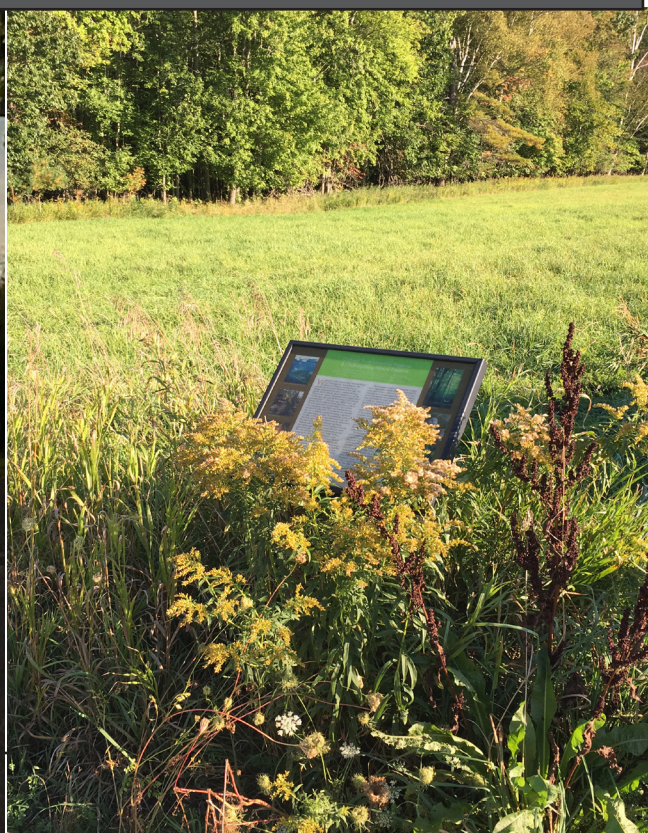




# Burt Township Master Plan 2026



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# BURT TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

2026

CHEBOYGAN COUNTY

MICHIGAN

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose and Planning Process

The purpose of the Burt Township Master Plan is to provide guidelines for future development, while protecting the natural resources and rural character of the Township. This plan presents extensive background information including socio-economic data on the Township; description and mapping of natural resources and existing land uses; and inventory of existing community facilities. The background information is analyzed to identify important characteristics, changes and trends occurring in the Burt Township. Updated community concerns were identified based on a citizen survey conducted in 2019, previous planning efforts, and input from the Township Planning Commission. Goals and policies were developed to guide future development based on the background studies, key land use trends, and community issues. These goals, along with a detailed map of existing land use, provided the basis for the Future Land Use Map which specifies where the various types of future development will locate in the community. This plan also provides suggestions for implementation of the identified goals and policies. The guidance provided by this Master Plan will be used to update the Zoning Ordinance for Burt Township.

In 2024 and 2025, the Burt Township Planning Commission conducted a comprehensive review of the Master Plan, and incorporated updates primarily in the social and economic characteristic (Chapter 2), natural features (Chapter 3), and the goals and objectives (Chapter 6) portions of the plan. The Plan update was conducted in accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

### Regional Setting and Historical Context

Burt Township is located on the western border of Cheboygan County, which is situated in the north central part of northern Michigan's lower peninsula. While technically Burt Township is one standard geographic township in area, slightly more than half of the Township is water (Burt Lake).

Burt Township takes its name from Burt Lake, which in turn was named after a state surveyor. The lake is part of an important inland water route, stretching from Crooked Lake and Conway (nine miles from Petoskey) in the south to Lake Huron in the north via the mouth of the Cheboygan River. Native Americans used the route prior to European settlement, and it was used for commercial transportation of logs in the second half of the 1800s.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the Michigan Central Railroad and the Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad laid track through to Cheboygan, leading to the foundation of several villages, including that of Burt Lake. About the time lumbering was slowing down, the resort business began to build in the area, creating the beginnings of the seasonal tourist industry still important today. The water route is still in use and frequented by many small pleasure craft.

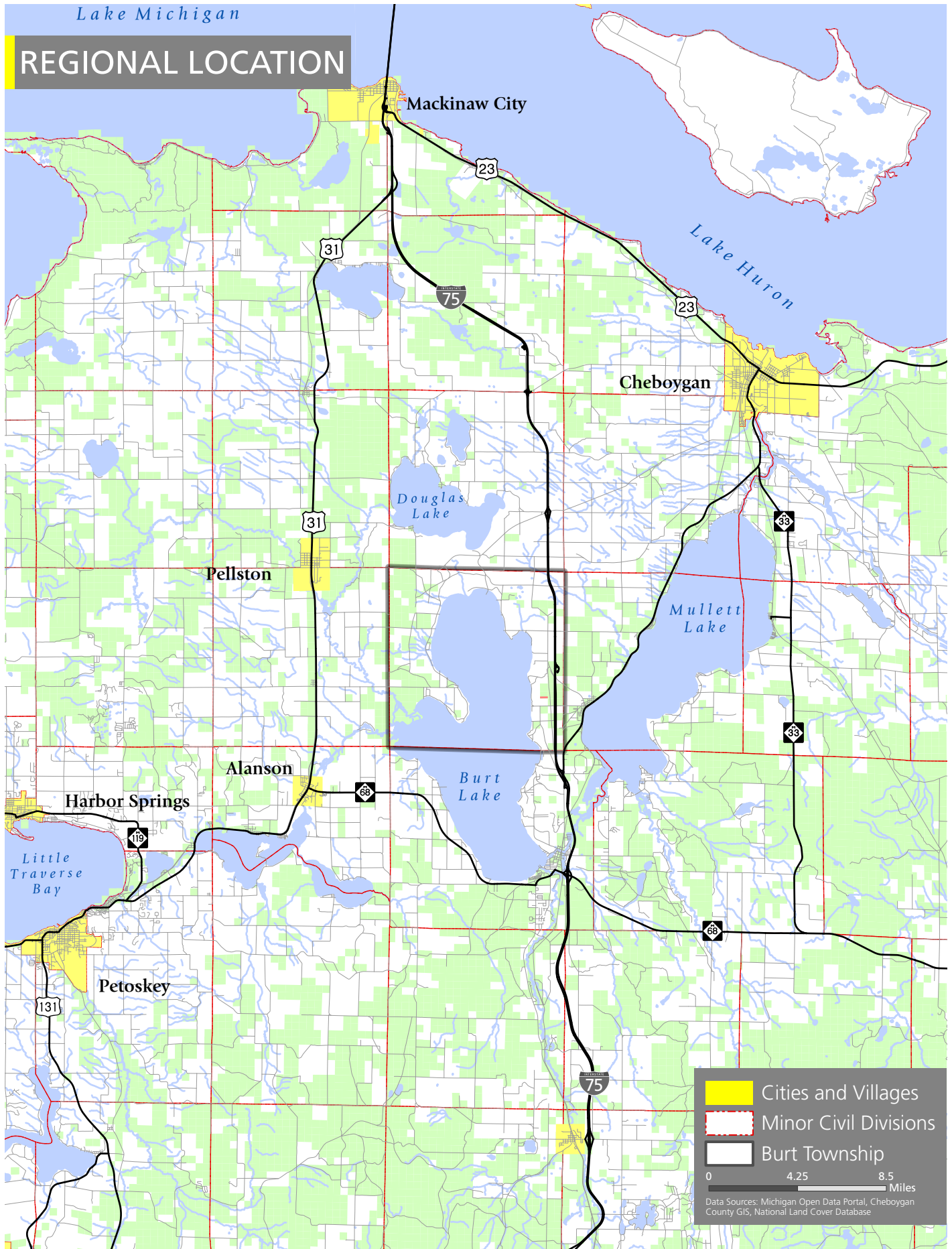
### Township History

On the west side of Burt Lake, one of the first settlements in Burt Township was an intermingled tribe of Ottawa and Chippewa Native Americans located on Indian Point, now often called Colonial Point. The census taken in 1836 indicated 117 Native



*Burt Township Hall.*

MAP 1: REGIONAL LOCATION



Americans lived there in a settlement called Pokagon's Village. There was a legal controversy over unpaid taxes by this tribe that resulted in a writ and eviction notice to vacate their 611 acres of land, and, in 1900, subsequently resulted in the burning of their homes by the Cheboygan County Sheriff.

On the east side of Burt Lake, there is very little history written except for a hotel that was built by a Mr. George Voightlander on land he bought from Mr. John Schennaman in 1885. The building was a splendid architectural wonder called "Fresh Breeze" and was completed in 1890 and operated as a 60-room hotel, bringing guests by horse-drawn wagon from the train station in Topinabee or by boat through the inland waterway. In 1903 the Weatherhead brothers, Albert J. Weatherhead and Edward J. Weatherhead, bought the hotel from Mr. Voightlander. It was never again operated as a hotel but was always filled with friends and family.

## The Status of Planning and Zoning in Burt Township

Cheboygan County formed its Zoning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals in December of 1969 and adopted the County's first zoning ordinance that same month. The County's first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in August 1979. Burt Township adopted its own zoning ordinance in 1976, being one of the first townships in northern lower Michigan to do so. The Township had not had a Master Plan until 2004.

In 2009, the Township reviewed and updated the Master Plan per the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. The update was relatively minor because new Census data was not yet available and there had not been major land use changes or activities in the Township. The goals were updated as appropriate to address a

few needs and/or plans which have changed or evolved, such as the intended non-motorized connector route between the North Central State Trail and the Petoskey to Mackinaw City Trail.

In 2014, the Burt Township Planning Commission updated the Master Plan in accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. The most significant changes included update census information, revisions to the goals and objectives based on the 2013 survey findings and public input.

In 2019, the Township Planning Commission again proceeded with a 5-year update of the Master Plan. This again entailed researching and current demographic and economic information from the U.S. Census and American Community Survey, as well as a review of the goals, objectives, and future land use map from the 2014 plan.

In 2024, the Township Planning Commission conducted a comprehensive review of the 2019 Master Plan. In 2025, the Township Planning Commission proceeded with a 5-year update that again entailed researching current demographic and economic information from the U.S. Census and American Community Survey, as well as a review of the goals, objectives, and future land use map.

A Zoning Ordinance supported by an up-to-date local master plan is considered the main tool Michigan communities have at their command to control land use patterns and development pressures. To provide a strong legal foundation, a zoning ordinance should correspond to an up-to-date adopted Master Plan. Since the Township administers a Township Zoning Ordinance, it should maintain an up-to-date Township-specific Master Plan to guide future development and provide a stronger legal foundation for its regulations.



*Crump Road.*



*Maple Bay Road.*

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# CHAPTER TWO

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

### Data Sources

The demographic information in this chapter was sourced from the following locations.

- The U.S. Decennial Censuses are among the most reliable sources of demographic information in the country. Mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the primary goal of the decennial census is to achieve a complete count of the U.S. population. Since its inception in 1790, the census has provided a critical reference point for tracking population changes over time. Although the census has been conducted for over 200 years, the questions have evolved to better reflect modern society. For instance, questions regarding past rebellion against the U.S. are no longer included. The most recent censuses have gathered data on age, sex, race, relationships within households, and household tenure.
- The American Community Survey (ACS) replaced the “long-form” questions of the decennial census starting in 2000, gathering similar information on social, economic, and housing conditions on an ongoing basis. Including these detailed questions in the decennial census would be more resource-intensive and could lower the response rate for the primary population count. Unlike the decennial census, the ACS is not a full survey of the U.S. population but rather a sample. Each year, a random selection of households receives the ACS, and the Census Bureau uses these responses to generate estimates for the broader population. Because the ACS is a sample survey, smaller communities require several years of data collection to produce accurate estimates. For smaller communities, data must be collected over a 60-month period, resulting in what are known as 5-year estimates. This allows for more accurate data as it is averaged over 5 years, rather than the smaller sample size of a single year. These five-year estimates were used in this report to ensure more accurate estimates.

