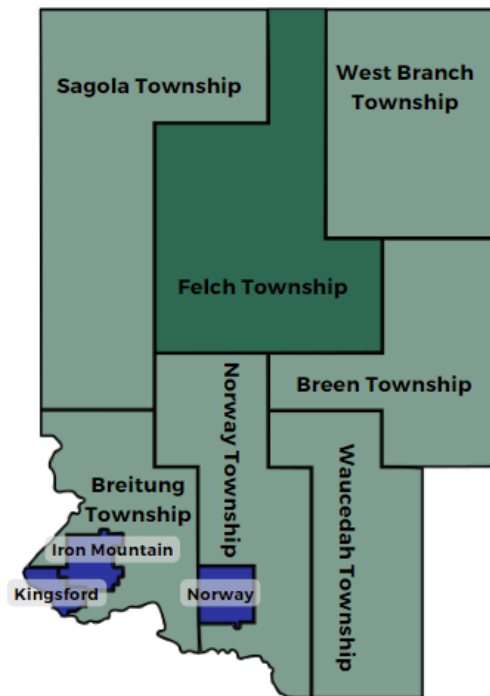
## 1.2 Brief Historical Background

Felch Township is located in north-central Dickinson County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, approximately 15 miles northeast of the Iron Mountain-Kingsford urban area. The Township was formed in 1882 when the land was still considered part of Marquette County. In September 1885, Iron County was formed and the Township then became part of Iron County. Felch Township became part of Dickinson County when the last county was finally formed in Michigan in 1891.

The eastern portion of the Menominee Iron Range underlies much of the southern area of the township, and the first communities were laid out as company towns for the iron mining operations. Historic mining was short-lived in the area; most of the operations ended by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with the exception of the Groveland Mine. Logging and lumber processing were the dominant activity until the depletion of the forestlands in the 1920s, supporting industrial operations in the Iron Mountain area and exported from the ports in Menominee and Escanaba.

There is some controversy over how Felch got its name. There are several other assertions over the naming of the community. Alpheus Felch was elected governor of Michigan in 1846 and most histories state that the town was named after him. Others have claimed that the town was named for Captain Felch of the North Western Mine. The first community, Felch Mountain was platted by the owners in 1881. The same summer, the Theodore settlement was platted by the owners, the Lake Superior Ship Canal, Railway and Iron Company. The village of Metropolitan (now Felch) was platted in 1882, with the request signed by the president of the Metropolitan Iron and Land Company.

The first mine was opened at Felch Mountain for the Metropolitan Land and Iron Company in 1876, in the interest of the Youngstown Iron Company. The Metropolitan Lumber Company was in operation in the area as early as the 1870s. Nelson P. Hulst discovered iron ore at Felch Mountain in 1873 and groups of men were sent out in all directions to test for iron ore. A wagon road, called the "Iron Road" was built from Vulcan to Felch Mountain soon after to haul iron ore by horse to be loaded on rail cars in Vulcan. In 1882 the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad was completed, and the Metropolitan Mine shipped 23,854 tons of iron ore. The Metropolitan Mine was closed by the end of 1888 and was never reopened.



Milltown, known as Metropolitan today, was a thriving village established just after 1880 as a sawmill town. Metropolitan was about one mile west of Felch and was the last station on a branch of the Chicago and North Western Railway coming west from Escanaba. The village was platted by the Metropolitan Mining Company in 1881. A post office was in operation there from 1881 until 1963. The present Zion Lutheran Church of Metropolitan sits almost exactly on the site of the old village, which is now a string of farms along the country roads. The Chicago and Northwestern Railway Company ran a line from Escanaba through to Milltown. There was one train per day, transporting passengers, logs and lumber. The sawmill was located on the Sturgeon River, south of Milltown. By 1905, the Metropolitan Lumber Company had moved its operations out of the area.

A number of lumber companies were floating logs down the Sturgeon River past the Morgan Mill to points as far away as Menominee and Marinette. Other companies were sending logs down the West Branch of the Sturgeon. Train loads of timber were hauled by rail daily to the main lines of the Chicago Northwestern Railway. The Morgan Mill was closed in 1923, after the company realized that their source of timber was almost depleted. It was at this time that many of the Township's residents began to look at dairy and potato farming as a source of income. The logging industry exploited the timber resources of the region, but the land has managed to recover and timber is still an important source of income for the Township.

(Source: Felch, Michigan Centennial 1878 to 1978, Beatrice M. Blomquist.)

Today, the remnants of the mining and lumber towns are still present in the Felch/Theodore and Metropolitan area, while additional residential development has taken advantage of the water features found through the township. With a significant portion of the township managed as state-owned forest land, logging remains a major economic activity. Agriculture, including commodity crops and livestock, is present in the rolling hills in the southern portion of the township. The land is also attractive to recreational activities, with campgrounds and cottages, and abundant access to ORV and snowmobile trails. The township's unique position in relation to its rural character and abundant natural resources gives it additional strengths and weaknesses for development. This Master Plan will help identify these areas and provide a framework for the future.

## Chapter 2.0 Population, Economic Base and Housing

### 2.1 Introduction to Population

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

Demographics- age, income, gender, education, occupation, etc.- shape the development of a community and its future growth. Data from the Decennial Census and American Community Survey estimates provided by the US Census Bureau is used throughout this Master Plan. While the Census is used primarily to count residents for Congressional Apportionment, it also collects statistics on social and economic characteristics of the population. Analyzing the trends in these statistics over time allows for the identification of issues and opportunities. However, due to the way that this data is accumulated, there can some margin of error. ACS data is collected each month using a random sampling method and aligned to the previous Census; with smaller sample size in smaller communities and townships there is a moderate margin of error. This analysis should be viewed as a snapshot of conditions at the time of writing and should be updated accordingly as new data is available or the local priorities of the community change.

### 2.2 Area Population Trends

The table below presents a comparison of historic population trends for all Dickinson County jurisdictions from 1960 to 2020. From 1960 to present, Felch Township's population has plateaued, and over the last ten years has declined by 8%. This is comparable to the adjacent rural townships of the county while the urban areas have maintained their populations. The proportion of Dickinson County residents living in Felch Township has been maintained, indicating other population loss throughout the county. While this population loss is a reflection of regional issues affecting rural and urban areas, the small population of Felch Township means that any loss has an effect. Population growth in Michigan has occurred in more urbanized areas in lower Michigan, while the Upper Peninsula has experienced loss.

Felch Township/Dickinson County Population Trends							
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Felch Township	509	444	615	705	726	752	687
Dickinson County	23,917	23,753	25,431	26,831	27,472	26,168	25,947
% Felch/Dickinson	2.1%	1.9%	2.4%	2.6%	2.6%	2.9%	2.6%

Historic Population Trends, Dickinson County							
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
<b>Felch Township</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>687</b>
<b>% Change</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-12.80%</b>	<b>38.50%</b>	<b>14.60%</b>	<b>3.00%</b>	<b>3.58%</b>	<b>-8.64%</b>
Breen Township	492	462	471	464	479	499	471
% Change	-	-6.10%	1.90%	-1.50%	3.20%	4.18%	-5.61%
Breitung Township	2,860	3,392	4,669	4,483	5,930	5,853	5,831
% Change	-	18.60%	37.60%	-4.00%	32.30%	-1.30%	-0.38%
City of Iron Mountain	9,299	8,702	8,341	8,525	8,154	7,624	7,518
% Change	-	6.40%	4.10%	2.20%	-4.40%	-6.50%	-1.39%
City of Kingsford	5,084	5,276	5,290	5,480	5,549	5,133	5,139
% Change	-	3.80%	0.30%	3.60%	1.30%	-7.50%	0.12%
City of Norway	3,171	3,033	2,919	2,910	2,959	2,845	2,840
% Change	-	-4.40%	-3.80%	-0.30%	1.70%	-3.85%	-0.18%
Norway Township	1,022	966	1,257	1,325	1,639	1,489	1,535
% Change	-	-5.50%	30.10%	5.40%	23.70%	-9.15%	3.09%
Sagola Township	952	918	1,146	1,166	1,169	1,106	1,066
% Change	-	-3.60%	24.80%	1.70%	0.30%	-5.39%	-3.62%
Waucedah Township	475	503	577	693	800	804	809
% Change	-	5.90%	14.70%	20.10%	15.40%	0.50%	0.62%
West Branch Township	53	57	56	80	67	63	51
% Change	-	7.50%	1.80%	42.90%	16.30%	-5.97%	19.05%
Dickinson County	23,917	23,753	25,341	26,831	27,472	26,168	25,947
% Change	-	-0.70%	6.70%	5.90%	2.40%	-4.75%	-0.84%
State of Michigan	7,823,194	8,881,826	9,262,044	9,295,287	9,938,444	9,833,640	10,077,331
% Change	-	13.60%	4.30%	0.40%	6.90%	-1.05%	2.48%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

While the State of Michigan has experienced population growth over the past 20 years, all of jurisdictions within Dickinson County have experienced some loss. While those losses have been somewhat less in certain areas over the past 10 years, losses in the northernmost rural areas of Dickinson County have increased. Many counties in the Upper Peninsula tend to have high levels of domestic out migration, largely reflecting a movement of young adults to cities for education and employment that is only partially offset by in-migration of older adults and retirees. Many former “Yoopers” that move away from the area to work return to the Upper Peninsula to spend their retirement years where they grew up. The Upper Peninsula has also become a retirement destination for both full-time and part-time “snowbird” retirees, looking to live in quiet, rural areas.

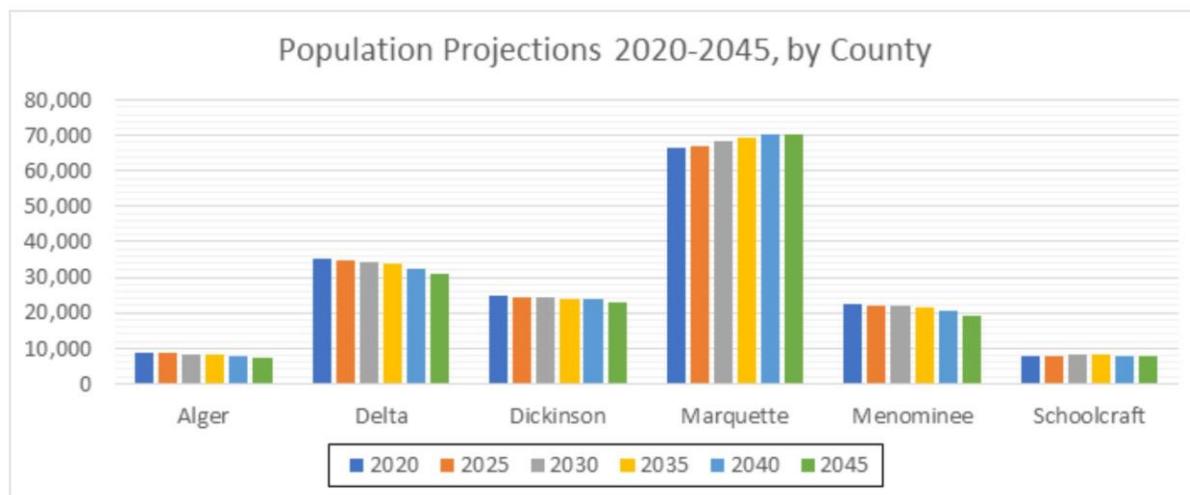
Population change is the result of a combination of natural increase and migration. When births within a community exceed deaths within a period of time, a positive natural increase is the result. Communities with younger populations tend to have high natural increases since the birth rates are higher. Those communities with a large number of older people tend to



have a small natural increase; a negative natural increase is less common, though more Upper Peninsula communities are trending toward these losses.

## 2.3 Regional Population Change

Since 2010, all the counties of the Upper Peninsula except Houghton have experienced net population losses. A combination of demographic shift, natural decrease, and out-migration have contributed to losses over the previous decade. According to Michigan Labor Market Information projections, the population of central U.P. counties is anticipated to decline through 2045; however, the population of Dickinson County is expected to remain relatively stable.



Source: Michigan Labor Market, 2020

Population projections are useful for estimating future residential demands for public services. However, the major component of population change, in- and out- migration, is very difficult to predict. A 2021 report on population migration in the Upper Peninsula<sup>1</sup> found that nearly half of population loss has been the result of net out-migration, particularly in rural areas. This historic loss trend has been experienced across the Upper Peninsula, though the COVID-19 pandemic, employment and economic trends of the past several years, and the possibly of future climate-related migration may have already had an effect on migration patterns.

Regional Population Change					
	1990 Pop.	2000 Pop.	2010 Pop.	2020 Pop.	2010-20 % Change
Alger	8,972	9,862	9,601	8,842	-7.9%
Baraga	7,954	8,746	8,860	8,158	-7.9%
Chippewa	34,604	38,543	38,520	36,785	-4.5%
Delta	37,780	38,520	37,069	36,903	-0.4%
Dickinson	26,831	27,472	26,168	25,947	-0.8%
Gogebic	18,052	17,370	16,427	14,380	-12.5%
Houghton	35,446	36,016	36,628	37,361	2.0%

<sup>1</sup> Peterson, Julia and Winkler, Richelle. *Pandemic Migration in Michigan's Upper Peninsula*. 2021.

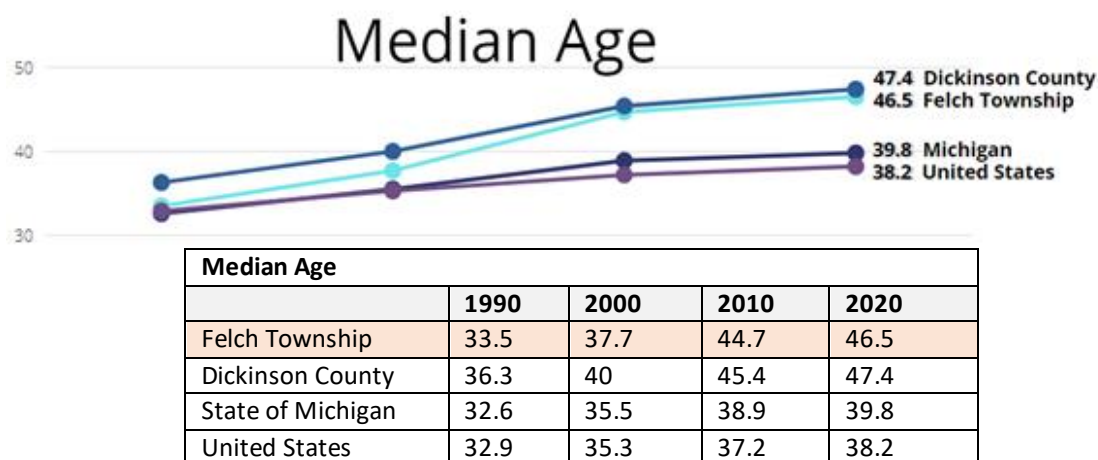
Iron	13,175	13,138	11,817	11,631	-1.6%
Keweenaw	1,701	2,301	2,156	2,046	-5.1%
Luce	5,763	7,024	6,631	5,339	-19.5%
Mackinac	10,674	11,943	11,113	10,834	-2.5%
Marquette	70,887	64,634	67,077	66,017	-1.6%
Menominee	24,920	25,326	24,029	23,502	-2.2%
Ontonagon	8,854	7,818	6,780	5,816	-14.2%
Schoolcraft	8,302	8,903	8,485	8,047	-5.2%
Upper Peninsula	313,915	317,616	311,361	301,608	-3.1%
Michigan	9,310,462	9,952,450	9,877,597	10,077,331	2.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## 2.4 Age Structure

A careful analysis of a community's age structure is an essential step in sound decision-making. If trends suggest a younger population, the community may need to focus on school facilities, childcare centers, playgrounds and other services utilized by a younger population. An aging population may require additional health care facilities, community services such as meals or transportation, and specialized housing.

