

WELLS TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

2023



PREPARED BY THE WELLS TOWNSHIP PLANNING
COMMISSION

CHAIRMAN: BARBARA ROBERTS

BOARD LIAISON: STEVE MILESKE

MEMBERS: LORI LYNCH, KATHY BRADY, CELINA SUNDHOLM

WELLS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

SUPERVISOR: ROBERT THERRIAN

CLERK: PATTI MANNINEN

TREASURER: JANELL MINEAU

TRUSTEE: MARILYN MANNINEN

TRUSTEE: STEVE MILESKE



ASSISTANCE BY THE CENTRAL UPPER PENINSULA PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT REGIONAL COMMISSION
(CUPPAD)

At a regular meeting of the Wells Township Planning Commission on September 18, 2023 at 7:30pm, the following motion was offered:

Motion by Brady and seconded by Sundholm to adopt the following resolution:

Resolution # 9-18-2023

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE WELLS TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

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 incorporating the current conditions, maps, and future goals of the Township and submitted the plan to the Township Board for review and comment at a meeting on July 10, 2023; and

WHEREAS, on July 10, 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 September 17, 2023; and

WHEREAS, notice of distribution and public hearing was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA on July 12, 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 September 18, 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 did not take this action; and

WHEREAS, the Wells Township Planning Commission, 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 Wells Township Planning Commission hereby approves and adopts the Wells Township Master Plan, as per the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008.

Roll Call Vote:

Yes No

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Roberts</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Mileski</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Sundholm</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Brady</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Lynch</u>

MOTION Carried

I certify that the above is a true and complete copy of a resolution passed by the Wells Township Planning Commission at a meeting on September 18, 2023.

By: [Signature]
Wells Township Planning Commission Chair

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

The Wells Township Master Plan is a document intended to aid in future development and growth within the Township, provide a basis for the Township Zoning Ordinance, and define the visions and wishes of the government and its people for the next 20 years. Major elements discussed in this document include: population and demographics, community facilities and services, recreation, transportation, natural features and land use. After addressing the question “where are we now?” the next step is determining “where do we want to go in the future?” To answer the question, the Planning Commission has developed goals based on the Township’s needs that became evident as existing conditions were documented. This Master Plan addresses the issues of present conditions and the Township’s needs and desired future conditions, while also providing a means to achieve future development goals and objectives. It is important to note that the Master Plan is not a Zoning Ordinance, nor is it law or an ordinance. It is a long-range policy guide for the future development of the Township and should be used as a planning tool.

Authority to Plan

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended), authorizes units of government to plan, create Planning Commissions, and regulate and subdivide land. The act permits and mandates the Planning Commission to create and adopt a Master Plan. The Master Plan is the basis for land use regulations and zoning. For units of government that have and enforce zoning, that zoning must be based on a plan. The purpose of this Master Plan is to guide future development towards more economic and efficient use of the land; promote public health, safety, and the general welfare; and provide for adequate transportation systems and infrastructure, public utilities, and recreation.

In preparing the Master Plan, the Township is authorized to: conduct studies, investigations, and surveys relative to economic, social, and physical development of the township; formulate plans and make recommendations for the most effective economic, social and physical development of the township; cooperate with all departments of state and federal governments and other public agencies; and consult with adjacent units of government.

The Planning Process

The last Master Plan was adopted in 2016 and serves as the basis for this update. The Township Zoning Ordinance was originally adopted in 1996 and amended in 2005, 2011, and 2020.

A public input survey was shared online and available in a paper format during the spring election day in 2023. A total of 24 responses were received – an 11% response. With such a small sample size, some views may not be reflective of the majority, but all public input is valuable. A public hearing was held on September 18, 2023 to allow the public to review the draft plan, maps, future land use, etc. and discuss issues with CUPPAD and the Planning Commission. The Plan was adopted during the Planning Commission’s regular meeting on September 18, 2023.

Township Background and Brief History

Wells Township is located in the very southern portion of Marquette County, in the Central U.P. It borders three counties: Delta and Menominee to the south and Dickinson to the west. The Township is very rural in nature and covers 155 square miles (99,200 acres). The City of Marquette is approximately 40 miles north and the City of Escanaba is approximately 30 miles to the south.

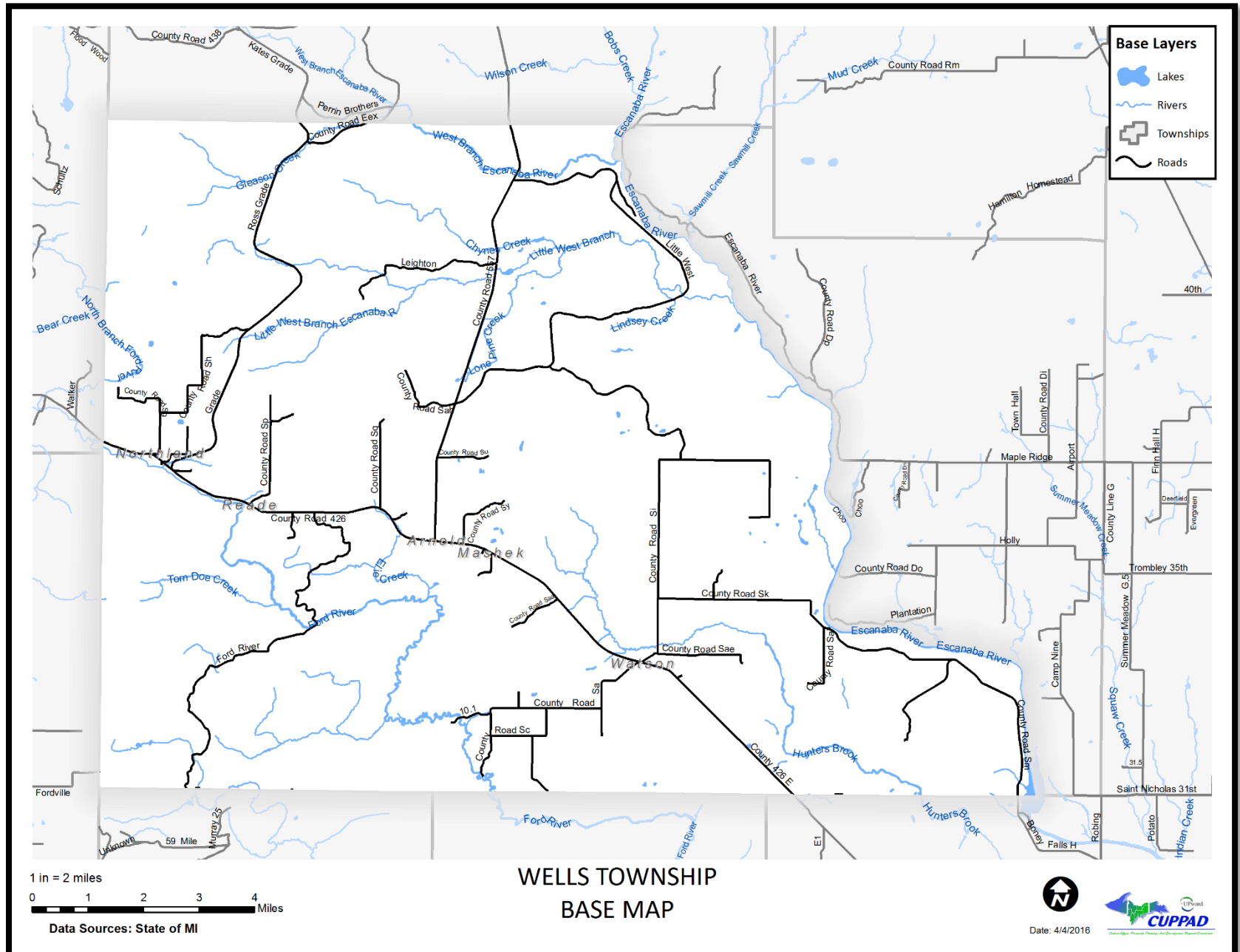
Wells Township was officially organized in 1903 from land belonging to Forsyth Township. Boundaries changed in 1909 as areas of Wells Township lying within T43N, R25W east of the Escanaba River became part of Turin Township and areas within T42N, R24W west of the Escanaba River were detached from Turin Township to become part of Wells. Early homesteaders in the area maintained a livelihood by farming and cutting timber. Logging camps were operating in the area in the mid-1850s, northeast of Watson. Oxen were used to deliver supplies to the camps via a tote road that started in the Cornell area – known today as the Boney Falls Road. The Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad constructed a station in Watson in 1899, which opened up the area for settlement. Railroad expansion allowed for stations to be developed in Mashek, Reade, Northland, Ross, and Gleason. Northland was founded in 1897 by the Wolverine Cedar & Lumber Company, in anticipation of the expanding railroad.

George Mashek and his partner, Ed Arnold, owned a logging camp at Watson in the area of the present Jaeger house. In 1908, a store, boarding house, warehouse and saloon were established. Mashek's general store included a post office area which opened in 1909. Since a downstate community was already using Watson for a post office name, the name Arnold was substituted. Those living in the Watson area received their mail through the Arnold Post Office, Watson, Michigan. In 1935, the post office was relocated to the store at the corner of CR 426 and CR 557. Over the years, the term "Arnold Post Office" has become the name associated with the place originally known as Mashek. Following the height of the logging era, people who settled in the area made their livelihoods principally by farming. Most farming was done on a small scale supplemented with animals, gardens, and timber cutting.

Today, like it was then, distance continues to be an issue for Township residents. Opportunities that once existed for workers in the logging industry are much fewer due to the new methods and advanced mechanization now employed. Small-scale farming is not feasible as a means of making a living in today's world. While the methods, capital requirements, and overall business economics of logging and agriculture have changed, both continue to be major economic factors in the Township.



CHAPTER ONE MAPS

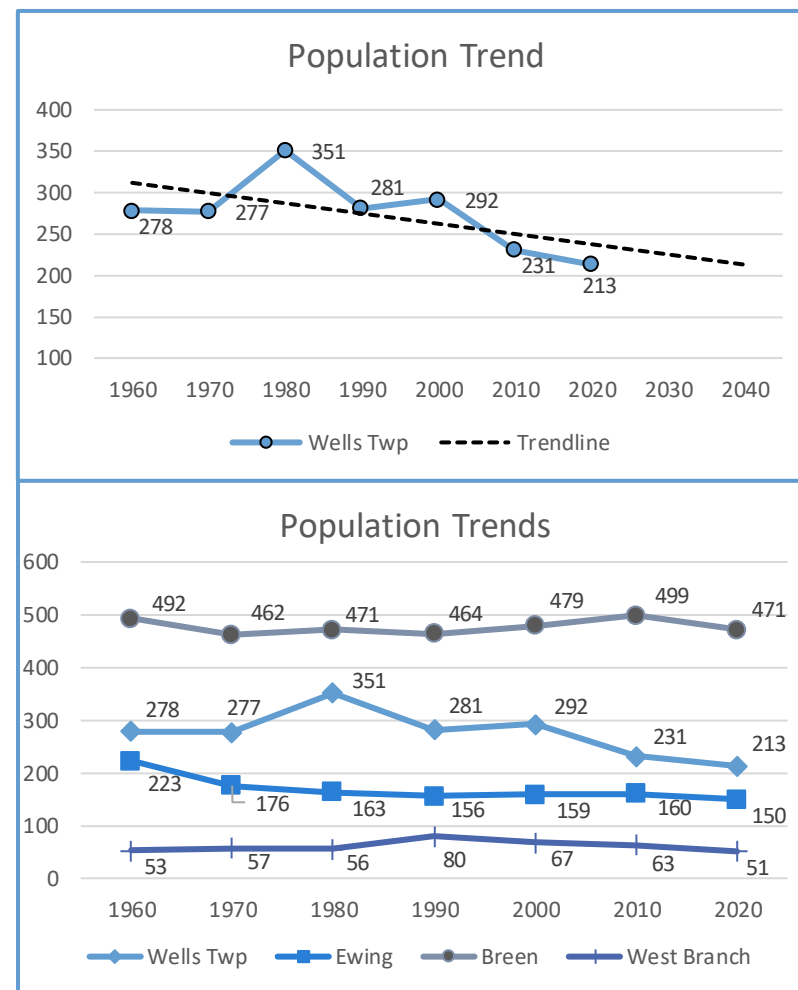


CHAPTER TWO – DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMICS

Comparing historical data is useful in identifying patterns and trends that may affect a community's approach to land use, economic development, and other general issues. Throughout this document, where available, the most recent US Census information is used (2020). The Census is a decennial census mandated under the United States Constitution and is a population-based survey. The American Community Survey (ACS) is a mandatory, ongoing statistical survey that samples a small percentage of the population every year. The data is a rolling update and measures changes in social and economic characteristics. However, in most rural areas, the ACS comes with a margin of error – the higher the margin of error, the less accurate the data may be due to the sampling size of the area. **In very rural areas like Wells Township, the margin of error is considerably high and ACS data should be viewed with that in mind. Census and ACS figures provide estimates as a guide and tool.**

Population

As of the 2020 Census, the population of Wells Township was 213 people. The population trend since 1960 is shown in the chart to the right. Overall, the Township population has remained fairly steady, with the only jump in 1980. The chart below contains a trendline – this is an estimate of the future based on a mathematical formula and the past population data. The trendline helps forecast any future trends. In the case of Wells Township, the trend appears to show a continued decline over the next twenty years. In the several surrounding small townships, shown at the right, this loss of population is also present. These townships are also very rural in nature and follow similar patterns to Wells Township. Ewing Township, in Marquette County, experienced a large decrease between 1960 and 1970, but has since seen very minor increases and decreases. Similarly, Breen Township, in Dickinson County, has also seen minor increases and decreases over the fifty-year span. West Branch Township, also in Marquette County, has remained fairly steady other than a small increase in 1990. Minor population loss is expected to continue in the Upper Peninsula region, with a larger impact in rural areas.