### Population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population for Burt Township in 2023 was 934 residents (483 male – 451 female), averaging approximately 47.4 persons per square mile for the Township’s 19.7 square miles of land area.<sup>1</sup> This population density can be compared to approximately 36.0 persons per square mile for Cheboygan County and 172.9 persons per square mile for the State of Michigan.<sup>2</sup>

In discussing the population for Burt Township, however, it is important to note that the figure presented by the 2020 Census does not reflect the actual population of the Township during the summer months, which is higher. In fact, Cheboygan County stated in their 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan that summertime visitors in the County can increase the population by as high as 50%.<sup>3</sup> This is something that is typical throughout much of northern Michigan, as the natural beauty and recreation amenities attract many seasonal visitors. The Census tally, taken on April 1st, counts residents where they reside at that time, and therefore misses this seasonal population. Respondents are asked to declare a permanent residence different from their April location, if more than six months are spent at the alternate address. However, many fail to do so for reasons of misunderstanding or for tax purposes.

In reviewing the social and economic information derived from Census data, the figures presented for housing characteristics show 493 units (about 51.8 percent of the total housing units) as seasonal, recreational, or occasional use homes in 2023.<sup>4</sup> Over half of all housing units are for seasonal use meaning that Burt Township has the potential to see its population increase significantly during summer months when tourism and vacationing is more prevalent. Based on the average household size of 2.32 in 2023 and the 493 seasonal housing units, Burt Township has the potential to see its population grow by more than 1,100 people during peak visitation months assuming that

**TABLE 1: POPULATION IN BURT TOWNSHIP AND CHEBOYGAN COUNTY, 1980-2023**

	1980	1990	2000	2010	Percent Change 10-20	2020	Percent Change 20-23	2023
Cheboygan County	20,649	21,398	26,448	26,152	-2.2%	25,579	0.8%	25,778
Burt Township	520	533	654	680	4.4%	710	31.5%	934

Source – U.S. Decennial Census & American Community Survey, DP05.

**TABLE 2: AGE DISTRIBUTION, 2023**

	Burt Township	Cheboygan County	Michigan
Under 5 years	1.5%	4.1%	5.5%
5 to 9 years	2.9%	4.3%	5.9%
10 to 14 years	5.4%	4.3%	6.2%
15 to 19 years	4.3%	5.1%	6.5%
20 to 24 years	1.7%	4.8%	6.6%
25 to 34 years	1.7%	9.6%	13.1%
35 to 44 years	9.7%	9.9%	12.0%
45 to 54 years	6.9%	12.4%	12.2%
55 to 59 years	6.5%	7.1%	6.7%
60 to 64 years	17.5%	10.1%	7.1%
65 to 74 years	29.2%	17.7%	11.0%
75 to 84 years	11.3%	8.3%	5.1%
85 years and over	1.4%	2.5%	2.1%
Total Population	934	25,778	10,051,595
Median age (years)	64.3	51.9	40.1

Source – American Community Survey, DP05.

these seasonal units host the same household size.<sup>5</sup> These figures are not including those who visit the area and stay at homes that are already occupied with family or friends, as well as those who camp or stay in other lodging options.

The table “Population in Burt Township and Cheboygan County, 1980-2023” illustrates how population has changed over time. As can be seen, the most substantial percentage growth occurred between 1990 and 2000, when the Township population increased by just under one-quarter (23.6%).<sup>6</sup> Estimates from the 2023 American Community Survey show a 31.5% increase between 2020 and 2023, though the small population sample size makes it likely that these estimates are not exact due to the high margin of error.<sup>7</sup> While these estimates may not be exact, the Northern Michigan region is experiencing growth post-Covid with the rise of people who are working remotely being a reason for this increase.<sup>8</sup>

## Age Distribution and Racial Make-up

Information on age distribution within a population can assist the community in matching public services to community characteristics and in determining what, if any, special needs specific resident groups might have. The table “Age Distribution, 2023” shows residents of Burt Township in 2023 were a significantly older population compared with Cheboygan County, and the State of Michigan as a whole. The median age of year-round residents in Burt Township was 64.3 years in 2023, almost 13 years higher than Cheboygan County and 24 years older than the State of Michigan. This median age shows an increase of more than 6 years since 2010 when it was 58.2 years, showing that the community is aging at a high rate.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, the data shows that 41.9% of all residents are 65 years of age or older in Burt Township, compared to just 28.5% countywide and 18.2% statewide. Just 14.1% of residents were 19 years of age or younger.<sup>10</sup>

As the median age in the Township continues to rise Burt Township must proactively address how to best serve its aging population. Aging in place remains a top priority for many older residents, yet the rural character of the community presents unique challenges. Limited access to healthcare, public transportation, accessible housing, and social services can make it difficult for older adults to remain in their homes as they age. These factors, along with food insecurity and limited mobility, can lead to social isolation and declining health.<sup>11</sup>

More than 96% of residents in Burt Township are white or white in combination with another race, while about 1.7% of residents are American Indian and 1.1% are Black or African American. This racial distribution is consistent with distribution in the past.<sup>12</sup>

## Income and Employment

The table “Median Household Income, 2013 & 2023” shows how income has changed over the 10-year period. Median household income in Burt Township showed a 23% increase during the time and is higher than the county and state median, though it increased at a slower rate.<sup>13</sup>

The American Community Survey (ACS) tracks employment data of all residents for all municipalities who are not institutionalized, it tracks this information for all residents who are 16 or older (also known as labor force) and at the time of data collection.<sup>14</sup> Within Burt Township, the total labor force participation rate is 33.9%, a very low rate compared to both the County and State. Additionally, the unemployment rate is lower than the County and State, this low labor

force participation and low unemployment is a side effect of the large portion of older residents who are of retirement age and have exited the labor force.<sup>15</sup> A declining labor force participation rate can hinder economic growth, limit job creation, and reduce the local government’s capacity to fund essential services and infrastructure. Workforce shortages may also lead to higher costs of living, increased reliance on social programs, and broader impacts on community well-being.<sup>16</sup>

The figure “Labor Force Participation by Industry, 2013 & 2023” on the following page shows what portion of the labor force works within specific industries. The most common industry is “Professional, scientific, management, administrative, waste management” followed closely by “Construction”. Both industries saw an increase from 2013 when they were the 4th and 5th most common industry.<sup>17</sup> Given the limited number of employment opportunities within Burt Township, an assumption can be made that many residents are self-employed or find employment elsewhere, possibly in Cheboygan, Indian River, or Petoskey.

## Educational Attainment

In Burt Township, of residents over 25 years of age, 97.5% have attained an education of high school graduate or higher, while 47.3% have attained a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>18</sup> This level of educational achievement is greater than for the County (with 89.7%) and for the State (91.9%). A bachelor's degree or higher has been attained by 22.9% of the County population and 31.8% statewide.<sup>19</sup>

**TABLE 3: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 2013 & 2023**

	Median Household Income 2013	Median Household Income 2023	% Change
Burt Township	\$66,042	\$81,250	23.0%
Cheboygan County	\$42,876	\$61,619	43.7%
State of Michigan	\$52,668	\$71,149	35.1%

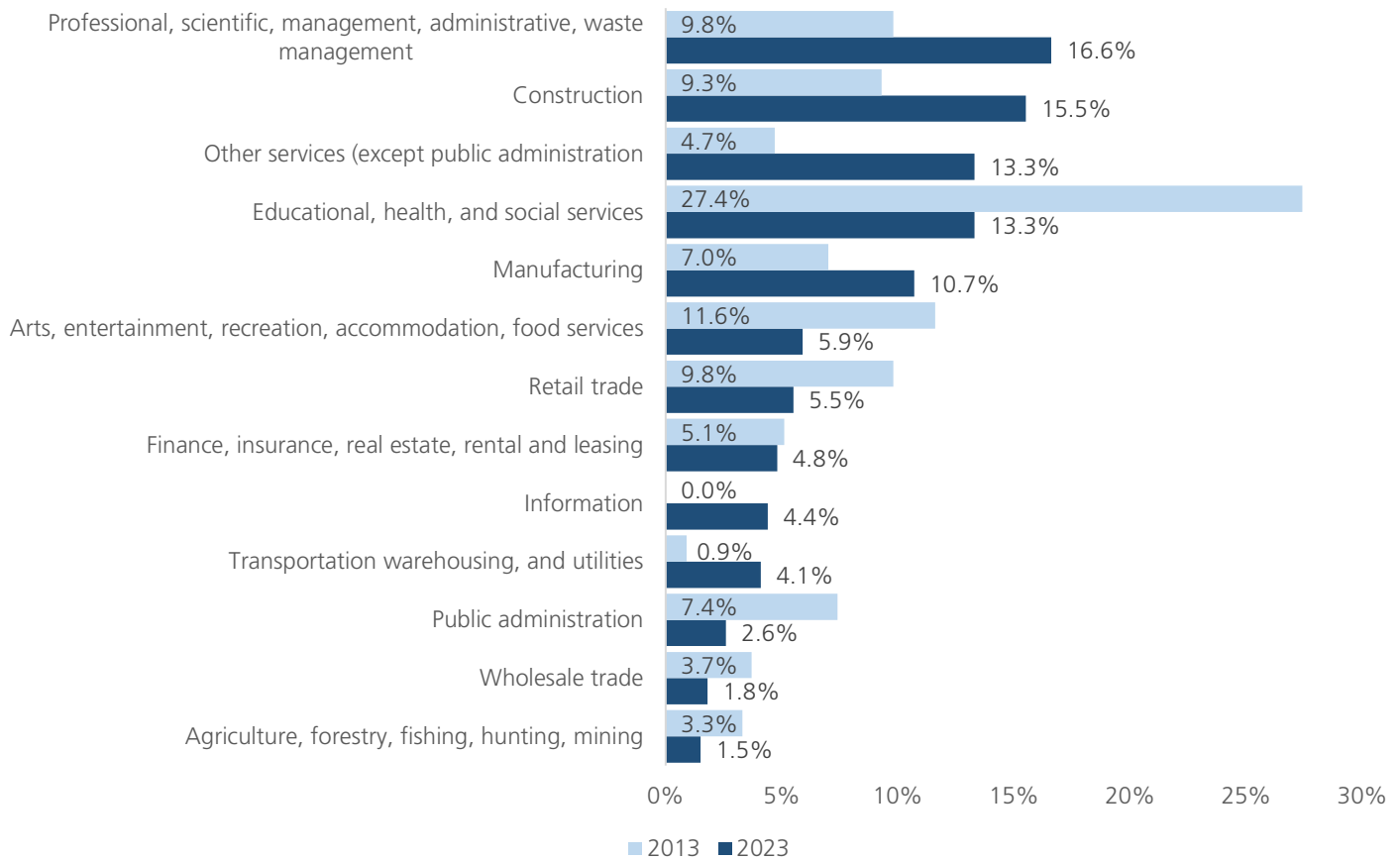
Source – American Community Survey, DP03.

**TABLE 4: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION, 2023**

	Burt Township	Cheboygan County	Michigan
Labor force	840	22,252	8,155,338
In labor force	33.9%	51.2%	61.4%
Employed	32.3%	47.6%	57.8%
Unemployment Rate	4.9%	7.0%	5.8%

Source – American Community Survey, DP03.

**FIGURE 1: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION BY INDUSTRY, 2013 & 2023**



Source – American Community Survey, DP03.

**TABLE 5: HOUSING UNITS USED SEASONALLY, 2023**

	Total Units	Seasonal Units	% Seasonal
Burt Township	952	493	51.8%
Cheboygan County	17,742	6,007	33.9%
State of Michigan	4,599,683	260,162	5.7%

Source – American Community Survey, DP04.