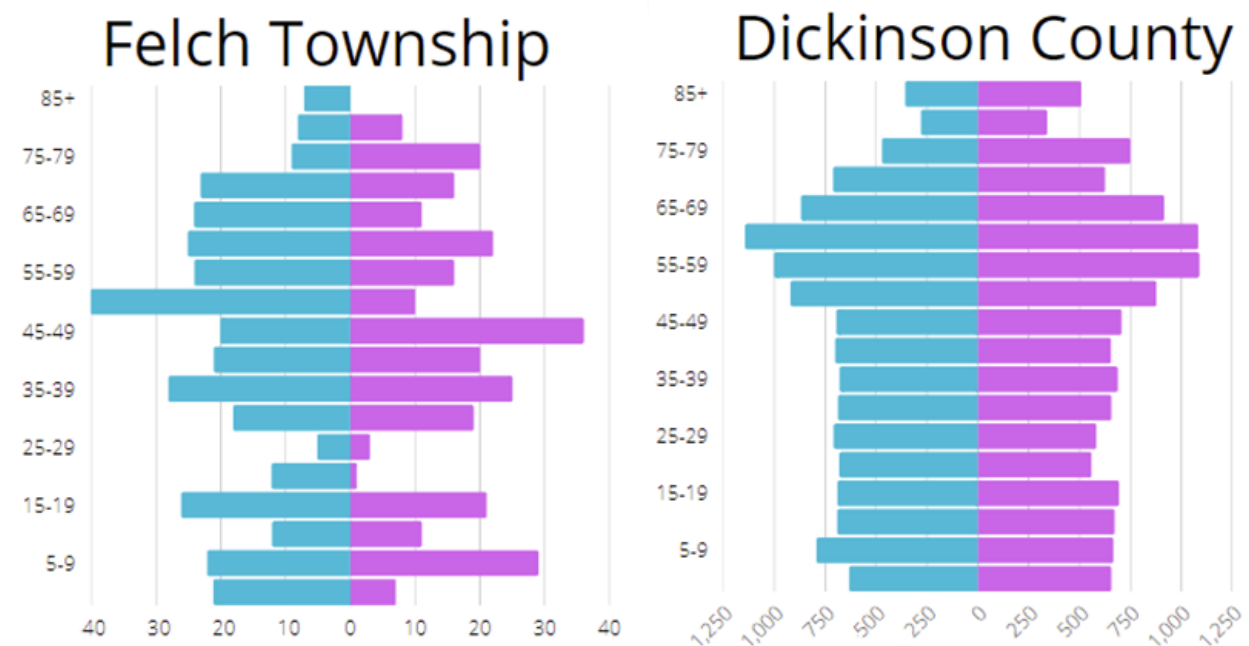
While Felch Township's population has been relatively stable in recent years, it is aging. This follows national trends with the aging of the Baby Boomer Generation; the youngest within that cohort now reaching or reached retirement age. Felch Township's population has experienced significant change in median age since the 1990s, though is slightly younger than Dickinson County overall. The American Community Survey estimates the 2020 median age in the township at 46.5 years.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates

Population pyramids show the number of persons within particular age cohorts, arranged by gender. In a growing population the bottom of the pyramid should flare out, representing a higher number of those in the younger cohorts. In a stable population pyramid, the shape is more representative of a pillar. When the pyramid is inverted, there are fewer persons in the

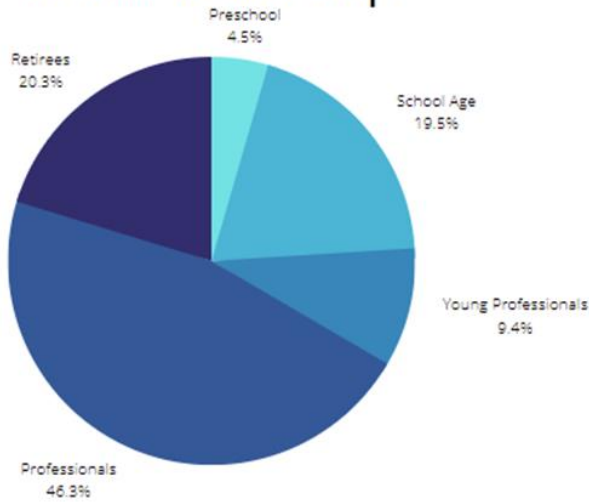
younger cohorts to replace those in the older ones, indicating future population loss. Each cohort's number of representatives by gender are usually comparable.



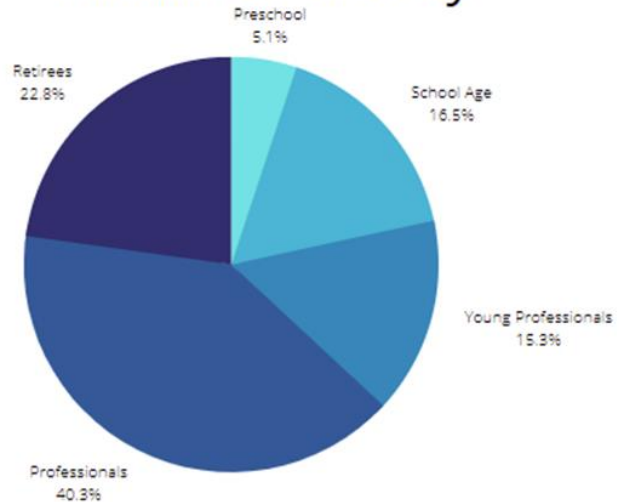
Felch Township's population pyramid is pillar-shaped; while the stabilized population is represented by the pillar-shape, there is a higher proportion of older residents, and a lack of residents between the ages of 20-30. This shape indicates a moderate share of the population will be aging out of the workforce over the next decade and there may be an increased demand for services related to aging such as health care, transportation alternatives, assisted care, and senior-designed housing accommodations. The lack of young adult residents, particularly young women, may be reflective of education and job-related opportunities that draw younger residents to more urban communities, an issue seen across the Upper Peninsula in rural areas.

The retirement age group, representing those 65 and older in Felch Township, makes up 20.3% of the population. Including those from 55-65, who can be expected to retire over the next decade or so, this portion represents nearly 35% of the entire population. Broken down into groups by like-age cohorts, currently nearly 56% of the population is of working age, 19.5% of schooling age, and 4.5% pre-school age. Few persons are represented in the 20-30 age cohort, in which it is likely that young people attend college or move out of the community on their own. There are also fewer persons in the youngest cohorts indicating a possible decrease in the number of school-age children in the coming years.

## Felch Township



## Dickinson County



Compared to Dickinson County overall, Felch Township has more professional-age residents, and slightly more school-age children. While the county has a higher aging population, its younger cohorts are stabilized, which is predictive of possible future population loss or little net change.

## 2.5 Educational Attainment

Educational and workforce training requirements have been increasing over the past several decades. Employers are now looking for employees with post-high school education, primarily due to the complexity of equipment and methods being used in the modern workplace. A highly trained, educated workforce is an asset in attracting employers to a community. In Felch Township, residents over 25 are more likely to have completed high school and some secondary education than the surrounding area and state, indicating a strong school and social support system for young people. Over the past 20 years, the number of residents that have pursued post-high school education has risen 15%.

Educational Attainment of Persons 25 Years and Older, Selected Areas, 2020						
Educational Level	Felch Township		Dickinson County		State of Michigan	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	0	0.0%	136	0.7%	186,848	2.7%
9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> Grade, No Diploma	15	3.3%	847	4.5%	409,465	6.0%
High School Graduate	166	36.2%	6,198	33.2%	1,955,654	28.5%
Some College, No Degree	93	20.3%	4,452	23.9%	1,587,649	23.2%
Associate Degree	103	22.5%	2,470	13.2%	658,927	9.6%
Bachelor's degree	58	12.7%	3,032	16.3%	1,251,117	18.3%
Graduate or Professional Degree	23	5.0%	1,523	8.2%	804,014	11.7%
High School Graduate or Higher	443	96.7%	17,675	94.7%	6,257,361	91.3%
Bachelor's degree or Higher	81	17.7%	4,555	24.4%	2,055,131	30.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates

## 2.6 Household Characteristics

Household characteristics of a community are related to population trends, and can reflect larger changes in social values, economic conditions, and demographic changes. The Census Bureau defines a household as all persons who occupy a housing unit (i.e., a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any groups of related or unrelated persons sharing the same living quarters). A family consists of a householder and one or more persons living in the same household who are related by birth, marriage or adoption. A non-family household can be one person living alone, or any combination of people not related by blood, marriage or adoption.

There were 259 households in Felch Township estimated through the 2020 American Community Survey. Over the past 20 years the number of occupied households and average household size has decreased; this aligns with the aging population of the township, where more families have had children come of age and move away from the area, leading to smaller households. During the same period the number of non-family households have increased in proportion, indicating that more people are living independently and contributing to the decline in household size.

Felch Township Household Types, 2000-2020						
	2000		2010		2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Family Households	183	73.2%	230	72.5%	182	70.2%
Married Couples	158	63.2%	201	63.4%	165	63.7%
Male Householder	15	8.1%	16	5.0%	6	2.3%
Female Householder	10	5.5%	13	4.1%	11	4.2%
Non-family Households	67	26.8%	87	27.4%	77	29.7%
Householder Living Alone	58	23.2%	79	24.9%	32	12.2%
Householder Living Alone 65+	27	10.8%	15	4.7%	20	7.6%
Total Households	250	100.0%	317	100.0%	259	100.0%
Average Household Size	2.65		2.37		2.35	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Compared to Dickinson County, Felch Township has a similar household size (2.17), a greater number of family households (64.7%), and fewer householders living alone (29.9%) and over 65 years old (13.3%). In Dickinson County, 19% of those 65 and over are living alone, second only to Iron County (20.5%) in the Upper Peninsula. These differences suggest that while couple-led households are continuing to age in place, fewer of those persons who are living alone continue to live in their homes as they age; possibly seeking senior-friendly living arrangements elsewhere.

## **2.9 Issues and Opportunities, Population**

- The Township's population has stabilized and experienced minor losses over the past several decades, reflecting county and regional trends.
- The median age of Township residents has increased 38.8% from 1990 to 2020; additional services for the aging population may be necessary, including public housing opportunities. Many former area residents return to the Upper Peninsula to retire, or may live in the area seasonally as "snowbirds".
- Only 3.4% of the Township's population is represented in the 20-29 age group; this data may support that college aged individuals and young professionals are more likely to pursue job opportunities outside of the area.
- Felch Township residents over the age of 25 maintain higher rates of earning an associate degree than reported for the county and state, representing more persons engaged in employment requiring additional post-high school education.
- Household size has decreased in Felch Township, most likely due to children aging out of the household while parents continue to live in place.

## 2.10 Area Economy

Central to a community's stability and growth is its economic base. Two major sectors make up an economy: a basic or export sector that provides goods and services for markets outside of the community, and a non-basic sector that provides goods and services for local consumption. Economic vitality and balance rely heavily on the creation and retention of local basic sector jobs.

The changes in population of an area are generally closely related to changes in the amount of economic activity in the area. The segment of the population that is most closely related to the economy is the labor force, which is defined as residents 16 years of age and older, that are either employed at one or more jobs or are actively seeking employment. The employed portion of the labor force provides the primary economic support of the total population.

The factors that influence the economic base in a community extend beyond its boundaries, increasingly so as the effects of the global economy are realized. Therefore, this chapter will not only include information that is specific to Felch Township, but it will also include comparative data from the county, region, and state. Much of the economic information presented is available only at the county level.

Historically the local economy has been closely related to natural resources and natural features. Ore reserves along the Menominee Iron Range were mined in and around the county following the sinking of the first test pit in 1877. Mining activity continued until about 1945. Old shafts that once provided access for underground mining operations are still visible today. The proximity and abundance of forest products are an available source of raw material for area paper mills, lumber mills and the wood products industries. Agriculture, which once dominated the rural landscape, particularly around the Metropolitan area, is a primary source of income for very few residents.

Tourism is an important and growing industry throughout the Upper Peninsula. What was once a short business season has become year-round due to the popularity of winter sports such as snowmobiling, downhill and cross-country skiing, ice fishing, and snowshoeing. The area is abundant with opportunities for hiking, kayaking, canoeing, bird watching, and many other outdoor activities. Increasing tourism has resulted in the emergence of new businesses such as motels, campgrounds, restaurants and specialty shops and services. Today's tourists are more likely to travel frequently, take shorter trips and stay closer to home. Transportation accounts for the largest portion of the average budget for travel. Places that provide attractions with historic, cultural, and environmental features have become increasingly popular.

## **2.11 Civilian Labor Force Characteristics**

The labor force participation rate is an estimate of the number of people aged 16 and older engaged in the workforce. The American Community Survey estimates that 55.2% of Felch Township residents were engaged in the workforce in 2020. This is slightly lower than the national rate from the Federal Reserve pre-COVID-19 pandemic, which was 63.4% in February 2020. The discrepancy may be related to less labor force participation among younger school-age residents, and a higher than estimated number of early retirees. With the pandemic's impact to employment and the subsequent "Great Resignation" of job mobility and early retirements, along with Felch's higher portion of retirement-age residents, the current labor force participation rate in the township is likely to continue to decrease.

Another pandemic outcome was the impact to childcare services coupled with school closures which resulted in a portion of parents in the workforce, particularly women, to drop out. Of Felch Township households with children pre-pandemic, the Census Bureau estimated that 76% in had both parents active in the workforce. It remains to be seen what impact the pandemic has had on the local workforce composition, and how it may impact long-term employment trends.

According to the US Census Bureau's On the Map tool, in 2019 96% of Felch Township residents were employed in areas outside of the township's borders. 4% are both residents and employed in the township, and another 88 people worked within the township, but have residence outside of it. Over 60% of residents in the workforce are likely to be employed in the Iron Mountain-Kingsford urban area, or in adjacent Sagola Township. An outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic was the surge of remote work options; data is insufficient to determine if there have been residents working remotely from their homes in the township, and a lack of sufficient internet or availability in rural areas may not make it feasible for many. Remote work is on the rise nationally and the expansion of available high-speed internet service to new areas of the Upper Peninsula could raise interest in the area for remote workers seeking to live in the rural countryside.

## **2.12 Employment by Industry Group**

The three leading employment sectors for Felch Township are education, health and social services; manufacturing; and construction. The presence of North Dickinson School creates the likelihood of a higher percentage of employees in the education field in the area, and large health providers in Iron Mountain, Escanaba, and Marquette are also regional employment draws. Large manufacturers in Iron Mountain-Kingsford and Louisiana-Pacific in Sagola Township have attracted additional residents. The average resident in the workforce commutes about 32 minutes to their place of employment, which is approximately the travel time from Felch to the industrial area of Iron Mountain-Kingsford.



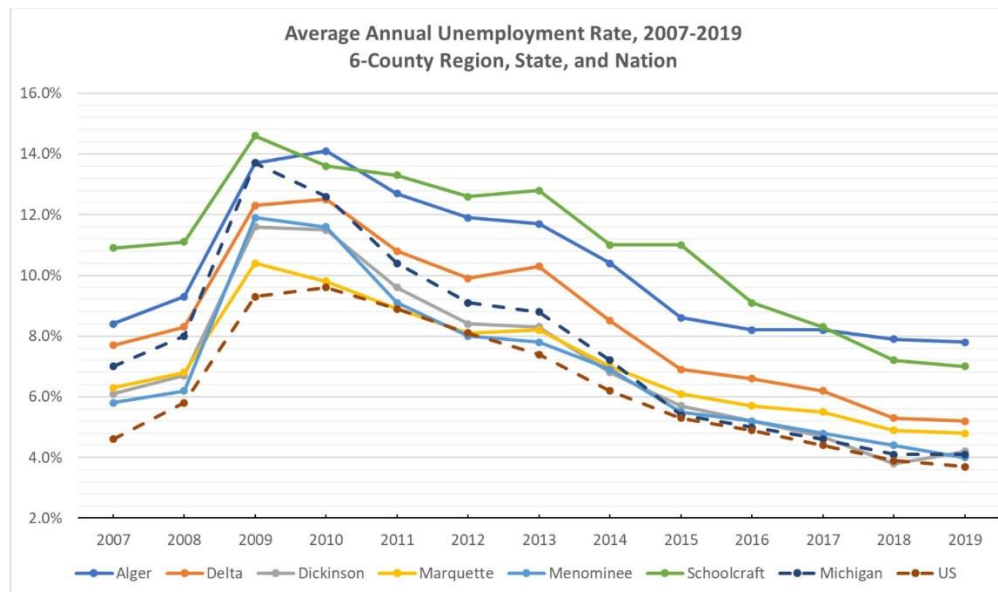
Major employers in Felch Township include MVA Enterprises (logging), Jacobson Logging, the Dickinson County Road Commission, North Dickinson Schools, and Solberg's (bar/restaurant). There are a number of small businesses present in the township as well, mostly engaged in the tourism and agriculture sectors. Dickinson County's diverse economy provides employment opportunities for many Felch Township residents. Some major employers in Dickinson County include: Billerud Paper Corporation (paper products), Marshfield Medical Center-Dickinson (hospital), Sagola Hardwoods (hardwood lumber), MJ Electric (electrical contractor), Louisiana Pacific (building products), Grede Foundries Inc. (ferrous metals), BOSS Snowplow (manufacturing), Systems Control (electronics), and CCI Systems (telecommunications).

