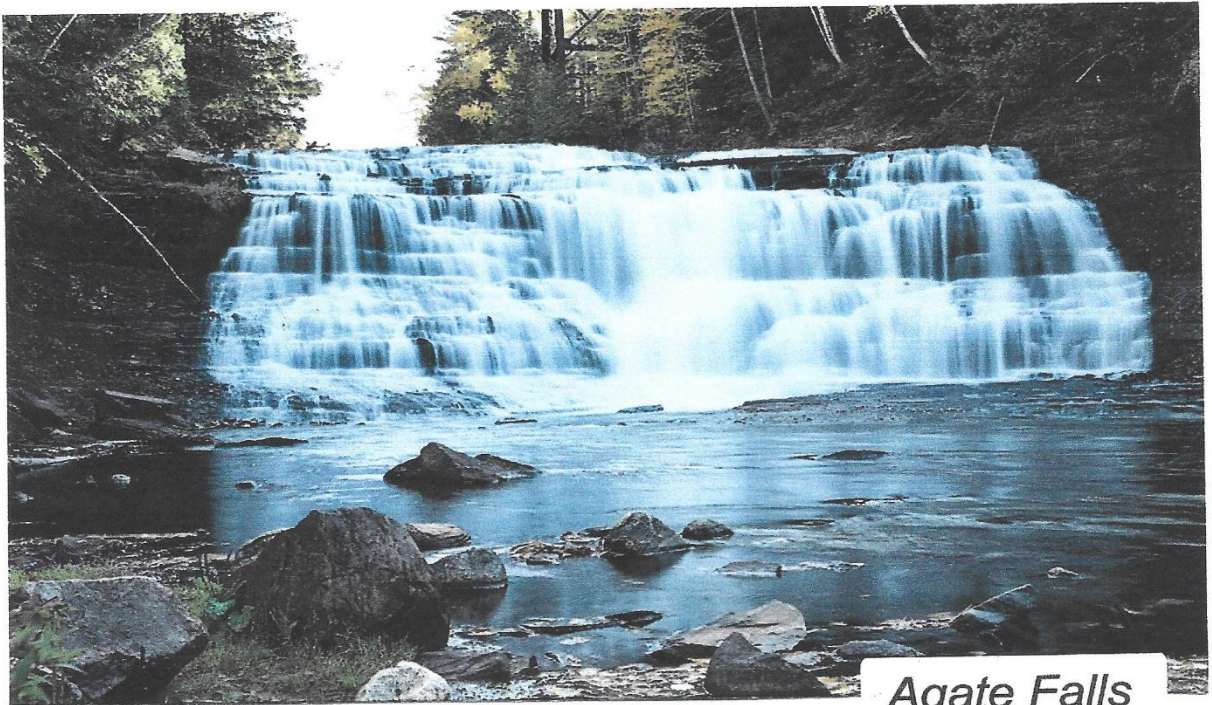


INTERIOR TOWNSHIP

ONTONAGON COUNTY - STATE OF MICHIGAN



Agate Falls

MASTER PLAN

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Interior Township Master Plan
Revised 10/10/2024

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Interior Township Master Plan March 2014

Revision Date: 10/10/2024

Introduction

The intent of the master plan is to express the Township's vision of its future and provide a guide to accomplish that vision.

The basic purpose of the Master Plan is to promote:

- 1) Public health, safety, and general welfare
- 2) Public access to Interior Township's natural environment and resources
- 3) Improvements and maintenance of the public roads and streets
- 4) Facilitation of systems that provide for sewage disposal, a safe and adequate water supply, recreation, and other public improvements
- 5) Interior Township's character with thorough plans balancing land use needs and population

A well-developed Master Plan can help decision makers by emphasizing *planning for* development rather than *reacting to* development. The value of a Master Plan is directly related to the Township residents' willingness to follow its vision as outlined in the Master Plan.

A strategic plan for Interior Township was adopted in March of 1992. Parts of that plan have been included in the Master Plan originally established in March of 2014. The Planning Commission has continued to work on the plan following the guidelines of the Michigan Society of Planners, including the creation of a Fact Book. In December of 2022, the Interior Township Planning Commission conducted a survey of the Township residents to obtain opinions on various aspects of life in the township. There were a number of focus group meetings and the community was encouraged to participate.

Historical Analysis

Creating A Community

The wide strip of territory in Michigan's Upper Peninsula was an inaccessible, forested wilderness in the late nineteenth century. The area where Interior Township is located, along with the surrounding territory, was opened in the early 1880s. Lumbermen sent their timber cruisers to locate the timber and determine its value. These timber resources initiated the logging era which was responsible

for the eventual settlement of the area. Logging from this era produced the lumber that expanded Midwest cities such as Detroit, Milwaukee, and Chicago as well as many towns on the western prairies.

Initially, logging operations were restricted to the lands closest to the branches of the Ontonagon River because transporting logs on the river was the most economical method of transportation to the lumber mills for processing. When the railroads extended their lines into the region, timber harvesting left the confines of the rivers as rail spurs reached deep into the forests. Lumber mills also moved closer to the logging operations.

In 1887, The Duluth, South Shore, and Atlantic Railroads came through the region impacting the region's development. Not only was the railroad the primary means of transport for all goods, services, and people, but the railroad contributed to the local economy in other ways. As property owners, the railroad companies paid property taxes, provided employment, and purchased local goods and services as did their employees.

Likewise, timber harvesting provided employment. At different times, as many as one-hundred logging camps operated between Wakefield and Sidnaw. However, it wasn't until sawmills were built in the township that a local economy and community became permanent. The first sawmill in the township was built by the Interior Lumber Company and was operating by 1884, and the W. D. Wing Company soon followed, opening its mill in 1891.

As logging operations cleared the timber, settlers moved in and homesteaded the cut-over lands. These immigrants cleared the land of stumps, built homes and barns, and developed an agrarian economy. These farm families represented the region's two income families: the women and children tended the farms while the men and older boys worked the timber.

Population growth spurred economic development which demanded a more responsive form of local government. On March 16, 1889, twenty-four land owners signed an application to create a new township to be known as Interior Township. The application was accepted by the Ontonagon County Board of Supervisors, and the following October, Luke B. Conway presented his credentials to the Board of Supervisors, becoming the first supervisor to represent Interior Township.

From the beginning, three primary industries were the economic engine for the township's economy: manufacturing (sawmills); agriculture, and transportation (the railroad). For example, in 1912 three sawmills were in operation: The Trout Creek Manufacturing Company, Weidman Lumber, and DeLaitre, Anderson, and Company. Each mill had its own electrical plant, and the town was furnished electricity by George Hardes' Trout Creek Manufacturing Company plant.

The industrial sectors supported a wide variety of other local businesses. At one time, the township boasted four grocery stores, four service stations, a bank, two

hotels, two restaurants, two barbershops, a beauty shop, a clothing store, a movie theater, and five taverns. During the first half of the twentieth century physicians and a veterinarian provided services in the township.

Erosion of the Economic Base

The basic structure of this local economy held together for nearly sixty years from 1890 to 1950. The economy sustained itself through the Great Depression years of 1930s and the war years of the 1940s. However, beginning in the 1940s, social changes signaled a death knell for that earlier economic way of life which resulted in a steady migration from Interior Township.

From 1900 to 1930, Interior Township registered a population growth from 274 to 1,137 persons. In 1940, the township recorded a 3.9% population decrease (39 persons); this was not a large decrease considering the very difficult economic period from which the nation was just recovering and that many residents left to go to war. This small loss, however, foreshadowed future decennial counts, and a loss of population has persisted in every decennial count since 1940. In 1950, the township had a 13.2% decrease (145 persons). In 1990, the population census was 480, down 48 persons from the 1980 census (a 9.1% decrease). The most precipitous drop occurred from 1990 to 2000, with the 2000 census recording 375 residents (22% fewer than 1990). Other townships in the surrounding area showed the same pattern. See Table 1 for population figures.

A number of things happened that had far-reaching impacts upon Interior Township from 1960 to the present. From the Age of the Robber Barons a national movement began in the late 1800s/early 1900s to protect some of our national resources for the citizens. This resulted in the establishment of two national forest areas in the Upper Peninsula being designated as national forests in the 1930s. Interior Township subsequently found itself situated within the boundaries of the Ottawa National Forest with 38,527 acres of the township's total 57,391 acres coming under U. S. Forest Service jurisdiction.