## Housing Diversity

An evaluation of housing stock and property values can be very beneficial in determining community characteristics or housing needs. For example, a large percentage of seasonal housing units is indicative of an increased seasonal population, as is the case of Burt Township. In 2023, there were 952 housing units in Burt Township with 96.3% being single family homes and about 3.7% being mobile homes. A breakdown of housing units compared to those that are used seasonally can be seen in the table “Housing Units Used Seasonally, 2023”. Seasonal units in Burt Township comprise far more of the total housing units compared to the County and State.<sup>20</sup>

## Household Size and Ownership

Household size refers to the number of people who reside within the housing unit, while tenure refers to whether a housing unit is owner or renter occupied. In Burt Township, 97.8% of all households are owner-occupied, while 2.2% are renter occupied.<sup>21</sup> Data shows that the average size of an owner-occupied household is slightly larger than renter-occupied households at 2.32 and 2.0, respectively, both are smaller than the County and the State.<sup>22</sup>

## Housing Value

The U.S. Census Bureau collects data on home values of owner-occupied homes. The table “Median Home Value, 2013-2023” shows how home values changed

**TABLE 6: HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND TENURE**

	Burt Township	Cheboygan County	Michigan
Owner-occupied	97.8%	85.0%	72.9%
Renter-occupied	2.2%	15.0%	27.1%
Average household size owner-occupied	2.32	2.37	2.55
Average household size renter-occupied	2.0	2.36	2.13

Source – American Community Survey, DP04.

**TABLE 7: MEDIAN HOME VALUE, 2013-2023**

	Burt Township	Cheboygan County	Michigan
Median home value 2013	\$203,600	\$116,600	\$128,600
Median home value 2023	\$503,800	\$175,200	\$217,600
% Change	147.4%	50.3%	69.2%

Source – American Community Survey, DP04.

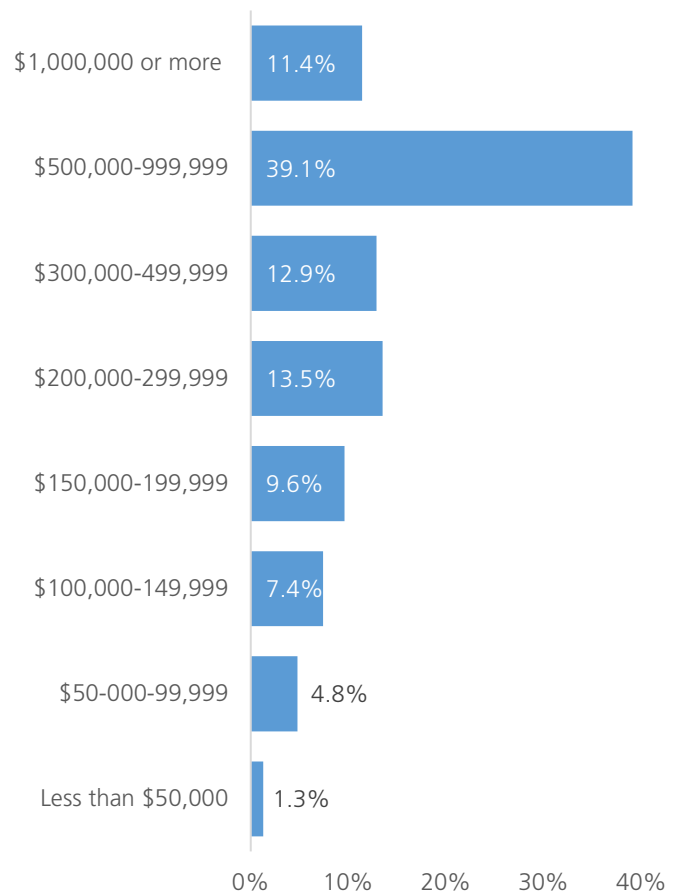
over time. The median value of an owner-occupied unit in Burt Township increased by a staggering 147.4% over the ten-year period to \$503,800.<sup>23</sup> This increase far outpaced the County and State during the same time and underscores the desirability of living in the Township for natural beauty and recreation access.

Considering the high median home value in Burt Township it can be assumed that many individual homes are high value. Just over half (50.5%) of all owner-occupied homes are valued at \$500,000 or higher, with 11.4% being valued at more than \$1,000,000.<sup>24</sup> Just 6.1% of all units were valued at \$100,000 or less.<sup>25</sup>

### Key Takeaways

- Just over one-third of residents 16 years and older are actively in the labor force, something influenced by the high portion of elderly residents. This can make it difficult to bring in economic growth and also results in a lower tax base than communities with a high participation rate.
- Burt Township residents on average are more educated than the rest of Cheboygan County and the State of Michigan.
- More than half of all housing units are only occupied seasonally and are empty for portions of the year.
- The median value of an owner-occupied unit in Burt Township increase by almost 2.5x between 2013 and 2023 far outpacing the County and State. While this underscores the desirability of living in the Township for natural beauty and recreation access it is likely that the area is becoming unaffordable for many.

**FIGURE 2: HOME VALUES IN BURT TOWNSHIP**



Source – American Community Survey, DP04.

## Sources

- 1 American Community Survey, 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP05.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Cheboygan County Hazard Mitigation Plan, P.7, 5-20-2025, <https://www.cheboygancounty.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/fs89-1629311527-79528.pdf>
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- 16 Chris Romer, Vail Valley Partnership, Workforce Shortages and the Impact on Our Community, 6-7-2025, <https://www.vailvalleypartnership.com/2023/02/workforce-shortages-and-the-impact-on-our-community/#:~:text=The%20lack%20of%20people%20to,elderly%20or%20those%20with%20disabilities>.
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- 21 Ibid.
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- 24 Ibid.
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*Crump Road.*

# CHAPTER THREE

## NATURAL FEATURES

### Climate

Burt Township's position in the interior of northern lower Michigan means it lacks the climate moderating effects that proximity to the Great Lakes provides. Due to the inland location, the growing season can be as short as 70-80 days. However, Burt Lake does provide some moderation of the Township's temperature extremes, as it encompasses slightly more than half the community's area.

County-wide the presence of the Great Lakes tends to keep the temperature near the shoreline portions of the county warmer in the winter months and cooler in the summer months than in inland areas. This affects the length of the growing season in the various portions of the County. The lakeshore region of the County may have a growing season of as long as 140 days, whereas the interior portions of the County are limited to a shorter season, typically 70 to 80 days.

The average temperature in the summer months as recorded by the Cheboygan weather station is 65 degrees Fahrenheit, while the winter average is 19 degrees (data from NOAA; 1960 through 1990). The overall annual average temperature for Cheboygan County is 52 degrees, although variations occur. Historical temperature data illustrates the following county temperature extremes. The highest recorded temperature of 104 degrees (8/6/47) and lowest recorded of 38 degrees below zero (2/6/95). Precipitation is well distributed throughout the year with the growing season May to October receiving an average of 17.3 inches, 61% of the total annual average. The average annual snowfall for Cheboygan is 81.8 inches but can vary considerably throughout the County.

### Geology

The bedrock underlying the County was formed from an ancient sea, which covered the area some 250-600 million years ago. The bedrock underlying Burt Township was formed during the Middle Devonian ages of the Paleozoic Era. This bedrock is Bell shale, Dundee Limestone, and Traverse Group.

The primary surface geologic features in Burt Township are moraines, course textured glacial till, and dune sand. Moraines, linear hilly ridges, were formed by the deposition of unsorted sand, gravel, rock, and clay at the margins of the glacier. A moraine represents the former position of a glacier's edge in the past. Till is composed of unsorted sands and gravels left by the glacier. Moraines are predominant in the Township and occur in the area surrounding Burt Lake, with pockets of dune sand and some glacial till in the community's northwest portion. The surface geology of Burt Township is shown in the map "Quaternary Geology."

### Soils and Farmland

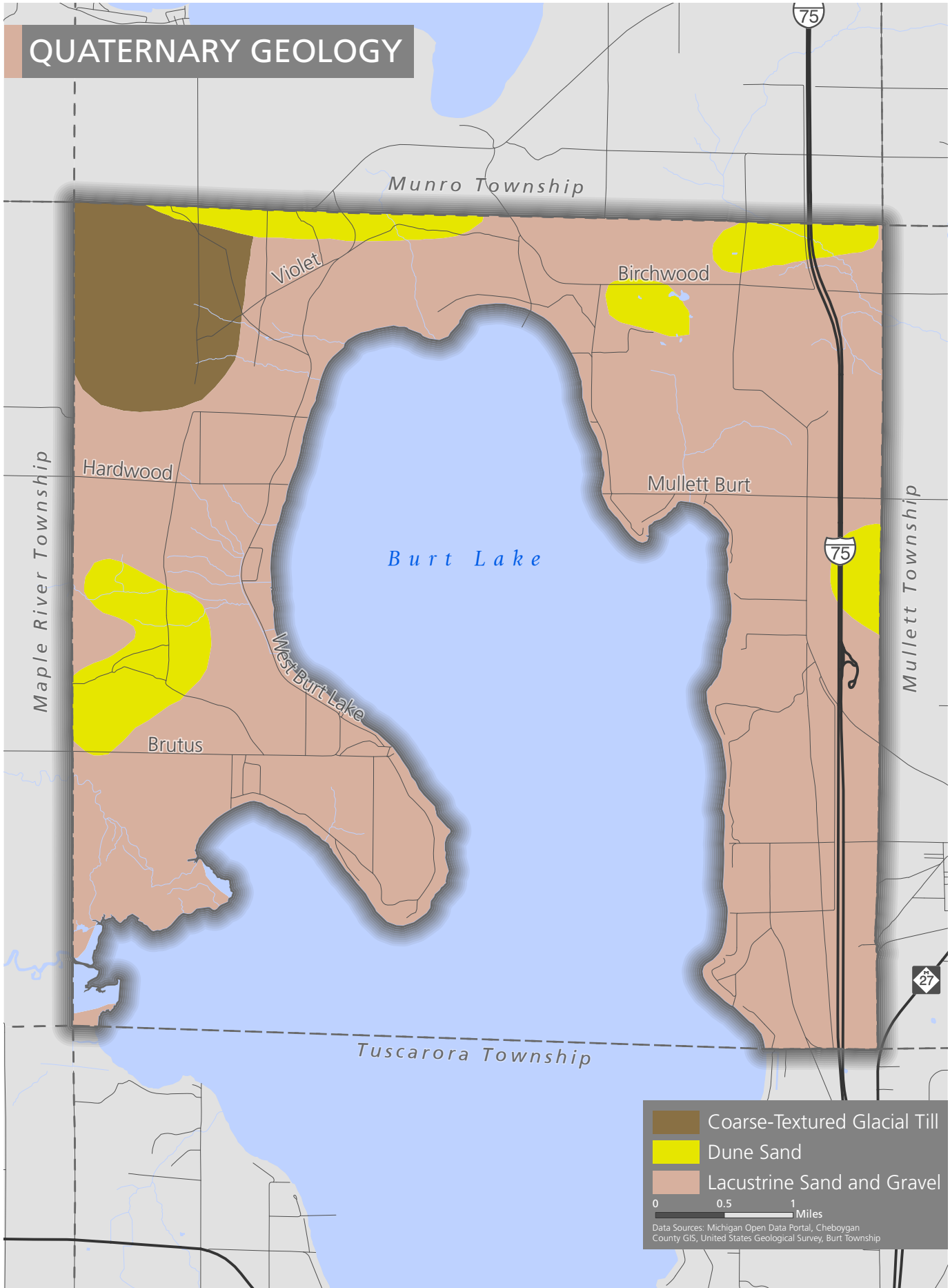
One important determinant of land use is the soil's suitability for development. Land uses must correspond with the capacity of the soils on which they occur, and the soil's suitability for each use should be determined before development occurs.

Approximately 13.1 percent of Burt Township is wetland area, comprised of soils which are hydric (wetland) soils or have hydric inclusions (see the "Wetlands" map). Soils identified as having hydric inclusions are soil types that may have some wetland areas but where the extent of wetlands cannot be determined by the soil type alone. These soils must be field checked to verify whether wetland areas exist. Soils and topography



*University of Michigan Biological Station Property.*

MAP 2: QUATERNARY GEOLOGY



also determine which areas are classified as prime farmland, which is a locally-important resource. The prime farmland classification indicates soils that are ideally suited for agricultural or timber production. Unique farmland is land other than prime that is used to produce specific high-value food and fiber crops. Locally important farmland includes soils that are nearly prime but are located on slightly steeper grades. These soils can produce high yields when treated and managed according to modern farming methods. With good management, these soils may produce yields equal to that of prime soils. Agricultural soils are a valuable natural resource in the Township and region. Areas currently being used for agricultural purposes are in the community's northeast, as shown in the "Existing Land Use" map on page 31.