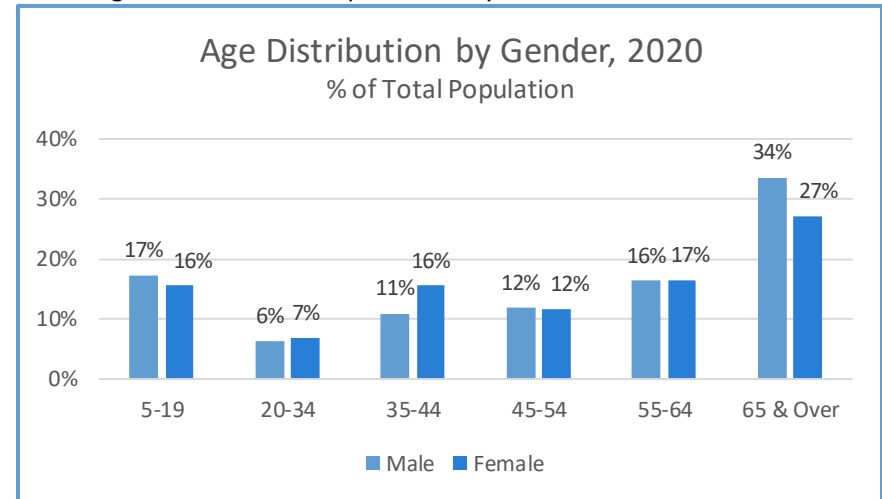
Age, Education, Race, and Disability

In order to determine the needs of the population, the Township needs to understand which population age groups are increasing and which are not. The term “Baby Boomers” is often used to describe those born between 1946 and 1964, post-World War II. Baby Boomers represent 23% of the United States population, as of the 2020 Census. “Gen Xers” were the generation born roughly between 1965 and 1976 – as of the 2020 Census, this group represents 19.7% of the Nation’s population. According to the 2020 Census, the median age of Wells Township was 53.1 years old; a considerable increase from the 2000 Census, which was 40 years old, and comparable to the previous Census which reported 53.9 years.

Age distribution by gender from the 2020 Census is shown in the figure to the right. Those 65 and over represent the largest age group within the Township, a larger trend as the median age of the Baby Boomer generation increases. As with other areas of the Upper Peninsula, fewer of those in the 20-45 age groups are present in rural areas, representing a loss including a number of families with children. It can be expected that these trends will continue, with the overall population aging and fewer school age children present.

For the population 25 years and over, ACS figures show 90% are high school graduates, 26% have some college with no degree, 2% have an associate’s degree, 13% have a bachelor’s degree, and 2% have a graduate degree. Two of the largest employers in the County are health care and education - both of which require advanced training or degrees. The trend is growing in which employers that may not have required advanced training in the past, now seek employees with post-high school education. Many employers seek to locate in areas that have a highly-trained workforce.

The 2020 ACS shows that 6% of the population 18 to 64 has a disability (ambulatory difficulty is number one in this age group), and that 96% of the population is White and 4% a mix of Black, American Indian, and/or multiple races.



Wells Township Educational Attainment, 2020	
Less than 9th Grade	2%
9th-12th Grade	8%
High School Graduate	48%
Some College	26%
Associate's Degree	2%
Bachelor's Degree	13%
Graduate Degree	2%

Income & Labor Force

Examination of local income figures and trends helps determine the amount of “wealth” that is available locally. Income figures are currently available through the American Community Survey (ACS) sample data; this data does have a margin of error associated with it. Median household income in the township, in 2020 dollars, is \$45,313 while the median family income is \$54,063. Since 2010, this represents an approximate \$10,000 increase for households, but a comparable decrease for families. This is representative of the demographic change in the township, where the number of families is decreasing, and the wealth associated with younger generations is also decreased compared to their older peers. This displays in the chart below in the reduction of the overall number of families, and the increase in the number of households representing higher income brackets. A household consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit, collectively, while a family represents two or more individuals who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. The chart below provides a visual comparison for the changes in household income versus the changes in family income. Of note also is the increase in those earning less than \$10,000, which may represent a greater proportion of households relying on limited retirement income.

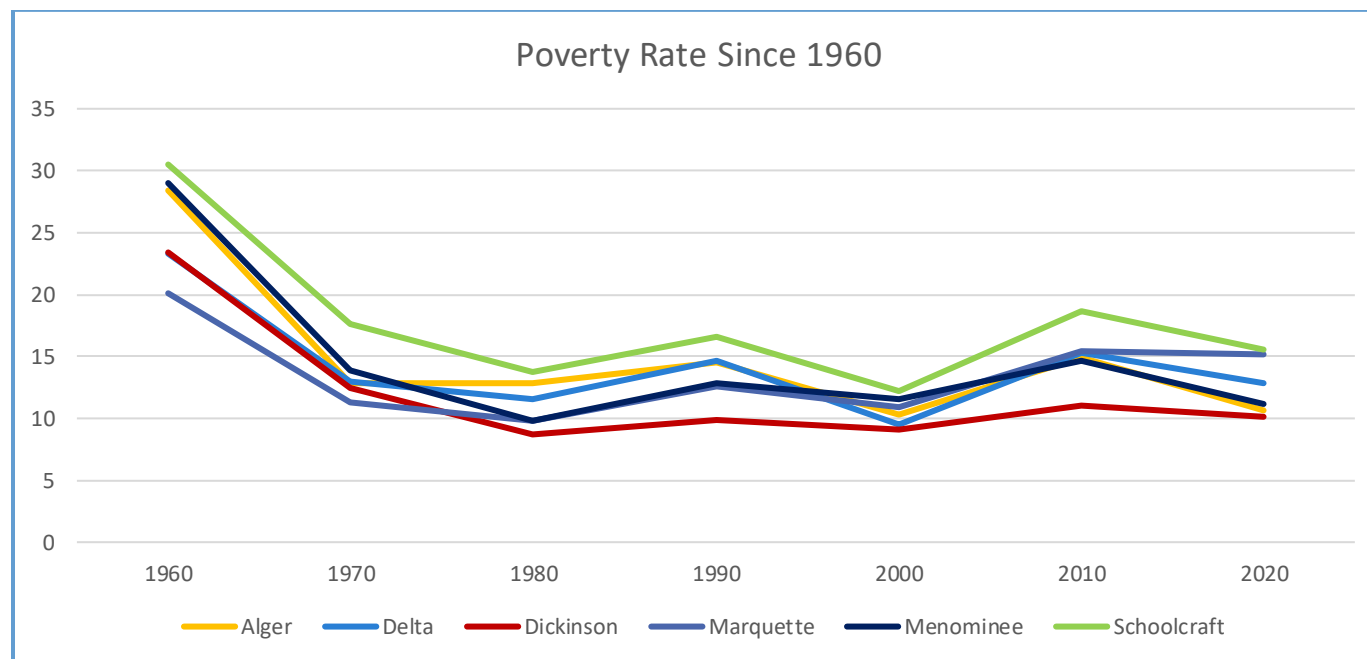
Household and Family Income 2010-2020						
	2010	2020	% Change	2010	2020	%Change
	Households	Households		Families	Families	
Total	96	109	13.5%	63	49	-22%
Less than \$10,000	6.3%	10.1%	3.8%	1.6%	0.0%	-1.6%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	7.3%	0.9%	-6.4%	11.1%	0.0%	-11.1%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	11.5%	7.3%	-4.2%	3.2%	0.0%	-3.2%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	21.9%	20.2%	-1.7%	19.0%	24.5%	5.5%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	11.5%	20.2%	8.7%	4.8%	20.4%	15.6%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	20.8%	16.5%	-4.3%	28.6%	24.5%	-4.1%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	11.5%	10.1%	-1.4%	17.5%	16.3%	-1.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	9.4%	12.8%	3.4%	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0.0%	1.8%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
\$200,000 or more	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

American Community Survey, 2010 & 2020

Another factor in examining income is the poverty rate. Poverty is defined as the state in which a person or household lacks a usual or acceptable amount of money or possessions; those in poverty are considered very poor. The poverty rate is the threshold or minimum level of income deemed adequate. This rate is typically adjusted annually. Poverty levels are determined by the United States Bureau of the Census based on a complex formula that includes 48 different thresholds that vary by family size, number of children within the family and the age of the householder.

County-level poverty rates from past Census' are shown below. In the Central U.P., Schoolcraft County has historically had the highest poverty rate of the six Counties. Since 1980, Marquette and Menominee Counties have had similar poverty rates, while Dickinson has had the lowest. Generally, increases in the poverty rate have been reflective of larger economic trends; it remains to be seen how the impact of COVID-19 and corresponding job losses and inflationary period may effect the poverty rate for the near future.

ACS figures from 2020 estimate that 6.8% of the township's population is below the poverty level. In comparison, ACS estimates 15.2% of Marquette County's population is below the poverty level.



The figure below compares labor force statistics for the township with surrounding townships, the county, and the state. The percentage of those that could participate in the labor force (of those 16 years and older) is lower than the majority, along with a reduced labor force participation rate. This is representative of the growing retirement-age populations in the rural townships compared with the county and state overall; the labor force participation rate is also expected to continue to decrease in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered a large number of early retirements and employment churn that continue to strain the local available workforce.

Labor Force Participation Rate						
	Wells Twp	Ewing Twp	Breen Twp	West Branch Township	Marquette County	Michigan
Population	213	175	471	16	66,017	10,077,331
Of Working Age (16+)	78%	87%	68%	63%	84%	80%
Labor Force Participation Rate	50%	39.20%	50.90%	50%	58.70%	61.50%

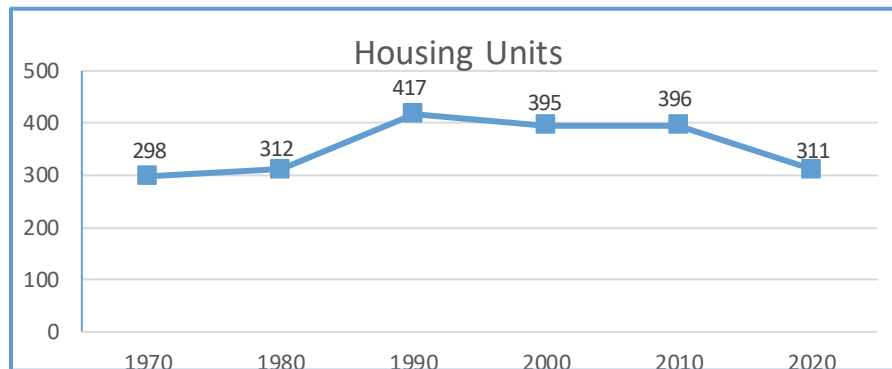
Using the Census Bureau's *On the Map* tool reveals that those employed in the township are likely to work outside of it. 97% of employed residents are expected to leave their homes for jobs in the surrounding cities and manufacturing areas. The average travel time to work is just less than an hour, roughly similar to the travel times to the cities of Marquette, Escanaba, and Iron Mountain. A similar number of external workers enter the township for employment, though these are likely to be more transient occupations working over a larger area in forestry, transportation, and related industries.

The majority of employed residents are occupied in manufacturing and transportation-related jobs. ***In the public input survey, the majority of residents were split between working within Wells Township, or wider Marquette and Delta Counties. When asked what types of businesses residents would like to see within the Township, most cited the need for increased access to restaurant and retail facilities.***

Employment by Industry Area	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining	14%
Construction	6%
Manufacturing	25%
Wholesale Trade	6%
Retail Trade	-
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	22%
Information	-
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	6%
Professional, scientific, management, administration, and waste management	-
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	3%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service	17%
Other services except public administration	3%
Public administration	-

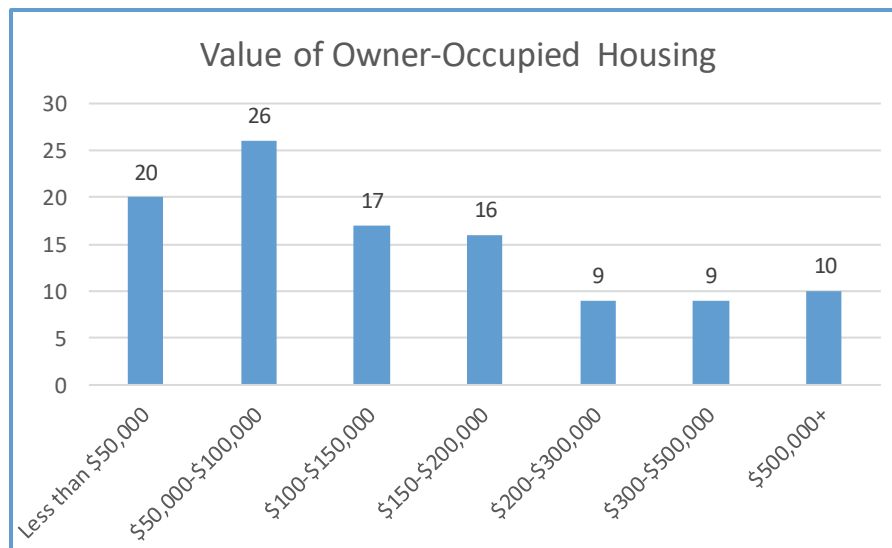
Housing

Housing is a fundamental factor when planning for a community's future – housing values, seasonal housing, housing trends – are all things that should be considered. The Census uses two ways to describe housing – housing units and households. A **household** includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit. People not living in households are classified as living in group quarters. The 2020 Census shows that the township has 109 total households, of which 49 are family households. A **housing unit** is a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, occupied as separate living quarters



or, if vacant, intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live separately from any other people in the building and which have direct access from outside the building or through a common hall. Both occupied and vacant housing units are included in the housing unit inventory. The chart to the left shows the number of housing units within the Township, which has been decreasing since 1990. The 2020 Census data shows that of the 311 housing units within the township, 96 were occupied and 215 were vacant – 184 of those are designated as seasonal or recreational use (69%). This large proportion of seasonal housing is not uncommon in the more rural areas of the Upper

Peninsula, as many people maintain camps or vacation homes for seasonal use. A small number of homes are rentals, either for long-term, or increasingly, short-term rental periods. The average home in the township is a two-bedroom built in the 1970s.



When considering housing, the value of that housing stock helps to better understand the quality of housing in the area. The chart to the left shows the value of owner-occupied housing. Rising home prices over the past several years have had less impact on rural areas; because housing in the township tends to be smaller and older, the average housing value is between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

The largest source of State Equalized Value (SEV) in the township has been residential, historically at 60%+.

Chapter Three – Community Description

A look at Township Services, Infrastructure, Recreation, and Natural Resources

Utilities, Water, Solid Waste

Electric service within the Township is provided by Alger Delta Cooperative. An Enbridge gas pipeline runs through the township, although no gas service is provided. Solid waste is managed by subscription haulers, mainly North Country Disposal. Recycling is not currently collected; though upcoming changes to materials management laws may necessitate seeking options for facilitating recycling service.

Township residents rely on private wells for drinking water and on-site septic systems, both of which are regulated by the Marquette County Health Department under the Superior Environmental Health Code. Wells for facilities serving the public, such as motels, fall under regulations of the Federal and State Safe Drinking Water Acts, where isolation distances, minimum yield and water quality testing requirements are more stringent than for a private residential well. Permits for residential and commercial wells are issued by the Health Department. The Wells and Water Table map on page 19 shows wells and the water table depth.