<b>Employment by Broad Economic Division, Selected Areas, 2020</b>				
	<b>Felch Township</b>		<b>Dickinson County</b>	<b>State of Michigan</b>
Broad Economic Division	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Mining	21	7.6%	2.3%	1.1%
Construction	25	9.0%	6.6%	5.5%
Manufacturing	69	24.8%	17.1%	18.6%
Transportation and Public Utilities	22	7.9%	7.1%	4.4%
Wholesale Trade	-	-	2.0%	2.4%
Retail Trade	18	6.5%	10.2%	10.7%
Information	1	0.4%	1.8%	1.3%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	6	2.2%	5.6%	5.6%
Professional & Management Service	18	6.5%	6.0%	9.7%
Educational, Health and Social Service	76	27.3%	25.9%	23.4%
Arts, Entertainment, Rec & Food Service	3	1.1%	5.5%	9.2%
Other Services	5	1.8%	4.6%	4.6%
Public Administration	14	5.0%	5.2%	3.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey estimates

## 2.14 Unemployment

Historical labor force and unemployment data is presented in the graph below for central Upper Peninsula counties. Dickinson County has generally recorded lower unemployment rates than the remainder of the Upper Peninsula, whose unemployment rates are frequently higher than those documented by the state overall. Unemployment was nearing record lows near the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic; when data becomes available, it is likely to show a sharp increase, and rapid decrease in employment due to short-term layoffs and hiring freezes. Unemployment in the area is currently near 4 percent, second only to Mackinac County for the lowest in the Upper Peninsula.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey estimates

## 2.16 Income Levels

Income analysis is provided in the table below using per capita, median household, and median family incomes. Per capita income is derived from the total income reported in a given community divided by the total population. Household income is derived from all households including families. Family income includes that of married-couple families and other households made up of persons related by blood, marriage or adoption. It does not include persons living alone, unrelated persons sharing living quarters or other non-family households.

Income Levels, Selected Areas, 2010 and 2020						
	Felch Township		Dickinson County		State of Michigan	
	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020
Per Capita Income	\$21,333	\$38,481	\$23,854	\$30,789	\$25,135	\$32,854
Median Household Income	\$53,654	\$75,417	\$42,586	\$51,704	\$48,432	\$59,234
Median Family Income	\$58,654	\$78,750	\$54,053	\$64,973	\$60,341	\$75,470

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey estimates

Incomes in Felch Township increased above the rate of inflation between 2010 and 2020, suggesting that there have been a number of wealthier residents entering the township. While the cumulative inflation price change was 18.69%, median household income for Felch Township residents has increased 40.56%. Current residents generally have higher incomes than the county and state medians.

## **2.17 Poverty Levels**

Poverty levels are determined by the United States Census Bureau based on a complex formula including family size, number of children within the family, and the age of the householder. The annual income poverty level in the United States for a family of two in 2020 was \$17,240; for a family of three, \$21,720; and a family of four, \$26,200. The percentage of Felch Township residents estimated to be living below the poverty level is 3.4%; much lower than Dickinson County, 10.1%, and the state at 13.7%.

When considering poverty rates for the Upper Peninsula, the lower cost of living should be kept in mind. Also a factor are those living on fixed incomes, such as the elderly and the disabled. When factoring for those age 60 and above in the township, the poverty level increases to 6.4%, and for those who were not in the labor force in the past twelve months, 8.8%.

## **2.18 Issues and Opportunities, Area Economy**

- Felch Township's labor participation rate is below the national rate, suggesting fewer residents are engaged in the workforce.
- 96% of township residents are employed in areas outside of the township. These are likely to be jobs at large employers in neighboring Sagola Township and the Iron Mountain-Kingsford area.
- The three leading employment sectors in the Township are education, health and social services; manufacturing; and construction.
- The average resident in the workforce commutes about 32 minutes to their place of employment.
- Dickinson County has reported lower unemployment rates when compared to the remainder of the Upper Peninsula.
- In general, incomes in Felch Township are 30 to 40 percent higher than those for the state and Dickinson County.
- Poverty rates for the Township were lower than the rates reported for the county and the state.

## 2.19 Introduction to Housing

Housing is one of the key factors to consider when planning for a community's future. The location and type of housing available establishes where public infrastructure must be provided. The placement of a community's housing also determines the costs associated with public services. Furthermore, the location of new housing can be settled on in part by the availability of public infrastructure and services. Housing characteristics can also reveal information about a community's history and its economic and social situation.

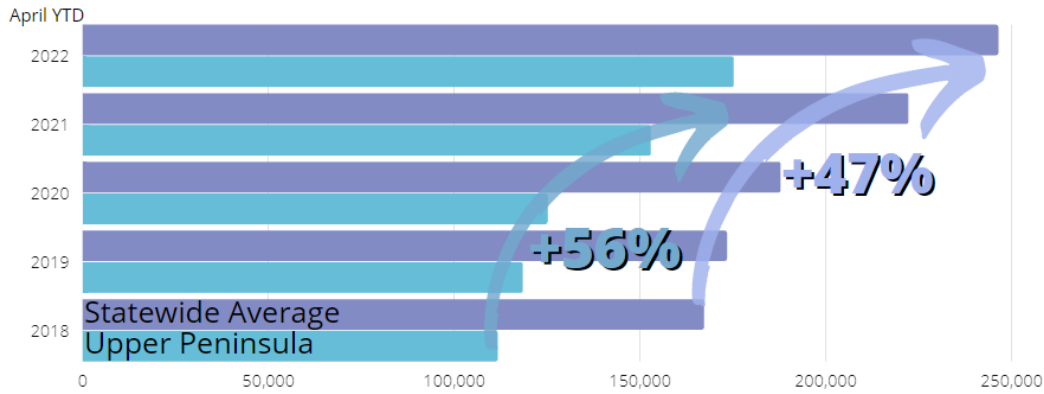
The cost of housing and the type of housing available are typically determined by market factors. Outside of operating a housing authority or possibly serving as the developer of residential property, local units of government do not usually become directly involved with providing housing. Through zoning and other land use controls, the provision of infrastructure and services and efforts to attract new residents to a community, local governments can have a powerful impact on housing in a community.

In addition to migration, commuter trends, the cost of land and construction, and other housing related elements, there are several key non-housing factors that can influence an area's housing market. Public safety, or a lack of, can influence where people choose to buy a home and raise a family. Quality education is one of the primary locational factors for families with school-age children. Area access to employment, shopping and other entertainment needs factor into the purchase of a home.

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

The result in the Upper Peninsula has been that even though the full-time residential population has been decreasing, home and rental availability is highly competitive, and the market demand far exceeds the supply. Home sale prices in the Upper Peninsula have increased 56% over the past five years, faster than statewide median sale. The average home sale in the Upper Peninsula in April of 2022 was \$175,146; though these prices are somewhat lower in rural areas.

### Home Sale Prices, Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, 2018-2022



Information presented in this chapter will provide area officials with the most recent housing data available, including structure and occupancy characteristics and housing studies conducted in Dickinson County. This information will help assess housing needs and determine the appropriate course of action to address housing needs in Felch Township.

## 2.20 Housing Characteristics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey estimates, a total of 576 housing units are present in the township. 52% of these are continually occupied; the definition for “vacant” housing used by the Census Bureau includes seasonal/migratory units and units where the residents do not have a separate place of residence elsewhere. In Felch Township, there is a high percentage of housing stock that is used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Anecdotally, with recent migratory and housing stock changes in the Upper Peninsula, this number may be expected to decrease, as new residents are coming into the township and living permanently in previously seasonal housing.

Total Housing Units, Occupancy and Tenure, 2020						
Housing Units	Felch Township		Dickinson County		State of Michigan	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Units	576	-	13,917	-	4,570,173	-
Occupied	302	52%	11,569	83%	3,980,408	87%
Owner	294	97%	9,185	79%	2,855,485	72%
Renter	8	3%	2,384	26%	1,124,923	39%
Vacant	274	48%	2,348	17%	528,413	12%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Redistricting Data and American Community Survey estimates

Since 2000, the percentage of rental housing in the county and state has increased by roughly ten percent while the percentage in the township has decreased by 75%; related to the small number of existing rentals. An increase in both the number of continually occupied owned

properties and seasonal housing may suggest that this decrease includes both more permanent residents and some housing being used as short-term rentals or vacation homes.

<b>Percent Historic and Current Housing Types by Unit, 2000-2020</b>									
Unit of Government	% 2000			% 2010			% 2020		
	Single Family	Multi-Family	Mobile Homes, Boat, RV, etc.	Single Family	Multi-Family	Mobile Homes, Boat, RV, etc.	Single Family	Multi-Family	Mobile Homes, Boat, RV, etc.
Felch Township	81.3	2.1	16.6	90.6	1.1	8.3	96.5	0.8	2.7
Dickinson County	82.0	11.5	6.5	83.5	12.1	4.4	82.0	12.1	5.9
State of Michigan	74.5	18.8	6.7	72.9	21.9	5.2	72.4	22.6	5.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and American Community Survey estimates 2010, 2020

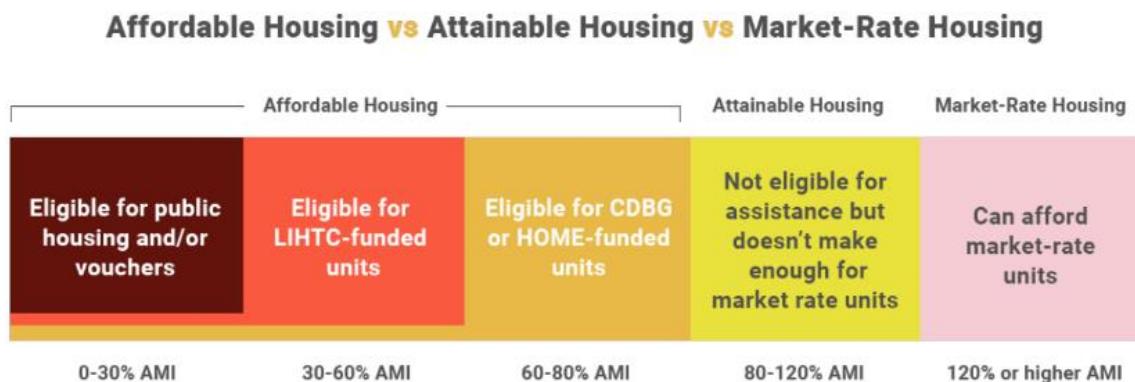
96.5% of the housing stock in the township consists of single-family homes; an increase of 18% over the past 20 years. Accompanying this is a significant 83% decrease in the number of mobile homes and alternative housing types. This decrease may support the anecdotal increase in the number of seasonal properties and “camps” being either phased out for other alternatives or developed into full-time residences.

30% of the township’s housing was built before 1960, with the bulk of housing being built between 1960 and 2000 (55.6%), coinciding with much of the township’s growth period between the 1970s and 1990s. Many new homeowners in the area during this time period were seeking rural areas with large lot sizes and built near the waterfront on lakes and near North Dickinson School, built in 1970. New home building has slowed over the past 20 years comparable to regional trends, with about 13% of homes built since 2000.

The housing stock represents a mixture of both older and newer homes; while an older housing stock is not necessarily inadequate or of poorer quality than newer structures, it is more prone to deterioration if not properly maintained. Since a relatively large number of householders are over the age of 65, when maintenance may also become increasingly difficult, some of the township’s housing stock may be vulnerable. Older housing units often lack the amenities desired by more affluent, or younger households, such as multiple bathrooms and larger bedrooms, family rooms, and garages. These older units often have narrow doorways, steep stairs and other features which make them difficult for older residents to enjoy, and increased maintenance demands may also make these homes less desirable to an aging population.

As described above, housing values continue to rise nationally. In 2000, the Census Bureau reported that the median housing value in Felch Township was \$67,500. In 2020, median housing value was estimated at \$115,600; a 71% increase over twenty years. Based on regional and national trends, housing values may have further increased up to 40% over the past two

years. Because Felch Township's housing is somewhat newer and in a desirable rural area with larger lot sizes, it tends to have higher values than surrounding Dickinson County, where the median housing value is \$109,300.



AMI = Area Median Income which is reset by HUD each year according to inflation and cost of living increases.

Source: Fannie Mae, Michigan Land Bank Authority

Affordability of a community's housing stock is an important factor in drawing in new residents and maintaining the ability of current residents to continue living in their homes. Housing costs are described as: affordable, often meaning they are units that are subsidized by federal or state assistance programs; attainable, those that are not eligible for assistance but may be unable to afford market rate; and market-rate, the current going value for housing stock in the community. The township does not currently have any public housing developments where residents would be eligible for subsidized housing.

Ideally, housing costs (mortgage, taxes, etc.) should consume no more than 25 to 30 percent of gross household income. With a gap between median household income and home value, it is likely that some may find it difficult to purchase new housing in the community. Furthermore, as housing values rise, others on fixed or strained incomes may find it difficult to keep up with increased assessments of taxable value. With a high proportion of owner-occupied and non-mortgaged homes in the township, many have housing costs representing less than 20% of household income.

Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income, 2020			
Monthly Owner Costs as a % of Household Income	Percent of Households		
	Felch Township	Dickinson County	State of Michigan
Less than 20.0 percent	75%	71%	62%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	6%	10%	12%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	4%	8%	7%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	3%	3%	5%
35.0 to 39.9 percent	2%	2%	3%
40.0 to 49.9 percent	3%	3%	4%
50.0 percent or more	3%	5%	7%
Not computed	4%	0%	1%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey estimates



## **2.23 Public and Private Housing Assistance Programs**

Housing rehabilitation, weatherization (insulating, caulking, window replacement, etc.) and home purchasing assistance programs are provided through the Dickinson-Iron Community Service Agency. Applicants must meet eligibility guidelines to qualify. In addition to providing residents with safer and more comfortable living conditions, the programs help to maintain the aging housing stock in the area, in situations where homeowners may otherwise be unable to prevent deterioration.

The Menominee River Habitat for Humanity chapter was founded in 1992. The chapter includes all of Dickinson County and Niagara, Wisconsin. Applications are evaluated based on family income, current home conditions, willingness of the applicant to participate in a home building project through “sweat equity,” and additional factors. Habitat home projects are constructed by community volunteers and homeowners-to-be on donated land parcels. The local chapter has completed several home building projects in Dickinson County.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides housing assistance through its Rural Development Program. USDA provides homeownership opportunities to rural Americans, as well as programs for home renovation and repair. USDA also makes financing available to elderly, disabled, or low-income rural residents of multi-unit housing buildings to ensure they are able to make rent payments.

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) provides financial and technical assistance through public and private partnerships to create and preserve safe and decent affordable housing, engage in community economic development activities, develop vibrant cities, towns and villages, and address homeless issues. MSHDA provides assistance with Neighborhood Preservation, Rental Rehab and Homeowner Rehab programs as well.

## **2.24 Issues and Opportunities, Housing**

- Only 52% of the total housing units in the township are continually occupied, due to the extremely high number of housing units used for seasonal, recreational or occasional use.
- Single family homes make up over 96.5% of the housing units in the Township; multi-family housing represents less than 1%. Diversifying the available housing types may attract new residents and/or additional services.
- The Township represents a mixture of older and newly built homes, with approximately 13% of the housing stock built after 2000.
- New housing development is occurring in several areas of the township. Many homes are being constructed around the lakes; with some for recreational or seasonal use.
- The Township does not currently have any public housing developments. As the township’s population ages, public housing for seniors may be necessary.



## **Chapter 3.0 Community Facilities and Services, Recreation and Transportation**

### **3.1 Introduction to Community Facilities and Services**

Services and facilities provided by local governments are vital to the community's progress and well-being. Services may include police and fire protection, water supplies, and solid waste and wastewater disposal. Community facilities include libraries, schools, cemeteries, parks, and other recreational facilities. This chapter will focus on the facilities and services in Felch Township and consider future possibilities. This will not be an exhaustive study of these services and facilities but will provide a guideline for future decision making.

### **3.2 Township Facilities and Services**

#### **Felch Township Hall**

The Felch Township Hall, constructed in 1988, is located at W4243 M-69 and is a barrier-free facility. The Township completed an addition to the Hall in 2010, and recently completed lighting and facility updates to modernize the space and increase accessibility. The facility is also home to the Fire Hall, which is currently undergoing renovation and expansion. A pavilion, playground, and community ballfields are used for community events as well as Little League, hardball and softball. The Township Hall is currently in excellent condition and is available to residents as well as non-residents for rentals.

The Felch Township Hall/Community Center houses the Township offices and is the site for monthly meetings of the Felch Township Board and Planning Commission as well as local elections. The Hall also houses the Post Office, which provides service to much of northern Dickinson County. The Tri-Township Ambulance Authority, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Tri-Township Preservation Club, and the Eastern Dickinson County Sportsmen's Club also hold meetings at the Felch Township Hall. The Dickinson-Iron Community Action Agency provides meals for senior citizens at the Hall.