A major blow to the area was the closing of the White Pine Copper Mine in 1995. This was the direct result of the globalization of industries so many former employees were eligible for retraining under NAFTA, which they did and then left with their families to find work elsewhere. Still another blow came in 2010 with the closing of the Smurfit-Stone Paper Mill in Ontonagon. China joined the WTO in 2001 and flooded American markets with government subsidized cheap paper, undercutting Smurfit-Stone. By the time this dumping was mitigated by the WTO, it was too late. Once again, employees were eligible for retraining and those families left the area.

Another sign of economic changes began in the 1950s when the federal price supports for milk production changed. With these changes, it became increasingly difficult to profitably operate the small-scale family farms in the area. Additionally, the rise of national corporate dairies squeezed out the small farmers and the local

dairies could not compete with those national companies. With no alternatives to replace these small farms, agriculture slowly diminished as a force in the local economy, and with this livelihood removed, families and the young adults began leaving the area.

The most notable downturn just for Interior Township was in the 1960s. Since the early 1900s, Interior Township had two operating sawmills. One mill, commonly called "The Big Mill," was built in 1912 and handled all the logs ten feet and longer. The smaller mill, built around 1917, sawed eight-foot logs. These mills were responsible for employing over one hundred men working in both the mills and in the woods. Both of these mills closed in the 1960s.

In 1965, the "Big Mill" ceased operations and was dismantled. The smaller mill, destroyed by fire in 1969, was not rebuilt. These mills, over the years, had gone through a succession of ownership changes, while nationally, in the 1960s and early 1970s, the regional sawmill industry went through an economic restructuring, resulting in the closing of many outmoded, inefficient facilities. The Interior Township mills became victims of this trend when a merger between Abbott-Fox Lumber and Cleveland Cliffs focused economic development in a new Munising mill, and the vacant mill property was sold.

The railroads did not fare much better during this same period. The shift away from rail use along with changes in the industrial base contributed to the loss of the Upper Peninsula rail system. For Trout Creek and Interior Township, this meant the loss of rail service. The eventual abandonment of the rail line in the 1970s also represented a substantial loss of property tax revenue for the township. From 1950 to 1975, the primary industrial sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation, the engines of the local economy in the area, all began to disappear. Because of those employment losses, many other establishments closed or relocated to other communities because without sufficient population there was not enough demand for their goods and services to remain profitable. The erosion of the local economy had a negative impact on local governing bodies in that because of the shrinking tax base, the township government and the school district found it increasingly difficult to deliver traditional services.

Other factors leading to the decline of the community has been the passing of a generation of community leaders from the mid-century to the present fueled by the loss or decline of two major social institutions: education and religion. Trout Creek High School was consolidated with Ewen High School in 1967, and the elementary school followed in 1998. The Roman Catholic Church was closed and resident pastors for the four Protestant churches were replaced with traveling pastors.

The largest employers in the area continue to be the U.S. Forest Service and the Lac Vieux Desert Casino. Even though there has been no large-scale business development in Interior Township, there has been some progress including a truss construction company, an auto body repair shop and a convenience store with restaurant. Logging, trucking, and excavating remain important businesses, as does small scale agriculture. Many residents are self-employed professionals,

artisans, tradespeople, handcrafters, and other cottage industries. The community has been fortunate to maintain its local post office and local rural mail delivery in the face of continued downsizing by the U.S. Postal Service.

Focus On the Future

Introduction

The rich natural resources attracted the hardy pioneers to this locality where their hard work established homes and farms that nurtured a town, a vital education system, and instilled a strong sense of community. Their hard work cultivated the land, established homes and farms, built a town, nurtured a vital school system, and forged a strong sense of community. The vision of these citizens and their self-determination created a community that held together both in good and bad times. Now these same types of individuals with a strong sense of community and self-determination are needed to stop the tide of community disintegration.

Believing that only by calling upon the internal forces of the community could the community be saved, the Interior Township Board initiated a program of community improvements. During the 1980s, a wastewater system was built in conjunction through a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rehabilitation program to upgrade residential homes that were below current building code requirements. A new water system followed. Complementing these improvements is the Interior Township Civic Improvement Committee's efforts in renovating the old train depot into a historical museum. The construction of a new Mill Pond dam was a major fund-raising project in the early 1990s. An annual "Pond Fest" once provided funds for the Mill Pond Park improvements and in 2013, construction began for handicapped access at the park through a DNR grant.

In the fifteen years since Interior Township celebrated its centennial in 1988, the passing of many people from the World War II generation has been counterbalanced by the return to the community by retiring native sons and daughters. In addition, a number of non-native retirees, working people, and entrepreneurs have chosen to settle here, attracted by the rural character and natural beauty of the area. Many residential properties and parcels of land are being purchased by hunting, fishing, and snowmobile enthusiasts. Just as with the long-time residents, the newcomers participate in varying degrees in the life of the community and this presents a challenge to the development of short-term and long-term planning goals.

The past twenty years has brought many changes globally, nationally, and locally. It behooves our township to aid the community in understanding and dealing with these changes and the problems accompanying them. In order to plan for the

future, we need to review national and global issues and their impact on our region.

Industry and Manufacturing

The face of industry and manufacturing has changed since the closure of the White Pine copper mine in 1995. Today, all industries are more mechanized which means less employees. Farming and agriculture, Native American gaming, and the building trades are three local industries that still employs many individuals. Logging has become more efficient as has mining, requiring far fewer employees than needed twenty years ago.

Agriculture

Presently, organic/CSA food is in demand. Ontonagon County, including Interior Township, has the potential to market grass-fed beef, pastured hogs, and free-range chickens and turkeys securing top dollar.

Ontonagon County has the potential to supply urban areas with many wholesome foods. Blueberries, asparagus, carrots, apples, potatoes, and other cash crops are easily grown in the U.P. with a minimum of effort, as well as the livestock cited above. With the disclosure that many herbs and spices are contaminated¹, many of these can also be grown in the U.P. and marketed directly to the consumer.

Pick-Your-Own farms are currently having a resurgence around the nation. In other U.P. counties, people pick their own blueberries, strawberries, asparagus, apples, pumpkins, raspberries and other produce. This kind of agriculture endeavor can be a success.

As food safety becomes more of a national issue because of contamination and antibiotic-resistant bacteria, Interior Township and Ontonagon County has great potential to benefit from this emerging market.² The biggest barriers are marketing and initial cash outlay.

Depending of the consumer goods chosen to raise, the initial cash outlay varies. Initial outlay for livestock of any kind runs into the many thousands of dollars. Some goods, such as herbs and spices, have a very small initial outlay.

¹ FDA Releases Draft Report on Pathogens and Filth in Imported Spices (Food Safety News) 10/30/2013: <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2013/10/fda-releases-spice-risk-profile/>

² We've Reached "The End of Antibiotics, Period": <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/health-science-technology/hunting-the-nightmare-bacteria/dr-arjun-srinivasan-weve-reached-the-end-of-antibiotics-period/>

Cottage Food Industries

Many people in Ontonagon County have tried home-based food businesses as single entities. This has not been successful because the barriers that exist for organic/CSA agriculture also are at work here. Marketing often consists of selling at farmer's markets, small animal sales, and networking. The Legion Hall has a state-inspected kitchen which could be utilized for seasonal cottage industries such as jams, jellies, and other canned goods as well as bakery and candy. Skeptics need only to look at The Jampot run by the Society of St. John in the Keweenaw Peninsula.³ The State of Michigan has cottage industries requirements and information which may be viewed here: <http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/food-dairy/Michigan-cottage-foods-information>.

We have many talented, creative people in the area and everyone could combine their offerings and market them online as an Interior Township co-operative effort. Especially with the increased availability of high-speed internet throughout the area.

Community Description

Interior Township is located in the southeast corner of Ontonagon County in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan (see Figure 1, Location Map & Transportation System). The township is bordered on the east by Houghton and Iron Counties and on the south by Gogebic County. The townships of Haight and Stannard form the political boundaries on the west and north.

Interior Township is a very rural area with rugged wooded terrain, which contributes to its many natural scenic areas that attract outdoor enthusiasts year-round. Visitors often come to observe the beautiful waterfalls and enjoy the lakes, streams, wildlife and natural wooded areas as well as to snowmobile and other winter sports. Within the boundaries of the township are hunting areas such as the Davidson Lakes area and a Grouse Management Area near Bond Falls.

Interior Township is also centrally located for visitors to the Porcupine Mountains State Park, the Sturgeon Gorge Wilderness Area, the Sylvania Wilderness Area, and the McCormick Wilderness Area.

Today logging, lumbering, Native American casinos, and some agriculture provide employment for local residents, along with some professional and commercial employment and government jobs.

Life in Interior Township often revolves around a quality of life rather than the quantity of life. Life in a remote rural area is not for everyone but for people who enjoy the solitude, clean environment, and community ties based on mutual

³ The Jampot: <http://store.societystjohn.com/>

respect as well as a “can-do” and “make-do” ethic. Rural communities are known for pulling together in hardships as well as helping each other because of the rural character.

Population Trends and Characteristics

The loss of employment opportunities in the area has resulted in a population decline over the last two consecutive census periods. Yet, as younger families are forced to move out of the area for employment, older couples are retiring to the area. Table 1 shows the decline in area population in comparison to the State of Michigan. In percentages, the population of Interior Township decreased at almost twice the rate of Ontonagon County from 2000 to 2010 and at still a higher rate than Ontonagon County from 2010 to 2020 as shown below. Continued losses in population for the Township are anticipated but expectedly at this slower rate.

Table 1 - Population Trend

Location	1970	1990	2010	2020		2010-2020 %Change
Ontonagon County	10,584	8,854	6,780	5,816		-14.2%
Interior Township	601	480	336	270		-19.6%
State of Michigan	8,881,826	9,295,297	9,883,6640	10,077,331		+ 2.0%

An aid to determining the types of recreational and other community facilities needed by a community is the analysis of age distribution characteristics of the population. Comparison is made with age groups for the state as a whole, which would represent the norm. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the Township’s population by numbers and percentages of persons in each age group category. There are four groups: 0-5 preschool, 6-17 school-age, 18-64 prime labor force, and 65+ senior citizens. The breakdown shows a lower percentage of children compared to the state as a whole, a similar percentage of working age people, and twice the percentage of senior citizens compared to the rest of the state. This reflects the trend mentioned previously, where families with children have moved out of the area for employment but senior citizens have retired here.

Table 2 - Age Distribution in 2020
(not available for 2010)

Age Group	Interior Township		State of Michigan	
0-5	0	0%	552,803	5.4%
6-17	16	8.0%	1,598,038	15.9%
18-64	104	52.0%	6,214,735	61.7%
65+	80	40.0%	1,711,755	17.0%

Additional 2020 census population characteristics of Interior Township are:

Number of housing units: 287

Number of occupied housing units: 127

Number of vacant housing units: 160

Racial makeup: Caucasian—264; Native American—3; Other—3

Gender: male—143; female—127

Privity and Land Use

Interior Township is predominantly private and public forests with some land in agricultural use located throughout the township. The majority of land in the township is part of the Ottawa National Forest. The public use of commercial forests is protected by the lower taxes afforded this designation and so are used primarily for recreation such fishing, hunting, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and camping as well as commercial uses like balsam bough gathering and wildcrafting herbals.

The town proper of Trout Creek has the commercial and residential land use concentration in the township. A new sewer system, water system, and other public services have the potential to attract new commercial and residential development into the Trout Creek community. The Interior Township adopted a zoning ordinance in 1977, which has been periodically updated, most recently on March 9, 2020. See the Interior Township Rural Zoning Ordinance for more information.

Transportation System

Interior Township bisected by east-west State Highway (M28) just south of Trout Creek and connects with U.S. Highway 45 in Bruce Crossing and U.S. Highway 41 in Covington. Commercial and tourist traffic traveling east to Marquette and Sault Ste. Marie and west to Ironwood and Duluth is currently passing through the township as well as many Canadians traveling from one province to another. Recreational opportunities are available throughout the township as well as from its central location.

Streets in Trout Creek are paved, as are Gardner Road, the north-south thoroughfare connecting Trout Creek to Mass City, and South Calderwood Road, which connects Trout Creek to the Bond Falls recreation area and meets up with U.S. Hwy. 45 in Paulding. Gravel and/or clay roads comprise the remainder of the highway network of the Township. Ontonagon County and U. S. Forest Service maintain these roads (see Figure 1).

On-Tran is Ontonagon County's public transit. On-Tran operates a "curb-to-curb" service for appointments and shopping within the county, Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Once a month it makes the trip to Houghton for appointments and shopping. On-Tran's webpage: <http://www.getaroundwup.com/providers/on-tran/>

Climate

The climate of the area can be characterized as having short, cool summers and long, cold winters. Ontonagon County averages about 34 inches of rain and 213 inches of snow, annually. Average temperature for the coldest month (January) is about 3.7 degrees Fahrenheit; temperatures for the hottest month (July) average about 78 degrees Fahrenheit.⁴ Prevailing winds are southerly during warm weather and northwesterly for the remainder of the year. The area experiences its first frost around the beginning of September and the last frost around mid-June. The average growing season is approximately 147 days, depending upon elevation.

Geology, Topography, and Soils

The bedrock of Interior Township, formed during the Precambrian Era, is crystalline in nature. The two major sub-epochs of geologic development are the Keweenaw and Huronian.

Soils in the Township, as in most of Michigan, were formed during the time of the Pleistocene glaciations. The largest soil association in the Township is dominated by deep loamy soils, with some associated sandy soils in the northern part of the Township. These soils are deep, gently sloping to moderately steep, and moderately to well drained. The soil survey of the area may be accessed through the Natural Resources Conservation Services at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/mi/soils/> .

⁴ <http://www.ontonagonmi.org/community.html>;
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_MANUSCRIPTS/michigan/ontonagonMI2010/Ontonagon_MI.pdf

Hydrology

The Township is located within the Ontonagon River Drainage Basin, which discharges into Lake Superior at the Village of Ontonagon. The water quality in this basin is generally excellent, especially since new treatment facilities were installed in the community of Trout Creek.

Drainage in the Township is poor in the southern part while other areas have fairly good drainage. A high-water table exists in the Trout Creek area, located in the north central part of the Township.

Groundwater availability in Interior Township ranges from good to fair in the central and southern areas and poor in the northern part of the Township. Groundwater quality is acceptable for most uses. For more on the hydrology of Ontonagon County, see "Summary of Hydrogeologic Conditions by County for the State of Michigan": <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2007/1236/pdf/OFR2007-1236.pdf>

Vegetation, Wildlife and Fish

The most prevalent type of timber found in the Township is mixed hardwood and softwood consisting mainly of pines and aspen pole timber, which is suitable for pulp and chip production. Pockets of northern hardwoods, consisting of sugar maple and yellow birch, are found along the eastern part of the township. The understory of non-plantation trees is rich with many edible shrubs, bushes, and herbs as are the ponds and prairies that pepper the county.

Wildlife in the area is similar to other rural areas in the Upper Peninsula: herds of white-tailed deer, coyotes, fox, beaver, pine martens, black bears, weasels, and other harvestable wildlife associated with tracts of wild land. Wolf packs roam Interior Township and the occasional solitary male is commonly seen. Thus far, wolf problems in Interior Township have been few. Clear-cut tracts of aspen feed over one hundred species of birds and animals. Ospreys, blue herons, pileated woodpeckers, and bald eagles exist within Interior Township as do grouse, ducks, geese, and many songbirds. The clear lakes and streams are similar to others in the surrounding area and are inhabited by brook trout, rainbow trout, brown trout, walleye, northern pike, perch, bluegill, large mouthed bass, and other edible fish.

Our Community's Vision for the Future

Interior Township residents have indicated that meeting both the aspirations and needs of the community requires a strengthening of the local economy. The Strategic Plan for Interior Township (1992) emphasized the need to rebuild the township center, Trout Creek, as an important component of economic development. Some progress has been made such as rehabilitation/ renovation of some residences and business structures, the opening of a museum in an existing vacant building, the opening of a convenience store/restaurant in an existing

vacant building, the opening of an auto body repair facility in a newly constructed building and the demolition of some abandoned buildings. Additionally various websites such as AirBNB, have made privately owned short-term rentals available throughout the township. However, this progress has been counterbalanced by a continued decrease in population, the loss of the grade school to consolidation, a popular bar to a fire, and just an overall decline in economic opportunities.

Vision

We recognize that a high quality of life depends on a multitude of factors, including a healthy economy, a healthy environment and a strong community. The goals for developing a land use plan for Interior Township are based on fostering these in a way that respects the wishes of current residents as indicated through the survey responses and other modes of input. Our major goals are as follows:

- Preserve the rural character of the township.
- Developing recreation opportunities to include hiking and skiing trails, etc.
- Promote development of the economy.
- Capitalize on our local resources to build the economy. Considerations may include timber, recreation and agriculture.
- Rebuilding or expanding the town center.
- Smart development of land use that protects our green spaces and waters.
- Exploring the potential for the addition of a Township blight ordinance.

The Township is aware of Public Act 233 where in 2023, MI State Law transferred authority for siting decisions of wind and solar facilities from local officials to State regulators. At a minimum the Township may need to consider adding a “compatible renewable energy ordinance” within its Zoning Ordinance to account for denying or allowing such siting development requests. Continued research into this matter and exploration of corrective measures should be considered.

Platted Area Features

Interior Township has one platted area, Trout Creek, which has paved streets, sewer, and water. High-speed internet service (DSL) has recently become available throughout the township, which should make the area more attractive to new businesses and professionals who rely on high tech communications. Vacant property is available in the platted area which could be developed for residential or business purposes. Property in Interior Township is generally affordable, and small lots are available in Trout Creek. Small lots supporting homes, duplexes, or mobile homes could well become more attractive in a community where we see increasing numbers of retirees. This area includes a small area downtown with a post office, museum, American Legion Hall, and Township Hall within a two-block area. The area has attractive physical features, including a commons area in the town center, a creek running north/south through the town, several recently

rehabilitated or renovated buildings on Division Street, and the Mill Pond/Abbott-Fox Park.

The platted area also includes a 48-acre tract on M28 which consists of 38 acres zoned commercial/residential and 10 acres zoned industrial/heavy commercial which is within walking distance of the residential area.

Planning Opportunities

The platted area offers many opportunities for residential development, especially in attracting people who are interested in rehabilitation of older homes or building small homes, duplexes, or other affordable and efficient residences on small parcels which are on the sewer and water service. We encourage zoning regulations to allow for this kind of development where it fits existing codes for fire safety, sanitation, and noise control. The township should encourage residential development in Trout Creek to improve economic security as well as encourage more use of the sewer and water system, improved tax base, and increased economic activity within the population center of the township. Beautification efforts along Division Street and elsewhere in the platted area should continue. The continued efforts to improve upon the township roads remains important moving forward to enhance the appearance of Trout Creek and potentially attract both residential and business development.

The platted area is poised for new types of business development with the newly available DSL service. Home-based businesses, professional offices, and other small businesses are a more viable option as a result of this new service. Trout Creek can now be promoted as a “wired” community with the advantage of a relatively low cost of living, clean air and water, a peaceful atmosphere, and other desirable characteristics.

The old Trout Creek school building is vacant, on a large parcel in a residential area. The area is zoned residential/ commercial. Development of this property (using either the existing building or new structures) should be encouraged business/commercial development, but zoning should reflect the fact that residents live within a few feet of the existing building, and therefore should include stipulations regarding such things as noise, night lighting, and emissions. Such considerations should be applied anywhere in the platted area where a business might locate immediately adjacent to existing residences.

The single large industrial parcel along M28 has been vacant for many years. Many residents have indicated that they would welcome any business development there. Any development will meet state and local regulations for safety and environmental protection. It is recommended that the tract currently zoned as Industrial and Heavy Commercial be designated as Industrial/Commercial/Residential to provide for expanded uses. The zoning for this area should take into account that residential areas are very nearby.

Rural Area

The rural character and current land use designation of the unplotted areas of the township have been described previously. While the unplotted area covers the majority of the land in the township, approximately 65% of this land is under the control of the Ottawa National Forest and unavailable for development other than forestry and recreation. The Master Plan continues to endorse sustainable forestry practice on both public and private lands. The practice of multiple use and optimum access should be part of the long-term goals of the Master Plan.

Potential development/use of these lands can include housing, recreation, economic development, housing and farmland preservation. According to the survey results, economic development, housing, and attracting young families to the area are should be Interior Township's goals. There is potential discord between economic development and land use versus rural farmland preservation. Many second homes of vacation and seasonal properties, if the current trend continues, may become retirement homes.

In planning for economic development, the most feasible area (unplotted) is the area that borders Hwy. M28 and along Old M28 from the county line to Calderwood Road. The future extension of water and sewer services to these areas seem logical and practical. The option for subdividing larger tracts for housing or light industry remains open at this point. Potential economic development in the outlying areas of the township should include the Calderwood/Bond Lake area, the Agate corridor, and the M28 corridor from county line to Calderwood Road. The development of e-commerce or a technology park in a setting surrounded by nature requires a flexible posture in terms of new zoning districts, and new zoning should reflect considerations for the residents living nearby when creating stipulations regarding noise, light pollution, emissions, and traffic.

The need for affordable housing is directly tied to the cost of land, water, septic (sewage), and construction costs. The need for affordable land necessitates flexibility in the township's land division policies. Access to a downtown business core by retirees and young families lends itself to the creation of smaller homeowner parcels within a one-mile to one and one-half mile radius from the town center. The extension of municipal water and sewer within this distance appears to be feasible. For practical purposes, this includes the M28 and Old M28 corridors, Mill Pond Road, Gardner Road, and Calderwood Road.

Recreational development in the rural areas of Interior Township like much of the Upper Peninsula is an untapped resource. Hunting, fishing, walking, biking, hiking, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, swimming, camping and canoeing are just a few of our recreational opportunities that are readily available. For more information see "Interior Township Recreation Plan".

Planning for the future includes the increased development of the Mill Pond site with the inclusion of nature trails in the township property (twenty acres) south of the Mill Pond and the potential expansion of hiking and cross-country ski trails in the adjacent National Forest property (forty acres). The Trout Creek streams from the Mill Pond Dam to the old M28 bridge (backwater and recreation area) and remains a challenge to stream enhancement for fishing and hiking access.

The creation and maintenance of hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and ATV recreational trails will continue to see an expansion. A north/south motorized trail through the township appears to be both an economic and recreational plus. Likewise, enhancement of the north/south trunk line and/or trails for motorized vehicles and bicyclists from Bond Lake to M28, as a scenic by-way would fulfill at least two purposes. Protection and enhancement of a scenic corridor through the township via M28 will also showcase the natural beauty of our region to visitors and travelers.

Socioeconomics

The Interior Township taxable value for the year 2024 is \$14,510,139.00.

RECREATION

Creating Community Through People & Cooperation

In developing a Master Plan for Interior Township, it is necessary to consider the importance of the recreational facilities and opportunities which are available within and nearby our community.

Recreational opportunities have become increasingly important to our local economy and those of our neighboring townships. Existing small businesses rely on dollars brought to the area as a result of these recreational opportunities to sustain and grow.

Our rural character offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities for everyone all four seasons of the year with a groomed snowmobile/ORV trail passes through Interior Township in an East-West direction. This trail receives heavy snowmobile and ORV usage bringing many visitors through our Township and surrounding areas. This trail is currently being maintained by the MDNR with assistance from local area snowmobile and ORV clubs.

In addition, the many other recreational opportunities available for outdoor enthusiasts within and nearby Interior Township include:

- Abbot Fox Community Park and Pond
- Bond Falls Recreation Area and Scenic Sites
- Agate Falls Park and Scenic Sites
- Interior Grouse Management Area and Hiking Trail
- Davidson Lakes Walking Trails
- Peter Wolfe Chapter of the North Country Hiking Trail
- Ottawa National Forest Campgrounds

Some additional information on these recreational opportunities is provided on the following pages.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

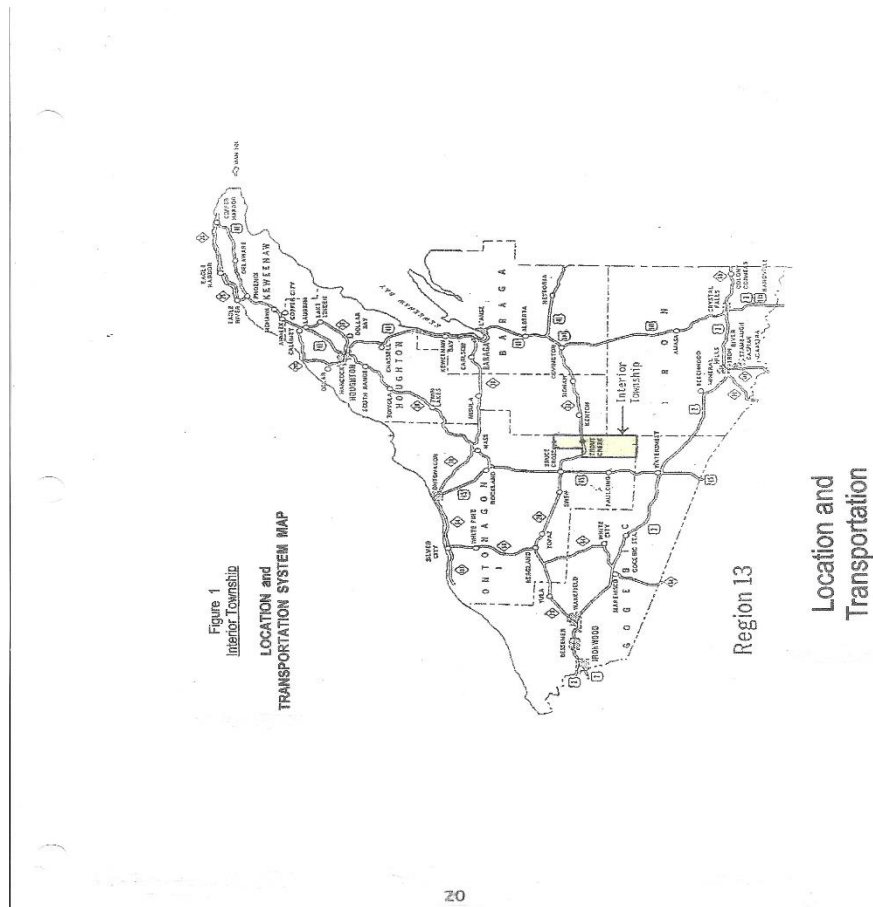
October 10, 2024 revisions to the Plan were compiled, edited and completed by:
Duane Bullock, Melanie Pelkola, Wade Boan and Mary Koch.

On March 3, 2014 an original final draft was compiled, edited and completed by:
Jessica Toole, Don McLaughlin, and Rosie Larrin.

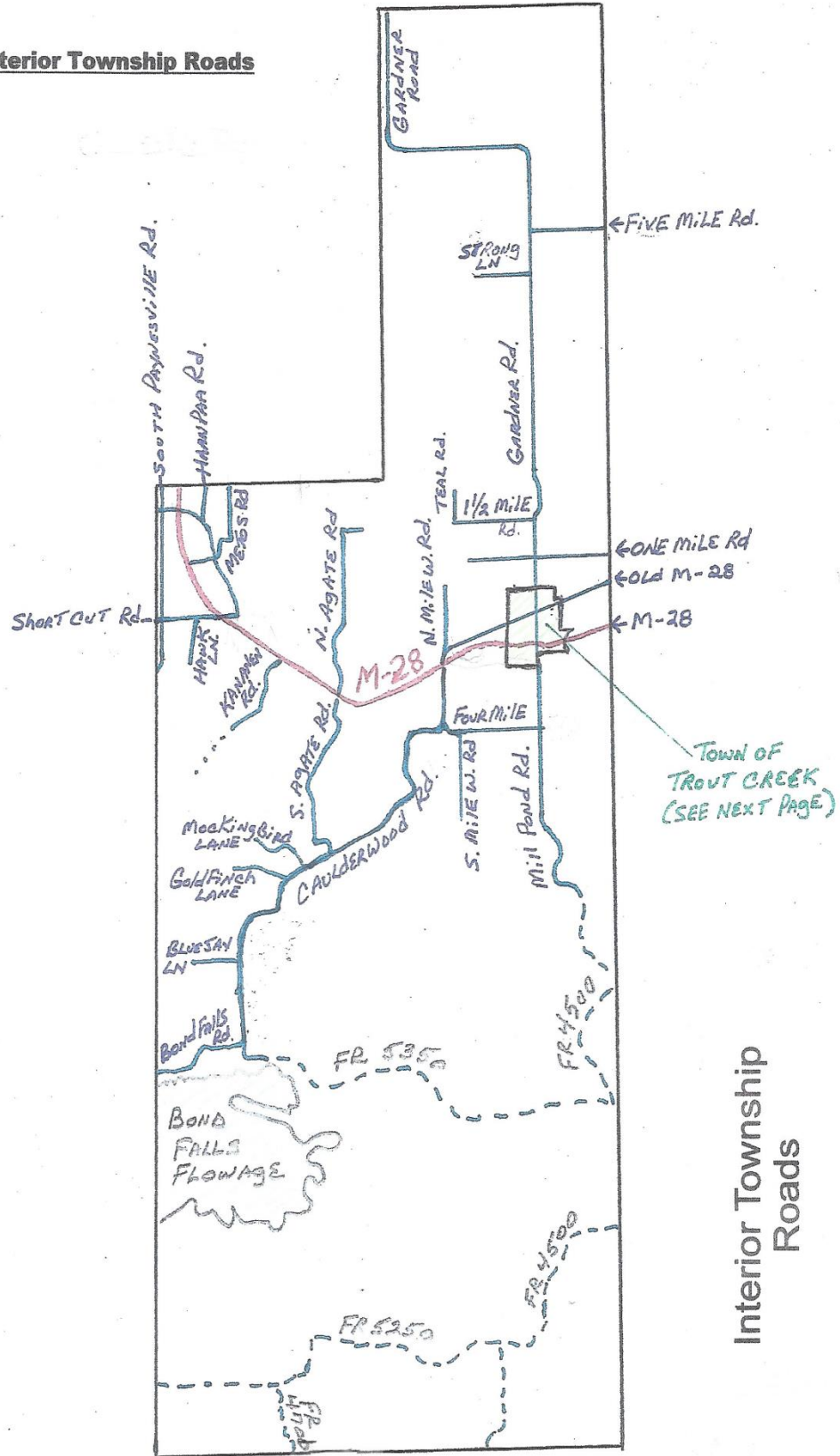
The following residents began compiling and pursuing the Master Plan on the
Planning Commission over the course of a decade:

Melanie Pelkola, Paul Besonen, Patsy May, Bob Knivila, Ruth Warren, Fred and
Priscella Sliger, Eugene Nurmi, Lee Ann Anderson, Kelly Pertulla, Walt Hatton,
Joanne Cottenham, Dale Schmeisser, Danny Hemming, and Sandy Wilson.

Photo credit of Agate Falls: Donnie McLaughlin

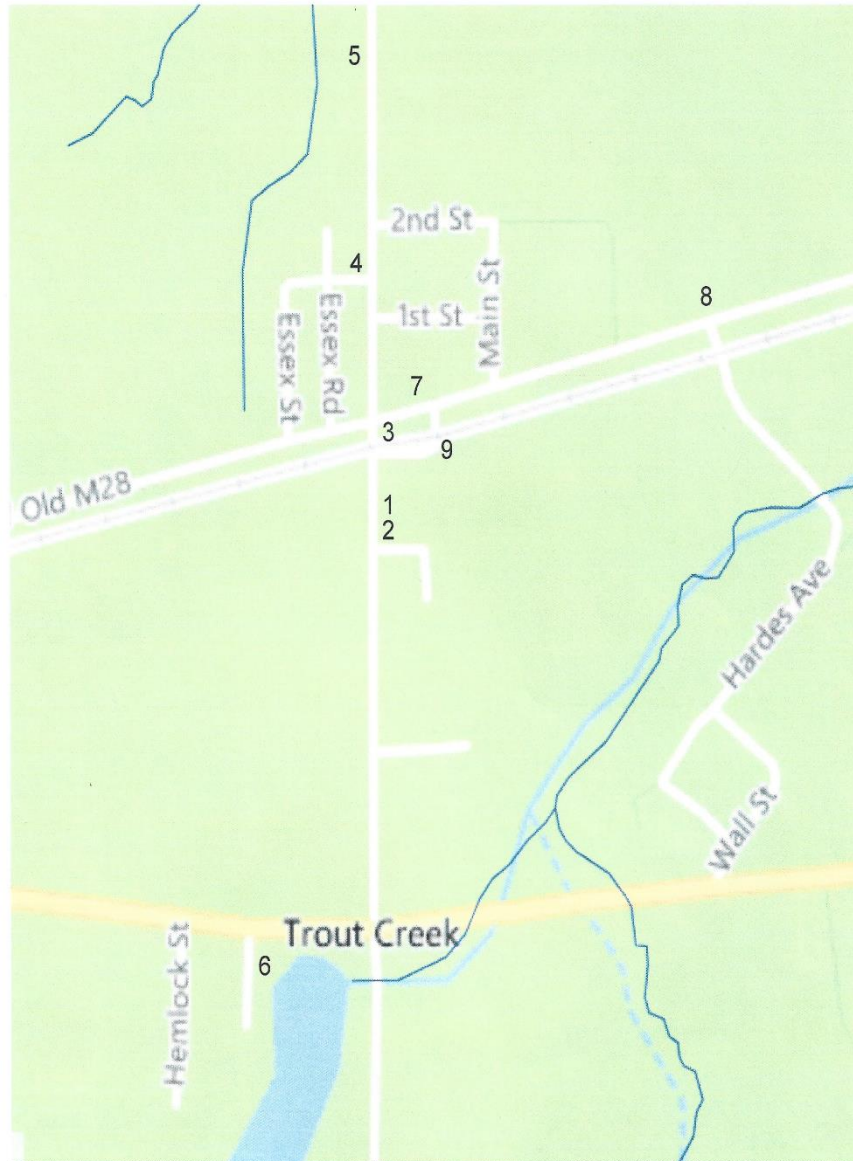


Interior Township Roads



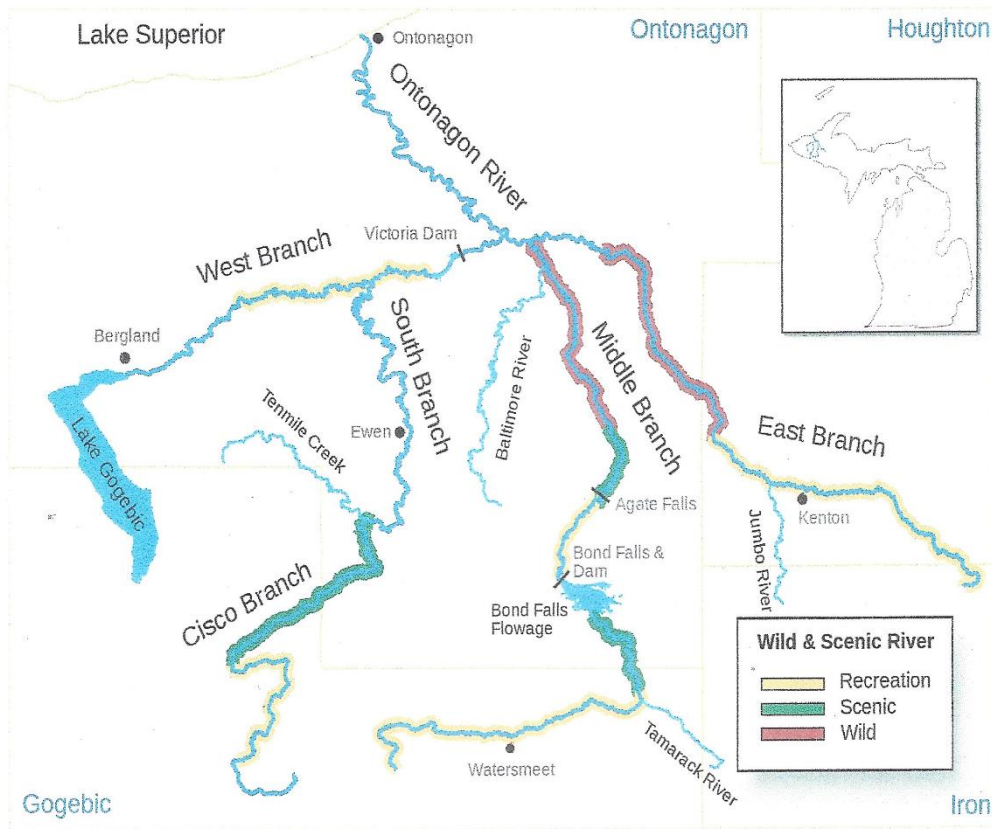
Interior Township
Roads

Town of Trout Creek Street Map



Points of Interest

1. Township Hall
2. Trinity Lutheran Church
3. Hazel Sliger Museum
4. Post Office
5. Calvary Temple Assembly of God
6. Mill Pond Park
7. Fire Hall
8. Independent Apostolic Lutheran Church
9. VFW

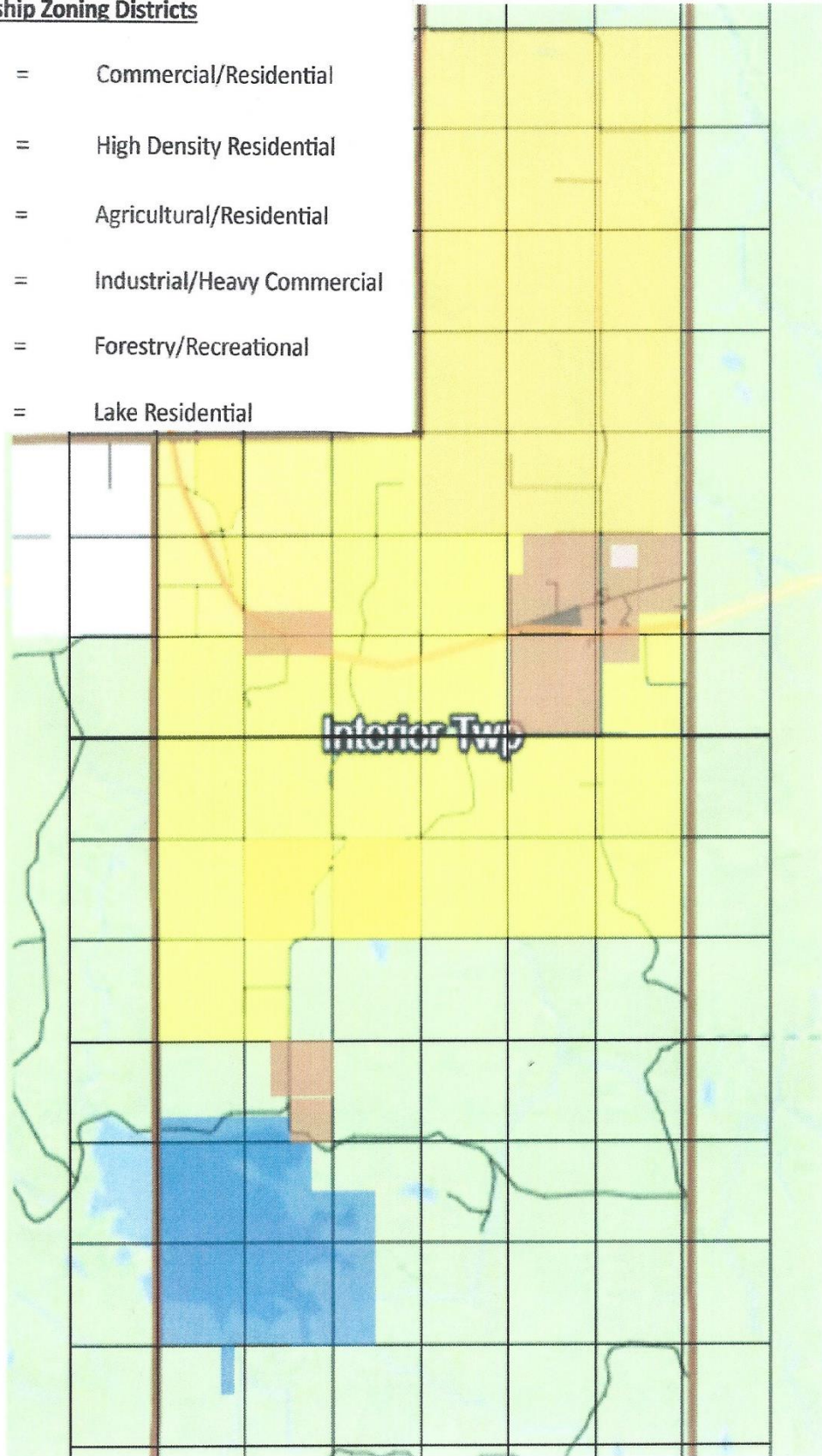


AREA RIVERS

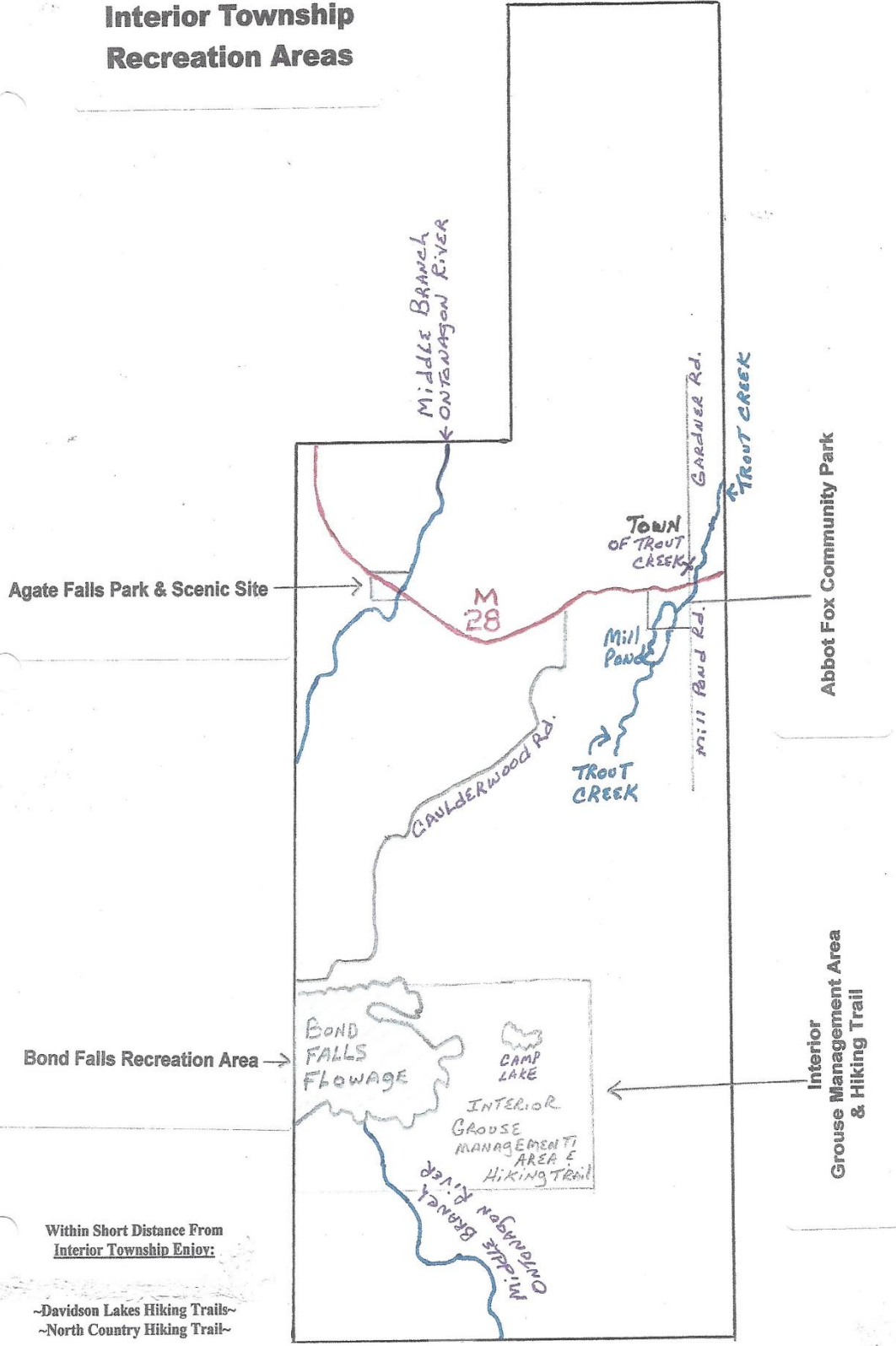
Area Rivers

Interior Township Zoning Districts

- Tan** = Commercial/Residential
- Pink** = High Density Residential
- Yellow** = Agricultural/Residential
- Gray** = Industrial/Heavy Commercial
- Green** = Forestry/Recreational
- Blue** = Lake Residential



Interior Township Recreation Areas



Agate Falls Park & Scenic Site →

Bond Falls Recreation Area →

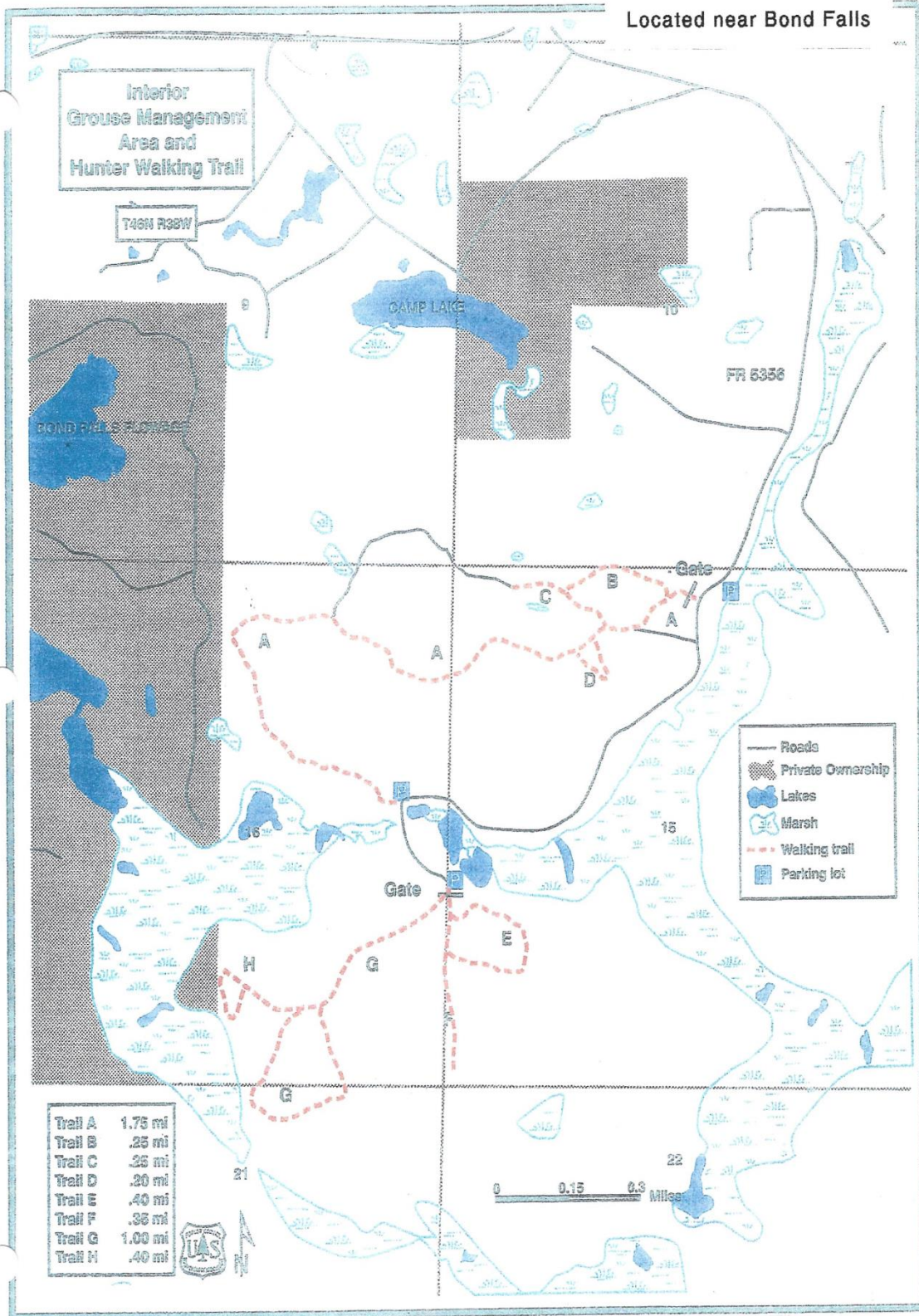
Within Short Distance From
Interior Township Enjoy:

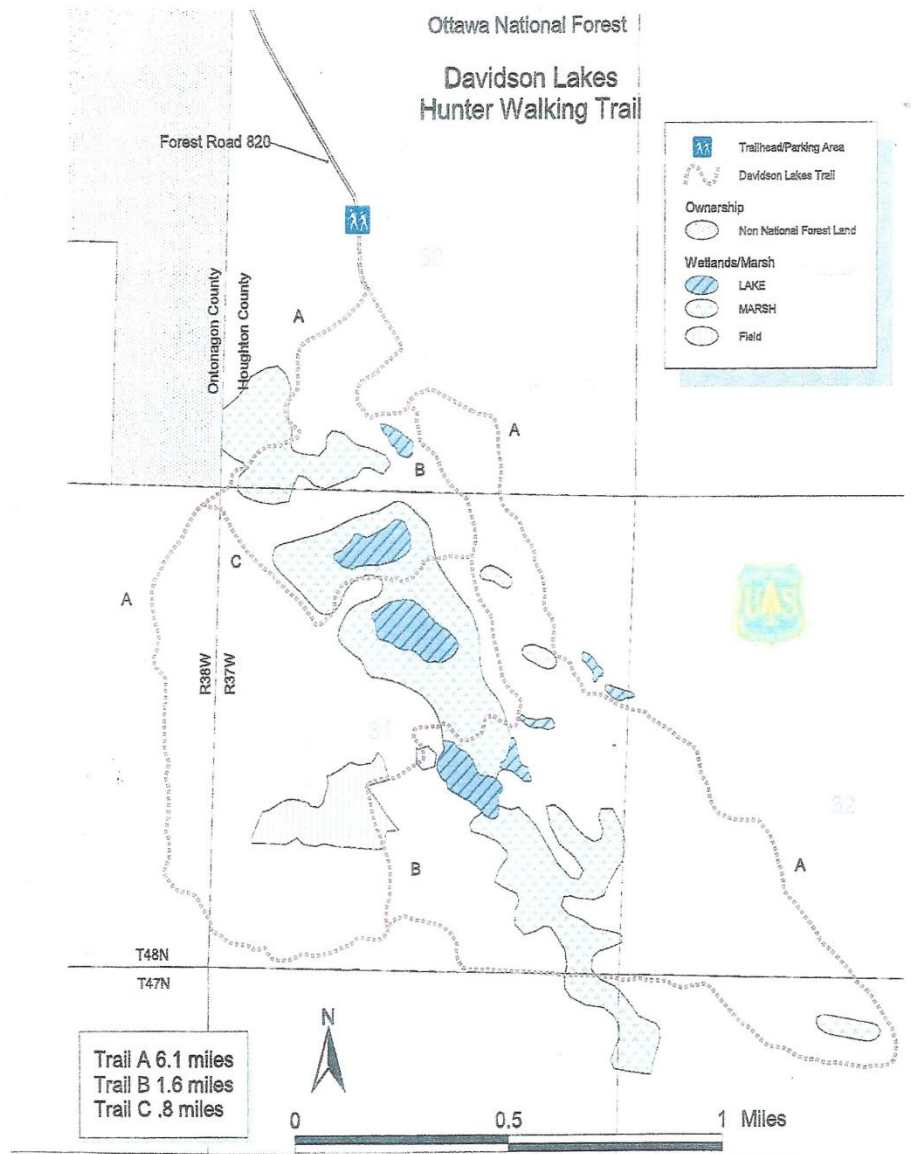
- ~Davidson Lakes Hiking Trails~
- ~North Country Hiking Trail~

Abbot Fox Community Park

Interior
Grouse Management Area
& Hiking Trail

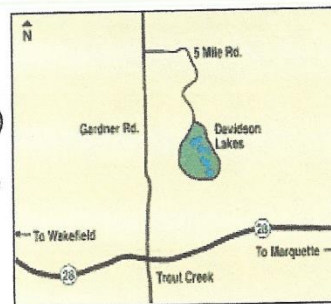
Located near Bond Falls





Directions

From Trout Creek, drive north on Gardner Road for five miles to Five Mile Road. Turn right (east) and continue 1 mile. The road turns into a drive-able sand trail. Follow it for 3 miles until you see a sign for Davidson Lakes Hunter Walking Trail and a gate closing the trail road to vehicles. There is a small parking area near the gate.



Ownership: U.S. Forest Service, Ottawa National Forest, Kenton Ranger District
(906) 852-3500

Size: 640 acres

Closest Town: Trout Creek

Peter Wolfe Chapter of the North Country Hiking Trail



Based in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the Peter Wolfe Chapter is responsible for developing, maintaining, protecting and promoting their 140 mile section of the North Country National Scenic Trail. Their section spans from M-64 near Bergland to eastern Baraga County near Marquette, and passes through the Ottawa National Forest. One can connect with the North Country Trail just a few miles North of Trout Creek on Gardner Road. Hiking East will take one through rural landscapes and the rugged territory of the Sturgeon River Gorge and the McCormick tract Wilderness Area. Going West will take you through the old Copper Mining Sites near Old Victoria towards the wild country of the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park. For more information visit: northcountrytrail.org

Ottawa National Forest

Interior Township is located in the heart of the Ottawa National Forest and is in close proximity to many of the recreational opportunities provided by the US Forest Service on the Ottawa.

The Kenton Ranger District maintains 5 campgrounds ranging from small dispersed camp grounds to larger established campgrounds located next to some great fishing lakes. Campgrounds located within the Kenton Ranger District include: Sparrow Rapids Campground, Norway Lake Campground, Perch Lake Campground, Sturgeon River Campground and Lake Ste Kathryn Campground.

Other nearby campgrounds provided by the US Forest Service include: Bob Lake Campground, Golden Lake Campground and Courtney Lake Campground.

The Ottawa National Forest is also home to many fishing lakes & streams, water falls, hiking trails and more.

For more information visit: fs.usda.gov/ottawa

Abbot Fox Community Park

Located along Highway M-28 near the Town site of Trout Creek, the Abbot Fox Community Park is constructed on the former log deck site of the Abbot Fox Lumber Company. The pond on the park site (the "Mill Pond") was used in the lumbering days to float logs to clean them and soften the bark prior to their being cut into lumber at the sawmill which was located nearby.

On display in the park is an antique steam engine which was an integral part of the sawmill operations.

The Park offers picnic sites, two pavilions, a playground area and handicap accessible bathrooms.

An ongoing upgrade to the park site to make the park more user friendly will provide handicap accessible pathways and gathering areas in the Park, handicap accessible picnic sites and a handicap accessible fishing and observation deck on the Mill Pond.

The Mill Pond provides excellent brook trout fishing. Be sure to take a look at the dam and fish ladder system.



Bond Falls Recreation Area

A popular camping, fishing, boating and hiking area, Bond Falls Recreation Area is located about 9 miles southwest of Trout Creek, Michigan off Highway M-28 on Caulderwood Road and Bond Falls Road.

Rustic campsites are located around Bond Falls Flowage most of which are large enough to accommodate camper trailers. Outdoor toilets are provided at the campsites. Most of the campsites are along the waters edge and many provide good swimming areas. Picnic tables are also provided at most campsites.

At the top of the Falls area roadside parking and picnic tables are available as well as a foot trail down to view the Falls.

A State of Michigan Scenic Site Area provides handicap accessibility via boardwalks to view the Falls.

The Recreation Area also contains the Interior Grouse Management Area and Hiking Trails.

The Bond Falls Recreation Area is a collaborative effort with Upper Peninsula Power Company, the State of Michigan and the United States Forest Service. A privately operated Snack and Gift Shop is available.

The Falls is located on the Middle Branch of the Ontonagon River. Total drop of the Falls is about 45 feet. Visit thewildsofmichigan.com/bond-falls for more information.



Bond Falls

Agate Falls Park & Scenic Site

Located about 4 miles west of Trout Creek, MI, on Highway m-28, Agate Falls is considered by many to be one of Upper Michigan's most picturesque waterfalls. The falls are located on the Middle Branch of the Ontonagon River and cascades nearly 40 feet.

Access to view the falls is via an improved foot trail.

Parking - Picnic Tables - Water and Toilets are available at the park.

The park is maintained by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

More information is available at: michigandnr.com/parksandtrails



Agate Falls