Important determinants for siting a septic system are soil types, water table, and steepness of slopes. In areas with clay soils, steep slopes and small lots, siting and maintaining septic systems can pose problems. Per the Health Code, sewer lines from buildings shall be located a minimum of ten feet (10') from all water wells. Septic tanks or vaulted privies shall be located a minimum of fifty feet (50') from residential wells; seventy five feet (75') from Type IIb non-community and Type III water supplies, and two hundred feet (200') from Type IIa and community water supplies; ten feet (10') from property lines; five feet (5') from foundation walls; five feet (5') from building footing drains, storm drains and/or other subsoil drains; ten feet (10') from water lines; ten feet (10') from steep embankments or drop-offs; and seventy-five feet (75') from lakes, streams or other surface water impoundments. These restrictions are subject to change with the Health Code. More information in septic and well siting can be found in the County Health Code.

Schools & Libraries

Kindergarten through 8th grade students are housed in the Wells Township School in Arnold. District students attend high school at the Gwinn Area Community Schools. Enrollment at the Township School has hovered around 15 students for the past several years.

The 8,500 square foot school was constructed in 1958 and includes a gymnasium, which also serves as a cafeteria, and four classrooms. An area has been devoted for library purposes and is open to the public throughout the year. A garage was constructed in 1987 to store the district's bus fleet (3) and is located adjacent to the school building. The garage is a 2,700 square foot facility.

Wells Township residents have access to the Peter White Library in Marquette, and libraries in Gladstone and Escanaba. A library is also available at the Wells Township School. The Escanaba Public Library provides library cards for those outside the service area for \$35. The Peter White Library issues library cards to those in the service area free of charge, which includes Wells Township.

Medical Facilities, Law Enforcement /Emergency Response

Fire Protection

The Fire Department was organized on August 8, 1979, and chartered January 5, 1980. Currently the Fire Department consists of four (4) trained and state certified volunteer fire fighters, with one additional person in training. Mutual Aid Agreements are in force with the surrounding townships of Forsyth, Richmond, Cornell (Delta County), West Branch (Dickinson County), Harris (Menominee County), and the Michigan DNR Fire Division. Fire call charges are not assessed and volunteer fire fighters receive a small compensation for duties. Funding from taxes are used for fire calls, and the Township also covers the cost of trainings.

Insurance ratings are determined by the Insurance Service Office Commercial Risk, Inc., using the Grading Schedule of Municipal Fire Protection. Gradings obtained under the schedule are used throughout the United States in establishing base rates for fire insurance. While ISO does not presume to dictate a community's level of fire protection, its findings are the recognized norm for assessing fire protection adequacy. Factors such as equipment, alarm systems, water supply, fire prevention programs, building construction and distance of potential hazard areas are considered in establishing a rating. Those areas within 5 road miles of the Township fire department are given a Class 9 rating. Class 10 applies to properties located more than 5 road miles from the responding fire department. There are no hydrants within the Township. The rating schedule ranges from the greatest level of protection designated as Class 1 to the least protection, Class 10.

Hospitals/Health Care/Emergency Medical Services

The largest hospital in the Region is the UP Health System - Marquette, which serves as a regional medical center. A medical staff of more than 200 doctors works as a team with its more than 1,800 employees in caring for approximately 9,000 inpatients and more than 350,000 outpatients per year. As a 222-bed tertiary care hospital, UP Health System – Marquette receives patients from across the UP and provides care in 65 specialties and subspecialties. OSF St. Francis Hospital in Escanaba, employs over 700 individuals with more than 100 physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners on staff. The facility offers a variety of primary care and specialty care services.

A broad range of medical and dental specialties are available in both the Marquette and Escanaba areas. The nearest physicians are located in the community of Gwinn. Home health care services are available through several service providers. Advanced Medical Technicians are available from neighboring Forsyth Township and Emergency Medical Services through Rampart Ambulance, a service of U.P. Health System in Marquette. An emergency helicopter service, provided by Guardian Flight in Escanaba, provides the County-area with air medical transportation. Medical helicopters are able to land in the area near the Township Hall. ***In the township's public input survey, respondents rated access to healthcare and social services as the third-most impactful issue to township residents.***

Law Enforcement

The Michigan State Police Post located in Gladstone and the Marquette County Sheriff's Department provide protection for township residents. The Sheriff's Department operates an 80-bed jail on Baraga Avenue in the city of Marquette. The 80-bed jail may also house up to 10 federal inmates. The three-story facility has blocks on each floor where the inmates are classified based on the severity of their crimes. The staff operates with the philosophy

of maintaining the highest level of security, while providing a constitutionally safe and healthy environment for the inmates and staff. Central dispatch for the County's 911 system is provided through the Michigan State Police in Negaunee.

Township Facilities

Community Building

Construction of the 50' by 80' (4,000 square feet) Community Building was completed in 1980 and meets barrier-free requirements. Township Board and other Township bodies conduct their meetings in this facility and it is used as the polling place for elections. In addition to the area used by Township officers and for meetings, the facility contains a kitchen area and large room used for banquets, receptions, reunions, etc. A covered walkway serves as the entrance to this portion of the building. Restrooms within the building are accessible.

Fire Hall

The present 54' by 60' (3,300 square feet) Fire Hall was constructed in 1988 and meets barrier-free requirements. The structure has sufficient capacity to house 5 units and contains a meeting/training room, office and restroom.

Recreation Facilities

Township recreational facilities are located at the Township complex in Arnold adjoining the Wells Township School. A 1,200 square foot outdoor community swimming pool was opened in 1973. An appointed pool manager manages pool operations while the Township Board oversees pool operations. The pool was scheduled to be reconstructed several years ago, but the project was paused during the construction phase. One of the overarching goals established in the Township's 2023 Recreation Plan is to apply for grant funding to reconstruct the pool area and add amenities. A grade-level 40' by 80' pavilion, constructed in 1994, is located adjacent to the Township Hall. The pavilion surface is flooded in the winter to provide a covered outside ice rink for area residents. Barrier-free vaulted toilets are located near the pavilion. Double tennis courts were constructed in 1975 and are presently in poor



condition. The Township has received DNR funding twice – a Land and Water Grant and a Michigan Bond Fund award. The court improvements were done in 2001, and funding for a pavilion was granted in 1990. A baseball field, developed through community volunteer efforts, is located on school district property. The Township is also open to expanding trail for both motorized and nonmotorized use with partnerships between landowners and the DNR.

Cemeteries

The Riverview Cemetery in Northland was established in 1905 and includes 2.0 acres. Forest Home Cemetery in Watson was established in 1916 and includes 4.84 acres. Cemetery records are maintained by the Township Sexton. Sale of cemetery plots is also a function of the Township Sexton. Normal cemetery maintenance is completed by Township seasonal employees. Plot excavation is arranged by plot owners with the approval of the Sexton, per the township cemetery ordinance.

Administration

Wells Township currently has a 5-member Township Board, 5-member Planning Commission, 3-member Zoning Board of Appeals, a 3-member Board of Review, and a Township Sexton for the two cemeteries.

Other Services

Liquor inspections are completed by the County Sheriff's office. Building permits are issued by the Marquette County Building Codes Department. Zoning permits are issued by the Township Zoning Administrator consistent with the Township Zoning Ordinance. Property assessments are completed by the Township Assessor who has attained requisite certification from the State of Michigan.

Postal Services

The closure of the Arnold Post Office, located at the Arnold Trails Station, in 2022 necessitated the reorganization of addressing in the township. Roughly half of the area was organized under the Felch Post Office and zip code (26 miles southwest) and the other half under the Cornell Post Office (17 miles southeast). The change in addressing has exacerbated already existing issues with rural postal services, and added additional travel burdens to residents off the regular mail routes.

Transportation

Moving goods, services, and people is another important factor in determining future development of a community. Having transportation options, as well as things like quality roads, plays a role in business and commercial development.

County Road System

The Marquette County Road Commission is the agency responsible for maintenance, snow removal and improvements of roads within the Township. Because no state highways run through the Township, residents and visitors rely on the local county road system for travel. In accordance with Public Act 51, the Marquette County Road Commission designates roads as primary or local. The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) National Functional

Class (NFC) classifies a road based on the type of service the road is intended to provide. Roads are classified in one of three general categories: arterial, collector, and local. Wells Township contains major collector and local roads.

Collector roads generally serve intra-county traffic, and typically travel distances are shorter than on arterial routes. Consequently, more moderate speeds may be typical. Major collector roads should: (1) Provide service to any county seat not on an arterial route, to the larger towns not directly served by the higher systems, and to other traffic generators of equivalent intra-county importance, such as consolidated schools, shipping points, county parks, important agricultural areas, etc.; (2) link these places with nearby larger towns or cities, or with routes of higher classification; and (3) serve the more important intra-county travel corridors.

The purpose of the local road system is to primarily provide access to adjacent lands and service travel over relatively short distances as compared to collectors or other higher systems. Using State of Michigan road data, Wells Township contains a total of 106.38 miles of road: county major collector roads account for about thirty miles (26.5%); county local roads account for almost forty miles (35.48%); and just over forty miles (37.93%) of road are classified as “not a certified public road”, meaning they are typically private drives or a road that is not typically open to public traffic. The NFC map on page 21 shows the road network for the Township, and classifies roads by National Function Class (NFC).

The Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) is the total volume of traffic for a specific roadway. The AADT is a way to determine how “busy” a road is. The AADT can be used to determine how much maintenance a roadway needs or if enforcement of speed limits needs to be increased. AADT can also be a factor in roadway funding. The Michigan Department of Transportation performs traffic counts on both State Highway systems and local systems, typically in coordination with the Regional Planning Organizations. The township’s main travel roads, CR-426 and CR-557, see between 300-400 cars per day. In comparison with other highways in the area - M-69 near LaBranche has an AADT of 1,065, and M-35 near Rock has an AADT of 1,727.

Current Road Conditions – PASER System

The Marquette County Road Commission utilizes the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) system for assessing the condition of federal-aid eligible paved roads in the County. The Road Surface Rating map at the end of this chapter shows the latest PASER ratings for the township.

PASER is a visual pavement survey method developed by the University of Wisconsin to evaluate surface road conditions. A rating scale of 1-10 (1 being a failed paved road, 10 being a newly paved road) is used to evaluate the surface distress of the pavement based on pavement material and types of deterioration present. The ratings are then grouped into three categories based on the type of work required; Routine Maintenance (8-10), Capital Preventive Maintenance (5-7), and Structural Improvement (1-4).

- Routine Maintenance includes regularly scheduled preventative treatments such as drainage clearing, shoulder grading, and crack sealing.
- Capital Preventive Maintenance consists of planned treatments applied to existing roadways to hinder further deterioration, such as a sealcoat, thin overlay, or crack sealing.
- Roads rated as needing Structural Improvement are those in need of reconstruction to improve the structural integrity of the pavement, such as a thick overlay or a mill & fill.



In Wells Township, roads needing structural improvements include most of County Road 426 (except from Watson to CR 557) and County Road Si. Roads needing capital preventative maintenance include County Road 426 from Watson to CR 557 and the northern portion of County Road Si. The PASER map on page 21 shows current PASER ratings for the Township. ***Poor road conditions continue to be one of the most commented on issues in the community input survey – residents and taxpayers see road repairs and improvements as a very high priority for the Township and County, as well as road-related maintenance (ditches, grass mowing, etc.)***

Other Transportation

Public transportation in the area is provided by Marquette's MarqTran and Delta County's DATA services. MarqTran has regular routes and schedules in the Marquette, Ishpeming/Negaunee, and Gwinn areas. Service is provided via 9 fixed routes Monday – Saturday, door to door service 7 days a week and 2 deviated fixed routes. Senior citizens (60 years or older), students (K-12 & college students with a valid school ID) and people with disabilities ride for half fare. Preschool children ride free of charge with a paying adult. ***Although MarqTran states County-wide service, the community survey and public comments at meetings suggests Wells Township is underserved and getting MarqTran to come to Wells Township has proven to be difficult.***

DATA (Delta Area Transit Authority) has regular routes in Escanaba and Gladstone – rural riders need to make special arrangements. Greyhound Lines provides bus service and has regular schedules in Escanaba and Marquette, with optional stops in Gladstone, Gwinn, Powers/Spalding, and Stephenson. Air travel is provided by Marquette Sawyer Regional Airport (formerly Sawyer International Airport) at the former K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base, and at the Delta County Airport in Escanaba. Rail lines in the area are now entirely used for the transport of goods through the region. The Escanaba & Lake Superior Railroad (E&LS) is headquartered in Wells and owns an inactive rail line that spans the township parallel to County Road 426.

Topography, Soils, Geology/Bedrock, Surface Water

The bedrock of Wells Township consists of sedimentary rocks that were formed during the Paleozoic Era, about 400 to 500 million years ago. The Paleozoic rocks that underlie the Township include sandstone, limestone, and dolomite of the Cambrian and Ordovician Periods.

Wells Township contains approximately seventy (70) types of soil, according to SSURGO soil data. Because of the high number of soil types and the difficulty displaying those soils on a map, a generalized soil map is on page 24. Grouping soils in general groups provides a broad understanding of the soil types in an area. Generally, the Township contains sandy loams and some areas of organically-rich soils.

The topography of Wells Township is a gradual rise in elevation from the SE corner to the NW corner, as shown on the map on page 25. The Township has very few areas with steep slopes (greater than 10%).

The largest surface water features in the Township are the West Branch of the Escanaba River and the Ford River. Several miles' worth of creeks and smaller rivers also traverse the Township. There are numerous small lakes scattered around the Township, but nothing larger than a few acres.

Recreation, Wildlife, and Protected Species

The Township contains a large amount of State land, which can be used by the public for recreation. Approximately 25 miles of snowmobile and ORV trail run north-south through the Township (see map on page 25). The Township does not contain any DNR designated hiking, ski, or motorcycle trails. Wells Township also participates in the County's ORV Ordinance, which regulates ORV traffic along County roads.

With the vast amount of State-owned land in the township, it's recommended the Township Board work with and communicate with the MDNR to continue trail development on State lands and work with private landowners on any areas that are significant (such as crossings, etc.) With the increased use of ORVs, the MDNR has shown its dedication to regional and local motorized trail development by opening new trails in the township. Smaller, localized non-motorized trails in the township would provide opportunities for residents and tourists. Access to the abundant wilderness areas and expanded motorized and nonmotorized trail development were established as goals in the Township's 2023 Recreation Plan.

The only major recreational facility is at the Township Hall complex, which is described in more detail under Township Facilities earlier in this chapter. Marquette County maintains several county-owned facilities around the county, but no county-owned facilities are present within Wells Township. The city of Marquette provides the bulk of recreational opportunities in the county, as well as the cities of Escanaba and Gladstone, both in neighboring Delta County. A small rustic campground at Boney Falls (Escanaba River) is privately owned but offered to area residents and visitors.