#### **Fire Protection**

The Felch Township Volunteer Fire Department is located at the Felch Township Hall, W4243 M-69 in Felch. The Fire Department consists of 15 trained volunteers, led by one chief and one assistant. Felch Township maintains mutual aid agreements with West Branch Township, Breen Township and Sagola Township (on call as needed), as well as with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

#### **Tri-Township Ambulance Authority**

Felch Township, in agreement with West Branch Township and Breen Township has joined together under Public Act 57 of 1988 to form the Tri-Township Ambulance Authority. The purpose of the Authority is to provide emergency medical services to residents in the three townships and to promote interest in and develop first aid and rescue work in the area. The Authority is financed through Township-levied millages for the purpose of ambulance services.

The governing body of the Authority is composed of six members: two members from each Township. Breen Township holds the title to the ambulance as specified in the agreement. Nordic Ambulance is the ambulance provider. The new addition to the Township Hall and Fire Hall included space for housing the ambulance, which is now stationed there.

### **Township Cemetery**

Felch Township owns and maintains the Township Cemetery located on approximately 40 acres on Calumet Mine Road. The cemetery was last expanded about 20 years ago and has adequate space available. The Township employs a sexton to maintain and supervise activities at the cemetery.

### **Water and Wastewater**

All water in the township is provided by private wells and all wastewater is handled by private septic systems. There are no plans to provide public water and wastewater in the township.

### **Solid Waste and Recycling**

Solid waste service is contracted out yearly by the Township. The current contract is held by Green For Life (GFL). Solid waste is dropped off by residents at the solid waste/recycling building located behind the ballfields at the Township Hall for pick-up. The Township also collects recyclable metals and compostable material, as well as hosting a community cleanup event twice a year. The waste transfer site is currently open for several hours two days per week and is staffed by one person.

Solid waste is transported and processed at the Dickinson County Solid Waste Processing Facility in Quinnesec operated by Green For Life. Wastes are transferred to the Wood Island landfill in Alger County for final disposal.

## **3.3 County and Area Facilities and Services**

### **Dickinson County Road Commission**

County and local roads are maintained by the Dickinson County Road Commission as set forth in Act 51, the Michigan Transportation Act. State trunklines are maintained by the Road Commission in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation. Storage and maintenance facilities are located in Felch and Iron Mountain. The Felch garage holds trucks, graders, bulldozers, excavators and survey equipment. There are approximately 8 employees at the Felch satellite office.

### **Marshfield Medical Center-Dickinson**

Dickinson County Hospital on the north side of US-2 near Iron Mountain's eastern corporate limit was completed in 1996. In 2022, the organization was added to the Marshfield Clinic Health System and renamed Marshfield Medical Center-Dickinson. The 33-bed facility provides acute care to medical, surgical, pediatric, obstetric, and emergency patients. An adjoining facility offers several clinical services as a regional medical destination.

### **Oscar G. Johnson Veterans Affairs Medical Center**

The organization provides primary care at the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center as well as at clinics in Gladstone, Hancock, Menominee, Marquette, Ironwood, Sault Ste. Marie, and Rhineland, Wisconsin. Over 20,000 veterans in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and northeastern Wisconsin rely upon the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center and clinics for their healthcare. Over 600 staff provide primary and selected secondary care. Volunteers provide a wide variety of services.

### **Dickinson County Airport**

Ford Airport in Kingsford is operated by Dickinson County. The airport area includes 713 acres within portions of Kingsford and Breitung Township. Flights are currently offered by Delta Airlines to Detroit and Minneapolis, Minnesota several days per week.

### **Law Enforcement**

The Dickinson County Sheriff's Department and the Iron Mountain Post of the Michigan State Police provide full-time law enforcement services within the township. Jail facilities are located at the Dickinson County Correctional Facility in Iron Mountain. The 71-bed facility is operated by the Dickinson County Sheriff's Department.

### **Building Permits and Code Enforcement**

Building permits are issued by the Dickinson County Construction Code Commission. A Township-issued zoning permit must be secured before a building permit is issued. Building, mechanical, plumbing and electrical inspections are done by authorized employees or agents of the Dickinson County Construction Code Commission. Soil and sediment control permits are also available.

### **Library**

Residents in the area are provided library services by the Dickinson County Library. The main branch of Dickinson County Library is located at 401 Iron Mountain Street, in Iron Mountain. The library is headquarters for the Mid-Peninsula Library System which offers library services among the eight member-libraries throughout the Upper Peninsula. The North Dickinson Branch, located in the North Dickinson County School, is open Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 10am to 3pm.

### **North Dickinson County School**

The North Dickinson County School is located at W6588 M-69 in Felch Township. The North Dickinson County School provides an education for approximately 259 students from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The school also provides a home for a branch of the Dickinson County Library.

North Dickinson County School provides a variety of athletic activities in which students may participate providing they meet any eligibility requirements that may apply. Athletic options include boy's football, basketball and track and girls' basketball, volleyball and track. Cheerleading is also an option if enough interest is present. North Dickinson County School provides students the opportunity to broaden their learning through other extracurricular-related activities.

### **Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District**

Technical education, early childhood education, special education, and general services are provided by the Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District, a consortium of the six public school districts in the two-county area. Beyond direct and support services to students, the ISD provides support services to teachers and administrators in professional development and regulatory compliance.

### **Post-Secondary Training Institutions**

Bay de Noc Community College in Delta County offers instructional programs in vocational and technical fields, and many associate degree opportunities. Since the early 1970's, Bay College has had a presence in Dickinson County. In 2007, the college constructed a new West Campus building on 25 acres of donated land in Iron Mountain. Through a unique contractual relationship with the Dickinson County Board of Commissioners, the college has been able to move forward in offering a strong core of transfer degrees and occupational programs to support the local workforce.

Post-secondary educational facilities within the region and approximate distances from Felch include:

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| •Bay College West, Iron Mountain               | - 9 miles   |
| •Bay de Noc Community College, Escanaba        | - 45 miles  |
| •Northern Michigan University, Marquette       | - 80 miles  |
| •Michigan Technological University, Houghton   | - 120 miles |
| •Gogebic Community College, Ironwood           | - 135 miles |
| •University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, WI         | - 90 miles  |
| •University of Wisconsin-Marinette, WI         | - 75 miles  |
| •Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, WI | - 40 miles  |

### **Telephone Service**

Upper Peninsula Telephone Company and AT&T offer local telephone service in the Felch Township Area. Long distance service is available from several providers.

### **Internet Service**

Basic internet service with speeds up to 25mbps is available in limited areas of the Township. Northern Michigan University's Educational Access Network provides wireless broadband from two nodes in the Felch and Metropolitan areas. Much of the township is unserved or underserved with internet access.

### **Cable Service**

There is no cable service available in the Township; satellite television is used by many residents.

### **Natural Gas Service**

There is no natural gas service in the area. Large natural gas transport pipelines run through the northern area of the Township; service is not provided at this time, likely due to the high cost of distribution.

### **Postal Service**

All mail delivery within the Township is handled through the U.S. Post Office located at the Township Hall.

### **Michigan Department of Natural Resources**

The Department of Natural Resources maintains the Felch Field Office on M-69. The staff includes forestry and fire management personnel. Equipment used in conjunction with construction projects and fire control is stored and maintained at this facility.

## **3.4 Issues and Opportunities, County and Area Facilities and Services**

- The Felch Township Hall is barrier-free and is in good condition. Recent facility updates have modernized and allow additional space for community organizations and events.
- The expansion of the Fire Hall will allow additional storage and training areas for the volunteer fire department. The volunteer force has had difficulty maintaining sufficient force strength and is seeking more participation. The Township maintains membership in the Tri-Township Ambulance Authority and has mutual aid agreements for fire protection with the surrounding communities as well as the MDNR.
- The Township maintains a solid waste, recycling, and compost drop-off site for residents. State-level changes in materials management may allow for expansion of this facility.
- The North Dickinson County School has maintained strong, quality educational and athletic programs despite a declining enrollment.
- Much of the township is underserved or unserved by internet access. Broadband internet availability may help to promote employment flexibility, education, and digital participation, as well as attract new residents who desire these amenities.

## **3.5 Recreation**

Information provided in this section is intended to provide current and comprehensive data to guide Felch Township decision makers regarding future park development and/or acquisition. Existing parks and other recreational facilities and events are discussed in the context of location, features and use.

The Township has recently adopted a new 5-year Recreation Plan in conjunction with work on the Master Plan. Citizen surveys were available to obtain valuable input on the Township's current recreation facilities and the Township's recreation needs.

There is a limited amount of private and public recreational facilities within Felch Township. Recreation related to tourism is vital to area economics and is an expanding industry nationwide. Attractions and facilities located in close proximity to the Township present many opportunities for active and passive recreation. Felch Township is rich in natural resources, drawing a growing number of visitors each year. Having adequate recreational facilities to meet the needs of visitors and as well as residents is vital to the community.

The Township's current organizational structure for recreation is detailed below:



The Felch Township Recreation Committee is tasked with recommending ways to best meet the recreational needs of the community. The Recreation Committee is an advisory committee that reports to the Township Board, which is responsible for the provision and administration of local recreation opportunities. Funding for parks and recreation comes from the Township's General Fund. The Township employs a full-time park maintenance person, as well as a contracted campground host during the summer months. Community programming and events are managed by volunteers. The Township benefits from relationships with local groups who have often donated in-kind labor and material for projects. Volunteers are recruited for springtime park cleanup and maintenance projects, and groups are coordinated for larger projects as they are identified.

The Township currently maintains two recreational sites: The ballfields, playground, and recreational area at the Felch Community Center, and Norway Lake Park and Campground. Norway Lake Park was transferred to the township's ownership from Dickinson County in 2015, and the township has worked to improve and expand the facilities, including updating the bathroom facilities and adding a one-of-a-kind nine-hole disc golf course. The Township is actively planning additional updates and an expansion of the campground within the park in order to attract additional recreational tourism. Recent updates at the Felch Community Center increased accessibility within the Township Hall; additional funding and support is needed to update other outdoor recreation areas.

Other recreational areas include the playgrounds and facilities at North Dickinson School, open to the public after school hours. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources maintains four additional recreational facilities within the township: Gene Pond State Forest Campground, Pickerel Lake boat launch, Six Mile Lake boat launch, and Solberg Lake boat access. There is also state-owned land available to Felch Township residents for year-round recreational day use,

including 70,177 acres of Commercial Forest Reserve (CFR) lands in Dickinson County. Copper Country State Forest also has 220,000 acres of public land available for a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities. ORV and snowmobile trails are sources of recreational land available for seasonal use throughout the areas of the Lake Antoine Trail, Loretto-Felch Trail, Loretto Loop, and Felch Grade Trail.

In addition to updating township-owned recreational facilities, the Township is also seeking additional opportunities through trails, signage, and marketing that will help connect sites across the township and wider area. The goal is to establish Norway Lake Park and Felch Township as a recreation destination for outdoor activities in Dickinson County and the Upper Peninsula. The Township is actively seeking grants and additional funding opportunities to help realize these goals.

### **3.9 Issues and Opportunities, Recreation**

- Natural features including a wealth of lakes and forestland throughout Dickinson County provide a variety of year-round active and passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
- The Township has an updated 5-year recreation plan approved by the MDNR which will permit the Township to apply for MDNR Trust Fund grants. The Township has identified several priorities for recreational development. Grant funding should be pursued to begin the proposed improvements.
- All current and future recreation sites should be developed to achieve maximum benefits for all users, including compliance with the ADA. This could include the upgrade of play areas, removal of uneven surfaces and obstructions, and procurement of additional wheelchair accessible picnic tables; addressing the interests of the younger and senior generations and those with special needs is necessary.
- The Township is actively working to modernize and expand the facilities available at Norway Lake Park and Campground and the Felch Community Center in order to creation a recreational tourism destination and promote connection to other areas of the township.

### **3.10 Transportation**

Communities depend on the effective movement of people and goods to sustain a functioning economy. Broadly speaking, a transportation system can be defined as any means used to move people and/or products. A major goal of a transportation system is to move goods and people through and within local, regional, national and international economies safely and efficiently. Transportation efficiency is a key factor in decisions affecting land use and development.

A region's employment base and quality of life is closely linked to the effectiveness of the transportation system. A compilation of needs, goals, and policies is necessary to guide the

future development of various modes of transportation including highways, local roads, public transportation, railroads, airports, marinas, and trail systems. Transportation services and facilities must be maintained and developed to achieve a community's overall vision.

Michigan Public Act 51 of 1951 requires that all counties and incorporated cities and villages establish and maintain road systems under their jurisdiction, as distinct from state jurisdiction. Counties, cities and villages receive approximately 61% of the funding allocated through Act 51 for local roads with the remaining 39% earmarked for state highways under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Roads and other transportation systems have been largely influenced by the physical barriers present, such as rivers, lakes, swamps, and rugged terrain. Transportation routes were established along areas presenting the least physical resistance. Much of the Township's roadways are used for participation in the natural resource economy; areas used for logging are connected to processing and manufacturing facilities found in the wider areas of Sagola and Breitung Townships, northern Menominee County, and western Delta County. Transportation of heavy logging loads has deteriorated the condition of many roads over the years. Increasing off-road vehicle usage along roadways has affected shoulder conditions.

### **State Trunkline Highway**

The state trunkline system includes state and federal highways which connect communities to other areas within the county, state and out state locations. These roadways provide the highest level of traffic mobility for the traveling public. More than half of the total statewide traffic is carried on the highway system, which comprises only 8% of the Michigan roadway network length. State highways are designated with the prefix "M," federal highways with "U.S.". A segment of Highway M-69 is located in the Township. Highway M-69 passes through the Township in an east-west direction for approximately 14 miles.

### **County Road System (Primary and Local)**

Act 51 requires that all roads, streets and highways included in the county primary road system are determined as county primary and local roads. The mileage of each road system is used as the basis for computation of road funding.

Primary roads are considered those of the greatest general importance to the County. All other roads not classified as primary are considered local. The local road system contains the most miles in the Dickinson County road system, but has the lowest level of traffic.

There are over 36 miles of county primary roads which are maintained year-round within the township. Examples of County Primary Roads include Groveland Mine Road (Old 69 Road) and Norway Lake Road (County Road 581). The remaining road mileage are considered local roads, including those within the platted areas of Felch and Theodore, and various smaller roads and dead ends.



The Dickinson County Road Commission has applied funding to rehabilitate County Road 581 from M-69 to Ralph over the past several and coming years. Each year, sections of the roadway have been repaved, with work anticipated to continue through 2026.

### **Major Street System**

A system of major streets in each incorporated city or village is approved by the State Transportation Commission, pursuant to Act 51. Major streets are selected by the city or village governing body on the basis of greatest general importance to the city or village. Streets may be added or deleted from the system subject to approval of the State Transportation commissioner. The Township has no major streets.

### **Local Street System**

Those city or village roads, exclusive of state trunklines, county roads and those included in the major street system constitute the local street system. The process of approval, additions and deletions is the same as with other road system designations. The Township has no local streets.

### **Private Roads**

The Township does not have any private roads, only private driveways. All other roads are maintained by the Dickinson County Road Commission.

### **Bridges**

There are three bridges within Felch Township. There are two bridges located on Groveland Mine Road and one along County Road 581 to Norway Lake. All three bridges in the Township are in fair repair. The bridge along County Road 581 is very narrow and may need to be widened and replaced.

### **Road Condition Evaluation**

Roads under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation are evaluated on the basis of pavement condition. Surface conditions are determined by the amount of deterioration such as cracking, faulting, wheel tracking, patching, etc. Federal-aid eligible roads within Felch Township have been evaluated using the PASER (*Pavement Surface and Evaluation and Rating*) system. Every year, a survey team consisting of road commission members and regional planning staff drives a portion of the roads to evaluate the pavement surface condition. The results of these surveys are used by the County Road Commission and the Transportation Asset Management Council with MDOT to determine priority for road improvements. Road condition based on the latest survey is available here:

<https://www.mcgi.state.mi.us/tamcMap/>

### **Road Repair**

The Township Board determines road repairs as funds are available. Funding for road repair and construction is limited and projects are completed when possible. The Township wishes to apply funding to rebuild Six Mile Lake Road in the near future.

### **3.12 Alternate Forms of Transportation**

There are no forms of public transportation available in the township at this time. The Dickinson-Iron Community Service Agency (DISCA) offers limited door-to-door transportation services to seniors and the disabled within Dickinson County. Rail transportation through the northern portion of the township has been discontinued, with the tracks used for car storage.