The map "Soils-Septic Limitations" identifies areas with limitations for septic systems because of soil types. The limitations identified are either related to slope, hydric soils, or both. These limitations do not preclude the development of specific sites. Potential developers should realize, however, that construction on some soils may be more costly in time and money. A more detailed analysis of the soils by the District Health Department will determine suitability for siting a septic system. Health Department approval is required by State law.

## Solar Energy

In 2019, Burt Township explored the possibility of allowing solar energy systems through the community's

zoning ordinance. The Township considered allowing three types of solar installations; energy farms, in which solar energy is generated on non-prime farmland and subsequently sold, roof-mounted installations on private property for consumption on-site, and ground-mounted installations on private property for consumption on-site. Allowing these uses is accomplished by incorporating solar installations as permitted uses in the Township's agricultural, commercial, and residential zoning designations. In September 2023, the Township adopted a zoning amendment to regulate personal and commercial grade solar installations in Burt Township.

## Water Resources

One of the most valuable natural resources of Burt Township is water. The Township is located within the Cheboygan River watershed, which is sub-basin of the Lake Huron watershed. The waters of Burt Lake provide for a variety of recreational activities such as fishing, boating, and swimming.

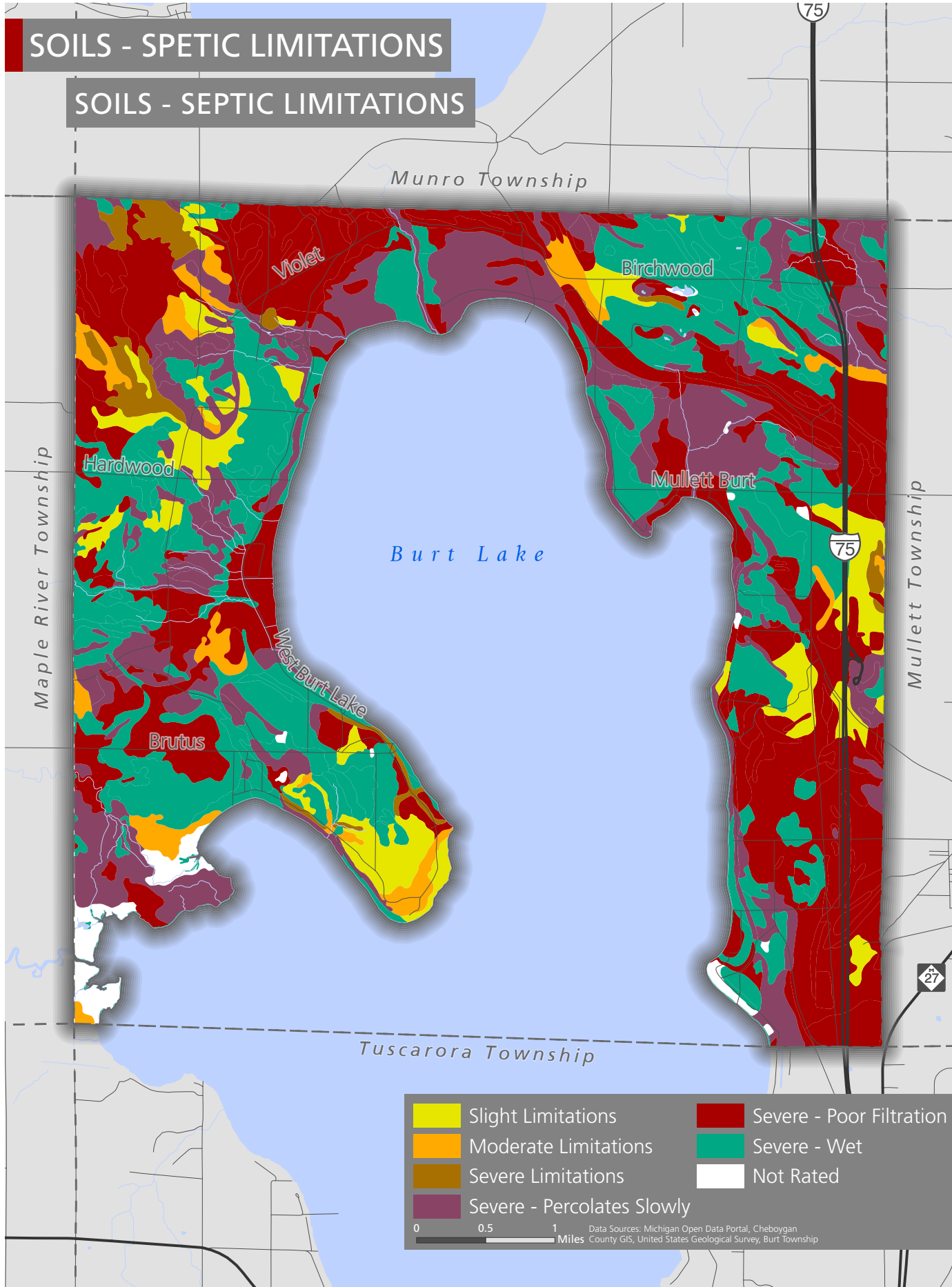
Both groundwater and surface water are vital resources within Burt Township. Because there is no water distribution system, residents must rely upon individual wells for drinking water. The vulnerability of drinking water aquifers to surface contamination is high in the Township, with its highly permeable soils. Surface waters in lakes and creeks of the Township are an important resource for scenic, recreational, and groundwater recharge amenities. It is therefore important that water resources be protected and managed in a manner which would ensure their quality.



*Burt Lake.*

# SOILS - SPETIC LIMITATIONS

## SOILS - SEPTIC LIMITATIONS



## Groundwater

Important factors in the evaluation of groundwater are the quantity and quality of the water. The geologic and hydrologic features of the Township provide residents with sufficient water quantities. Water availability will not likely be a factor in limiting growth. In Burt Township, water quality is more of a limiting factor than water supply. Water hardeners, iron content, salinity and septic field contamination are problems encountered in Burt Township. While hardness and salinity are minor problems, high iron content is common throughout the Township. A concern is the potential contamination of wells by septic fields. The possibility for such pollution exists, although the Cheboygan County Health Department record has no documented occurrences of contamination to date.

## Surface Water

The major body of water in Burt Township is Burt Lake. Burt Lake is located (approximately half) in Burt Township, the southern half in Tuscarora Township. The surface area of the lake is 17,120 acres, with a maximum depth of 73 feet and average depth of 39 feet. The lake and its associated tributary streams and creeks offer scenic and recreational amenities to Township residents and visitors. It is extremely important that the quality of these surface waters be protected from the negative impacts of development, such as pollution and loss of scenic views to open water.

The Burt Lake Preservation Association is an active organization of interested citizens and property owners concerned with the protection of Burt Lake.

Lakes, creeks, and wetlands are important for surface drainage, groundwater recharge and wildlife habitat. Alterations to the water features can contribute to flooding, poor water quality, insufficient water supply, and loss of valuable wildlife habitat.

Water quality testing includes dissolved oxygen and temperature profiles, pH levels, Total Phosphorus, Nitrate/Nitrite, Conductivity, Chloride, and Water Clarity Secchi Disc readings. Dissolved oxygen (D.O.) is an important factor in determining the lake's water quality, since most aquatic organisms depend on having an abundant supply of oxygen available. The pH level is a measure of the acidity or alkalinity on a scale from zero to 14. Low pH indicates acidity, high pH indicating alkaline conditions and a pH of 7 is neutral. The higher than background levels of Phosphorous results in excessive growth of algae and aquatic plants. Phosphorous is considered the most important nutrient

influencing lake water quality. Nitrogen is considered the second most important nutrient affecting water quality. Low concentrations of nitrogen indicate good water quality. Conductivity and chloride are usually not water quality problems but are valuable indicators of human influence on water quality.

Overall the results of the Tip of the Mitt volunteer lake-monitoring program do not indicate a significant change in the water quality of Burt Lake in recent years. The Trophic Status Index Value for Burt Lake has typically ranged between 30 and 35 since 2000. In 1994, the trophic status of Burt Lake changed to oligotrophic and TSI values have been in that range ever since. What was once a moderately productive lake appears to have changed for the long-term to a low productive lake: clear, nutrient poor, but oxygen-rich. Overall, data show that Burt Lake has exceptionally high-quality waters.

While the current quality of surface waters in Burt Township is good, the threat of potential water pollution from non-point sources is a concern. Proper land use management can help control water quality conditions in Burt Township. Some methods to curb pollution include runoff control measures, proper treatment of sanitary wastes, fertilizer applications restrictions, and septic tank regulations, which are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

## Wetlands and Woodlands

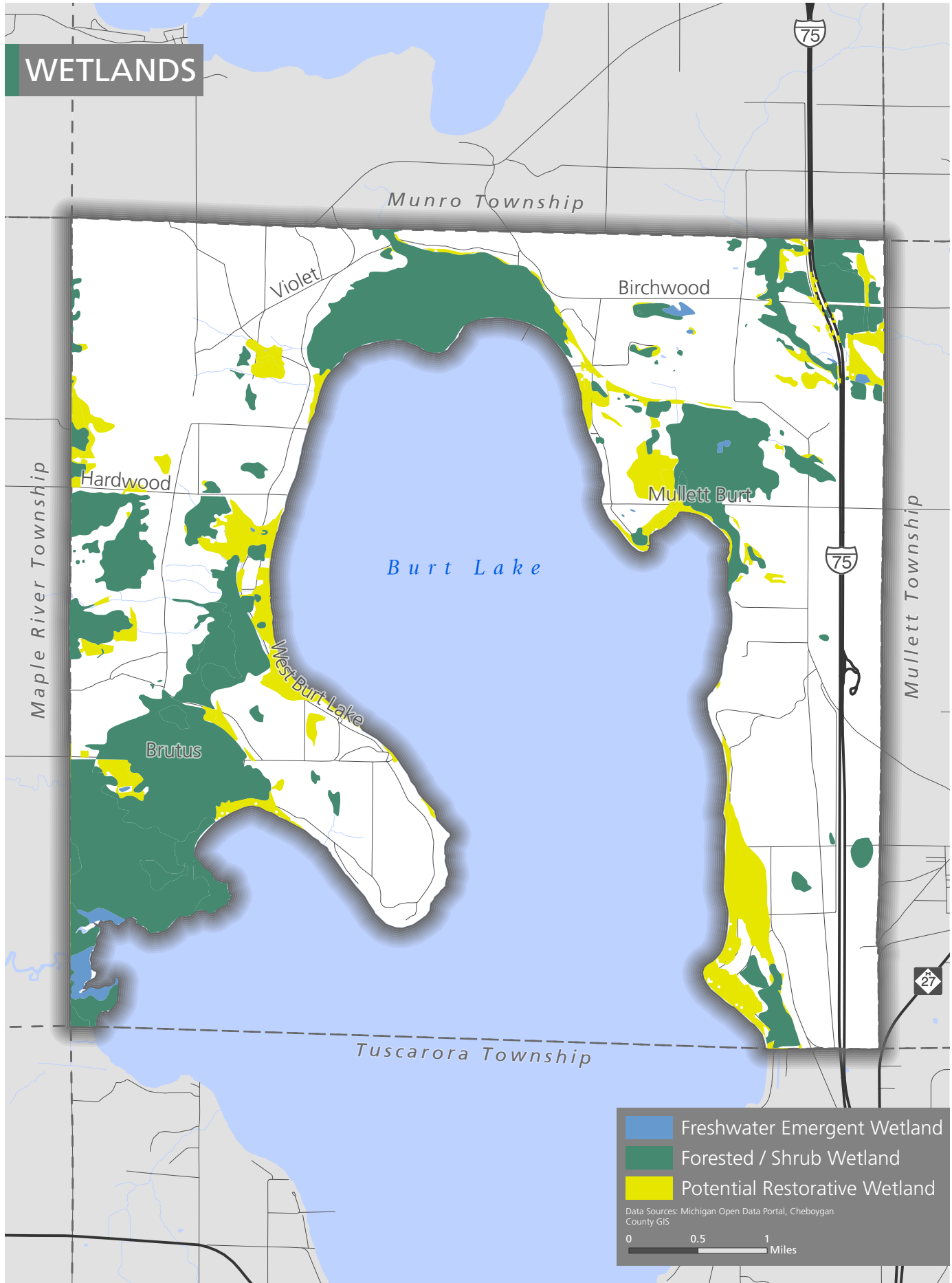
In addition to the scenic characteristics of woodlands, forested areas provide habitat for wildlife, protect the soil from erosion, and act as a buffer from noise on heavily traveled highways. The Map "Forests" shows the distribution of forested land within the Township. The forested and wetland areas are located throughout much of the community and some are under public, or quasi-public ownership, such as the property owned by the University of Michigan. Other forested lands are protected in land trusts or with conservation easements.