The Michigan Natural Features Inventory provides a listing of rare and endangered species by county. Marquette County has 70 different plant and animal species listed under the MNFI. Because of the sensitivity of specific locations of these species, the MNFI has created the Biological Rarity Index, which provides a ranking (high, moderate, low) of finding a rare or endangered species in a certain location. This rarity map is shown on page 24 and shows the locations of these areas and their risk probability.

Sites of Environmental Contamination

Part 213 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (1994 PA 451, as amended) regulates underground storage tanks in Michigan. The Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) maintains a database of closed & active underground storage tanks (UST). There are currently three (3) sites within Wells Township that had or have underground storage tanks: Jaeger's IGA – Closed UST, Tank Removed; Lapalmes Country Corner (Now Arnold Trails Station) – Open UST; Northland Bar & Hotel – Closed UST, Tank Removed. The site of Lapalmes Country Corner (Arnold Trails Station) had three tanks previously removed (closed), and has one tank in use. All three sites have had leaks reported on site – only the Northland leaking tank has a status of closed. The other two sites where leaking tanks were found have not been remediated.

Per the Michigan EGLE, remedial action of a contaminated site can occur in several ways. Currently, the owners of the property at the time a leak occurred are ultimately responsible for cleanup of a contaminated site. However, if the property is either in foreclosure or another party is interested in purchasing the site (but does not want to be responsible for cleanup), the EGLE allows for a Baseline Environmental Assessment (BEA) to be performed at the property to determine what contamination, if any, exists at the site. A properly conducted BEA allows the property to be acquired or for an individual to begin operating a facility without being held liable for existing contamination. BEAs are used to gather enough information about the property being transferred so existing contamination can be distinguished from any possible new releases that might occur after the new owner or operator takes over the property. More information about BEAs is available from EGLE.

Clean and Affordable Energy

One of the biggest issues facing the Upper Peninsula is energy – the cost of energy, the reliability of energy, and the future of energy. Energy discussions in recent years have slightly shifted from a traditional thought of “alternative” energy to clean and affordable energy starting with energy generation, the electrical grid, transmission, etc. Energy options such as wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal are becoming more affordable and more viable, and federal and state programs are promoting their expanded use.

Energy infrastructure in Michigan is vastly different between the Upper and Lower Peninsulas. More than 90% of all electric energy in the Lower Peninsula is supplied by just two utilities (Consumers and DTE). In contrast, the U.P. is serviced by four privately owned utilities (UPPCO, WE, WPS and XCEL), three rural electric co-ops (OCREA, Alger-Delta and Cloverland) and 13 small municipal utilities. Their service areas are overlapping and non-contiguous, with no clear demarcation at municipal or county boundaries. While the control and ownership of some utilities in the region has undergone change, the service areas have remained largely intact in recent history.

Historically, electric generation in the U.P. began with small site-specific coal-based power plants built near and in support of mining activity in the region¹. Sized adequate to the needs of local mining activity, such generation facilities weren't meant to serve as large independent 'utility scale' power plants. As mining activity ceased, many of these generation facilities have either closed down, or have been forced to continue to operate in order to maintain grid reliability in the region². Municipal coal-based power plants in the region have been shut down, in favor of purchasing intra-regional power, or have been replaced by natural gas generation plants.

In Wells Township, this plan recommends the Township be open to allowing various forms of small-scale energy options and generation. The township already has a substantial substation present off County Road 426. As electrical transmission and distribution become more critical, the Township should take steps to work with utilities to improve the energy situation as much as possible. The Township has already added provisions for scaled wind and solar energy systems of various configurations to the zoning ordinance.

According to NREL data as compiled by CUPPAD, the Township's wind power potential is classified as "poor". The Township's annual average daily total solar resource (AADTSR) is 3.75 – 3.85 MW hours/m²/day (averaged over surface cells of 10 km in size). Large solar farms are in the planning stages both to the north and west in Marquette and Dickinson Counties which could lead to further installations as a result of statewide and national goals and programs. ***In the public input survey, respondents rated a lack of infrastructure investment (in roads, power, and other utilities) as the most impactful issue for township residents.***

Broadband Internet Access

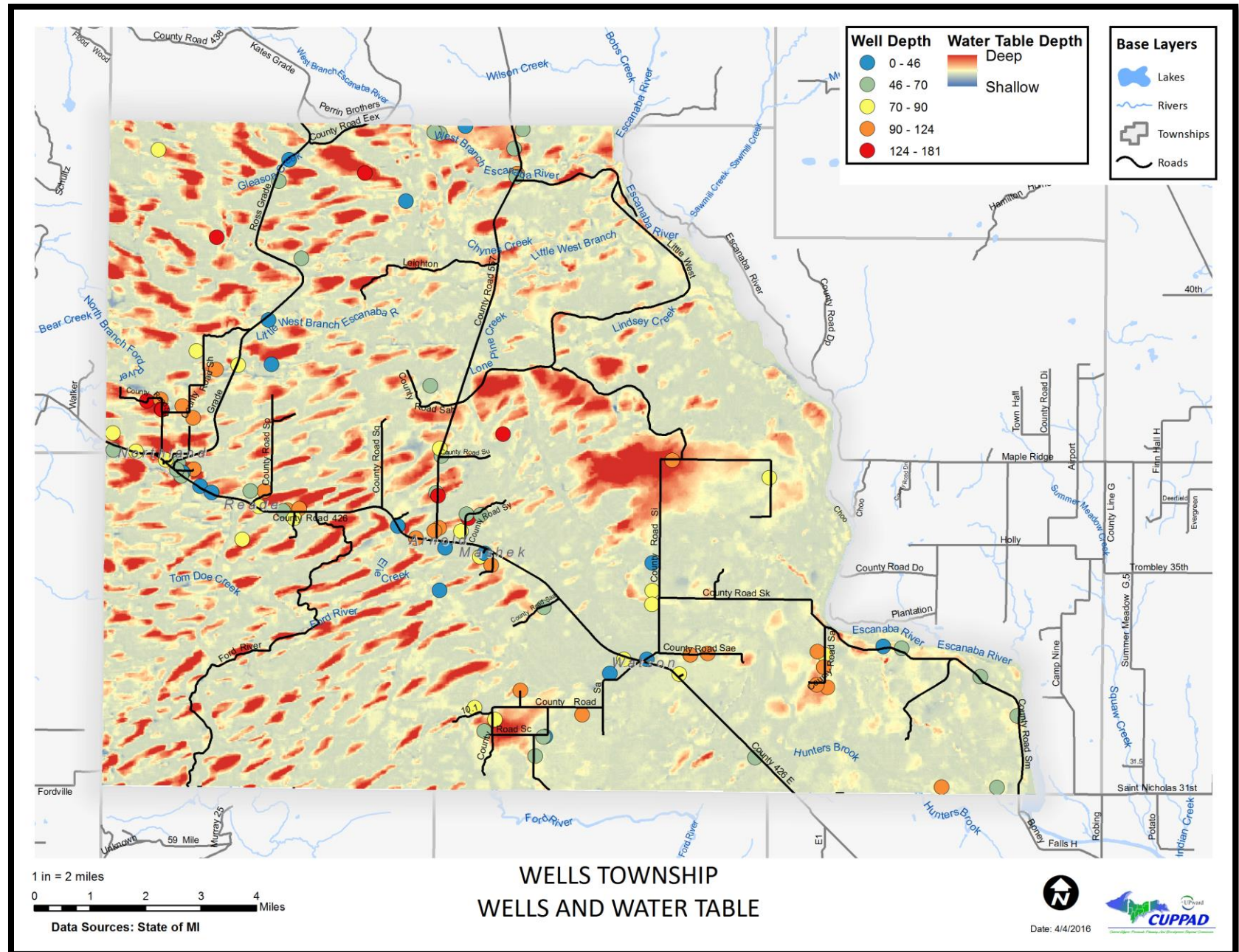
Internet service is an almost ubiquitous need to participate in the current digital economy. Communication, schooling, healthcare, recreation, business, and services all rely on uninterrupted internet connections to operate effectively. High-speed internet access also allows for participation in remote work opportunities; an attraction for new residents looking to move from more urban areas. The current accepted need for internet speed in households is "broadband" or 100 megabytes per second (Mbps) download and 10 Mbps upload speeds.

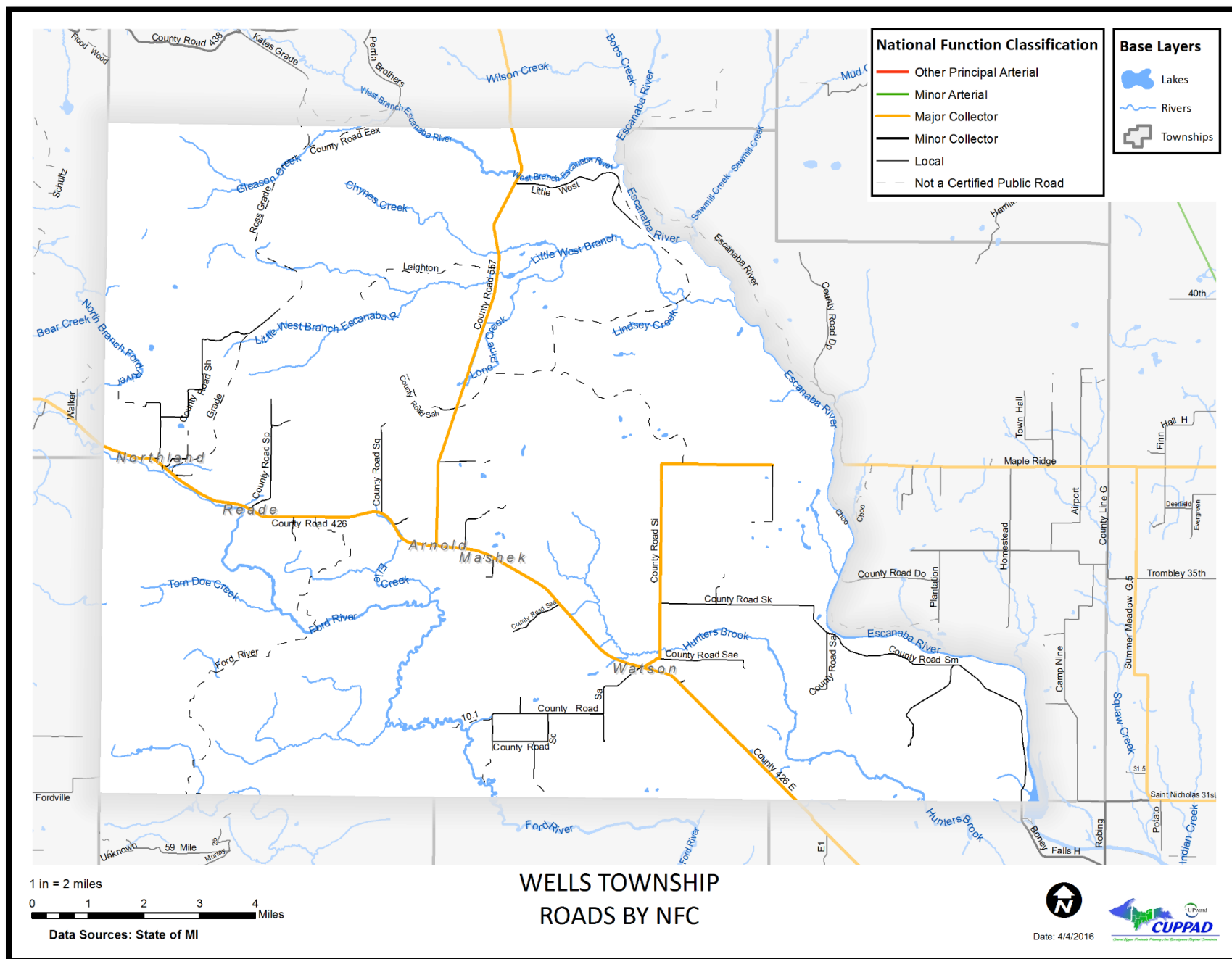
Broadband quality internet service may soon be available to residents through companies participating in state and federal rural infrastructure programs. Wells Township has been identified as an underserved area where potential funding will be available to bring broadband quality internet to people's homes. The Township should continue to support these initiatives and will be able to market the availability to potential residents and visitors. Broadband access will also allow residents to participate in remote healthcare opportunities, reducing the need to travel nearly an hour to Marquette and Escanaba for some types of care. ***Through the public input survey, respondents rated access to the internet and cellular phone service as the second most impactful issue for township residents.***

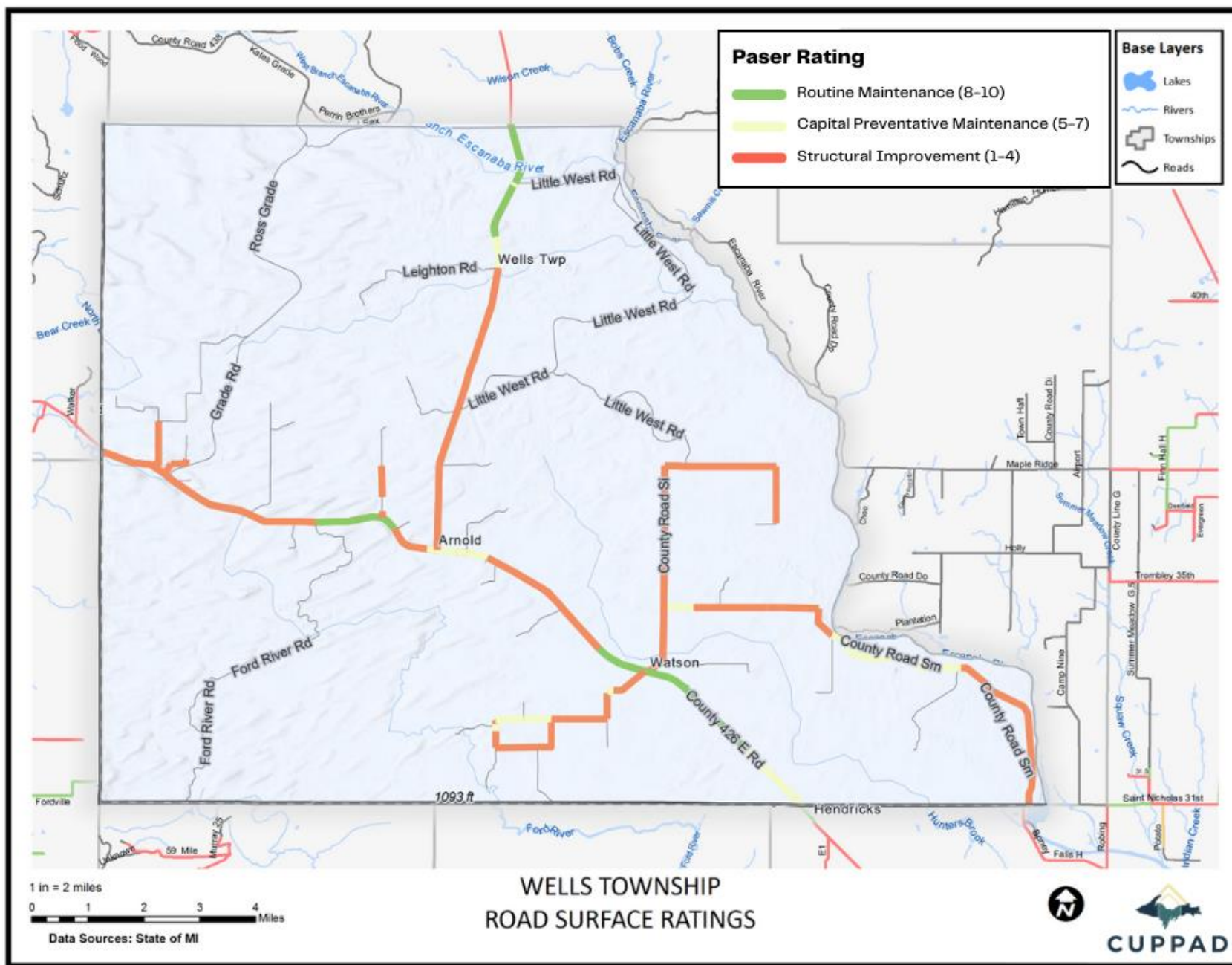
¹ http://www.michigan.gov/documents/energy/ETF_Policy_Position_long_419056_7.pdf