Dickinson County boasts over 140 miles of snowmobile and ORV trails. Snowmobile and ORV trails pass through Township-owned property and across much of the state-owned land. The Felch Grade Trail is 44 miles long and stretches from Escanaba west to Felch. The Loretto – Felch Trail is located 1.5 miles east of Waucedah off of US-2, or 2.5 miles south of Foster City and is 25 miles long. The Ralph Pipeline is approximately one mile south of Ralph on County Road 581 and runs for 11 miles. Many trails in Dickinson County are maintained by the Tri-County Snowmobile Club in the winter.

Recent nationwide efforts to expand access to active (nonmotorized) transportation opportunities to all residents have resulted in additional investments in sidewalks, hiking, and bicycling trails and facilities. The Township does not currently have curbs and sidewalks, which is typical of rural areas in the Upper Peninsula. The Felch Grade Trail and a short hiking trail at the Gene Pond Campground represent the dedicated active transportation facilities within the township. While limited facilities are available and future facilities are unlikely due to the township's rural character and low population density, an emphasis on identifying safety improvements along rural roadways for active transportation users is still warranted.

### **3.13 Issues and Opportunities, Transportation**

- While certain roads in the township are in good condition, a significant proportion of the roads are in need of repair. The funding and matching requirements of the Dickinson County Road Commission have limited the rebuilding of roads within the township. County Road 581 from M-69 to Ralph is being rebuilt in sections over the past and upcoming several years.
- Dickinson County does not currently have a county-wide transit system. Michigan's population is aging; older residents and residents with disabilities will increasingly depend on transit services. There may be a need to expand or enhance transit services available to seniors and residents with disabilities.
- The natural setting of the Township provides an opportunity to expand active transportation facilities for recreation. Grant opportunities could be pursued to fund trail and safety enhancements.

## Chapter 4.0 Land Use

### 4.1 Land Use Patterns

Patterns of land use evolved from economic necessity. The economy was firmly linked to trade routes that followed natural features such as lakes and streams. The general historic land use patterns which are common to the Upper Peninsula are reflected in the land use patterns that have developed in Felch Township. Settlements were established at, or close by, active points of commercial activity, in this case, mining and logging activities.

Following the discovery of iron ore along the Menominee Range in 1873, Dickinson County experienced a population boom due to the availability of mining-related work. As more people settled in the area, farming also developed into an important use of the land. Residential and commercial development occurred in areas not excavated for mining activity, but in close proximity. Neighborhoods were established in short order to provide housing, churches, schools and stores needed by the residents.

Railroads were constructed to transport iron ore to lake ports such as Escanaba for delivery to steel mills at the lower end of the Great Lakes. Completion of rail lines provided transportation for products other than iron ore such as lumber and the supplies necessary to sustain a community and its people. The importance of railroads is evident in the settlement patterns that followed their construction.

An abundance of cheap land became available following the removal of valuable timber resources during the lumbering boom. Families interested in farming were attracted by the affordable land. Where good soil conditions existed, agriculture was successful. Agriculture remains an important industry today, only on a much more limited basis.

Natural features and cultural influences were also important determinants of how land was used. Rugged terrain and swampland, for instance, were not inviting for the establishment of settlements. Cultural influences are reflected in the types of buildings constructed, local commercial practices, and community traditions and activities.

### 4.2 Factors Affecting Land Use

Land use is never a static process; change is always occurring. Decisions affecting land use can come from a variety of sources. Changes in land use have been the result of various decisions made by individuals, families, businesses, or governmental/public agencies. It is important to note, however, that land use changes cannot be attributed to a single set of decisions made by one group or individual. Rather it is a combination of decisions made by a number of individuals, organizations, or public agencies.

Location tends to be the most important factor for home buyers and commercial interests. The availability of public and private services, accessibility, existing conditions of the area, and price are other important considerations. Speculators may purchase, hold or sell property based on

an anticipated future profit. Land developers, too, attempt to anticipate market conditions, i.e., supply and demand for housing, goods and services, or industrial needs. They strive to accurately assess the type, scope, and optimum time of development that will produce a profitable outcome.

Owners of business and industrial concerns decide to start, expand, or close their operations based on economic probability. Many factors may be considered in determining economic feasibility including supply and demand for the goods or services produced, cost and quality of transportation, and site availability. Local decisions have a bearing on these factors.

Generally, the immediate self-interest of the individual or organization making a land use decision supersedes what impact the use may have on the surrounding lands. Decisions determined in this fashion can potentially result in incongruous or incompatible development since the community's overall pattern of development is not necessarily among the factors considered. Laws and regulations have been enacted giving local units of government the means to deal with land use issues. These legal tools allow federal, state, and local governments to address the overall compatibility and appropriateness of development and land use.

Federal legislative actions have created loan and grant programs for community facilities, water and wastewater systems, housing, economic development, and planning. Drinking water standards, air quality and many other environmental factors are addressed in federal regulations. Although these laws, regulations and programs do not usually directly affect land use and development, they have a major indirect effect. For example, a community that lacks sufficient sewage disposal capacity to serve industrial uses may be able to obtain federal funding to assist with expansion of its sewer treatment facility, which in turn, may lead to industrial development.

The traditional role of the state has been limited to providing enabling legislation for local units of government to regulate growth and development through planning and zoning. The State of Michigan does, however, regulate land use and development in regions of environmental concern including wetlands, floodplains, and coastal areas. This can have a direct effect on local land use. The state also enforces standards for municipal water systems and wastewater systems that are at least as strict as federal standards. A community's ability to provide water and wastewater treatment systems is directly affected by these regulatory standards, and others can have similar effects on additional services.

Local governments can exert the most effective influence on land use changes through zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, building codes, and public investment in roads, water and sewer systems, parks, etc. Local planning efforts that seek to define the most desirable and appropriate uses for the various parts of a community, and anticipate and prepare for growth, can serve to guide future land use decision-making. The Township utilizes a zoning ordinance to regulate land use and a blight enforcement ordinance to maintain health and safety.

Other factors affecting land use include the existing transportation system, taxation, land values, natural features, changing technology, and market conditions. Changes in lifestyles,

family size, shopping preferences, and customer attitudes also affect land use decisions. Mobility is greater than at any previous time; families are smaller, and life expectancies have increased. These changes are reflected in employment patterns and housing and shopping preferences. From a land use standpoint, some pertinent issues are the preferences for larger homes situated on larger parcels, the apparent willingness to endure longer commuting distances to work, and the growing market for housing specifically designed for elderly residents - particularly those residing for only part of the year.

The transportation system that serves a community determines how quickly and easily raw materials and finished goods can be received and shipped. It also is directly related to product cost, a crucial factor for business. The expanding network of roadways in the U.S., together with the proliferation of private automobiles, has enabled residents of rural areas to commute to larger communities for employment and shopping, and has increased the accessibility of many areas to tourists. This increased mobility has, in many cases, facilitated development of strip commercial areas, large shopping malls, and suburban residential development. Referred to as "urban sprawl," such development frequently converts open space and agricultural land to more intensive uses.

Taxation and land values play a part in many land use decisions. Families may move from urban areas because they feel they are willing to trade off lower taxes and/or user fees for the lack of municipal services and increased distance from employment, shopping, and schools. Land values in rural areas may also be lower, thus more attractive to residents. Commercial and industrial enterprises are generally less willing to forego municipal services such as water and sewer. They are also more likely to locate in areas of concentrations of population rather than in very rural areas.

Changing technology, including internet availability, cellphones, video conferencing, and e-mail provide businesses with location options that were previously not practical. Often, the quality of life associated with these rural locations is an additional attraction. The expansion and availability of internet services sufficient to offer remote work and business options may lead to potential development and land use change.

#### **4.3 Current Use Inventory**

Current land use patterns in Felch Township are described in three broad categories. Land uses were determined using the Township's current zoning map and aerial photos. Land use developed using Sentinel satellite imagery describes built-up areas, forested area, croplands, etc. is presented on the following map:



Source: Sentinel-2 satellite imagery, ESRI Inc., 2022.

The three broad categories of the zoning ordinance reflect the typical development pattern and land use in the township. Those districts are described as:

**Resource Production (RP) District:** The intent of the Resource Production District is to maintain low density rural areas which because of their rural character and location, potential mineral content, accessibility, natural characteristics, and potentially high cost of providing public services for intensive uses are more suitable for a wide range of forestry, agriculture, natural resource, and recreation uses. The RP District also allows greater opportunity for low density single-family residential development in areas where electrical service and access using maintained county roads are available. Approximately 90,483 acres or over 98.88% of the township's land is designated as Resource Production.

**Residential/Lake Shore (R/LS) District:** The purpose of the Residential District is to preserve for residential and recreational uses those areas with frontage on inland lakes and rivers which, because of existing development, natural characteristics and accessibility, are suitable for

development. Approximately 790 acres or 0.86% of the township is designated as residential/lake shore.

**Town Development (TD) District:** The purpose of the Town Development District is to establish and preserve a town district for residential, retail, and service establishments, and certain governmental uses that are compatible with a small-town setting and serve the residents and tourists. The district is designed for small unincorporated town areas where a mix of residential and retail uses is in accord with established patterns of use and the needs of nearby residents. Approximately 245 acres or 0.26% of the township is designated as Town Development District.

<b>Current Use Inventory, Felch Township</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Felch Township Acreage</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Acreage</b>
Resource Production	90,483	98.88
Residential/Lake Shore	790	0.86
Town Development	245	0.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>91,518</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### **4.4 Residential Land Use**

Residential land use includes single family homes, multi-family homes and mobile homes. As discussed in Chapter 2, much of the development in the township has occurred over the past fifty years, compared to much of the residential development in the cities in Dickinson County. The township represents a mixture of older and newer homes, averaging just over 50 years in age, while Dickinson County has many older homes, especially concentrated in the cities. Over 96% of the township's housing stock consists of single-family homes.

Residential living preferences changed significantly after World War II and accelerated in the 1970s. During World War I, the Depression and World War II, new housing starts dropped to near zero. After World War II however, the surge in housing construction was unprecedented. The widespread development of suburban housing that got under way in 1946 was inspired by the typical American pattern of rural settlement, where each farmhouse stands alone on its own ground, often out of sight of any neighbors. The typical suburb consists almost entirely of single-family detached homes surrounded by their own lawns, gardens, sheds and centered on lots that provide at least minimum separation from neighbors, even in low income and middle-income districts.

Residential development beyond the older town-platted areas has been concentrated around Norway Lake and Six Mile Lake. Land around Pickerel Lake has been subdivided and homes exist around the lake. Additional development has occurred in the Resource Production area as the result of parcel splitting. Average new homes built within the last decade typically have two or more stories, three bedrooms, two and a half baths, central heating and air conditioning and a garage. These homes are 46% larger than those homes built in the mid-1970s. Low density

settlements prevail in suburban and rural areas. As with many residential areas located outside of a more “urban” center, there is a concern with sprawl. Zoning for different types of density can help dictate the location of future development.

Some residential development in recent years has occurred in updating some of the township’s large proportion of seasonal residences into permanent homes. A number of older seasonal homes or previous “camp” structures were not intended for long-term or permanent occupancy, and as such were not built to accommodate stricter residential building codes. Future development of seasonal dwellings and their use could be considered for future zoning updates. In a similar vein, the proliferation of short-term rental housing, often using seasonal dwelling structures, across the Upper Peninsula has seen concerns with livability and compatibility to neighboring permanent residential uses and community character.

#### **4.5 Commercial Development**

Felch Township has limited commercial development, generally within the Town Development District area. Smaller commercial enterprises, including a commercial kitchen and farm store have developed alongside agricultural areas. The Township maintains a Commercial District in its zoning ordinance that is intended to be compatible with more intensive commercial and light industrial development and is reserved for future use.

#### **4.6 Agricultural Development**

The most recent USDA agricultural census was completed in 2017 and provides information by county. In total, 140 farms were operating in Dickinson County, a number that has been slowly decreasing, along with the number of acres in operation. Nationally, the average age of farm operators has been increasing, potentially affecting the future of agricultural land use if no one has been taking over after the farmer retires. If this trend continues, farmland could potentially be lost to development.

Nearly 99% of the township is designated as Resource Production, which includes agricultural activities along with resource extraction. Much of the land is owned by the State of Michigan and limited in development. Several areas of private landholding that are currently zoned in this manner have experienced residential development and could be considered for rezoning.

Agricultural development in the township has been limited to very few farms, mainly located in the Metropolitan area. These farms mainly produce beef and potatoes. A few farms have diversified to offer local produce, including various fruits and vegetables, for use in commercial sales or sold at local markets. Greenhouses and other accessory agricultural uses have not typically been considered for regulation through the zoning ordinance.

Forested land makes up a large percentage of township and larger Dickinson County, and the local economy is tied to the harvest, transportation, and processing of wood products. Sustainable management of forested land includes managing non-timber value and protecting



water quality, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and scenic landscapes. Ensuring commercial and ecological viability is an important balance in land use and sustainable development.

#### **4.7 Industrial Land Use and Energy Systems**

There is no land that is zoned for industrial uses in the township at this time. The Township maintains an Industrial zoning district in the zoning ordinance that is reserved for future use. The district is intended to encompass manufacturing, assembling, fabricating, processing, storage, and mineral extraction activities that may influence surrounding land use.

Wind-based utility scale energy systems have been added to the zoning ordinance as conditional uses in the Resource Production and reserved Industrial Districts. With the development of a solar utility scale energy system on State-owned land near Groveland Mine, the Township is considering possible zoning amendments that regulate further development of energy uses in these districts. Similar to the wind regulations, large scale solar uses would be subject to conditions that are compatible to the districts they are located.

#### **4.8 Public and Quasi-Public Land Use**

Public land uses in the township include the Township Hall complex, parks and recreation facilities, schools, and other public buildings; discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Quasi-public land generally consists of churches and other privately owned facilities that are open to the public. These types of facilities contribute to the quality of life in a community. These types of development have generally been limited.

#### **4.9 Environmental Protection**

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) safeguards the state's environment while supporting economic growth and development. Environmental contamination means the release of a hazardous substance, or the potential release of a discarded hazardous substance, in a quantity which is or may become injurious to the environment, public health, safety or welfare. The presence of hazardous substances at these sites may restrict future development. ELGE maintains records for sites of environmental contamination within the township: the site of the old Groveland Mine plant, and an area near Felch. These areas may be limited by site conditions to uses that do not significantly alter the ground conditions or take steps to mitigate the potential spread of existing contamination.

Leaking underground storage tanks have resulted in more stringent requirements for the placement of storage tanks. Many aging fuel tanks that complied with the guidelines in place at the time of installation have deteriorated. Fuel may then be able to enter the surrounding soil. EGLE maintains records for 5 open or closed leaking storage tanks within the township.

Wetlands are present across much of the lower elevation areas of the township, particularly to the northeast of Felch. Wetlands recycle nutrients, filter certain pollutants, recharge groundwater, and provide habitat for fish and wildlife. They promote health in the local ecosystem and serve roles in watershed dynamics. With development in the township reliant

on well water systems and septic, considerations should be made for the protection and restoration of wetlands found in proximity to new development.

#### 4.10 Land Use Trends

Growth, as measured in terms of state equalized valuation (SEV), is shown in the table below for all governmental units in Dickinson County. Felch Township's total SEV increased from \$20,423,486 in 2000 to \$50,096,700 in 2020, a 145% increase; more than double the County's 64% increase over the same time period. Growth in taxable value comes from three sources: inflation, uncapping due to property sales, and new construction. The growth seen in taxable value is higher than the rate of inflation, and new construction has slowed over the past decade. Much of the growth may have occurred due to direct property sales and reassessments or as the result of parcel splitting.

<b>State Equalized Valuations, Dickinson County, 2000, 2008, 2022</b>				
Unit of Government	2000 Total Real and Personal Property SEV	2008 Total Real and Personal Property SEV	2022 Total Real and Personal Property SEV	Percent Change 2000-2022
Felch Township	\$20,423,486	\$37,132,900	\$50,096,700	+145%
Breen Township	\$12,585,870	\$26,676,900	\$35,811,100	+185%
Breitung Township	\$226,087,300	\$367,161,200	\$305,840,817	+35%
City of Iron Mountain	\$165,880,400	\$237,245,700	\$285,059,190	+72%
City of Kingsford	\$109,011,300	\$127,266,700	\$150,582,500	+38%
City of Norway	\$43,728,750	\$61,536,100	\$66,095,200	+51%
Norway Township	\$36,127,105	\$55,904,286	\$80,713,402	+123%
Sagola Township	\$40,474,100	\$71,243,400	\$73,473,965	+82%
Waucedah Township	\$25,690,650	\$47,661,500	\$70,632,700	+175%
West Branch Township	\$7,607,234	\$11,971,100	\$11,790,000	+55%
Dickinson County	\$687,616,195	\$1,043,799,786	\$1,130,095,574	+64%

Source: Dickinson County Equalization Department, 2008. State of Michigan, Department of Treasury, 2022.

#### 4.11 Issues and Opportunities, Land Use

- Zoning and supplementary ordinances can assist local units of government in guiding current and future development.
- The availability of public and private services, accessibility, existing conditions of the area, and price are other important considerations for residential development.
- Much of the land in the Township is owned by the State of Michigan and limited for development purposes.
- The Township is overwhelmingly dominated by land designated for resource production. Several areas of land could be rezoned from Resource Production to residential if development continues to reflect a change in density or use.

- The Township should evaluate provisions for solar energy installations due to the development of a utility scale solar installation on the old Groveland Mine property.
- Property valuation increases in the township show a similar pattern to the rest of the County. In general, the outlying townships are experiencing a larger growth rate, possibly due to the increase in residential development in outlying areas. Continued growth should ensure that adequate public services are available.

## Chapter 5.0 Goals and Strategies

### 5.1 Introduction

Throughout the preceding chapters of this plan, detailed information has been presented defining the historical trends and current situation in Felch Township. This background information has helped the Planning Commission to gain an understanding of the forces which have shaped the growth and development of the township to this point.

In order for a community to have a sound plan for growth and development, it is essential that goals be set. These goals are broad statements which reflect desired future conditions and are based on the background information, assumptions, alternatives, and policy variables presented earlier. More specific strategies are then developed, defining actions that can be taken to implement the goals. The final stage of the planning process, implementation, begins once the goals and strategies have been defined. The first step in implementation is the adoption of this plan by the Planning Commission and Felch Township Board following a public review period and hearing and consideration of any public comments received.

Plan implementation continues through adherence to the goals and strategies set forth in this plan. It should be emphasized, however, that these goals and strategies are only a guide and provide long-term vision; ideas and projects mentioned are adjustable per a community's needs. While the Planning Commission has developed these goals and strategies based on the best information available, the needs of the community at a point in time, changing needs and desires within the community, or changes in the local population or economy may mean that these goals and strategies will need to be re-evaluated. This plan must remain flexible enough to respond to changing needs and conditions, while still providing a strong guiding mechanism for future development. The Planning Commission and Township Board, together with other groups, organizations and individuals, can use this plan as a dynamic decision-making tool, and should assure that the plan is referred to frequently and updated periodically.

To assist in understanding the nature of the goals and strategies presented on the following pages, the following definitions are presented:

#### Goal:

A broad statement of a desired future condition, the generalized end toward which all efforts are directed. Goals are often stated in terms of fulfilling broad public needs, or alleviating major problems. Goals are generally difficult to measure and are idealistic.

#### Strategy:

A statement that sets forth specific means of functions related to goal attainment. A strategy can be a task, step or action that supports achieving the stated goal.

## 5.2 Population

Felch Township has experienced growth in its population 1960 to 2000, but that growth has tapered off in recent years and there have been minor losses. Dickinson County as a whole has experienced minor population losses over the past 20 years, similar to regional trends. Growth in earlier decades may be attributed to industrial activity in the area which has since ended or been drawn to nearby areas. The median age in Felch Township has increased 13 years from 33.5 to 46.5 years from 1990 to 2020. This compares with a median age of 47.4 at the county level but is higher than the 39.8 years at the state level. The Township is experiencing an aging population due to the loss of younger residents combined with increases in middle and older age groups associated with an aging baby boomer population.

County and state populations reflected a lower percentage of persons possessing associate degrees. These statistics likely reflect the educational requirements for the types of jobs available in the wider area, to which the majority of those employed in the township commute to. The average household size in the township has decreased while the proportion of single-family and owner-occupied housing has risen, possibly indicating that fewer families are moving to the area and more residents are aging in place.

**Goal: Maintain the existing population and manage future population growth.**

### Strategies:

- Continue to support the ability of residents to age in place in their homes by encouraging community services and events and engaging with home rehabilitation and improvement programs.
- Support attracting more young families to the area by marketing quality of life, the availability of schools and recreational opportunities, and amenities like high-speed internet for digital inclusion and remote work.

## 5.3 Economic Base

The majority of commercial and industrial enterprises in Dickinson County are located along the US-2 corridor, from Norway westward into Breitung Township and Iron Mountain. For the most part, the area's employment, shopping, and services are also located within this general area. Local unemployment rates are generally lower in Dickinson County than those rates elsewhere in the Upper Peninsula. The lower unemployment rate is a direct reflection of economic diversity in the area.

Historically, the local economy has been closely related to natural resources and natural features. Dickinson County boasts a varied economy, with several large employers in the manufacturing and service sectors. The local economy also contains a large and diverse array of small and mid-sized firms.

Felch Township represents about 4.4 percent of the total SEV for Dickinson County; a proportion that has grown over the past several years. More than half of the township's employed residents reported a commute time to work of more than 30 minutes, likely due to the somewhat limited employment opportunities located directly in the township. In general, incomes in Felch Township are higher than those for the state and Dickinson County. With limited employment in the township but a wealth of natural resources and recreational assets, there are opportunities to expand economic resiliency and attract new businesses by investing in and marketing for tourism.

**Goal: Maintain the existing economic base and aim to attract new diversified businesses to the area.**

**Goal: Maintain and strengthen the tourism industry.**

**Strategies:**

- Encourage existing businesses to stay in the township and assist in expansion efforts when possible.
- Encourage new companies to locate in the township and in Dickinson County.
- Encourage the connection of high-speed internet throughout the area to attract remote workers and high-tech business and industry.
- Encourage coordination between economic development groups in the county and support initiatives that are consistent with the goals of the township.
- Ensure that the Township's infrastructure is up to date and efficient with the capacity to meet economic expansion demand.
- Encourage the reuse of existing commercial sites when possible.
- Encourage the promotion of local historic sites, outdoor activities, and the area's natural features to bring tourism business into the township and the county.
- Improve the Township's recreational opportunities to attract tourists and provide residents with enhanced trails and facilities.

## 5.4 Housing

Housing is one of the key factors to consider when planning for a community's future. Only 52% of the housing units in the township are occupied. This is due to the extremely high number of housing units that are used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. There are currently very few multi-family housing units available in the township; more apartment or condominium-style units may be needed in the future. The Township does not currently have any public housing developments. As the township's population continues to age, public housing developments for seniors may be necessary.

Housing in the township is represented by a mixture of older and newly built homes. Many new homeowners are looking for larger homes on larger lots and often rural townships have the space. Housing values have increased dramatically in the township over the past several years, similar to regional and nationwide trends. Nearly 75 percent of the Township's homeowners pay less than 20 percent of their total income for housing costs, and 97% of homes are owner-occupied. This represents a higher-than average number of residents that have lived in their homes for extended periods; combined with shrinking household size, many residents are continuing to age in place.

**Goal: Develop a housing stock offering a range of cost, type, and location to meet the needs, preferences and financial capabilities of the local population.**

### Strategies:

- Participate in the MSHDA housing programs which provide funding for home repairs, rehabilitation, and home ownership.
- Continue to enforce ordinances designed to protect public health and safety, as well as control blight and structural deterioration.
- Encourage community beautification programs.
- Encourage the development of multi-unit housing units in the township.
- Encourage the development of public housing facilities in the township.

## 5.5 Community Facilities and Services

Services and facilities provided by local governments are vital to the community's progress and well-being. The Felch Township Hall is barrier free and is in good condition. The expansion of the Fire Hall will provide updated facilities and space for training. The Township maintains membership in the Tri-Township Ambulance Authority and has mutual aid agreements for fire

protection with the surrounding communities as well as the MDNR. The Township continues to offer a recycling drop-off program to support materials management goals. The North Dickinson County School has maintained strong, quality, educational and athletic programs despite declining enrollment. Dickinson County also provides a wide array of services available to township residents.

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

**Strategies:**

- Encourage the coordination of municipal processes to ensure efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- Pursue state and federal grant and loan programs to provide and improve facilities and services.
- Continue to maintain mutual aid agreements for fire protection and maintain membership in the Tri-Township Ambulance Authority.
- Continue efforts to expand the township's recycling program.
- Continue to support the North Dickinson School.
- Continue to improve and maintain the Township website.
- Continue efforts to coordinate services with Dickinson County.
- Township officials should periodically attend Planning Commission and Board meetings at the County level.
- Continue to identify grant opportunities and community support for recreation and amenities at Township-owned properties, and connectivity between recreational assets.

## **5.6 Recreation**

The Township has recently adopted an updated 5-year Recreation Plan in conjunction with the Master Plan. A Citizen survey was offered to obtain valuable input on the Township's current recreation facilities and the Township's recreation needs. The Township Board is responsible for the provision and administration of local recreation opportunities in Felch Township. The Township has had a long and successful relationship with various community organizations and residents who support community programs and in-kind donations of labor and material.



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

**Strategies:**

- Complete and submit the Felch Township 5-Year Recreation Plan to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources as updates are needed.
- Apply for MDNR Trust Fund grants and MDOT transportation enhancement grants to aid the Township in funding future recreation projects.
- Continue to pursue funding and support for upgrades at Norway Lake Park.
- Maintain and develop all existing and future recreational areas to achieve maximum benefits for all users, including compliance with the ADA.
- Encourage public participation in the recreation planning process.
- Coordinate area recreation facilities and programs when possible to avoid duplication.
- Support the efforts of local bicycling and active transportation groups.
- Support the local snowmobile club and MDNR's maintenance of snowmobile and ORV trails to provide year-round recreational activities.
- Continue to support the local baseball programs.

## **5.7 Transportation**

Communities depend on the effective movement of people and goods to sustain a functioning economy. State Highway M-69 passes through the Township in an east-west direction for approximately 14 miles. Examples of County Roads in the Township include Groveland Mine Road (Old 69 Road) and Norway Lake Road (County Road 581). The Township Board determines road repairs as funds are available. Funding for road repair and construction is limited and projects are completed when possible. Snowmobile and ORV trails pass through Township-owned property. There are no forms of public transportation available in the Township.

**Goal: Provide a safe, well maintained, and efficient multi-modal transportation network.**

**Strategies:**

- Continue to submit projects to the Dickinson County Road Commission for road repairs and maintenance as identified.

- Support efforts to fund repairs to local roads using diverse funding resources and potential partnerships.
- Continue to use the PASER system to evaluate roads in the township and use the PASER ratings to help determine priorities for road improvements.
- Pursue grant funding to support trail enhancement in the township.

## 5.8 Land Use

Settlements in Dickinson County were established at, or close by, active points of commercial activity, in this case, mining and logging activities. Felch Township currently utilizes a zoning ordinance to regulate land use. Residential development is concentrated around Felch, Norway Lake, and Six Mile Lake. Commercial land use is extremely limited in the township. Felch Township is overwhelmingly dominated by land designated for resource production. There is no land that is zoned for industrial uses in the township at this time. The Township maintains an Industrial zoning district in the Zoning Ordinance that is reserved for future use.

Property valuation increases in the township show a similar pattern to the rest of the county. In general, the townships are experiencing a larger growth rate, possibly due to the increase in residential development in outlying areas.

**Goal: Establish land use patterns in the township that maintain the overall character of the community and ensure the health, safety and welfare of residents.**

### Strategies:

- Maintain a diversified land use pattern throughout the township.
- Continue to monitor areas of land experiencing development to possibly rezone from Resource Production to Residential to reflect the current development status.
- Review and revise the zoning ordinance and zoning map to reflect the goals of the Master Plan.
- Recommend the clean-up of any contaminated sites within the township.
- Promote Felch Township as a great place to live and for the abundance of recreation opportunities.

## Chapter 6.0 Future Land Use and Zoning Plan

### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapters of the Master Plan provide an overview of the existing conditions in Felch Township. A future land use plan is representative of the “preferred future” of how the community would like to grow and includes recommendations on how development will be carried out. It is based on analyses of environmental opportunities and constraints, existing trends and conditions and projected future land use needs. Future land use planning establishes the desired amounts and locations of residential, commercial, and industrial development; public facilities; open space; environmental conservation and recreational areas; and changes or improvements to the local traffic circulation systems. This chapter also presents the Zoning Plan, which along with the rest of the relevant parts of this Future Land Use Plan, is intended to guide the implementation of and future changes to the Township’s Zoning Ordinances.

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA) requires in Sec. 203 (1) that zoning be based on a plan. Similarly, Sec. 7 (2) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) sets forth the purposes for which a master plan must be created. In order for a master plan to serve as the basis for zoning, it should promote the purposes in the MZEA and MPEA. The zoning plan identifies the zoning districts and their purposes, as well as the basic standards proposed for each district. Current zoning districts utilized in the Township Zoning Ordinance and any potential modifications to the districts will also be discussed in this chapter.

Future Land Use, and the Future Land Use Map, reflects the assumption that land use patterns in Felch Township will continue to be heavily influenced by the large tracts of land designated for resource production and owned by the State of Michigan. Other major considerations which helped shape the future land use map are a desire to establish appropriate uses and to develop a consistent land use pattern throughout the Township, including providing adequate land for residential uses.

### 6.2 Current Zoning Districts and Zoning Plan

The Township is currently divided into five zoning districts; two districts are reserved for future use. The intent and general purpose will be depicted for each district. A review of the schedule of regulations will also be included for the Township.

#### Felch Township Zoning Districts and Schedule of Regulations

**RESIDENTIAL/LAKE SHORE (R/LS) DISTRICT:** The R/LS, Residential/Lake Shore District, is established to preserve for residential and recreational uses those areas with frontage on inland lakes and rivers which, because of existing development, natural characteristics and accessibility, are suitable for development.

**RESOURCE PRODUCTION (RP) DISTRICT:** The RP, Resource Production District, is established to maintain low density rural areas which because of their rural character and location, potential

mineral content, accessibility, natural characteristics, and the potentially high cost of providing public services for intensive uses are more suitable for a wide range of forestry, agriculture, natural resource, and recreational uses.

The purpose of establishing this RP District is to allow greater opportunity for low density single-family residential development in certain areas. Some of the requirements necessary for development within the RP District are (1) having electrical service, and (2) being located on a county road serviced year-round.

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

**COMMERCIAL (B) DISTRICT (RESERVED FOR FUTURE USE):** The B, Commercial District, is established to preserve a district for commercial uses, along with compatible industrial uses.

**INDUSTRIAL (I) DISTRICT (RESERVED FOR FUTURE USE):** The I, Industrial District is designed and intended for manufacturing, assembling, fabricating, and processing businesses, storage, mineral extraction, and other commercial activities, which may require larger sites and isolation from many kinds of other land uses and to make provisions for commercial uses necessary to serve the immediate needs of an industrial area.

#### Schedule of Regulations

Minimum/Maximum Dimensional Requirements					
	R/LS	RP	TD	B	I
Minimum Lot Area Without Sanitary Sewer	43,560 Square feet	43,560 Square feet	43,560 Square feet	43,560 Square feet	43,560 Square feet
Minimum Lot Width	100	150	100	100	150
Minimum Front Yard	30	40	30	30	40
Minimum Side Yard	10	25	10	10	20
Minimum Rear Yard	30	30	30	30	30
Maximum Building Height	30	30	30	30	(A)
Maximum Lot Coverage	35%	30%	35%	35%	30%

(A) Height at any point on a structure shall not exceed the horizontal distance to any lot line.

The minimum lot size and lot width regulations do not apply to any nonconforming parcel of land shown as a lot in a recorded plat, or described in a deed or land contract executed and delivered prior to the effective date of the Zoning Ordinance.

On any lot which borders on a lake, river, stream or other body of water, a required yard of 100 feet as measured from the normal high-water mark on water fronting property is required. The 100-foot setback is also to be used for the placement of on-site waste disposal systems. When lot sizes recorded prior to the passage of this Ordinance or site conditions makes compliance with this section an impossibility, site plans will be considered for approval that have the prior approval of the county sanitarian in respect to the on-site waste disposal system location. In no event will any part of the system be within 50 feet of the high-water mark.

### **6.3 The Relationship between Zoning and the Future Land Use Plan**

The Future Land Use Map is not the same as the Zoning Map, either in the legal sense or in its purpose. A land use map is a graphic representation of how land is physically being used. The future land use map is general in nature and is an official description of where and to what level future zoning should be permitted. The zoning map is a graphic representation of the boundaries for which zoning regulations have been adopted by Felch Township.

The Future Land Use Map, along with its associated descriptions for future land use classifications make up the Future Land Use Plan. The Future Land Use Map serves as a guide for making decisions on the rezoning of land. However, the Planning Commission and Township Board should consider the map to be one of many tools available to help them in making land use decisions, recommendations and addressing rezoning requests. The information presented on the map should be complemented by site-specific information as considered necessary by Township officials prior to any final decisions. Felch Township is not currently undergoing rapid changes; therefore, current zoning and future land use districts are very similar.

#### Future Land Use Classifications

##### **Residential District**

The Residential District is established and maintained for low-density residential development and development near bodies of water, including rivers and lakes, and where development density could affect natural resources. This district generally includes all areas adjacent to inland lakes, and have been platted into small tracts. Low-density single-family residences are permitted by right while other housing types and compatible uses may be permitted by conditional use permits where such development will not adversely impact adjoining properties.

##### **Natural Resources District**

It is the intent of the Natural Resources District to ensure that lands within the township which are well suited for the production of timber, minerals, food, or fiber are retained for such production, unimpeded by the establishment of incompatible uses which would hinder timber or mineral extraction or farm operations and irretrievably deplete these resources.

The Natural Resources District acknowledges that timber harvesting, mining and agriculture are specialized forms of industry characterized by the production, harvesting or extraction of saleable products as a result of the combination of raw materials, manpower, and energy.

Other purposes for which this district is established include:

1. Preserving woodlands and wetlands associated with forests and farms, which, because of their natural physical features, may be useful as water retention and groundwater recharge areas, and as habitat for plants and animals; and which have an important aesthetic, scenic, or recreational value which contributes to the unique character of this District.
2. Providing the basis for land assessments which reflect its existing forested, mineral, or agricultural nature, and, owing to these regulations, its limited use for other purposes.
3. Preventing the conversion of subject lands to scattered unrelated development which, when unregulated, unnecessarily increases the cost of public services to all citizens and, in the case of agriculture, may result in the premature disinvestment in agriculture.
4. Providing opportunities for certain commercial and light industrial uses, under stipulations or conditional use permits, which are compatible with the continued use of this district for agricultural, forestry or mining purposes.

#### **Town District**

The intent of the Town District is to establish and preserve a town district for single-family homes and for retail commercial uses that are compatible with a small-town setting and serve residents and tourists. This district is designed for small unincorporated town areas where a mix of residential and retail commercial is in accord with established patterns of use and the needs of nearby residents.

#### **Commercial District [Reserved for future use]**

It is the intent of the Commercial District to provide for a variety of compatible commercial and business establishments and professional offices, located on surfaced primary and local roads, and situated near the population being served so as to minimize the distance traveled day-to-day for goods and services. The district is also intended to provide for highway-oriented commercial development which is intended to serve a greater segment of the population than those persons who reside in the immediate area. Whether the intensity of the commercial activity is high or relatively benign, it shall be developed so as to not harm adjacent residential areas. Public utilities and public sanitary sewer and water may be required before larger, denser commercial development can proceed and is desirable in the future for those areas where less intensive commercial development is proposed.

#### **Industrial District [Reserved for future use]**

It is the intent and purpose of the Industrial District to accommodate by right a variety of light industrial and commercial uses characterized by relatively low traffic generation and the

absence of objectionable external effects, in areas of the township affording direct access to surfaced primary roads and, where applicable, railroads. Such industrial areas should be free from incompatible uses and designed so as not to harm adjoining uses. This district will also accommodate, under stipulations or conditional use permit those uses which are generally considered to have external effects; however, it is intended that provisions be implemented in each instance to minimize any effects the use(s) might otherwise have on adjoining properties.

<b>Future Land Use Classifications and Associated Zoning Districts</b>	
<u>Future Land Use Classification</u>	<u>Zoning District(s)</u>
Residential District	Residential/Lake Shore District
Natural Resources District	Resource Production District
Town District	Town Development District
General Business District [reserved]	Commercial District [reserved]
Manufacturing District [reserved]	Industrial District [reserved]

Future Land Use districts are illustrated on the accompanying map.

The Township does not intend to significantly modify the existing schedule of regulations outlined in the zoning ordinance at this time. Any future modification will be because of the result of ongoing development.

### **Schedule of Regulations**

<b>Minimum/Maximum Dimensional Requirements</b>					
	<b>R</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>GB</b>	<b>M</b>
Minimum Lot Area Without Sanitary Sewer	20,000 Square feet	40,000 Square feet	20,000 Square feet	20,000 Square feet	40,000 Square feet
Minimum Lot Width	100	150	100	100	150
Minimum Front Yard	30	40	30	30	40
Minimum Side Yard	10	25	10	10	20
Minimum Rear Yard	30	30	30	30	30
Maximum Building Height	30	30	30	30	(A)
Maximum Lot Coverage	35%	30%	35%	35%	30%

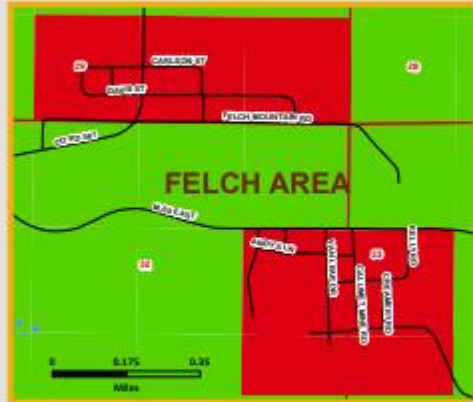
(A) Height at any point on a structure shall not exceed the horizontal distance to any lot line.

The minimum lot size and lot width regulations do not apply to any nonconforming parcel of land shown as a lot in a recorded plat, or described in a deed or land contract executed and delivered prior to the effective date of the Zoning Ordinance.

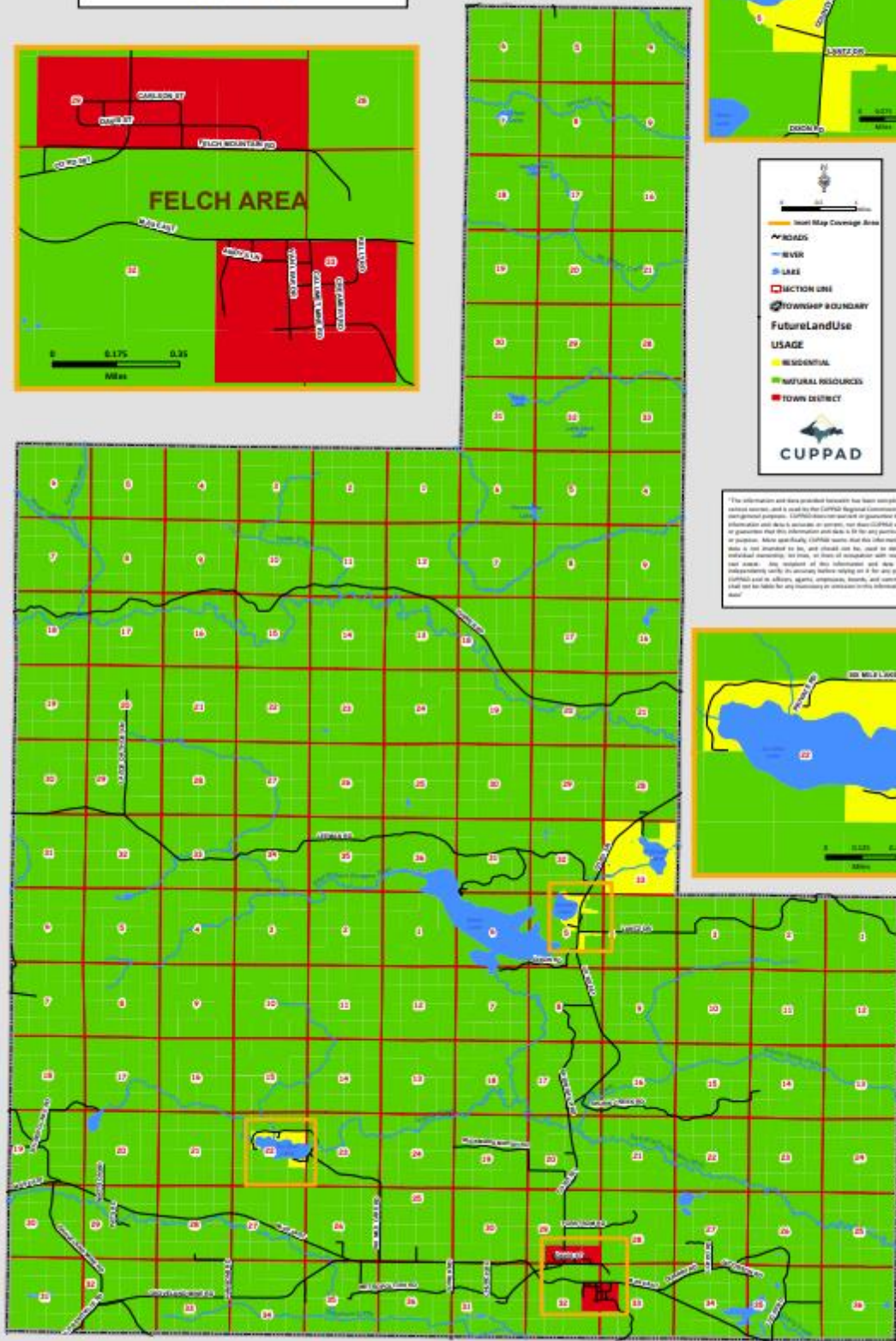
On any lot which borders on a lake, river, stream or other body of water, a required yard of 100 feet as measured from the normal high-water mark on water fronting property is required. The 100 foot setback is also to be used for the placement of on-site waste disposal systems. When lot sizes recorded prior to the passage of this Ordinance or site conditions makes compliance



# **FELCH TOWNSHIP** DICKINSON COUNTY, MICHIGAN FUTURE LAND USE



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with this section an impossibility, site plans will be considered for approval that have the prior approval of the county sanitarian in respect to the on-site waste disposal system location. In no event will any part of the system be within 50 feet of the high-water mark.

#### **6.4 Sensitive Areas**

All land that borders water frontage in the township should be considered sensitive land. Water frontage is often sensitive to building and septic systems. Many homes along the lakes in the township were built before modern building codes and the township's zoning ordinance and may not be up to code at this time. Many of the existing homes are also quite close together. Future development around lakes should be closely monitored to discourage potential environmental contamination. Obtaining soil erosion permits before construction is also necessary when required.

#### **6.5 Commercial Development**

There is very little commercial development in the township at this time. There are provisions available to establish a commercial district in the current zoning ordinance reserved for future use. Infrastructure development may be necessary to support commercial development in the township. Soil conditions in the community of Felch are not likely to be deemed suitable for significant commercial development. There is potential for commercial development near Groveland Mine Road; there is natural gas available as well as three-phase power, water and a Class A highway.

#### **6.6 Industrial Development**

There is no industrial development in Felch Township currently. There are provisions available to establish an industrial district in the current zoning ordinance and it is reserved for future use. As with commercial development, industrial development could occur near Groveland Mine Road, where there may land and services available to accommodate it.

#### **6.7 Residential Development**

There is potential for further residential development in the Town District area of the township, essentially in the platted areas. However, the existing platted lots are non-conforming with the current ordinance. Future development will likely require on-site wastewater systems, which would not be able to be sited on the smaller lots. Mound septic systems are designed to address certain site restrictions. Typically, a mound is used when there are: slow or fast permeable soils, shallow soil cover over creviced or porous bedrock, or a high water table. Because acceptable soil conditions are not always found below the surface, the mound allows the conditions to be created above the surface. Residential development could also include multiple-unit housing and/or services for the aging population of the township.

Residential development occurring in the Natural Resources District should occur with respect to the intent of maintaining low-density development and preserving the rural character and natural resources of the area. Additional development occurring in this and the Residential District should be reviewed with the intent of resolving nonconformities that may have an effect

on neighboring uses or the environment. The availability of public services, such as road access and infrastructure should be considered as well.

#### **6.8 Recreational Development**

Future recreational development in the township should occur with the intent of providing accessibility for users and mobility between existing recreational facilities. The Township will continue to improve and expand existing facilities as funding is available. Recreational development at Township-owned facilities should continue to reflect the priorities described in the current Recreation Plan.

#### **6.9 Transportation and Utilities**

Future transportation improvements will be focused on upgrading and maintaining existing roads. Expansion of natural gas is unlikely and cost prohibitive in most cases. Installation of cellular towers will be encouraged to improve service in the township; particularly along M-69. The installation of broadband internet utilities will also be encouraged to improve residential access to digital services and encourage digital workforce opportunities.

#### **6.10 Alternative Energy**

With increasing energy costs, there has been a growing interest in utilizing alternative energy resources. Regulations regarding alternative energy sources will continue to be reviewed by the Township and incorporated into the zoning ordinance as appropriate.

Solar energy systems hold great promise for the future energy needs of the Township because they use a renewable energy resource; they require less capital, land, water, and other resources needed for central-station generation of electricity; and because they do not pollute the community's water and air. The successful use of solar energy systems for such purposes as supplying space heating, water heating or the production of electricity is dependent upon sufficient access to direct sunlight, necessitating open space. Existing utilities, including electrical substations, and relatively flat land are both available, particularly in the southwest of the Township.

The development of the Groveland Mine solar utility system on reclaimed mining tailings may encourage additional utility and residential scale solar development. Regulations should be adopted in the zoning ordinance regulating the siting and use of solar energy systems with appropriate and reasonable conditions. The Township should review materials published by the Michigan State University Extension and University of Michigan regarding solar energy system education and example regulations. These include options for regulating both utility scale and smaller home-based accessory systems.

#### **6.11 Additional Zoning Updates**

The Planning Commission intends to provide for potential zoning amendments that allow for reasonable growth to be accommodated with minimal land use conflicts or negative environmental impacts, while allowing for the continuation of existing uses. Potential Zoning Ordinance amendments may include: reviewing and updating definitions; regulations to

accommodate new trends in planning and zoning, including solar energy systems and multimodal transportation; updates to the zoning map; and reviewing and strengthening the language for the intent of each zoning district.

The Township does not currently have Zoning Ordinance language regulating Planned Unit Development (PUD) and plans on establishing PUDs as a conditional use in compatible districts. PUDs are a flexible zoning technique that allows a land developer much more creativity in how land is used without sacrificing public concerns for compatibility with adjacent units of land and often with greater protection of significant environmental features. PUD is a special type of floating overlay district which generally does not appear on the municipal zoning map until a designation is requested. This is applied at the time a project is approved and may include provisions to encourage clustering of buildings, designation of common open space, and incorporation of a variety of building types and mixed land uses. A PUD is planned and built as a unit thus fixing the type and location of uses and buildings over the entire project. The Township recognizes that flexible zoning techniques will be a helpful tool for developers and the Township.

The Township would like to explore the regulation of short-term residential rentals, and the re-development of seasonally occupied housing into permanent uses. The transition of what may have been seasonal dwellings in the past into permanent ones may create non-conformities and issues related to building codes. The Township will ensure the safety of residents and the availability of services by developing regulations for structures undergoing this change in use. At the same time, some seasonal dwellings are being used as vacation, or short-term rentals for use by others residing outside of the area. To ensure that the character of the area is maintained and adjoining property owners are protected, the Township will explore creating an inventory of known short-term rental properties and regulations regarding their use. The Township may also explore options to regulate and enforce noise restrictions for uses which may have this effect.

## **6.12 Conclusion**

Planning is intended to guide the forces of change in ways that encourage desirable outcomes while striking an appropriate balance with development and preservation. The Master Plan should be reviewed on a yearly basis and amended as necessary to maintain its use as a reliable planning tool. State law requires that the Master Plan must be revised at least every five years to establish if updating is necessary.

As the developers and most frequent users of this document, the Planning Commission will be responsible for reviewing the recommendations and progress of the Master Plan. An outdated Plan that is not frequently reviewed can diminish the decision-making process. Therefore, the Planning Commission should conduct an annual review of the Plan and amend it as appropriate. Amendments that should occur include:

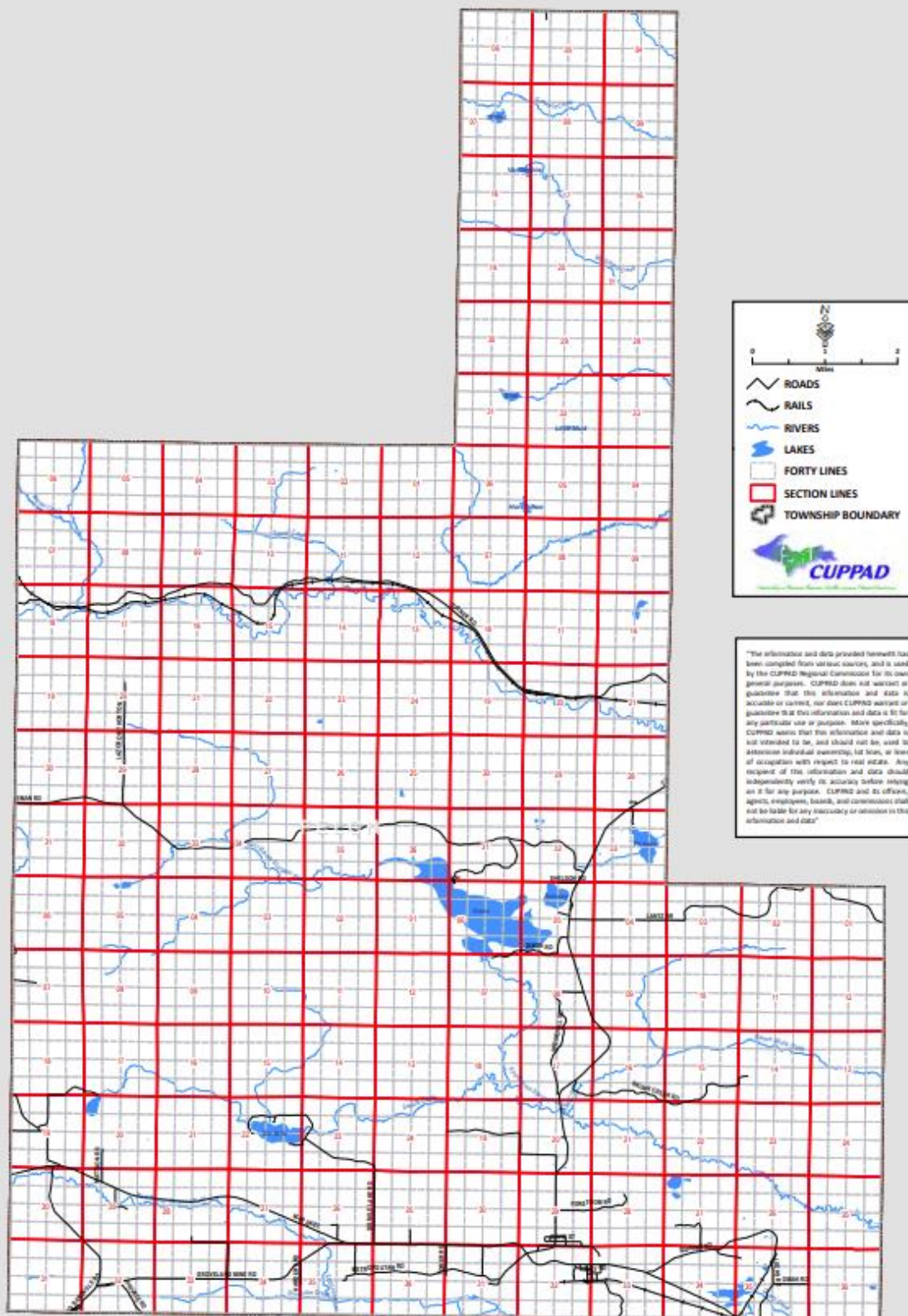
- Delete goals and recommendations that have been accomplished and add new recommendations as needs and desires arise.

- Modify the Future Land Use Map to reflect any zoning decisions that have changed the direction of development in the Township.
- Update demographic information whenever data is available.

This Master Plan represents over a year of effort by the Township Board, Planning Commission, and residents. Development of the plan involved collection and analysis of data on population, housing, land use, transportation, infrastructure and socioeconomic conditions. The Master Plan process also included a Citizen Survey. The Plan sets forth several recommendations, and as such, this Plan will only be as successful as the implementation measures taken to achieve the vision set forth in previous chapters.

# FELCH TOWNSHIP

## BASE MAP



**Appendix B Citizen Survey Results**  
**Conducted online via surveymonkey.com, Summer 2022**

1. I am a resident of
  - a. Felch Township – 9 (81%)
  - b. Other – 2 (18%)
2. How long have you lived and/or owned property in Felch Township?
  - a. Less than one year – 0
  - b. 1 to 5 years – 0
  - c. 5 to 10 years – 0
  - d. 10 to 20 years – 4 (40%)
  - e. Over 20 years – 6 (60%)
3. Do you live in Felch Township year-round?
  - a. Yes – 9 (81%)
  - b. No, I leave for someplace else in the winter months – 0
  - c. No, I spend less than three months of the year in Felch Township – 0
  - d. No, I spend over half of the year in Felch Township – 2 (18%)
4. Where is your place of employment located?
  - a. I'm retired – 1 (9%)
  - b. I'm unemployed – 0
  - c. I work in Felch Township – 3 (27%)
  - d. I work in the vicinity of Iron Mountain – 4 (36%)
  - e. I work somewhere else in Dickinson County – 1 (9%)
  - f. I work outside of Dickinson County – 2 (18%)
  - g. I work outside of Michigan – 0
5. What is your current employment status?
  - a. Full-time – 8 (72%)
  - b. Part-time – 2 (18%)
  - c. Multiple part-time jobs – 0
  - d. Self-employed – 0
  - e. Unemployed/looking – 0
  - f. Unable to work – 0
  - g. Full-time homemaker – 0
  - h. Retired – 1 (9%)
  - i. Student – 0
6. Would you like to work remotely from Felch Township?
  - a. Not applicable to me – 2 (18%)
  - b. Yes, I would work full time remotely – 2 (18%)
  - c. Yes, I would work part-time remotely – 3 (27%)
  - d. I would work remotely but internet service is not adequate – 2 (18%)
  - e. No thank you – 1 (9%)
  - f. Yes, I currently work full time remotely – 0
  - g. Yes, I currently work part-time remotely – 1 (9%)
7. Do you have school-age children? If so, where do they attend?
  - a. None of the above – 7 (63%)
  - b. I have children that attend North Dickinson County School – 2 (18%)

- c. I have children that attend school in another district – 0
  - d. I have multiple children that attend school in different districts – 1 (9%)
  - e. I homeschool my children – 0
  - f. My children are too young for school – 1 (9%)
8. Do you own your home/land in Felch Township (check all that apply)
- a. Own and live in Felch Township – 9 (90%)
  - b. Own property but live elsewhere – 1 (10%)
  - c. Rent and live in Felch Township – 0
  - d. Rent property but live elsewhere – 0
9. What strategy would you prefer for residential growth management in Felch Township?
- a. Growth encouraged – 1 (10%)
  - b. Growth takes its own course – 6 (60%)
  - c. Planned and limited growth – 3 (30%)
  - d. No Growth – 0
10. What strategy would you prefer for commercial growth management in Felch Township?
- a. Growth encouraged – 5 (50%)
  - b. Growth takes its own course – 2 (20%)
  - c. Planned and structured growth – 2 (20%)
  - d. No Growth – 1 (10%)
11. Thinking about the overall housing stock in the Township, to what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Felch Township's housing suffers from blight	1 (9%)	8 (72%)	0	0	0	2 (18%)
Felch Township's housing amenities (size, style, features) are out of date	0	6 (54%)	4 (36%)	0	0	1 (9%)
Felch Township's housing is updated and there is an abundance of new/renovation projects within the community	0	0	2 (18%)	7 (63%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)

12. How do you feel about the proportion of rentals to homeowner occupied residences within the community? (check al that apply)
- a. There is a good balance of owner-occupied homes and rental properties – 3 (37%)
  - b. There are too many short-term rental properties – 0
  - c. There are not enough short-term rental properties – 1 (12%)
  - d. There are too many long-term rental properties – 0
  - e. There are not enough long-term rental properties – 5 (62%)
  - f. There are not enough owner-occupied residences – 0
13. Dedicated housing is need to accommodate the aging population in Felch Township
- a. Yes – 7 (77%)
  - b. No – 2 (22%)

Rate the Following:

	Don't Know	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
14. How would you describe quality of life in Felch Township, overall?	0	0	1 (10%)	6 (60%)	3 (30%)
15. How would you rate Felch Township as a place to raise children?	0	0	1 (9%)	7 (63%)	3 (27%)
16. How would you rate Felch Township as a place to live?	0	0	1 (9%)	6 (54%)	3 (36%)
17. How would you rate Felch Township as a place to retire?	0	0	3 (27%)	6 (54%)	2 (18%)
18. How do you rate recent community improvements including the Community Center renovations?	2 (18%)	0	1 (9%)	5 (45%)	3 (27%)
19. How would you rate Felch Township's sense of community?	1 (9%)	0	0	6 (54%)	4 (36%)
20. How would you rate Felch Township's recreation opportunities?	0	1 (10%)	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)
21. How would you rate Felch Township's job opportunities?	1 (9%)	7 (63%)	3 (27%)	0	0
22. How would you rate housing affordability?	2 (27%)	0	5 (45%)	3 (27%)	0
23. How would you rate the overall appearance of the Township?	1 (9%)	3 (27%)	5 (45%)	2 (18%)	0

24. How important is it that the Township population continues to grow and maintain its population?

- a. A great deal – 2 (18%)
- b. A lot – 4 (36%)
- c. A moderate amount – 1 (9%)
- d. A little – 1 (9%)
- e. None at all – 3 (27%)
- f. I would prefer the population decrease – 0

25. Would you encourage or discourage the following land uses in Felch Township?

	Encourage	Discourage	No Change	No Opinion
Residential development (single family homes)	8 (72%)	0	0	3 (27%)
Residential development (multiple units)	6 (54%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)
Commercial development	8 (72%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)
Rehabilitation of camps/cottages to permanent homes	7 (63%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)
Splitting or dividing of large parcels for the development of new housing	5 (45%)	3 (27%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)
Short-term property rentals	5 (45%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)
Affordable housing	5 (45%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	3 (27%)
Senior/assisted living	9 (81%)	1 (9%)	0	1 (9%)
Wind turbines or wind farms	4 (36%)	4 (36%)	0	3 (27%)
Large scale solar power arrays	4 (36%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	4 (36%)
Commercial communication (cell) towers	7 (63%)	1 (9%)	0	3 (27%)
Marijuana facilities (growing operations, retail sales)	3 (27%)	7 (63%)	0	1 (9%)
Organic agriculture	10 (90%)	0	1 (9%)	0
Conventional agriculture	9 (81%)	0	1 (9%)	2 (18%)



Township recreational parks	10 (90%)	0	1 (9%)	0
Hiking and Biking Trails	9 (81%)	0	1 (9%)	1 (9%)
ORV/Snowmobile Trails	10 (90%)	0	1 (9%)	0
Protection of natural areas/open space	7 (63%)	0	3 (27%)	1 (9%)
Educational institutions	8 (72%)	0	2 (18%)	1 (9%)
Day Cares (less than six children)	8 (72%)	0	1 (9%)	2 (18%)
Day Cares (more than six children)	7 (63%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)

26. Under the current zoning regulations do you feel that you are (choose one of the following):

- a. Over regulated – 0
- b. Properly regulated – 8 (72%)
- c. Under regulated – 2 (18%)
- d. I don't know what my classification is – 1 (9%)

27. For each of the services below please indicate whether you think the level of service is appropriate, should be increased, or should be decreased. (Check one for each service)

	Appropriate	Increase	Decrease	No Opinion
Road maintenance	5 (45%)	5 (45%)	0	1 (9%)
Snow plowing	9 (81%)	1 (9%)	0	1 (9%)
Police protection	8 (72%)	1 (9%)	0	2 (18%)
Fire protection/rescue	8 (72%)	2 (18%)	0	1 (9%)
Township office services/hours	9 (81%)	0	0	2 (18%)
Building code enforcement	8 (72%)	1 (9%)	0	2 (18%)
Code enforcement for blight	1 (9%)	8 (72%)	0	2 (18%)
Community events	6 (54%)	4 (36%)	0	1 (9%)
The availability of buildings for public use	6 (54%)	2 (18%)	0	3 (27%)
Public recreational opportunities	4 (36%)	6 (54%)	0	1 (9%)
Park maintenance	4 (36%)	6 (54%)	0	1 (9%)
Trash collection options/availability	6 (54%)	3 (27%)	0	2 (18%)

28. Would you be willing to pay per bag for household garbage at the Township's current transfer station?

- a. Yes – 3 (30%)
- b. No – 7 (70%)

29. Would you be willing to pay a monthly fee for curbside trash collection service?

- a. Yes – 6 (54%)
- b. No – 5 (45%)

30. Would you be willing to pay a monthly fee for curbside recycling collection service?

- a. Yes – 5 (45%)
- b. No – 6 (54%)

31. Would you be willing to serve on the Township Fire Department or Tri-Township Ambulance Corps?

- a. Yes – 3 (27%)
- b. No – 8 (72%)

32. Felch Township would benefit from focusing more energy into promoting its rural character and local assets to draw more residents and visitors.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5 (45%)	1 (9%)	4 (36%)	1 (9%)	0

33. Are there any particularly sensitive areas that need to be protected from development? (Where?) [open response]

- Mine Ponds

34. A large (multi-acre) solar array installation would be acceptable if... (check all that apply)

- a. Never acceptable – 3 (33%)
- b. It was visible from my home – 0
- c. It was near a roadway or area where I would see it regularly – 1 (11%)
- d. It was not visible from my home – 2 (22%)
- e. It was on otherwise vacant or unused land – 5 (55%)
- f. Anytime, I would love to see renewable energy installations in Felch Township – 3 (33%)

35. What recreational activities did you or a member of your household participate in within the past 2 years? [open response]

- Fishing and RV trails
- Orv, boating, camping, fishing, hunting, motorcycle riding, hiking
- Hiking, Fishing, ATV Trails
- Camping ATV hunting Fishing
- Camping, fishing, hunting, four wheeling
- Disc Golf, Swimming, Fishing, Hiking, Hunting

36. What do you VALUE about Felch Township's recreational opportunities? [open response]

- Accessibility
- Wide variety and openness
- Access to nature
- There is a great amount of land available to use for recreational purposes
- There is a lot of land and water to use for recreation

37. Rank your priorities for recreational improvements that may be considered in Felch Township. (1: highest priority to 4: lowest priority)

	1	2	3	4	Score
Improving the baseball fields at the Community Center (upgrading dugouts, ballfields, amenities)	1	3	3	2	2.33
Creating a rustic campground near the Community Center for hosting events and trail access	3	1	5	1	2.60
Funding improvements to Norway Lake Park and Campground	4	4	1	1	3.10
Other (Please list your priority)	1	2	1	3	2.14

38. What would you like to CHANGE about Felch Township's recreation opportunities? (If you answered "Other" in the previous question please detail here) [open response]

- Maintaining the roads to the mine ponds and Solberg Lake. Clarification of what trails are accessible by ORV's
- More township resident recreation and less out of town riff raff brought in
- Something for kids. Community pool or ice rink in winter.

- We were supposed to get a handicap fishing pier at Norway Lake, what happened?
39. What do you love about Felch Township? [open response]
- Community center and senior activities
  - Peacefulness
  - Sense of community
  - Great family oriented place with a lot of potential
  - The people are friendly. The air is clean and fresh with no factory smells. Fishing and hunting is good. It's quiet, in a good way.
  - Small town atmosphere
40. What change would you like to see within Felch Township? [open response]
- Enforcement of the blight ordinance and more oversight at the transfer station
  - Stop inappropriate use of township owned equipment and services
  - Remove/rehab old buildings. Blight mitigation
  - More opportunities for jobs, shopping, housing, and family oriented fun.
  - More restaurant and grocery store options
41. What do you think will be the most important issues facing Felch Township over the next 5, 10, 20, or 30 years? [open response]
- Aging population and limited resources, especially healthcare
  - Emergency services volunteerism
  - Declining population and job opportunities
  - Lack of businesses
  - Aging population, blighted property and loss of local jobs should be replaced with new remote work jobs, internet businesses
42. What would your ideal vision for Felch Township be in the year 2050? Briefly describe three of the most desirable characteristics this future Felch Township would possess.
1. Clean up blight | Keep out wind farms and solar plantations that do not work in this area | Job options | Stores for shopping | We will grow if we have internet, people want out of cities
  2. Continue to provide community opportunities | Ensure keeping level headed and common sense driven township board members | recreation to draw visitors | More family friendly options | Encourage small business startups
  3. Sense of community- that has existed for years | visually appealing communities | Rental units | Road repairs are a must
43. You can view the existing 2010 Felch Township Master Plan online here: <https://cuppad.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Felch-Twp-Master-Plan-Final.pdf> Please provide any comments or suggestions below on issues you do not think were appropriately addressed. [open response]
- Recreation questions? Not like the last recreation plan. What about fishing pier, walking trails, activities other than baseball?
44. Is there anything else you would like to add that was not addressed by the questions? If you would like to expand upon any of your responses in the previous questions, please do so here as well. [open response]
- [none]