The dominant forest associations in Burt Township are northern hardwoods (maple, beech, and basswood), aspen and pine in the upland areas. In the lowland or wetland areas, common hardwood species include ash, elm, and red maple. The common coniferous associations are cedar and tamarack in the wetlands.

## Fish and Wildlife

Trout, pike, walleye, perch, bass, muskie, and sturgeon are the primary species found in Burt Lake, creating good recreational fishing opportunities. Burt Lake fishery management strategy includes stocking and

MAP 4: WETLANDS



periodic surveying to assess the survival and growth of stocked species and status of fish populations. The lake is stocked periodically with lake sturgeon and rainbow trout by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). Additional stocking of walleye in Burt Lake is conducted by a private organization under permit with the MDNR.

Habitat for populations of songbirds, wild turkeys, muskrat, mink, and raccoon are also supplied by the Township's wetlands. Predominant mammal species found throughout Burt Township are fox, squirrel, rabbit, raccoons, porcupines, coyotes and deer. Bear are occasionally spotted in the Township. Additionally, the Michigan Monkeyflower is an endangered species both at the state and federal level, and the Hungerford crawling water beetle is a state listed endangered species, both species are found in Burt Township. Also, two "threatened" species, the bald eagle and osprey have been sighted in Burt Township. The following "special concern" bird species are known to nest in Burt Township: Cooper's hawk, northern goshawk, American bittern, red-shouldered hawk, and common loon.

## Scenic Features

The dynamic, year-round views of Burt Lake from along its shoreline are another important asset to Burt Township. Development which occurs along the Burt Lake shoreline area is visible to many other property owners and boaters on the lake. Just as consideration is given to the impact of development on water quality, the impact of development on visual quality should be considered.

In addition to Burt Lake, wooded areas, farmlands, streams and creeks, rolling topography, and historical structures are all important attributes found within Burt Township. Extensive panoramic views encompassing these features help create the pleasant rural and scenic character appreciated by residents and visitors alike.

## Sites of Environmental Contamination

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) provides for the identification, evaluation and risk assessment of sites of environmental contamination in the State, under part 201 of PA 451 of 1995.

The Environmental Response Division (ERD) of EGLE is charged with administering this law. A site of environmental contamination, as defined by the ERD, is "a location at which contamination of soil, ground water, surface water, air or other environmental resource is confirmed, or where there is potential for



*Burt Township Trail.*

contamination of resources due to site conditions, site use or management practices."

The agency publishes an annual list of environmentally contaminated sites by county, showing the sites by name, Site Assessment Model score, pollutant(s) and site status. As of December, 2025, one environmentally contaminated site that was listed in Burt Township due to gasoline leakage from a previous underground storage tank was undergoing remediation.

The Enbridge Line 5 oil pipeline crosses the Burt Township Hall property before continuing south along Interstate 75 to Bay City, MI. The pipeline carries crude oil for refinement. In the event of an emergency with the pipeline, dial "911" and the Enbridge Emergency control center at 1-855-869-8209.

## Surface Water Discharge Permits

All point source discharges into surface waters are required to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit which is issued by the Michigan Water Resources Commission upon recommendation by EGLE's, Surface Water Quality Division. Permit requirements generally address discharge limitations, effluent characteristics, monitoring and reporting requirements, along with facility management requirements. Currently there are two point source permit holders are listed in Burt Township, the Cheboygan County Road Commission for S. Extension Road, and MDOT for I-75 northbound between Topinabee Mail Route and Riggsville Road.

MAP 5: FORESTS



## Septic Tanks

Although water quality in Burt Lake remains high, pollution from septic tank effluent from surrounding residences could pose a concern if measures are not taken. Despite its freshwater resources, Michigan is the only State in the United States without uniform standards regarding septic system design, installation, and maintenance; this is left to Counties and municipalities. Still, only 11 of the state's 83 counties had requirements for septic inspections in 2019, and most were only mandated at the time of transfer or sale of property. The lack of oversight of private septic systems poses a threat to Michigan's water resources; public health experts throughout the State believe that most septic tank failures go unreported or undetected for large periods. Monitoring conducted in 2017 reported that nutrient contamination associated with septic systems affected all the Lower Peninsula river systems it studied. This has the potential to adversely affect lake ecosystems and public health.

Municipalities are left to deal with much of the challenge, however, with about half of the frontage on Burt Lake, Burt Township is in a unique position to do so and affect positive outcomes on water quality. Several types of mandates could reduce the risk of contamination. The Township may consider implementing a time of transfer ordinance or point of sale inspection program, which would mandate a septic inspection by the district health department at the time of property transfer or sale. The ordinance could also mandate remediation if a private system is found out of compliance. Success has been achieved by Milton Township in Antrim County, and Long Lake Township in Grand Traverse County, and among the many benefits, has increased residents' awareness of their septic system, and how they work. The ordinance has not discouraged new homeownership in the area, although as a drawback, it also doesn't catch problems of long-term property owners' systems, which often need the most attention.

Other more stringent regulations are options as well. Mandatory inspection programs would require owners to undertake an inspection at a specified time interval, while mandatory pumping ordinances require the pumping of septic systems at a specified time period. All of these regulatory options are possibilities although a time of transfer ordinance is a good starting point; the majority of respondents to the 2019 Burt Township Master Plan Survey indicated support for one.

"Potentially 40% of the aging septic systems in Cheboygan County have not been replaced or will need replacement in the near future."

Source: *Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. The Septic Question: Cheboygan County Report*

61%

of respondents to the Burt Township property owner survey reported that they would support a septic tank inspection ordinance at the time of property transfer

Source: *Burt Township Community Survey 2019*

## Air Quality

Air Quality is monitored by the Air Quality Division of EGLE. Standards have been established as acceptable levels of discharge for any of the following air pollutants: particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone, lead, and trace metals. These pollutants are monitored on a continuing basis at selected locations around the state. Monitoring in recent years has shown the level of pollutants in the region to be within the established acceptable standards.

Air discharge permits are required for businesses discharging more than the acceptable level of any of the regulated air pollutants. Within Cheboygan County there is one active permit, however, none currently listed in Burt Township.

On-going air quality monitoring and research is being conducted at the University of Michigan Biological Station in adjacent Munro Township. This research includes acid rain deposition research, mercury deposition research, and in-depth research in the areas of carbon monoxide and ozone.

## Summary

The review of the natural resources in Burt Township indicates the natural features and agricultural resources are currently relatively unimpaired; however, these resources are extremely vulnerable to change. Residents place value on the community's natural resources and scenic features, as indicated in previous community surveys. The environmental features of Township are an important asset to the community and need continued protection.



*Fall in Burt Township.*

*Source: Brandy and Scott Forsmark*

# CHAPTER FOUR

## EXISTING LAND USE

Land use is a critical element of community planning due to the impact it has on the daily lives of residents. When combined with demographic data and community input, land use planning creates an outline that Burt Township can utilize to ensure future development of the Township is consistent with the vision presented in the Master Plan. Burt Township's land area occupies 19.7 square miles (about 12,651 acres). The Township has a unique geographic location in that the Townships southern portion almost entirely follows the Burt Lake shoreline, which protrudes into the center portion of the land area to the point that the lake is just over one-half of a mile from the northern Township border, while the Township is approximately 6 miles north to south, overall.

### Pattern of Land Divisions

As development occurs, larger tracts of land are generally broken down into smaller parcels. Therefore, studying the existing pattern of land divisions is one way to analyze the status of land use and development. Land division patterns for Burt Township are discussed below. According to the Census Bureau, Burt Township's land area is 19.7 square miles. The two largest landowners in the Township are the University of Michigan with more

than 2,700 acres and the State of Michigan with over 2,000 acres.

Additionally, the Little Traverse Conservancy owns some large parcels as well. Privately held tracts, some of which are larger than 100 acres, are scattered throughout the interior of the Township. Subdivisions and small tracts are primarily located along the lakefront of Burt Lake. Other small tract land divisions are occurring as small parcels along the roads are split from larger parcels. In terms of land division patterns, it is worth noting that some of the newer residential developments in Burt Township are being created as site condominiums rather than traditional subdivisions. A site condominium does not actually create lots by land division. Therefore, a site condominium project may continue to appear as a large, undivided tract when it has already been converted to relatively dense residential use.

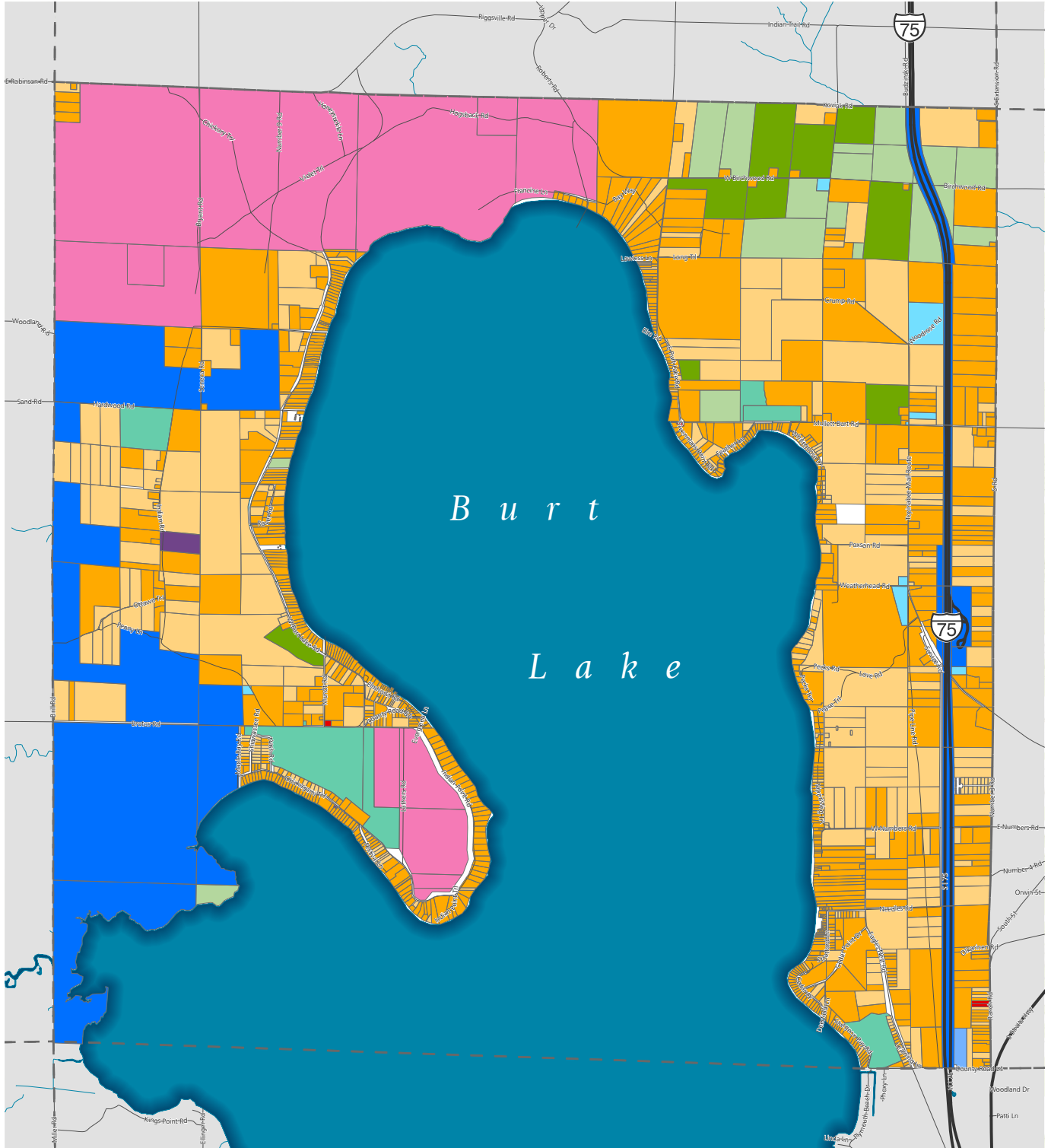
### Existing Land Use Statistics and Characteristics

Each parcel in Burt Township is classified by the Township assessor into one of the four categories below. Each land use classification is broken down by its status as "vacant" or "improved" (except for agricultural uses).

**TABLE 8: LAND USE IN BURT TOWNSHIP**

Land Use Type	Acres	Percentage	# of Parcels
Agricultural - Improved	413.3	3.27%	9
Agricultural - Vacant	547.4	4.33%	17
Residential - Improved	3698.9	29.24%	925
Residential - Vacant	2823.7	22.32%	348
Commercial - Improved	4.2	0.03%	4
Exempt - County	12.5	0.10%	1
Exempt - Education	2463.6	19.47%	12
Exempt - Local	63.9	0.51%	9
Exempt - Other	323.9	2.56%	8
Exempt - Religious	19.6	0.16%	2
Exempt - State	2007.3	15.87%	21
Undefined	272.6	2.15%	N/A
<b>Total Land Area</b>	<b>12651.0</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1356</b>

MAP 6: EXISTING LAND USE MAP



# Existing Land Use Map

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, Cheboygan County, Burt Township

Burt Township Boundary

- |                        |                      |                   |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Agricultural, Improved | Commercial, Improved | Exempt, Education |
| Agricultural, Vacant   | Exempt, Local        | Exempt, Religious |
| Residential, Improved  | Exempt, County       | Exempt, Other     |
| Residential, Vacant    | Exempt, State        |                   |

2,500 Feet

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

02/17/2025

The primary distinction between improved and vacant land is that improved land has infrastructure already in place such as roadways, utilities, and possible buildings already on site, whereas vacant land has none of these. Establishing infrastructure on site is a high cost of developing a location, so improved areas are much more optimal when attracting developers.

Land use types present in Burt Township include:

- Agricultural
- Residential
- Commercial
- Exempt

The table “Land Use in Burt Township” charts the total number of parcels, acres, and total percentage for both for all land use class in the Township. Land in the “Undefined” category are ones where data was not available. Data for existing land uses was provided by Cheboygan County.

## Agricultural Land Use

Agricultural land use in Burt Township covers over 960 acres (7.6% of total land area), primarily in the northeast. Over 413 acres are classified as improved (working) farmland, while 547 acres are nonworking in the Township.

## Residential Land Use

Residential land uses cover more than 6,522 acres in Burt Township, over half (51.5%) of the total Township land area. About 3700 acres are improved, and currently homesteaded on, while 2,823 acres are not actively used. The location of these parcels has no specific patterns and are both distributed throughout the Township.

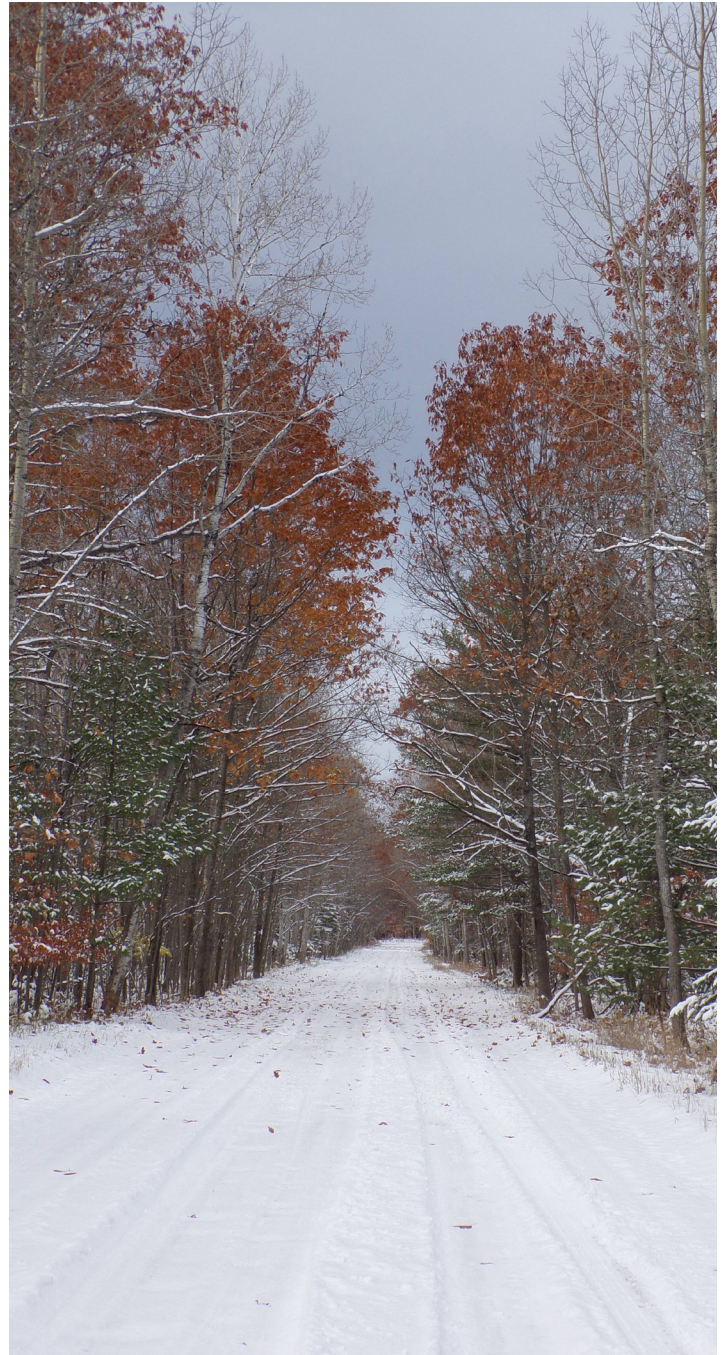
## Commercial Land Use

Burt Township has very little commercial land use, just 4.2 acres or less than 1/10 of 1% of all land coverage. Currently, commercial land uses are at the corner of Mundt and Brutus Roads north of Chaboiganing Nature Preserve.

## Exempt Land Uses

Approximately 38.7% of all land area is under the Exempt Land Use status, in total spanning just under 4,900 acres. These exempt lands account for a significant portion of the total area. Properties under

the Exempt designation are exempted from property taxes, meaning that they do not contribute to the tax base in this way. Property owned by the University of Michigan and the State of Michigan are the majority of these exempted lands. Both entities have large areas of contiguous undeveloped land, which is currently being maintained for recreation, conservation and educational purposes. The largest concentration of exempt lands are located in the western portion of the Township, though they are distributed throughout.



*Crump Road.*

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# CHAPTER FIVE

## COMMUNITY SERVICES, FACILITIES, AND TRANSPORTATION

### Water and Sewage Disposal Systems

Burt Township does not have a public drinking water system or a public sewer disposal system. A limited number of residential developments located around Burt Lake have shared septic systems, however, most of the Township residents have on-site private wells for domestic drinking water and individual septic systems. Septic systems and wells are regulated by the Cheboygan County Health Department.

Two important determinants for siting a septic system are soil suitability and depth to bedrock. Chapter Three - Natural Resources discusses the geology and soils of the Township.

### Solid Waste

Residents of Burt Township have several options for the disposal of solid waste. The Township owns and operates two transfer stations within the Township. Private haulers offer residential weekly curbside trash pick-up.

Since its inception in summer 2003, the Burt Township sponsored Township-wide spring clean up day has become an annual event. This clean-up event allows Township residents to bring "large items" (not typically accepted) to the transfer stations for disposal.

Currently recycling is occurring at the Cheboygan County level with local drop-off sites located at both the east and west side transfer station. Some Township residents may recycle using Emmet County facilities, or utilize the weekly household hazardous waste drop off available at the Cheboygan County fairgrounds.

### Other Public Utilities

Burt Township residents receive electric service from Consumers Energy or Presque Isle Electric and Gas Co-operative. Natural gas is available in the Township from DTE, Presque Isle Electric, and Gas Co-operative. Residents choose from several providers of local and long-distance phone service. Cable service, where available, is provided by Charter Communications. Wireless high-speed service is available from Verizon, Spectrum, and Starlink throughout much of the Township.

### Police, Fire, Ambulance

The Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet (CCE) Central Dispatch Authority communications agency provides emergency call receipt and dispatch service for Emmet, Charlevoix and Cheboygan Counties. Enhanced-911 telephone service, computer-aided dispatch, and a multi-channel radio system are in place, including a system which identifies the actual location from which a cellular phone call is made.

The Cheboygan County Sheriff and Michigan State Police provide law enforcement services to Burt Township. Fire protection is provided under contract by Pellston Fire Department and the Topinabee Fire Department depending on where service is needed.

### Recreation

The Burt Lake Trail is a recreational asset that has boosted the community's appeal and visitor-ship. The first of five phases was constructed in 2013 from Maple Bay Road to Hogsback Road on the west side of Burt Lake. Most of Phase I was 10 foot wide crushed limestone, which has incrementally been resurfaced with asphalt in half mile segments since 2022. The remaining 1.5 miles will be resurfaced in 2026. In 2015, negotiations began with University of Michigan Biological Station (UMBS) to obtain an easement trail route through their property on the north end of Burt Lake to extend the Phase I trail.

Phase II, which consists of 1.8 miles of separated asphalt trail, was completed in May, 2020 from Hogsback Road along Riggsville Road to East Burt Lake Road. This phase was financed with MDOT and MDNR Trust Fund grants, as well as with donor match money.

Phase III, a continuation from the Riggsville/East Burt Lake Road intersection through the UMBS property going south to the corner of East Burt Lake Road and Birchwood Road, was completed in 2021. Phase III was also financed by grants from MDOT and DNR Recreational Grant in addition to donor matches.

Working with the Cheboygan Road Commission, Phase IV, focused on East Burt Lake Road and extended for about 1.5 miles. Phase V, located along Mullett-Burt

Road, was also 1.5 miles. Both Phase IV and V involved the reconstruction and widening of the five foot paved shoulders in 2020 and 2017, respectively. Currently, the Burt Lake Trail is continuously paved for 11.4 miles.

## Water Sports and Other Recreation

The Township has numerous other recreation facilities, which consist primarily of water-related activities (boating, fishing, swimming, etc.) and trails for hiking, skiing, biking, as well as some snowmobiling trails. There are several public access sites on Burt Lake within the Township that are well utilized both in the summer and winter seasons.

The extensive network of trails in the Township are located on both public and semi-public lands, such as the State Forest land, the University of Michigan properties and the Little Traverse Conservancy properties. All trails are accessible from the Burt Lake Trail. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) also maintains a campground at Maple Bay in the Township.

## Parks and Recreation Action Strategies

Parks are key resources to continue attracting residents and visitors to the community, and recognizing this, Burt Township's 2023 recreation plan update defined several strategies to improve its assets in the near term through 2027. These projects were determined by a thorough inventory of the community's facilities and with feedback garnered from residents.

Road end sites are popular access points on Burt Lake and residents report parking shortages at peak use

times. Outside of this, the Township will work with neighboring jurisdictions in Emmet County to extend the Burt Lake Trail west to Brutus. User safety will be a primary concern as the trail will be located within certain road right of ways and easements. Some of these planned stretches will need to be designed as paved road shoulders. The Township also plans to create a trailhead at the publicly owned lot at the intersection of Crump and Mullet-Burt Road, which will improve access for visitors.

## Other Protected Lands

There are a growing number of parcels which have been donated to or purchased by the Little Traverse Conservancy. These Conservancy Preserve parcels are shown on the "Recreational Opportunities" map and are protected from future development as public conservancy owned properties. Additionally, Little Traverse Conservancy currently holds a conservation easement or similar instrument on four other private properties, (totally 104.5 acres) in the Township. These privately-owned properties are not shown on the map but are protected due to specific development restrictions associated with their respective conservation easement to limit future development on the property.

The University of Michigan owns extensive property (over 2,300 acres) primarily in the northern portion of Burt Township. While this land is considered semi-public, since the University allows residents use of the trails, it is not protected in any permanent manner.



*Maple Bay State Campground.*

**TABLE 9: RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Recreational Site	Map	Facilities
Maple Bay State Campground & Boat Launch	A	Public access - boat launch improvements. Ice fishing access in winter.
Michigan Department of Natural Resources site	B	Undeveloped waterfront site
Burt Lake Chaboiganing Nature Preserve Trailhead	C	Little Traverse Conservancy Preserve
Mundt Road Public Access	D-2	Public access suitable for shallow draft boats. Ice fishing access in winter.
Indian Road Public Access	D-3	Public limited access
Roberts Road	D-4	Public access suitable for shallow draft boats. Ice fishing access in winter.
Lawless Road	D-5	Public access suitable for shallow draft boats. Ice fishing access in winter.
Mullett-Burt Road ("Hoppies")	D-6	Public access suitable for summer use, expanded parking. Ice fishing access.
White Goose Drive	D-7	Public access - suitable for shallow draft boats. Ice fishing access in winter.
Numbers Road	D-8	Public access - suitable for shallow draft boats. Ice fishing access in winter.
Needles Road	D-9	Public access - suitable for shallow draft boats. Ice fishing access in winter.

The Mackinaw State Forest land owned by the State of Michigan is open for public use, but as with other state-owned land it is not necessarily permanently protected.

### Private, Civic, and Fraternal Organizations

Typically, there are many private, civic and fraternal organizations active in Burt Township or in which Burt Township residents are involved that are not specifically affiliated with the Township. The organizations either located in Burt Township or quite active in the Township include the following:

- Burt Lake Preservation Association
- Little Traverse Conservancy
- Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

- Sturgeon Forever
- Northern Lakes Walleye Club
- University of Michigan Biological Station
- Burt Lake Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians

Other organizations are typically regional organizations which have a larger membership and service area than the Township. A listing of such organizations is available from the Cheboygan Area Regional Chamber of Commerce. Many Township residents participate in the organizations available in Cheboygan County or throughout the region.

### Churches and Cemeteries

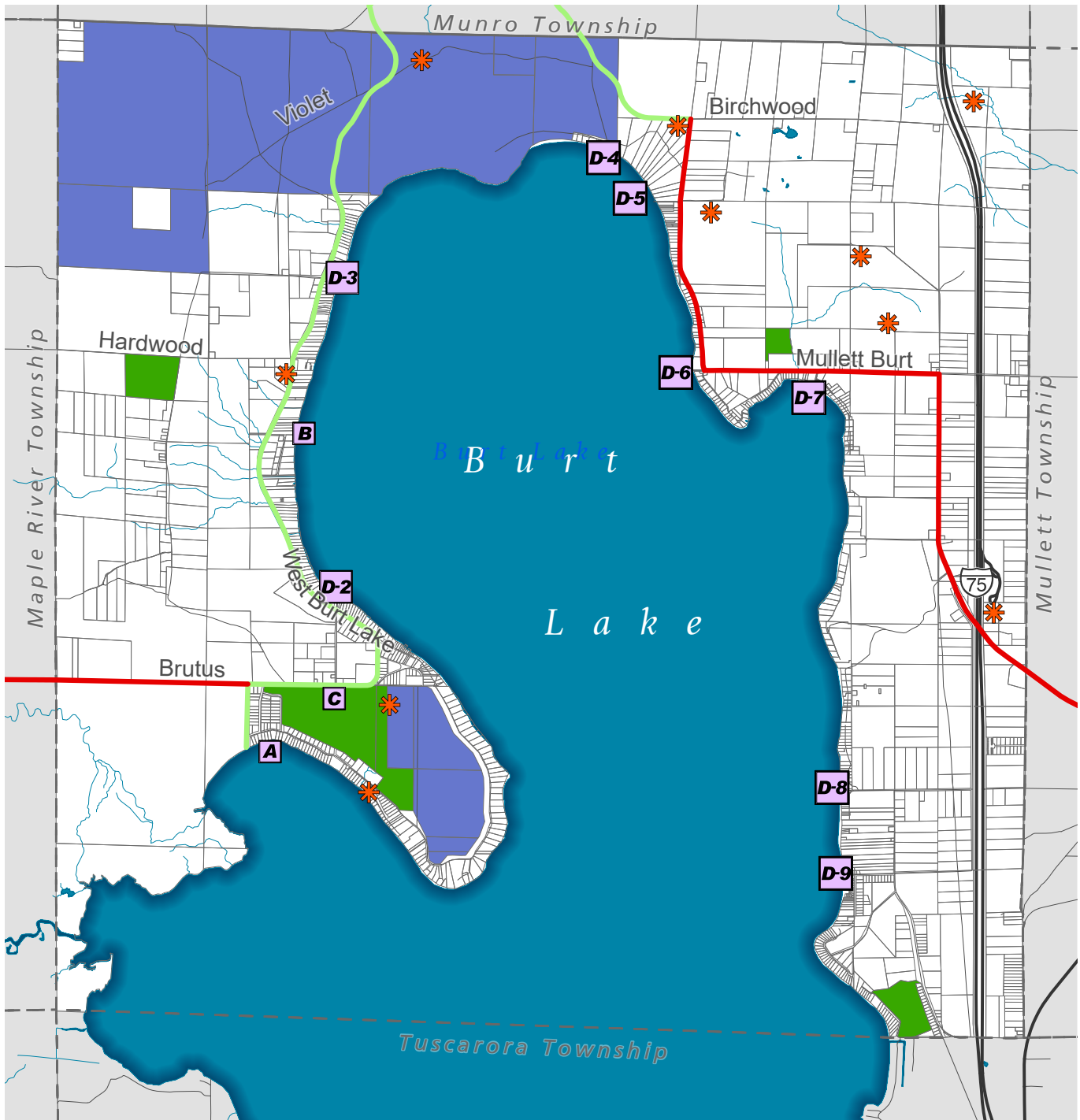
The one church located in Burt Township is St. Mary's Catholic Church located on Indian Road.

There are two Indian Cemeteries in the Township, one located off Chickagami Trail and the other Behind St. Mary's Catholic Church, both in the western portion of the Township. Additionally, the Burt-Mullett Township Cemetery is located off Topinabee Mail Route on the east side of the Township and is owned jointly with Mullett Township.



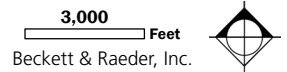
*Chaboiganing Nature Preserve.*

MAP 7: RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



# Recreational Opportunities

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, Cheboygan County GIS, Burt Township



10/16/2025

Burt Township Boundary

DNR Ownership (Mineral & Surface, Surface)

Little Traverse Conservancy Property

University of Michigan Property

Public Recreation Facilities (refer to table)

Scenic Outlook

Non-Motorized Trail

Proposed Non-Motorized Trail

## Transportation and Road Maintenance

The only interstate route through the Township is I-75, which is the dominant north/south route through the Township. This highway under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation. The total of I-75 passing through Burt Township is about six miles. The Cheboygan County Road Commission provides road

maintenance and snow removal services on all public non-seasonal roads within the Township.

The Straits Area Regional Ride provides an on-call dial-a-ride bus service within a multi-county area including the counties of Cheboygan, Emmet, Presque Isle, and Otsego. Commercial passenger air service, as well as air cargo service, is available at the Pellston Regional Airport.



*Horses grazing.*

*Source: Brandy and Scott Forsmark*

# CHAPTER SIX

## COMMUNITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In developing community goals and policies, it is important to analyze existing community characteristics, such as social and economic features, environmental resources, available services and facilities, and existing land use. In addition to examining existing characteristics, another important tool is to identify community assets, problems and other issues to be addressed.

Based on the foregoing, the following goals and objectives are established:

TOPIC	GOAL	ACTIONS
<b>Natural Resources</b>	Protect and preserve groundwater, surface water, woodlands, wetlands, open space, wildlife habitat and steep slopes.	Continue enforcement of the waterfront setback requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.
		Continue to receive information from the Tipp of the Mitt Watershed Council, the Little Traverse Conservancy, and related organizations.
<b>Agriculture &amp; Forestry</b>	Acknowledge the importance of agricultural lands and forestry management.	Work to provide economically feasible options for continued agricultural use of active prime farmland.
		Explore farmland protection initiatives, the transfer of development rights (when available), purchase of development rights, conservation easements and the clustering of non-farm development.
<b>Parks &amp; Recreation</b>	Provide and maintain recreation lands and facilities for safe access and enjoyment by residents and visitors.	Support the goals and objectives of the Burt Township Parks & Recreation.
<b>Housing &amp; Commercial Development</b>	Retain the Township’s rural and scenic character, while providing for suitable housing and commercial opportunities to serve year-round residents.	Explore options for different types of residential development including, single family, multi-family, and condominium housing.
		Explore opportunities for low impact commercial services (e.g. a general store)
<b>Infrastructure &amp; Public Services</b>	Maintain and improve the Township facilities, programs and systems consistent with the community needs, and the ability to finance the improvements.	Monitor and explore the needs for natural gas services as more development occurs.
		Continue to explore options to expand high-speed communications and fiber optic within Township.

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# CHAPTER SEVEN

## FUTURE LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

While the Planning Commission reviewed the Future Land Use categories and map as part of the 2025-2026 update, it was determined that the desired future configuration of land fits the Township's goals and will be appropriate to guide future development.

Through land-use planning and land use controls, Burt Township intends to ensure that existing forest, open space, and recreational land uses can continue; that irreplaceable natural resources such as water, wetlands, and forestlands will be protected; and that reasonable growth can be accommodated with minimal land-use conflicts or negative environmental impacts.

Future land use recommendations for Burt Township were developed by the Planning Commission. Recommendations are based on an analysis of several factors including the pattern of existing land use, social and economic characteristics, environmental conditions, available community services and facilities, the existing patterns of land divisions, and community goals and policies.

### Land Use Planning Areas

Listed below are the seven different land-use planning areas used to develop future land use recommendations. Detailed explanations of each land use planning area are below. Map 8 is the Future Land Use Map of Burt Township which depicts the geographic locations of land use planning areas.

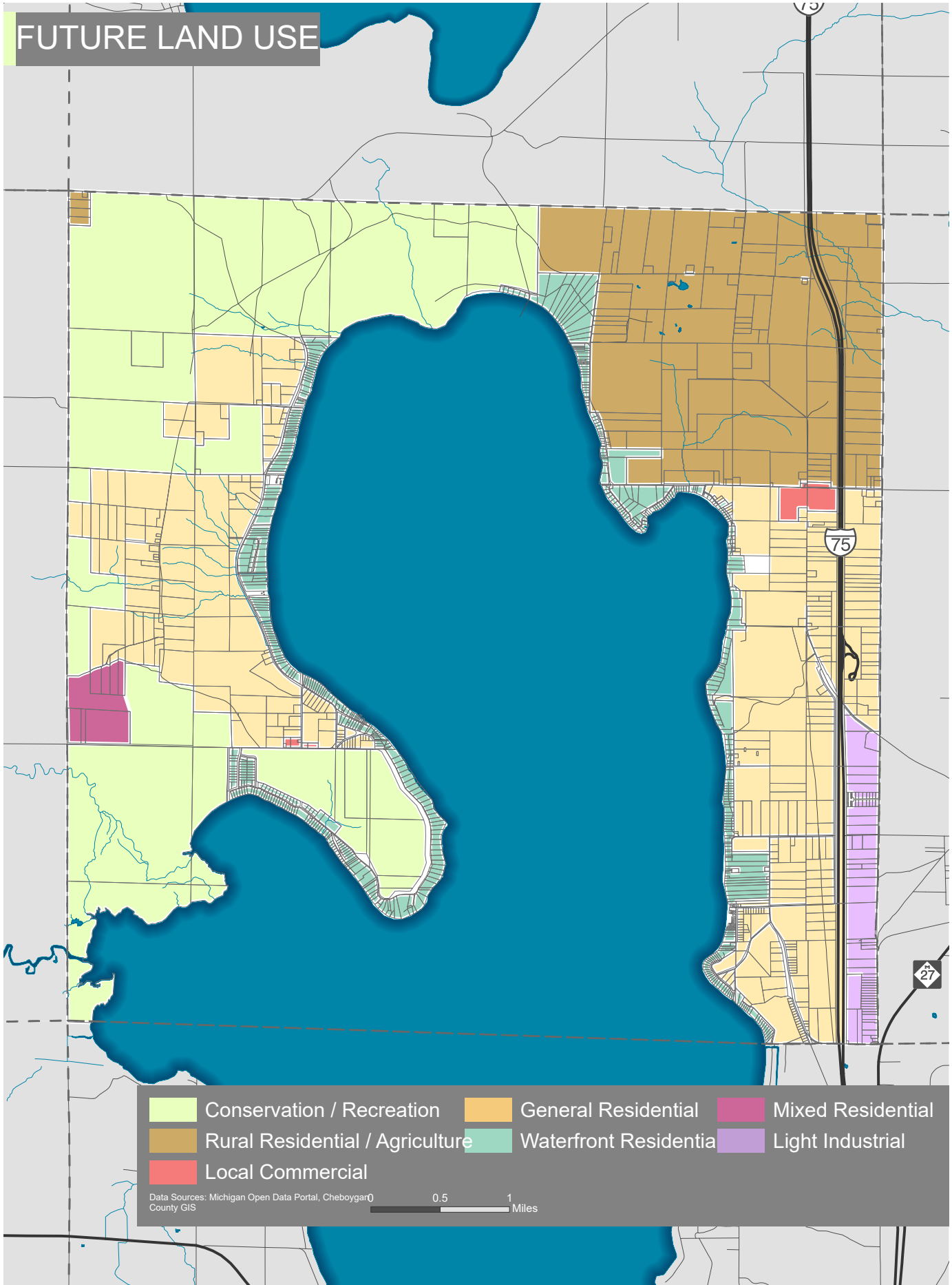
- Conservation / Recreation
- Rural Residential / Agriculture
- General Residential
- Mixed Residential
- Waterfront Residential
- Local Commercial
- Light Industrial

**Conservation / Recreation:** The Conservation/ Recreation category is the most extensive land use category recommended for the Township. All state-owned lands within the Township are shown within the Conservation/ Recreation category. Additionally, the University of Michigan property is in this category, and private lands held by Little Traverse Land Conservancy or with a conservation easement are also shown. Primary uses to be encouraged in the Conservation-Parkland areas include research/education, recreation (such as hunting, fishing, skiing, hiking, camping), and forest management. This encourages the establishment of contiguous reserve areas, river setbacks, wetlands, quiet areas, scenic areas, and wildlife habitat.

The Conservation/Recreation category is further designed to protect existing recreation property, areas planned for future recreation use, or other environmentally sensitive areas and natural resources, while allowing for very limited and low-intensity development to occur. This development would be consistent with recreational and conservation uses. A minimum lot size of 40 acres is required for the category. Very low-density residential development (one single-family house or dwelling unit for every 40 acres) would be allowed. To protect sensitive areas and maintain larger tracts available for other uses, clustering based on density equivalents of not more than one single-family house or dwelling unit per 40 acres is required in these areas.

**Rural Residential / Agriculture:** The areas designated for Rural Residential/Agriculture use on the Future Land Use Map may not cover all the active farms in the Township. It is important to recognize where active agriculture exists in the Township and encourage the continued agricultural use of this land. The Rural Residential/Agriculture land use category is consistent with the Township's goal to recognize the importance of agricultural production. Burt Township also recognizes

MAP 8: FUTURE LAND USE





*West Burt Lake Road.*

that the presence of agricultural land contributes significantly to the scenic and rural character valued by the Township residents. The Rural Residential/Agriculture area designation is intended to encourage the continued agricultural use of areas on prime agricultural soils. To preserve agricultural uses, it is recommended that nonagricultural residential uses be restricted within the agricultural category.

While the designation of Rural Residential/Agriculture land use category may not prevent the conversion of farmland to other uses, it will help to control the scale and rate of conversion. There are several ways to address the agricultural conversion issue before development. The Township Zoning Ordinance could, for example, allow non-agricultural uses as uses subject to special approval. Special approval status would require site plan review by the Planning Commission in the Rural Residential/Agricultural areas for certain types of non-agricultural development. During the site plan review, a density bonus could be allowed if the proposed residential development is clustered.

The Township will encourage methods that accommodate the needs of preserving farmlands, farming, open space, natural resources, and rural character of the Township, and at the same time assist landowners who want to reduce or discontinue farming. The methods could include innovative zoning provisions that allow for the preservation or conservation of essential natural resources, farmland, or open space. Some methods that other communities have employed

to help protect and preserve agricultural land while protecting a landowner's economic investment include the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), clustering requirements for non-agricultural uses, and tax breaks or incentives for continuing agricultural use. It is recommended that these alternatives be investigated for possible application in Burt Township, to balance economic rights with agricultural preservation goals.

**General Residential:** The General Residential development category is designed to accommodate single-family dwellings at a maximum density of one unit per two acres. The large residential lots provide privacy from neighbors and/or other development. This development is located on roads with light vehicular traffic. No municipal water or sewer service will be available. Buffers or physical separation from potentially incompatible uses (industrial and agriculture) may be necessary when located adjacent to this type of development. Additional provisions are recommended to be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a cluster development pattern to avoid or minimize development impacts on environmentally sensitive areas, forests, or farmland. This residential land use category is consistent with the Township's resource goal to "maintain an ecologically sound balance between human activities and the environment to retain the Township's scenic and rural character."

**Mixed Residential:** The Mixed Residential development category is primarily designed to accommodate single family, two-family, and multiple-family dwellings including mobile home parks on lots varying in size. Higher density residential uses, such as apartments, townhouses, condominiums, mobile home parks, convalescent or nursing homes, and manufactured home developments would be allowed provided that water and wastewater issues are adequately addressed. Community uses such as parks, churches, schools, libraries, or cemeteries, in addition to golf courses, resorts, home occupations (utilizing space outside dwelling unit), and bed and breakfast facilities may also be allowed in this area if it is designed to be compatible with the residential setting.

**Waterfront Residential:** To preserve the scenic beauty, property value and environmental integrity of areas adjacent to Burt Lake, a "Waterfront Residential" designation is recommended. With a specialized designation, it is possible to develop and strengthen residential standards specific to the unique environment found in waterfront areas. The Waterfront Residential designation is utilized along Burt Lake in areas of

existing lakefront residential development. Development regulations within the waterfront residential area should be designed to address Township residents' concerns regarding congestion of the local roads, water quality, and shoreline protection. Keyhole development or high density second-tier development should be strictly regulated within this land use category.

**Local Commercial:** The Local Commercial category includes existing commercial development and identifies specific areas for expansion adjacent to the existing commercial areas. Recommended uses include a variety of retail and service establishments with limited parking areas or a cluster of smaller retail and service businesses in specified locations. These uses serve residents and visitors and do not generate heavy vehicular traffic. Landscape buffers should be required between commercial from any residential uses, to minimize the commercial impacts on the adjacent residential uses.

**Light Industrial:** The Light Industrial future land-use category is designated to accommodate light industrial or commercial uses compatible with the limited services and environmental sensitivity of the Township. The Light Industrial future land use area is designed to provide sites for wholesale activities, warehouses, repair operations, retail operations that require large outside storage areas, manufacturing, and other low impact industrial or commercial operations. Operations are subject to performance standards relative to impacts on the community. This district is compatible with commercial uses but may not be compatible with residential districts without a required buffer.



*Maple Bay Campground.*



*Burt Township Hall.*

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# CHAPTER EIGHT

## PLAN ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Draft Plan Circulated for Comments

The draft Burt Township Master Plan 2026-2031 update was transmitted to the Township Board for review and comment in April, 2026. The Board authorized the distribution of the plan to the adjacent Townships and Counties, as required by state statute, on April 9, 2026. Following the Board's authorization, the draft update was distributed to the adjacent Townships, as well as to the planning commissions of Cheboygan and Emmet Counties on April 15, 2026. During the review period, the draft plan update was available for review on the Township's website, or by contacting the Planning Commission Chair and planning consultant.

### Public Hearing

A public hearing on the proposed 2026-2031 update of the Burt Township Master Plan, as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, was held on \_\_\_\_\_, 2026. The legally required public hearing notice was published in the Cheboygan County Tribune on \_\_\_\_\_, 2026. The purpose of the public hearing was to present the proposed Master Plan Update and accept comments from the public. All Planning Commissioners were present at the public hearing. A copy of the Planning Commission's resolution to adopt the Master Plan is provided at the end of this chapter.

### Plan Adoption

The Burt Township Master Plan 2026-2031 update, including all associated maps, was formally adopted by the Burt Township Planning Commission by a resolution on \_\_\_\_\_, 2026. A copy of the official resolution attached within the Appendix chapter of this plan.

### Legal Transmittals

Michigan planning law requires that the adopted Master Plan Update be transmitted to the Township Board, as well as to the adjacent Townships and the County Planning Commission. Copies of these transmittal letters are on file with the Township.

### Plan Implementation

A Master Plan is developed to provide a vision of the community's future. It is designed to serve as a tool for decision making on future development proposals. A Master Plan will also act as a guide for future public investment and service decisions, such as the local budget, grant applications, road standards development, community group activities, tax incentive decisions, and administration of utilities and services. According to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, comprehensive planning is the legal basis for the development of a zoning ordinance. Section 203 of the Act states: "The zoning ordinance shall be based on a plan designed to promote the public health, safety and general welfare, to encourage the use of lands in accordance with their character and adaptability, to limit the improper use of land, to conserve natural resources and energy, to meet the needs of the state's residents for food, fiber, and other natural resources, places of residence, recreation, industry, trade, service, and other uses of land, to ensure that uses of the land shall be situated in appropriate locations and relationships, to avoid the overcrowding of population; to provide adequate light and air; to lessen congestion of the public roads and streets, to reduce hazards to life and property; to facilitate adequate provision for a system of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply, education, recreation, and other public requirements, and to conserve the expenditure of funds for public improvements and services to conform with the most advantageous use of land resources, and properties."

### Zoning

The Zoning Ordinance is the most important tool for implementing the Master Plan. Zoning is the authority to regulate private use of land by creating land use zones and applying development standards in various zoning districts. A zoning ordinance regulating land use activities has been in effect in Burt Township since 1976. The Ordinance has since been revised numerous times. For nearly four decades the Ordinance has guided the

location, density, and standards for local development. The Zoning Ordinance should now be reviewed to ensure the Ordinance is consistent with the goals and the Future Land Use Plan presented in this Master Plan.

## Grants and Capital Improvement Plan

A Master Plan can also be used as a guide for future public investment and service decisions, such as the local budget, grant applications and administration of utilities and services. Many communities find it beneficial to prioritize and budget for capital improvement projects, such as infrastructure improvements, park improvements, etc. A Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is one tool that is often used to establish a prioritized schedule for all anticipated capital projects in a community. A CIP includes cost estimates and sources for financing for each project, and therefore, it can serve as both a budgetary and policy document to aid in the implementation of a community's goals defined in its Master Plan.



*Maple Bay Campground.*



*East Burt Lake Road.*



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