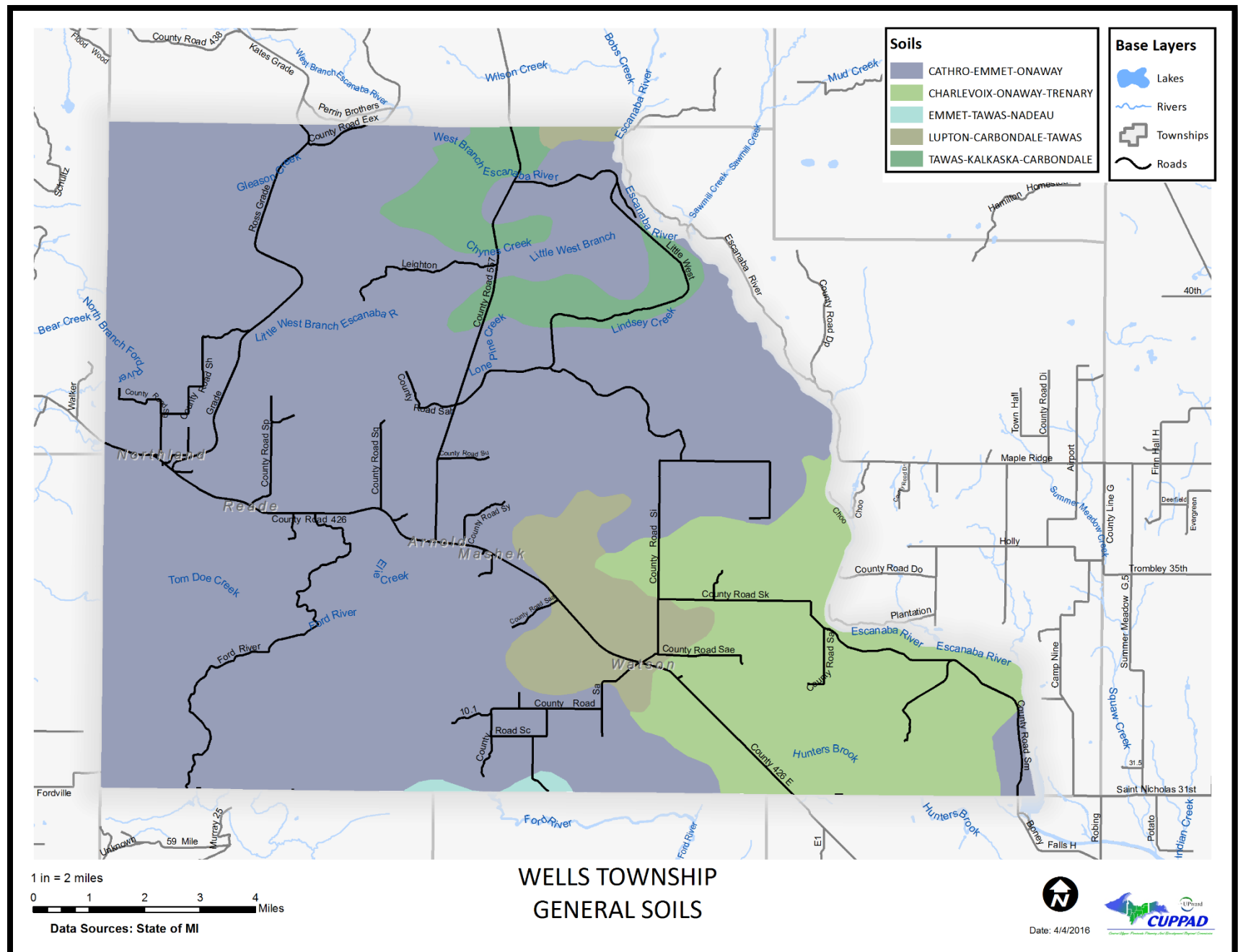
² <http://www.ferc.gov/whats-new/comm-meet/2015/091715/E-7.pdf>

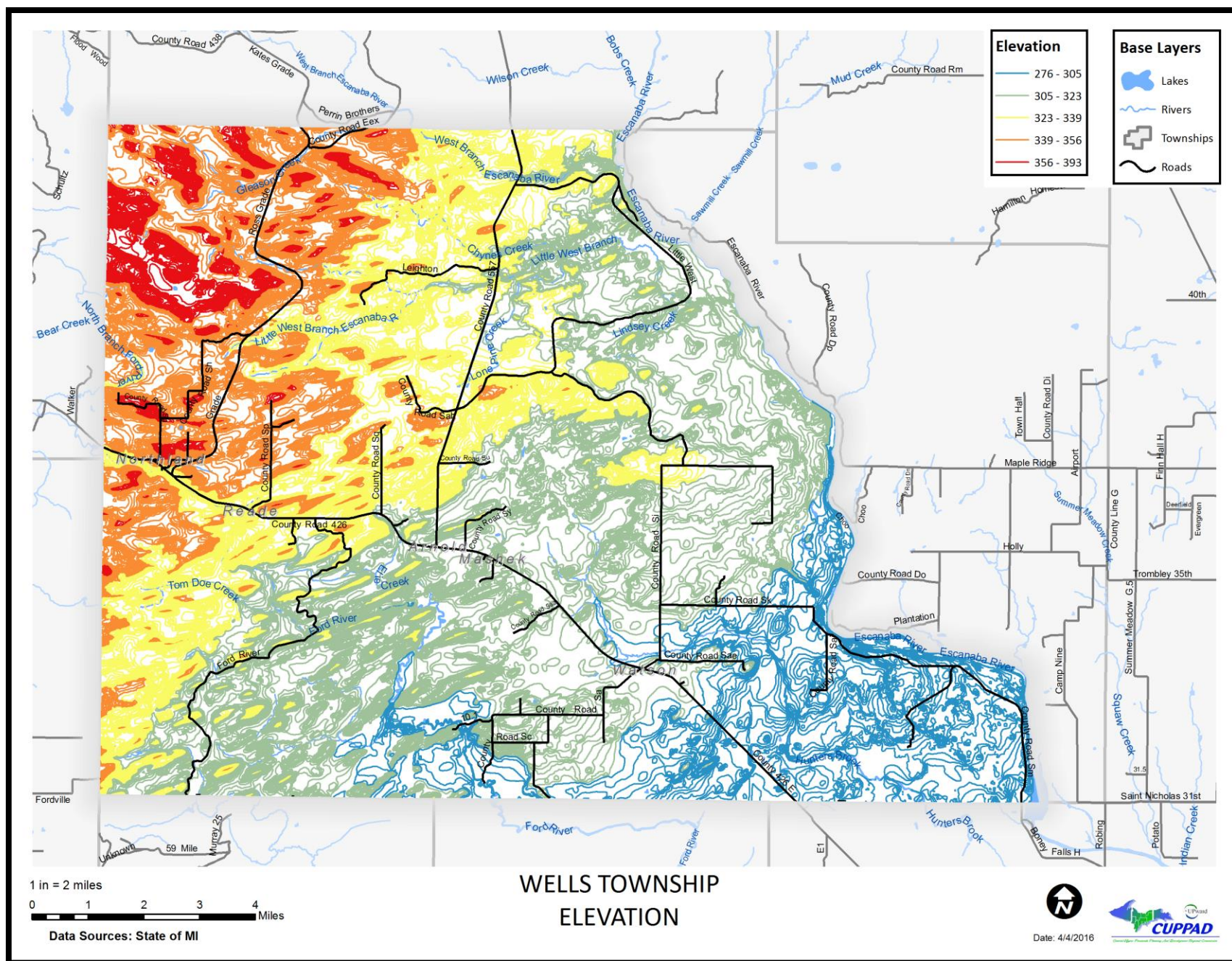
CHAPTER THREE MAPS

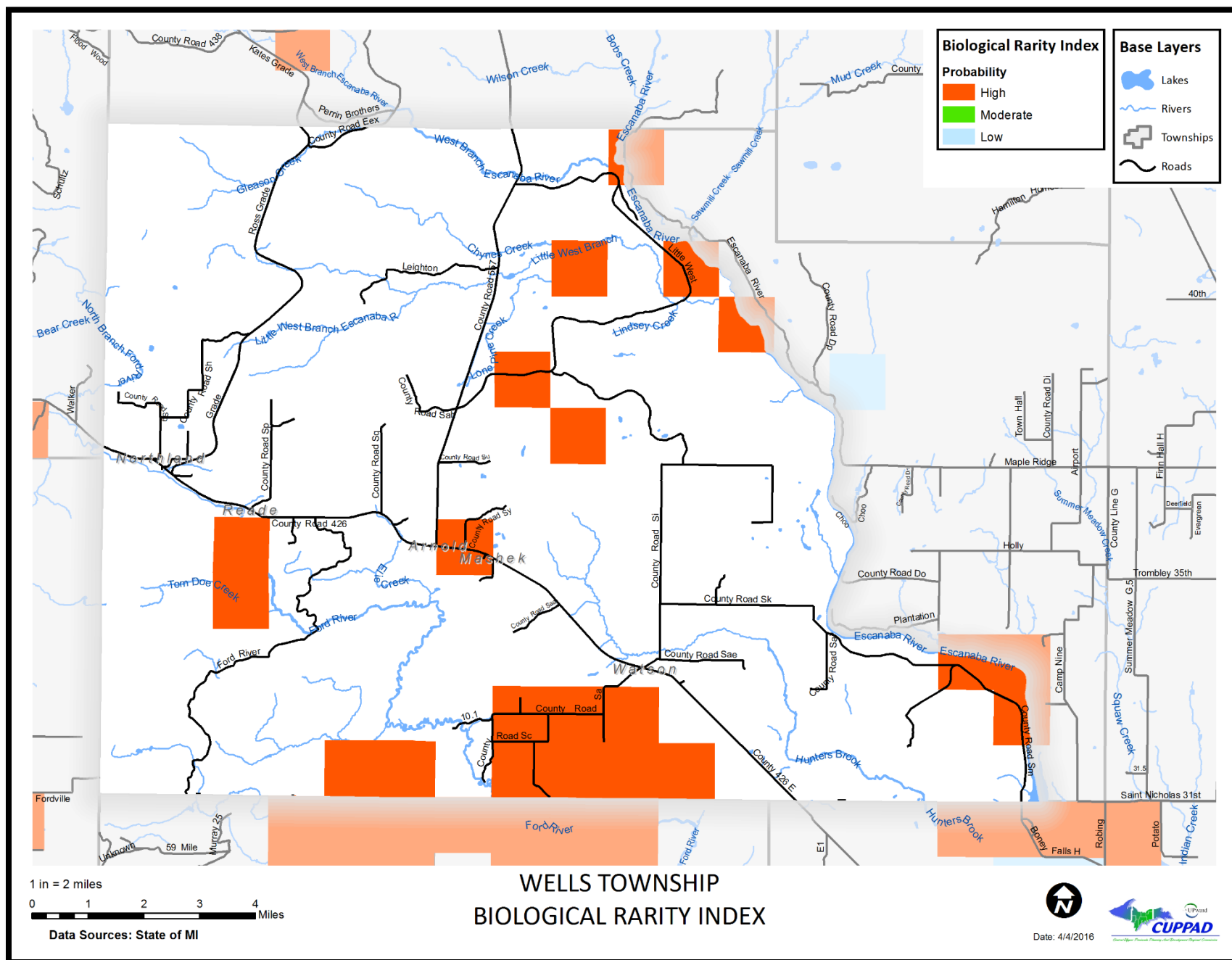


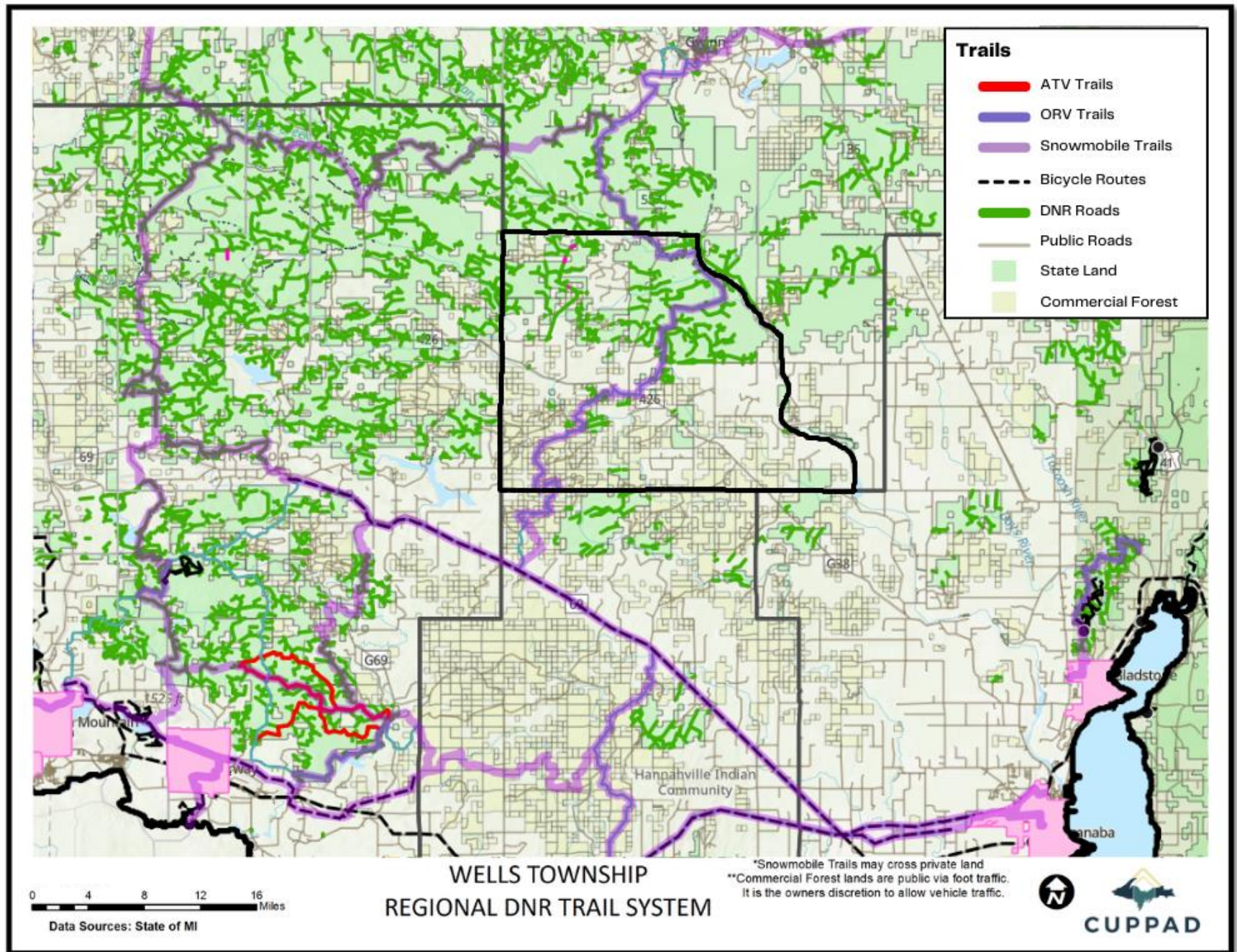












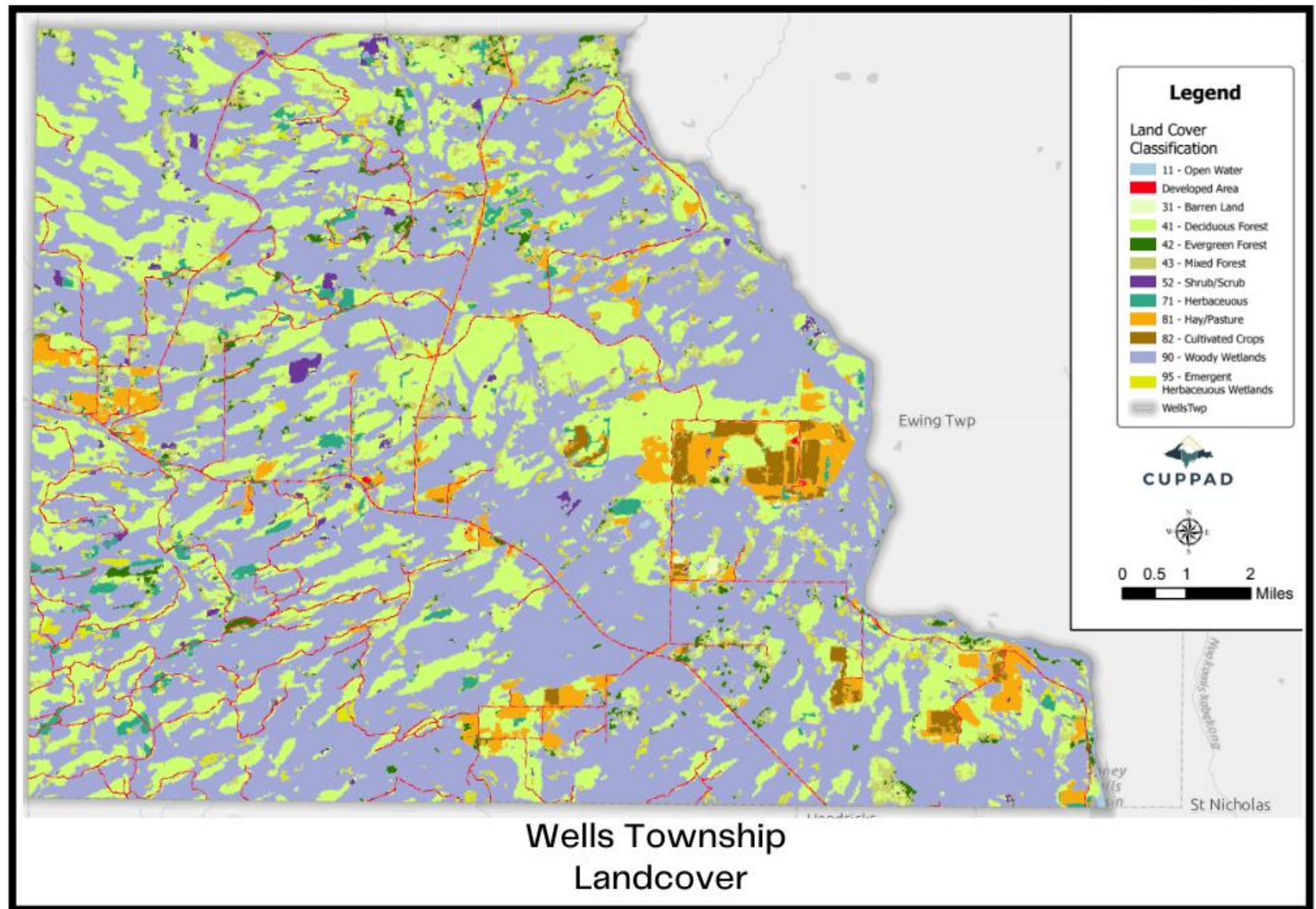
Chapter Four – Current Land Use/Land Cover

Before determining potential future land uses and developing the future land use map, the Township must have an accurate assessment of existing land uses. This process identifies urban built-up land uses along with natural land cover types like forest and wetlands. The following maps show land cover for the Township – one map shows data from the 2021 National Land Cover Dataset, and the other shows general land use for the Township, produced by the Marquette County Resource and Planning Department. The predominant land cover types in the Township include wetlands and forestland, which make up 54% and 36% respectively. Only a small percentage of the Township is considered developed – mostly along County Road 426 and off County Road Sa, south of CR 426. A few scattered areas of “built-up” development are better seen on the generalized land use map. The State of Michigan owns approximately 31,500 acres of land (31.7% of Township’s total acreage), and Commercial Forest covers approximately 28,500 acres (28.7% of Township’s total acreage).

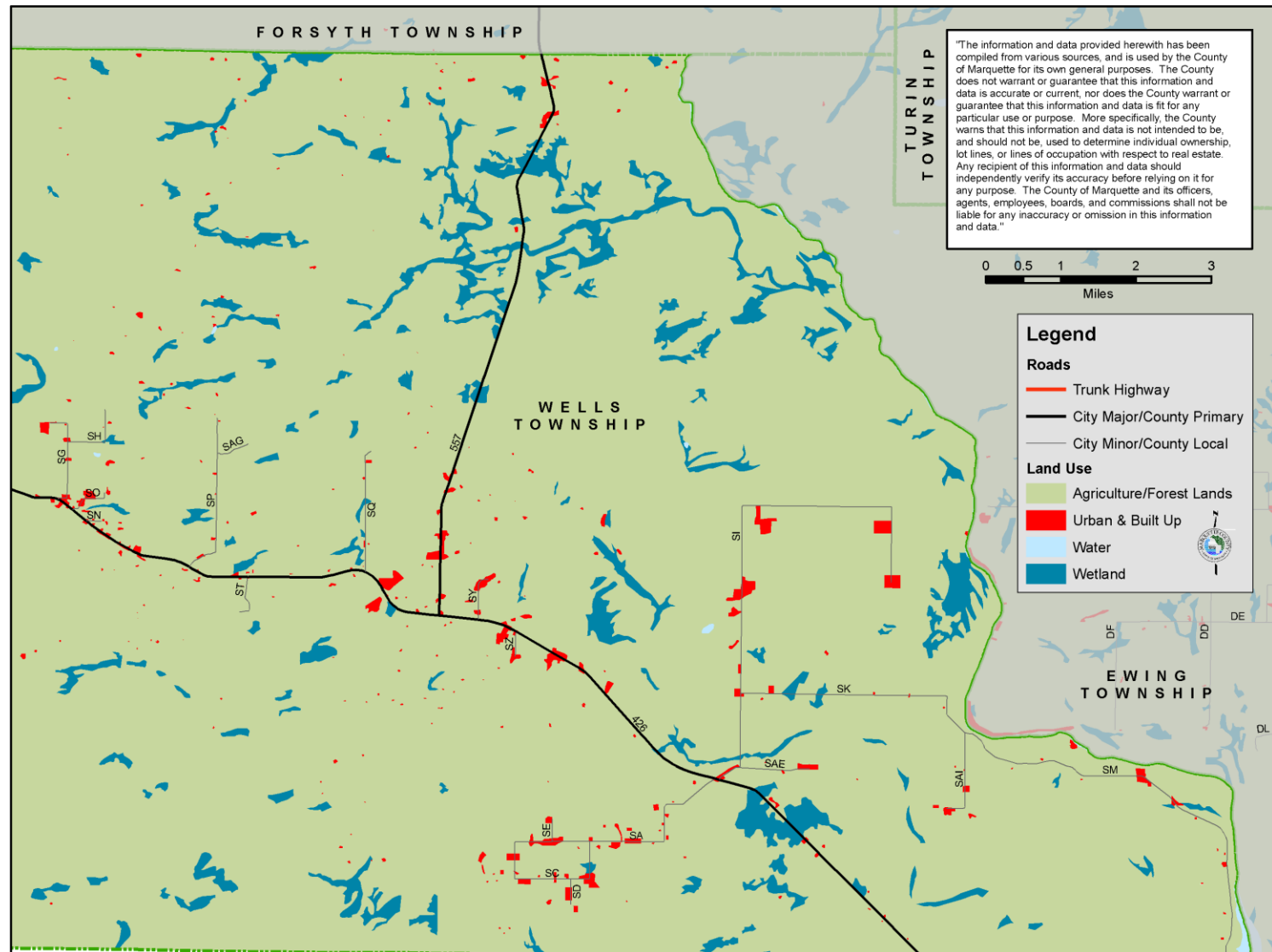
The table below shows the state equalized value (SEV) for properties in Wells Township from 2020 to 2023. The Township is taxed residential by a large margin, while agriculture and timber are second and third.

	2020 SEV	2020 % of Total	2021 SEV	2021 % of Total	2022 SEV	2022 % of Total	2023 SEV	2023 % of Total
Agriculture	\$5,819,100	17%	\$4,898,950	15%	\$5,178,200	16%	\$5,402,050	15%
Commercial	\$338,900	1%	\$328,500	1%	\$334,550	1%	\$353,100	1%
Industrial	\$1,138,400	3%	\$1,149,100	4%	\$1,148,950	3%	\$859,800	2%
Residential	\$19,440,700	57%	\$19,061,700	59%	\$18,890,000	57%	\$21,404,000	61%
Forest/Timber	\$7,332,300	22%	\$6,689,000	21%	\$7,385,550	22%	\$7,292,500	21%
Total	\$34,069,400		\$32,127,250		\$32,937,250		\$35,311,450	
<i>Source: Dept. of Treasury, MQT County Report</i>								

CHAPTER FOUR MAPS



Wells Township Generalized Land Use 2014



Chapter Five – Future Land Use and Zoning Plan

The final step in completing a Master Plan is to determine the types, location and intensities of development that should occur in the future. Future land use planning establishes the desired amounts and locations of residential, commercial, and industrial development; public facilities; environmental conservation and recreational areas; and changes or improvements to the local transportation system. With the establishment of a Future Land Use Plan, Wells Township intends to ensure that existing land uses can continue; that natural resources such as lakes, wetlands, and forestlands will be protected; and that growth can be accommodated with minimal land use conflicts or negative environmental impacts. While future land uses are difficult to predict, a future land use plan provides a scenario with which Wells Township may use as a guide when considering land use and development decisions.

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA), as amended, requires in Section 203 (1) that zoning be based on a plan. Similarly, Section 33 (2) (d) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), as amended, sets forth the purpose for developing a zoning plan. This Chapter includes the Zoning Plan, which is intended to guide the implementation of and future changes to the Township Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Plan describes:

- the purpose, general location, and general uses allowed for each existing and proposed zoning district;
- the differences between future land use categories on the Future Land Use Map and the existing and proposed zoning districts;
- a recommendation of dimensional standards for existing and proposed zoning districts
- the existing zoning map and future land use map

The relationship between the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance is often misunderstood. The Master Plan is a guide for land use for the future; the Zoning Ordinance regulates the use of land in the present. The Master Plan is not a binding, legal document; the Zoning Ordinance is a law that must be followed by the community's residents and others wishing to develop or do business in the Township. The future land use recommended for an area may be the same as the existing zoning for that area, while in some cases the future land use recommended is different from the existing zoning. The Future Land Use Map does not change the existing zoning in an area. A property owner must use the property as it is currently zoned.

The Future Land Use Map reflects the assumption that land use patterns in Wells Township will continue to be heavily influenced by recreation and forestry management, with the potential for some small business or home-based businesses, including short-term rentals. Potential updates to the Wells Township Zoning Ordinance are discussed throughout this chapter. These changes can be pursued as the need or opportunity presents itself. The Planning Commission can identify major policies it wishes to implement and begin to work on the corresponding zoning changes at the same time.

Existing Zoning Districts and Dimensional Standards

The current Wells Township Zoning Ordinance, last updated in 2020, lists 5 zoning districts which are briefly described below. As a result of the recommendations made in the Township's 2016 Master Plan, the Planning Commission implemented a number of revisions that resulted in reducing the number of zoning districts from 11, and created the waterfront development overlay district to protect uses in proximity to bodies of water. The current configuration of zoning districts has resulted in few issues, so this plan recommends that the current districts are anticipated to continue as current.

Future Land Use/Zoning 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, or will be used. The future land use map is general in nature and acts as a guide as to 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 Wells Township. The Future Land Use Map, along with its associated descriptions for future land use classifications, makes up the Future Land Use Plan. The Future Land Use Map should serve as a guide for making decisions on the rezoning of land.

The following table shows the relationship between the general Future Land Use Categories created as part of the planning process, the existing zoning districts, and proposed zoning districts. This plan recommends that the current zoning districts are anticipated to continue as current, with minor administrative updates and regulation of particular uses.

Future Land Use Categories and Associated Zoning Districts		
Future Land Use Categories	Existing Zoning Districts	Future Zoning Districts
Residential	Rural Residential (RR-1)	Residential
Waterfront	Waterfront Development Overlay (WDO-1)	Lakes and Rivers Overlay
Resource and Production	Agriculture & Resource Production (ARP-1)	Resource Production
Mixed Use	Rural Development (RD-1)	Township Development
Industrial	Industrial (I-1)	Industry Development

Future Land Use Categories

The Wells Township Planning Commission, with public input and assistance from CUPPAD, has developed the following future land use zoning district recommendations for the Township. The future land use categories are consistent with the surrounding townships. Future zoning districts align closely with the existing ordinance descriptions as the districts are expected to remain largely the same in character and intent.

Residential

The Residential District is intended for the establishment and preservation of quiet neighborhoods for single-family and two-family dwellings free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents in this District. The Residential District is designed to accommodate residential opportunities for those who are willing to assume the costs of providing their own services requiring spacious lots; ensuring a safe, potable water supply and treatment of wastewater on the same lot.

Lakes and Rivers Overlay

The Lakes and Rivers Overlay District is intended 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

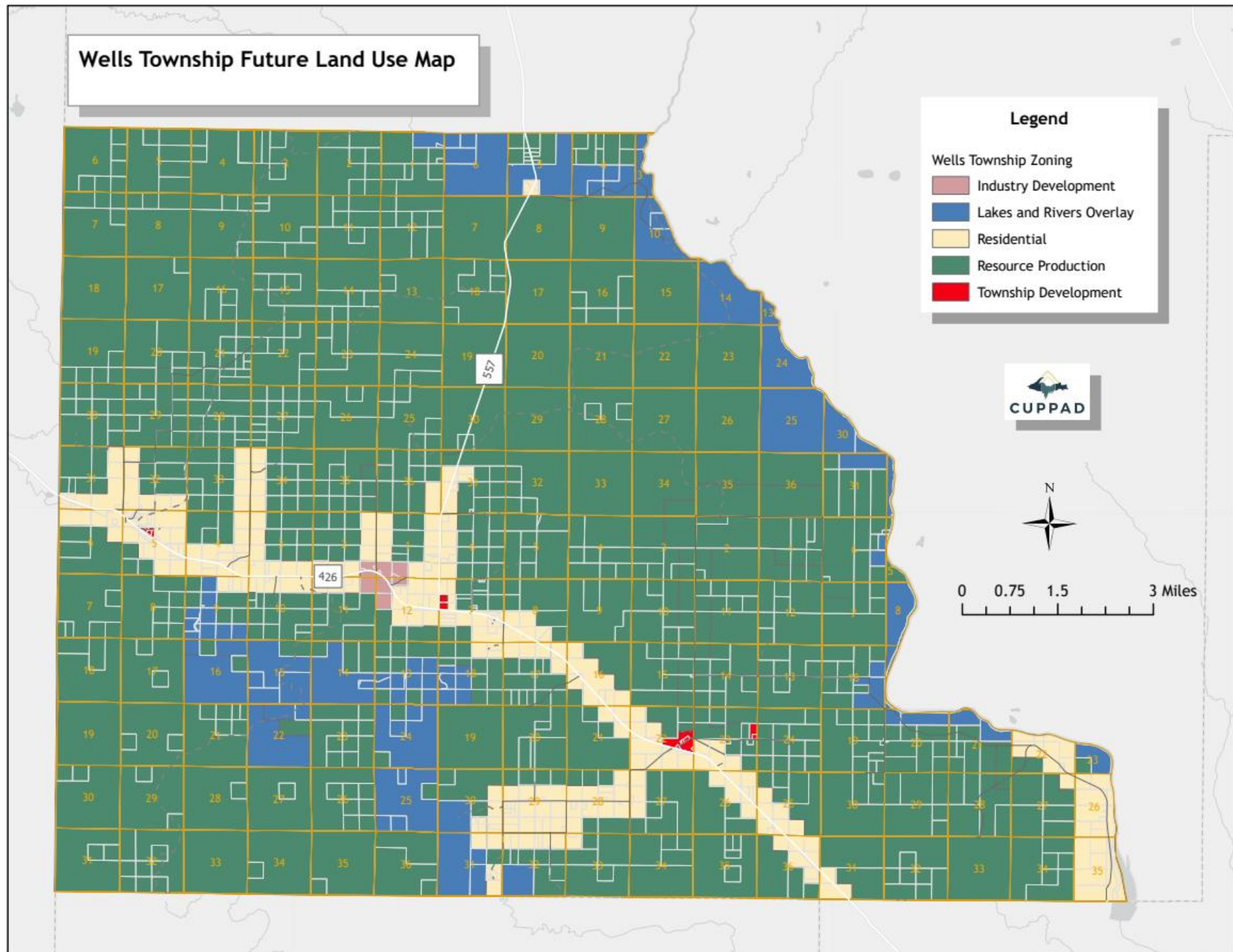
The Resource Production District is intended for recreational uses and extraction activities. The District is designed for areas with frontage on inland lakes and rivers, which because of their natural characteristics, accessibility, and high cost of providing public services, are suited for less intensive development intended for recreational or seasonal development. To preserve for productivity and protect from other incompatible uses the lands which have suitable soil characteristics for the growing of crops and animals beneficial to humans and to allow forestry and mineral extraction where such resources exist and their removal will not interfere with the overall operation and productivity of adjoining agricultural land uses. The District maintains low density rural areas which because of their rural character and location, potential mineral content, accessibility, natural characteristics and high cost of providing public services are not suitable for year-round development but rather for a wide range of forestry, agriculture, mineral extraction, natural resource and recreational uses. Governmental services may not be provided on a year-round basis or may not be provided at all.

Township Development

The Township Development District is intended 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 is in accord with established patterns of land use and the needs of nearby residents.

Industry Development

The Industry Development District is 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 service the immediate needs of an industrial area.



Zoning Recommendations

Outside of the districts, zoning changes are expected to relate to particular uses that may have an impact on the health, safety, and welfare of residents, or may be implemented to reduce or clarify the administration of the ordinance.

Recommended Dimensional Standards

The following table lists a **proposed** schedule of regulations for consideration in future updates to the Township Zoning Ordinance. The schedule of regulations outlined in the current ordinance may continue with little or no changes. Footnotes in the schedule of regulations may be amended to reflect the passage of repealed acts: Public Act 346 of 1972 being replaced by Part 301 of Public Act 451 of 1994, and Public Act 130 of 1931 being replaced by Public Act 51 of 1951, as amended. The table below should not be used or confused with the official zoning requirements.

District	Min. Lot Size (sq. ft.)	Min. Lot Width (ft.) (a)	Front Setback (ft.)	Side Setback (ft.)	Rear Setback (ft.)	Max Bldg. Height (ft.)
Residential	2 acres	200	15	15(b)	15	30
Lakes and Rivers Overlay	1 acre	100	75	75	75	30
Resource Production (h)	5 acres	300	25	15(g)	15(c)(g)	40(f)
Township Development	20,000(e)	-	10	10(b)	10	30
Industry Development	5 acres	300	50	30(e)	30	(d)

- a. Lot width shall be measured at front setback line and shall not include any encumbrances, such as easements or other such restrictions. Regardless of actual lot size, the maximum depth to width ratio shall be 4 to 1.
- b. An accessory building or structure may be located 6 feet from a side lot line.
- c. All structures shall be provided with access to their rear yard, with a minimum of thirty (30) feet clear and unobstructed access way or easement. Setbacks from the existing residential parcels shall be: 50 feet for all buildings; 25 feet for driveways, entrances or exits; and 10 feet for parking areas.
- d. Height at any point on a structure shall not exceed the horizontal distance to any lot line.
- e. The determination of lot size when adjoining a road shall be made as if the road was a part of the lot in question. For example, a 20-acre parcel fronting on a road will lose approximately one-half acre in the road right-of-way. This will then make the parcel size IV-1 19.5 acres, however, it will still conform to the 20 acre minimum lot size requirement.
- f. The minimum landscaped open space ratio shall be twenty-five (25) percent in the Township Development District.
- g. Customary accessory buildings or structures shall be at least located thirty (30) feet from the rear lot line and waterfront. Rear setback for parcels not abutting water courses shall be thirty (30) feet for all structures.
- h. Waterfront Development
 - a. Setbacks from Water - All structures on lots abutting any body of water, as defined in Act No. 346 of the Public Acts of 1972, including, but not limited to, inland lakes, rivers, streams, and impoundments, shall maintain a minimum setback of 75 feet as measured from the high-water mark or lot line. All uses shall be subject to this setback except private bathing facilities, saunas, storage sheds, and associated facilities which shall maintain a minimum setback of 30 feet as measured from the high-water mark or lot line.
 - b. Shore and Bank Area Alterations - The part of that setback which lies within 30 feet of the water edge shall be maintained in its natural condition. Trees and shrubs in a space 50 feet wide may be trimmed or pruned for a view of the fronting waters and for access thereto. No change shall be made in its natural grade. A

- lot shall be regarded in its natural condition when there is at least one tree or shrub having a height of at least 15 feet for each 75 square feet of area thereof in wooded areas or sufficient natural ground cover in open areas.
- c. Limitation of "Funnel Development" - Any development in any zoning district which shares a common lakefront or stream area may not permit more than one (1) single-family home, cottage, condominium or apartment unit to the use of each one hundred (100) feet of lake or stream frontage in such common lakefront or stream area as measured along the water's edge of normal high-water mark of the lake or stream. This restriction is intended to limit the number of users of the lake or stream frontage to preserve the quality of the waters, avoid congestion, and to preserve the quality of recreational use of all waters and recreational lands within the Township. This restriction shall apply to any parcel regardless of whether access to the water shall be gained by easement, common fee ownership, single fee ownership or lease. This restriction shall not apply to an official public access site.
 - i. Where the right-of-way is established under the McKnitt Act (P.A. 130 of 1931 as amended) and varies from the standard 66 feet of width, the set back shall be not less than 63 feet from the centerline of the roadway.

The proliferation of short-term rentals throughout the Upper Peninsula has created issues in the housing market and with tourism. Residential housing now used as bed and breakfasts and short-term rentals (VRBOs, AirBNBs), has brought additional tourism and economic opportunities to the township, but in some cases has been disruptive to local residents. These types of uses are intended to be defined and regulations explored by the Planning Commission, in order to protect the interests of both permanent residents and transient visitors.

Other potential zoning ordinance updates will focus on modernizing the ordinance, streamlining the development process, and reducing administration; these may include:

- Reviewing the updating definitions and references to align with current statutes and standards.
- Creating more accessibility and readability through revisions for clarity and format.
- Including regulations to accommodate new trends in land use and zoning that may be identified.
- Reviewing the Schedule of Regulations to apply appropriate standards for lot area, setbacks, and waterfront protection.
- Updating the zoning map.
- Reviewing and strengthening the language describing the intent of each zoning district to ensure the protection of the township's character and the health, safety and welfare of the community.

Chapter Six – Goals and Objectives

Part of the Master Plan process includes developing a set of goals and objectives that meet and satisfy the desires and wishes of Wells Township and its residents. After reviewing the community input surveys, discussing issues with residents at the public meeting, and considering existing and future conditions of the Township, the Planning Commission established the following Goals and Objectives. These goals and objectives will provide guidance to the Wells Township Planning Commission and Township Board.

Community & Economic Development

Goal: Expand and improve the economic base within the Township, allowing a varied mix of uses and businesses to encourage growth and development.

Objectives:

- Encourage home occupations as permitted uses and support existing businesses within the Township through local planning and zoning practices. Update the zoning ordinance to provide more flexibility in future development.
- Realizing that motorized recreation is a recently growing economic factor, work towards improving motorized access travel through the Township (snowmobile, four-wheelers, side-by-sides) and also work to develop destinations for these users (such as rest stops, parks, etc.)
- Ensure a basic property maintenance code is in effect and properly enforced to ensure properties are properly maintained to encourage future growth and development.
- Explore the possibility of campsites, local trail systems, and other localized efforts that may encourage visitors to stay in the area.

Natural Resources & Recreation

Goal: Support wide-ranging development and preservation of the Township's natural resources, recognizing that natural resources are an important economic base to the Township.

Objectives:

- Collaborate with the State of Michigan to develop recreational trails (both motorized and non-motorized) on State land within the Township.
- In a cooperative effort, work with local snowmobile clubs, MDNR, County Road Commission, MDOT, and County law enforcement to continue the maintenance of a regional snowmobile network through the township.
- Work cooperatively with the Conservation District and area groups to preserve and enhance the quality of the Escanaba and Ford river systems.
- Work with the MDNR and commercial forest landowners to ensure sound timber management practices are being performed within the township; attend annual MDNR public meetings to review and provide input on timber cuts in forest management units within the township.

Community Facilities and Services

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

Objectives:

- Continue to encourage cooperation with neighboring townships.
- Support local and regional efforts to expand internet and cellular services by working with Marquette County, CUPPAD, ConnectMI, and local providers to increase these services within the township.
- Work with the Marquette County Solid Waste Management Authority and local providers to improve solid waste and recycling services within the township. Seek recycling infrastructure grants to help facilitate recycling collection at the Township transfer station.
- Work with the Marquette County Sheriff Department and Michigan State Police to improve law enforcement services within the township, or explore possible agreements with Delta and Menominee Counties to have service expanded into Wells Township.
- Work with the Marquette County Road Commission to find solutions to improve the quality of the local road system, emphasizing that quality roads are a factor in the local economy and quality of life of taxpayers and residents.
- Continue to support the local fire department and emergency responders.

Master Plan Implementation and 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 Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that the Master Plan must be reviewed at least every five years to determine if updates are needed. It is strongly recommended that this Master Plan be reviewed annually, and changes be made as necessary to maintain its use as a reliable planning tool.

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

The Wells Township Planning Commission is required to develop an annual report for the Wells Township Board. The Planning Commission should also consider developing a priority listing of projects and assigning actions to various bodies of the Township in order to progress items identified within this plan.

Appendix A: Survey Information, Public Comment, Notification Documentation

SURVEY

Conducted April-May of 2023 through [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com)

Wells Township, Marquette County Master Plan

Your voice matters! Wells Township has begun the process of updating its Master Plan. Citizen input is an integral part of a Master Plan. The Plan illustrates the goals for development in the township, and is the basis for regulating land use and identifying the needs of the citizenry for up to the next 20 years. Please complete the following questionnaire; your responses are anonymous and will be reported in group form only. Thank you!

1. I live in the area of:

- ☐ Watson
- ☐ Arnold
- ☐ Northland
- ☐ Northern Wells Township
- ☐ Other (please specify)

2. I live in the Township:

- ☐ I live in the township year-round
- ☐ 9-12 months a year
- ☐ About half the year
- ☐ 3 months a year or less

3. Where is your place of employment located?

- ☐ I'm retired
- ☐ I'm in school
- ☐ I work remotely from my home
- ☐ I work within Wells Township
- ☐ I work somewhere else in Marquette County
- ☐ I work in Delta County
- ☐ I work in Dickinson County
- ☐ I work somewhere else
- ☐ I'm unemployed

4. How important is it to you that the Township's population continues to be maintained or grow?

- ☐ I think it should grow a lot
- ☐ I think it should grow a little bit
- ☐ I think it should stay the same
- ☐ I would prefer the population decrease

5. What strategy would you prefer for growth of businesses or commercial opportunities?

- ☐ Growth encouraged
- ☐ Growth takes it own course
- ☐ Planned and limited growth
- ☐ No growth

6. If new businesses were able to locate in the township, what kinds would you like to see?

7. Wells Township should seek to maintain its rural character and protect the area from development which may cause that character to significantly change.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

8. Thinking about the overall housing stock available in the Township, to what degree to you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
There is an appropriate mix of housing options for residents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to see more multi-unit, or different housing options available for residents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is an appropriate amount of permanent residences compared to seasonal cottages and camps	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Residences used for short-term rentals offer additional economic opportunities that are appropriate for the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. What do you love about living in Wells Township?

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

- ☐ Access to healthcare and social services
- ☐ Access to healthy and locally-produced food
- ☐ Access to services (retail, professionals, home and childcare)
- ☐ Access to the internet or cell service
- ☐ Access to educational or social opportunities for children
- ☐ Access to transportation or transit services
- ☐ Loss of population
- ☐ Environmental issues
- ☐ Lack of infrastructure investment (roads, power, etc.)
- ☐ Community safety and police presence
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Other (please specify)

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

- ☐ Over-regulated
- ☐ Properly regulated
- ☐ Under-regulated
- ☐ I don't know enough about the current zoning

12. What change would you like to see within Wells Township?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add that was not addresses by the questions? If you would also like to expand on any of your previous responses, please do so here.

SURVEY RESULTS

1. I live in the area of:

a. Watson	(22.22%)
b. Arnold	(51.85%)
c. Northland	(18.52%)
d. Northern Wells Township	(0%)
e. Other	(7.41%)

[Across the county line.]
[Gwinn]
2. I live in the Township:

a. I live in the township year-round	(96.00%)
b. 9-12 months a year	(0%)
c. About half the year	(0%)
d. 3 months a year or less	(4.00%)
3. Where is your place of employment located?

a. I'm retired	(15.38%)
b. I'm in school	(0%)
c. I work remotely from my home	(11.54%)
d. I work within Wells Township	(23.08%)
e. I work somewhere else in Marquette County	(23.08%)
f. I work in Delta County	(15.38%)
g. I work in Dickinson County	(0%)
h. I work somewhere else	(3.85%)
i. I'm unemployed	(7.69%)
4. How important is it to you that the Township's population continues to be maintained or grow?

a. I think it should grow a lot	(15.38%)
b. I think it should grow a little bit	(65.38%)
c. I think it should stay the same	(19.23%)
d. I would prefer the population decrease	(0%)
5. What strategy would you prefer for growth of businesses or commercial opportunities?

a. Growth encouraged	(38.00%)
b. Growth takes it own course	(20.00%)
c. Planned and limited growth	(32.00%)
d. No growth	(12.00%)
6. If new businesses were able to locate in the township, what kinds would you like to see?
[not marijuana!]
[stores, gas stations]
[Let our township stay as is- good]
[Restaurant]
[Feed mill]
[Something that could employ local individuals]
[Restaurant and camp ground]
[Dollar general]
[Timber, trucking, vacation rentals/lodging, storage]
[restaurant, convenience store, diesel- gas station]
[Agriculture]
[Restaurant]
[Grocery]
[Another bar/restaurant]

7. Wells Township should seek to maintain its rural character and protect the area from development which may cause that character to significantly change.

- a. Strongly agree (38.46%)
- b. Agree (26.92%)
- c. Neither agree nor disagree (26.92%)
- d. Disagree (7.69%)
- e. Strongly disagree (0%)

8. Thinking about the overall housing stock available in the Township, to what degree to you agree or disagree with the following statements:

a. There is an appropriate mix of housing options for residents

- a. Strongly agree (11.54%)
- b. Agree (19.23%)
- c. Neither agree nor disagree (30.77%)
- d. Disagree (30.77%)
- e. Strongly disagree (7.69%)

b. I would like to see more multi-unit, or different housing options available for residents

- a. Strongly agree (4.00%)
- b. Agree (16.00%)
- c. Neither agree nor disagree (20.00%)
- d. Disagree (20.00%)
- e. Strongly disagree (40.00%)

c. There is an appropriate amount of permanent residences compared to seasonal cottages and camps

- a. Strongly agree (4.00%)
- b. Agree (36.00%)
- c. Neither agree nor disagree (36.00%)
- d. Disagree (24.00%)
- e. Strongly disagree (0%)

d. Residences used for short-term rentals offer additional economic opportunities that are appropriate for the community

- a. Strongly agree (8.33%)
- b. Agree (33.33%)
- c. Neither agree nor disagree (41.67%)
- d. Disagree (12.50%)
- e. Strongly disagree (4.17%)

9. What do you love about living in Wells Township?

[It's rural]

[Peace and quiet]

[Privacy and own space]

[Peace and quiet]

[Few people around. Not near town.]

[It's remote]

[Everything but the roads. Extremely hard on vehicles]

[It's like one big family and we all look out for each other]

[It's quiet. I get along with my neighbors. We don't have neighbors right next to us.]

[Country and calm area for children to grow up in.]

[No ones bothering me]

[The people I live by.]

[The solitude.]

[It's rural]

[Laid back living with as little governmental interference as possible!]

[The friendships and camaraderie of the residents.]

[It's quiet.]

[Quiet]

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

- a. Access to healthcare and social services (46.15%)
- b. Access to healthy and locally-produced food (34.62%)
- c. Access to services (retail, professionals, home and childcare) (26.92%)
- d. Access to the internet or cell service (57.69%)
- e. Access to educational or social opportunities for children (23.08%)
- f. Access to transportation or transit services (34.62%)
- g. Loss of population (34.62%)
- h. Environmental issues (0%)
- i. Lack of infrastructure investment (roads, power, etc.) (69.23%)
- j. Community safety and police presence (15.38%)
- k. Tourism (0%)
- l. Other (7.69%)
 - [Bad roads and timely winter plowing]
 - [Drug use, vandalism, property damage is on the rise]

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

- a. Over regulated (19.23%)
- b. Properly regulated (30.77%)
- c. Under-regulated (0%)
- d. I don't know enough about the current zoning (50.00%)

12. What change would you like to see within Wells Township?

- [Open the pool! If not- remove the general operating millage!]
- [Fix the damn pool- lots of money is allotted to that facility]
- [Railroad tracks becoming a trail]
- [Better maintained roads. Better wifi.]
- [Campground and a restaurant that has breakfast and not just fast food type stuff.]
- [More housing]
- [Better roads- more internet options]
- [Increased police presence]
- [Better internet options, needed road repairs]
- [A better 911 system where the operator knows our area and can respond quicker]
- [Nothing]
- [None]

13. Is there anything else you would like to add that was not addresses by the questions? If you would also like to expand on any of your previous responses, please do so here.

- [Maybe a small campground instead of tennis courts]
- [Hope the pool is up and running soon we miss it alot during summer months and new improvements for seniors and handicap accessible to enjoy that is what are community is becoming seniors.Thank all that is involved with making this stuff happen.]
- [More young community members]
- [Nope:)]
- [I'd like to be able to see the minutes from the meetings posted on the official Wells Township page, so we know any changes or decisions that affect us, without having to attend meetings.]

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD & PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

WELLS TOWNSHIP

38295 County Road 426

Arnold, MI 49819

www.wellstownshipmarquettecounty.com

7/12/2023

NOTICE OF DISTRIBUTION, PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD, PUBLIC HEARING FOR A PROPOSED MASTER PLAN

The Wells Township, Marquette County Planning Commission has completed a draft of the Township's Master Plan. In accordance with Section 41 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended), notice is given that the Township Board has approved the draft Master Plan for distribution. The following local governments, commissions/committees, and utility and transportation agencies/companies are receiving this notice of distribution and public hearing as required by Sections 41 and 43 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3841):

Baldwin Township, Delta County, Township Board
Breen Township, Dickinson County, Planning Commission
Cornell Township, Delta County, Township Board
Ewing Township, Marquette County, Township Board
Forsyth Township, Marquette County Planning Commission
Harris Township, Menominee County Planning Commission
Spalding Township, Menominee County, Township Board
West Branch Township, Dickinson County, Township Board
Marquette County Planning Commission
Marquette County Road Commission
Central U.P. Planning and Development Regional Commission
Michigan Department of Transportation
Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association
TC Energy
SEMCO Energy Gas Company
Enbridge Energy
Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad

The adjacent communities, agencies, railroads and utilities have 63 days (through September 17, 2023) in which to provide comments to the Wells Township Planning Commission. A copy of the draft plan can be found at www.cuppad.org. Please provide any comments on the draft chapters to the Wells Township Planning Commission, care of CUPPAD. Comments on the chapters can be addressed to:

Wells Township Master Plan, c/o CUPPAD

In writing: 2950 College Ave Escanaba, MI or by email: rcarrig@cuppad.org

Following conclusion of the comment period, the Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on September 18, 2023 at 7:30pm in the Wells Township Hall. Following the Public Hearing the Planning Commission will incorporate changes (if necessary) into the document prior to the adoption of the plan.

COMMENTS AND CHANGES TO DRAFT



County of Marquette

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT/DEVELOPMENT DEPT.

PLANNING DIVISION

234 W BARAGA AVENUE • MARQUETTE, MI 49855

 Phone 906.225.8198
 Fax 906.225.8203
 www.co.marquette.mi.us

Wells Township Master Plan
 C/O CUPPAD
 2950 College Ave
 Escanaba, MI 49829

To: Ryan Carrig, CUPPAD
 From: Marquette County Planning Commission
 Date: August 3, 2023

AUTHORITY

Pursuant to Section 125.3841 Public Act 33 of 2008 (the Michigan Planning Enabling Act), the Wells Township Planning Commission has forwarded a draft master plan update to the Marquette County Planning Commission for review and comment.

PROCEDURE

The Wells Township Planning Commission notified surrounding municipalities of their intent to update the Master Plan. After holding a regular meeting on July 10, 2023, the Wells Township Planning Commission gave preliminary approval of the 2023-2028 Master Plan and released for review and comment on July 12. A 63-day public review period is in process, per the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. The review period will close on September 17, 2023. They have complied with the Act.

PROPOSAL

The 2023 Wells Township Master Plan is an update to the Township's Master Plan. The Plan was last updated in 2016. The 2023 Master Plan will guide public policy in Wells Township for the next five years.

CUPPAD assisted with the Plan update. The updated Plan is available for review on CUPPAD's website and a printed copy is available in the County Planning office.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONTIGUOUS TOWNSHIPS AND THE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The update to the Master Plan appears to be consistent with plans from surrounding municipalities and the County's Master Plan. Below are comparisons of the Wells Township draft Master Plan with key themes in Marquette County 2040.

Economy – This topic predominantly falls under The Community and Economic Development Section of Chapter Six – Goals and Objectives of the draft plan. Strategies include:

- Encourage home occupations as permitted uses and support existing businesses within the Township through local planning and zoning practices. Update the zoning ordinance to provide more flexibility in future development.
- Explore the possibility of campsites, local trail systems, and other localized efforts that may encourage visitors to stay in the area.

Marquette County is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

Environment – The draft plan discusses this topic mainly in the Natural Resources and Recreation Section of Chapter Six – Goals and Objectives of the draft plan. Strategies include:

- Work cooperatively with the Conservation District and area groups to preserve and enhance the quality of the Escanaba and Ford river systems.
- Work with the MDNR and commercial forest landowners to ensure sound timber management practices are being performed within the township; attend annual MDNR public meetings to review and provide input on timber cuts in forest management units within the township.

Health and Human Services – This theme is discussed in the Community and Economic Development Section in Chapter Six – Goals and Objectives. Strategies include:

- Ensure a basic property maintenance code is in effect and properly enforced to ensure properties are properly maintained to encourage future growth and development.
- Explore the possibility of campsites, local trail systems, and other localized efforts that may encourage visitors to stay in the area.

Housing – Housing is discussed in the Community and Economic Development Section in Chapter Six – Goals and Objectives. Strategies include:

- Encourage home occupations as permitted uses and support existing businesses within the Township through local planning and zoning practices. Update the zoning ordinance to provide more flexibility in future development.
- Ensure a basic property maintenance code is in effect and properly enforced to ensure properties are properly maintained to encourage future growth and development.

Recreation – This topic is discussed in the Natural Resources and Recreation Section in Chapter Six – Goals and Objectives. Strategies include:

- Collaborate with the State of Michigan to develop recreational trails (both motorized and non-motorized) on State land within the Township.
- Explore the possibility of campsites, local trail systems, and other localized efforts that may encourage visitors to stay in the area.

Transportation – This topic is discussed Chapter Six – Goals and Objectives in the Community Facilities and Services Section. Strategies include:

- Work with the Marquette County Road Commission to find solutions to improve the quality of the local road system, emphasizing that quality roads are a factor in the local economy and quality of life of taxpayers and residents.
- Realizing that motorized recreation is a recently growing economic factor, work towards improving motorized access travel through the Township (snowmobile, four-wheelers, side-by-sides) and also work to develop destinations for these users (such as rest stops, parks, etc.)

How We Work Together – This is discussed in the Community Facilities and Services and the Natural Resources and Recreation Sections of Chapter Six – Goals and Objectives. Strategies include:

Marquette County is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

- In a cooperative effort, work with local snowmobile clubs, MDNR, County Road Commission, MDOT, and County law enforcement to continue the maintenance of a regional snowmobile network through the township.
- Support local and regional efforts to expand internet and cellular services by working with Marquette County, CUPPAD, ConnectMI, and local providers to increase these services within the township.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

The updated Master Plan will continue to serve as a resource for future development and decision making in Wells Township. It not only has a local focus, but also incorporates county wide and regional trends and planning efforts into the narrative of the Plan and the goals and strategies. It highlights goals including broadband access, recreation, collaboration, and future land use and zoning which are all important factors considered in the Marquette County 2040 Master Plan. The Plan appears well thought out and the goals seem attainable taking into consideration the capacity and size of the township. Commissioners noted their appreciation for the collaboration with the MDNR and adjacent municipalities and encouraged continued collaboration when possible.

Please forward comments to the Wells Township Planning Commission and Township Board.

Sincerely,

Mike Touchinski, Secretary
Marquette County Planning Commission

CC: Wells Township Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners

Marquette County is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer