

Township of Watersmeet Michigan

Master Plan 2023-2027



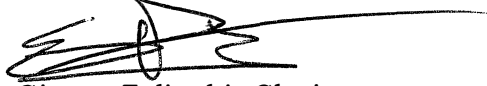
***Watersmeet Township Administrative Offices and Community Center
Opened April 2017***

Planning Commission Approval

On March 13, 2024, following a properly noticed public hearing, the following members of the Watersmeet Township Planning Commission unanimously approved the Watersmeet Master Plan 2023-2027:

- Simon Zelinski, Chair
- Pete Cartwright, Secretary
- Yvonne Clark, Board Liaison
- Kirsten Boehm, Member
- John Cestowski, Member
- Jim Gerdes, Member
- Tara Pachan, Member
- Jeff Zelinski, Member

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Simon Zelinski', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Simon Zelinski, Chair



Watersmeet Master Plan 2023-2027

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Watersmeet Township Master Plan (2023-2027)

Watersmeet is a friendly community located in a beautiful and scenic surrounding. Our goal is to make people aware of the opportunities that exist here, whether they be recreational, commercial, or residential. The plan that follows is meant to provide an indication of how our community developed, what currently exists here and what we hope may happen in the future. You are encouraged to read this plan and determine whether Watersmeet is an area you would consider moving into to meet your needs.

I. Summary

A. Introduction

The Watersmeet Township Master Plan (2023-2027) includes official Township policies to manage development and growth, and implement strategies that together establish a vision of the Township for the future. This is the fourth version of the plan which serves as a guide to decision-making by the Township, as well as private individuals and entities relative to development.

Community planning is a continual process. As changes occur in the community, data must be kept current, and goals, principles, and objectives must be regularly re-evaluated. The Plan should be updated every five years.

The Plan is divided into elements: Community Development, Land Use, Community Character, Transportation, Community Facilities and Services, Parks & Recreation, Economic Development, Housing, Environmental Resources, and Implementation & Review Process. The Appendices with supporting material follow the final element on implementation and review process.



B. Township's Planning Environment

Planning Area

The planning area is 277.8 square miles, located in the southeast portion of Gogebic County (see Map 1).

1. Land Capacity

Approximately seventy-five percent of the Township is dominated by the Ottawa National Forest; fourteen percent of the Township is water, leaving a little over ten percent for private and commercial development. Most of this accessible land is located around the unincorporated community of Watersmeet and the numerous lakes within the Township. The lake areas are usually the most attractive properties for developers.

2. Fiscal Considerations

The Township currently operates on a \$1,500,000.00 plus budget, using a zero-based budget each year. The Township has been able to provide services using the same operating millage rate for many years. A new millage rate would need to be approved by the voters and would be driven by a demand for increased services such as expanding the water/sewer district, repairing roads, or the like.

3. Populations Trends and Forecast

Population is one of the basic elements of any planning analysis. An overall understanding of the needs, wants and characteristics of the people who live in the Township depends on such items as population, types of household, diversity, distribution, changing trends and the reasons for change.

Current 2020 Census data indicates the Township population is approximately 1456 people. This represents a nearly 4% increase from 2010. The median age is 61 years old. The Watersmeet racial/ethnic groups are White (72.8%) followed by American Indian (23.9%) and Hispanic (1.3%).



C. What is the Township's History?

Watersmeet's history resembles other communities in Michigan's Upper Peninsula; Watersmeet Township was logged over in the late 1800s and into the 1900s. However, unlike many other areas, over 120,000 acres of land were placed in the National Forest Service ownership. These lands are now managed for multiple-resources use consistent with the National Forest management plan. The area lakes attracted people pursuing recreation and proximity to the natural resources. This desire formed the basis of the tourism industry in the area and the building of resorts, cottages and homes along the various shorelines.



Today, the land use in the surrounding area is primarily related to forest products. There is a very limited commercial sector and essentially no industry. Forest products and outdoor recreation are the primary sectors of the area.

A Brief History of the Lac Vieux Desert Tribe

Watersmeet Township is also the home of the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Chippewa Indians. Early accounts of the Lac Vieux Desert Band date back to the 1600's when French missionaries wrote of wintering with the band. The band originally lived on South Island at Lac Vieux Desert until later moving to the south shore of the lake in the 1800's.

Fishing, hunting and gathering natural foods sustained the members of the band for many years. These treaty rights and traditions are maintained to this day.



After the treaty of 1854, a large portion of the Lac Vieux Desert Band members returned to their original village "Ketegitigaaning". When the ceded Indian lands were placed on public sale, the members of Ketegitigaaning pooled part of the yield of their winter hunting, and used the furs to purchase the land they were living on from the Public Land Office in Marquette and remain to this day.

In recent history, LVD was recognized by most, as members of the Keweenaw Bay Band and resided in the Watersmeet area. However, in the decade of the 1960's, members of LVD began an effort to reorganize as a separate and distinct band. In 1988, after years of persistence, President Ronald Reagan signed the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians Act that made Lac Vieux Desert a Federally Recognized Tribe. During the 1990's the LVD Tribe created a resort facility. A limited clinic was also developed. A Tribal Water and Wastewater Utility system was also created. The Tribe also purchased several properties in the township and created new housing for its members. Significant amounts of money were also distributed to local communities through the Gaming Compact. The Tribe has also worked with the Township on several projects to

enhance the utility infrastructure, stopping the spread of invasive species in lakes, roads and outdoor recreation through BIA funding and monies from the Gaming Compact. Presently, the Tribe's reservation exists within the beautiful landscape of Watersmeet, Michigan. Aptly named, Watersmeet is the home to the boundaries where three major watersheds meet: the Mississippi River, Lake Superior, and Lake Michigan. The inherent traits of such a destination helped to make Watersmeet a natural travel and trade hub. As such, it has been a historically significant location for fur traders, explorers, miners, and loggers. Today, the Tribe strives to preserve the integrity of this land for future generations to enjoy.

D. Using the Comprehensive Plan

The Plan is the Township's official statement of policies and implementation strategies regarding growth, development, infrastructure, and quality of life. This Plan contains numerous strategies that include action steps, parties responsible for implementation and recommended time frames.



The Township Board will be responsible for creating budgets reflecting the policies and recommendations of the Plan for the Township. The Board should use the Plan as a guide in making decisions as to what is best for the Township now and in the future.

The Plan will be updated every five years to meet the changing needs of the Township.

The Plan will be available on the Township website as well as at the Township Offices.

II. Community Development Element

A. Introduction

The management of growth is critical to the long-term viability of the community. It ensures that current and future needs are met, that new development does not overwhelm the community character, and that fiscal resources will be available to sustain the Township.



Managing growth is a challenge. The Township influences development decisions through zoning and subdivision regulations and the timing and funding of infrastructure improvements. However, the marketplace also has a tremendous influence and affects the timing and absorption of new development. The Township can influence the marketplace, through incentives and disincentives.

This section of the Plan addresses the rate of growth, maintaining the northwoods character, residential development, and zoning standards to encourage rural development.

B. Goal and Principles

Growth will be managed in a qualitative manner that ensures the best development that is compatible with the community's values and aspirations, while ensuring sufficient revenues to provide facilities and services.

The supporting principles for Growth Management include the following:

1. The amount and rate of growth will be managed at a level that minimizes negative impacts to the Township and ensures long-term fiscal stability.



2. The Township's development standards will be maintained.
3. Development incentives will be consistent with Plan policies.
4. Funding will be stable for the development and operation of Township facilities and services that meet community needs.
5. The Township will continue to work with neighboring entities to strengthen the growth in Gogebic County.

C. Base Line – Community development for Watersmeet Township is limited to a non-contiguous land mass of between 10 and 15 percent of the Township's total land mass. There are large tracts of government land under management of USDA Forest Service. There are also additional parcels located in the Township's urban area primarily owned and governed by the LVD Tribe. Consequently, the areas for development are very limited.

1. Commercial Development. The most likely area for development would occur on, or near, the intersection of US2 and 45 or along short corridors except to the south. Some development is possible along major county roads and intersections. An example is the Family Dollar Store which was built in 2015 on US 45 North.



2. Residential Development. New homes are built each year but the number has slowed down considerably in the past few years. There is still available space for more development.

3. Infrastructure Development. The Township could consider new buildings for public services, new utility distributions (water, waste water), public services enhancements (such as a Township owned ambulance), additional Emergency Personnel, new sidewalks in the urban area or additional recreational facilities.

D. Objectives and Strategies.

1. Obtain a developer contact or interested party that would lead to establishing an outlet for retail hardware, such as the one that once operated in town.
2. Develop and construct a new riverside park along the middle branch of the Ontonagon River off old US 2 at the former Fish Hatchery. The Township presently owns the property.



III. Land Use Element



A. Introduction

A consistent, orderly pattern of land use and development will be established that will take into consideration the desire for growth, while preserving the northwoods character of the community and protecting the natural environment. All land use ordinances should be looked at through the prism of public health, public safety and general welfare. General welfare is defined as public health, public safety and public morality.

B. Recommended Land Uses are the following:

1. Lake Preservation

Watersmeet Township's waterfront resources are enormous, given the number of lakes and streams in the township. They encompass a wide variety of landscapes. The continuing development and re-development of water front property will be a leading quality-of-life factor in Watersmeet's economic growth.



2. Residential

Over the past decade, finding appropriate locations for single family homes has been challenging. There is limited space for development throughout the Township.

3. Commercial and Professional Office

The Township is limited by the small commercial corridor which presently exists along the US 2 and US 45 routes.

4. Objectives and Strategies

The most universal and proven method for effective preservation of the Township's rural character is through its Zoning Ordinance.

C. Residential

1. Issues and Findings

A limited amount of space exists for future single-family homes throughout the Township.

Benchmarks

A majority of homes in the Township are single-family owner-occupied homes.

2. Objectives and Strategies

Use the current Zoning Ordinance to facilitate the development of new housing.

D. Development Standards and Regulations

1. Issues and Findings

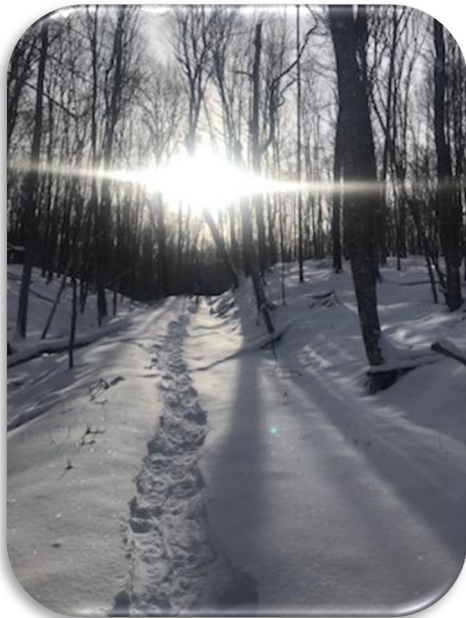
The Township is divided into five zoning districts; please refer to *Table 1: Watersmeet Township - Current Zoning Districts* below for definitions of the current zoning districts.

TABLE 1: WATERSMEET TOWNSHIP - CURRENT ZONING DISTRICTS		
Category	Description	Permitted Principal Uses
R-1	Residential & Restricted Commercial	Single-family dwellings; Publicly owned parks and playgrounds; Customary home occupations such as dressmaking, hair dressing, real estate, insurance sales, accounting services, and professional offices; and structures normally associated with single-family dwellings and mobile homes, such as a garage or shed for tools.
R-2	Residential & Restricted Commercial	Those uses permitted in R-1 district; Lodging, boarding, and tourist facilities; Mobile homes and two-family dwellings; Schools; Churches; Retail stores and shops; Personal service shops; Professional offices; Restaurants; Banks; Show rooms; Undertaking establishments; Public buildings; and Civic, social, or fraternal buildings.
L-1	Lake Areas	Single family dwellings; Publicly owned parks and playgrounds; Home occupations and professional offices; Hunting; Fishing; Trapping; and Harvesting of any native or wild crop permitted by law. Dwellings have a minimum of 750 square feet of finished living area, with a septic and water supply system, on a permanent foundation, and with no less than a 3/12 pitched roof. Property lots have a minimum of 150 feet of lake frontage or lot width, and a minimum lot depth of 300 feet.
L-2	Lake Areas	Those uses permitted in L-1 district. Property lots have a minimum of 300 feet of lake frontage and a minimum depth of 300 feet - required on the Michigan side of Big Lake, Mamie Lake, Poor Lake, East Bay Lake, and West Bay Lake

R & F	Recreation & Forestry	Tree farms; Wildlife sanctuaries; Game farms; Pastureland; Woodlots; Plant nurseries; Roadside stands; Publicly owned parks and playgrounds; Hunting; Fishing; Trapping; Cabins; Archery and shooting ranges; Forestry forest industries, and forest products production; Harvesting of any native or wild crops permitted by law: and Seasonal trailer coaches.
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Benchmarks

Amendments to the Zoning Code will be based on the recommendation of this Plan and other unforeseen elements which may apply pressure on the Township in the future.



IV. Community Character Element

A. Introduction

The character of the Township is unique, particularly given its rich cultural heritage and abundant natural features. The Township should protect its character and to ensure that new development and reinvestment is consistent and compatible with that character.

B. Goal and Principles

The northwoods atmosphere and natural features of the Township will be used as a template.

The supporting principles of Community Character are as follows:

1. The northwoods/rural atmosphere and character of the Township will be protected and promoted.
2. Signage will be limited with emphasis on well-designed signs to indicate Township boundaries and places of importance.
3. Mixed-use development will be emphasized along the US 45 and US 2 corridor. Development that enhances the Township's natural resources and recreational opportunities will be promoted.



C. Landmarks

Landmarks are major buildings, structures or other locations that help define the character and image of the community. Landmarks are not always historically designated buildings. Landmarks that are cherished should be protected and conserved so that they continue to generate positive feelings and images within the community.



1. Issues and Findings

The Bass Lake Park has been rejuvenated and serves as a welcomed community resource.

A new Community Center including the Township Offices was opened in the spring of 2017.

Benchmarks

Historic places will continue to be preserved and protected as appropriate.

V. Transportation Element

A. Introduction

Transportation is necessary for the effective movement of people and goods within and outside an area. It plays a vital role in the facilitation of an area's economy, land-use, and development. The road network is the single most important component of the transportation system for local residents. A reliance on private automobiles will continue into the foreseeable future, meaning that the road network will remain as the transportation source.

B. Goals & Principles

A transportation network that allows for the safe and efficient movement of goods and people will be supported and enhanced.

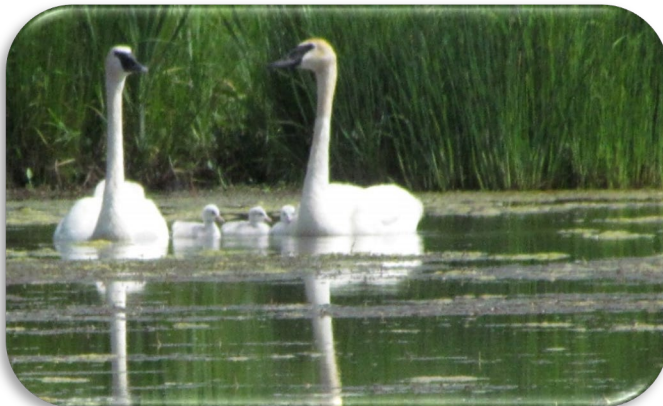
C. Road Network

Michigan Public Act 51 (Act 51) indicates that all counties and all incorporated cities and villages must establish and maintain road systems under their jurisdiction, distinct from state jurisdiction. This act classified the road system in counties into the following five categories (the legal systems of roads): state trunk line, county primary, county local, city/village major, and city/village local. These classifications provide a tool for enacting guidelines and standards on the use of public roads, and enable proper distribution of state and federal funds for road improvements.

1. Issues and Findings

In 2022, Watersmeet Township formed a Township Roadway Committee to help the Township Board prioritize road improvements throughout the Township.

Also, in 2022, Watersmeet Township launched a voluntary fire number sign replacement program. Unlike the existing signs, the new signs are large, durable, easy to see and reflective which will enable emergency personnel to locate property addresses easily, even at night.



Watersmeet Township should identify road improvement projects which are of local importance, and should work with the Gogebic County Road Commission to schedule these projects as local matching funds and road commission funds become available.

Benchmarks

Major improvements to the road network are needed and every effort should be made to provide sufficient shoulders for non-motorized and pedestrian travel.

2. Objectives and Strategies

T1. Prioritize road projects to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

All road projects undertaken by the Township or a developer should be consistent with the Plan. Consistency is measured in terms of the transportation, connectivity, land use and economic development policies of the Plan, as well as other related considerations.

T2. Seasonal Road Evaluation and Upgrade.

Based on the transportation needs associated with the proposed new development and other growth indicators which may occur within the Township, a seasonal road evaluation and possible upgrade is required.

T3. Safety Zones will be Established.

Any road up-grades or new road construction will include, if economically feasible, a five foot to eight foot shoulder for pedestrian and non-motorized traffic.

T4. Signage and Walkways.

The Township should implement a plan to increase and improve signage and develop walk ways on rural roads.



D. Trail Networks

1. Establish Working Relationships.

The Township should continue to work with the USDA Forest Service and the LVD Tribe to identify new opportunities for trail expansion. Funding opportunities through federal, state or private grants should continue to be explored. Additionally, the trail system could be advertised as a recreational opportunity for visitors and consequently providing local businesses with increased revenues.

Benchmarks

The Townships contains several motorized trails (i.e. snowmobile, ATV) which provide alternative accessibility to the Township.

In addition, the Agonikak National Recreation Trail has been completed along with a non-motorized path from Old US2 East to the LVD Casino. An additional 2.25 miles of National Forest System Road was converted to a National Forest System Trail, the Whitefish Lake Road, allows non-motorized traffic from the Thousand Island Lake Road to join the Wilderness Lakes Trails system. The LVD Tribe also completed the Albino Lake Trail in 2017. The Iron Belle Trail connecting Bell Isle and Ironwood also traverses through Watersmeet Township

E. Develop Safety Zones

Benchmarks

A non-motorized path has been established along US45 N from Old US2 East and is lighted. Consideration is being given to extend the current trail to the Bass Lake Park from its present termination at the LVD Casino.

F. Public Transportation

Benchmarks

Currently there is one bus that provides public transportation from Watersmeet to Ironwood on Thursdays, along with passengers from Ironwood to Watersmeet. There is weekly public transportation to Land O' Lakes or in the area around Watersmeet on Fridays.

G. Airport

Benchmarks

A small 4000' runway airport exists in Land O' Lakes, WI, which is located 8 mi. south of Watersmeet on US 45.

VI. Community Facilities and Service

A. Introduction

A fundamental municipal function is the provision of services and facilities that meet a variety of community needs. Those provided by local governments are often vital elements in the community's progress and well-being. Services may include police and fire protection, municipal water and wastewater systems, solid waste disposal and recreation programs. Facilities may include libraries, parks and recreational facilities, cemeteries, schools, and the infrastructure related to water and wastewater treatment systems.



B. Goals and Principles

The Township's goal for Community Facilities and Services is:

A range of well- funded community facilities and services will be provided that sustain and/or enhance the Township's quality of life and fulfill the Township's needs as the Township grows and changes.



C. Supporting Principles

1. Community facilities will meet the needs of all residents of the Township, especially children, teens and the elderly.
2. Township services will be adequately funded.
3. A range of parks and open spaces will be provided.
4. Community services will be expanded to meet the needs as the Township grows.



D. Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services

1. Issues and Findings

The Watersmeet Township Police Department was formed in 2018. Currently there are two full time Police Officers. Local Lac Vieux Desert Tribal Police Officers are also cross deputized by Watersmeet Township Police. The Gogebic County Sheriff's Department and the Michigan State Police also provide law enforcement for the Township.

The Township provides fire protection for its residents through its volunteer fire department. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Ottawa National Forest provides fire protection county-wide for grass, brush and forest fires under mutual aid agreements with local units.



Emergency calls for fires, medical emergencies, crimes and other emergencies are accomplished by dialing the numbers 9-1-1. The Township currently has emergency services provided by our local Emergency Responders in conjunction with Aspirus Advanced Life Support Ambulance service from Iron River, MI. The appropriate responding unit is then dispatched. Local fire, police, and emergency medical services units are all dispatched through central dispatch.

Benchmarks

Local police, fire and EMS response services are available to all areas of the Township.

2. Objectives and Strategies

CF1. Satellite Fire Station. The Township should continue to explore this possibility.

CF2. Plan for Future Needs. The Township should complete Public Protection Classification (PPC) which help the community evaluate its public fire-protection services. The classification will help the fire department in planning and budgeting for facilities, equipment, and training. The PPC rating may also help secure lower insurance rates for local homeowners.

E. Public Education

1. Issues and Findings

The Watersmeet Township School is the K-12 provider for the Township.

Benchmarks

Watersmeet School District provides a well-rounded education in the core areas and graduates can pursue college opportunities or non-traditional career paths in an area of interest within the community.

F. Continuing Education

1. Issues and Findings

Residents looking for higher educational opportunities can attend Gogebic Community College (GCC) located in Ironwood. Courses are available both on-campus and on-line.

Northern Michigan University also offers courses through the EAN broad-band network.



G. Healthcare

The Lac Vieux Desert Health Center, a 32000 square foot state of the art facility, opened in the summer of 2016 is located at N5241 Hwy 45 in Watersmeet. The Center is open to the public and patients within a 100-mile radius use its services. The Center provides a complete pharmacy, dental, optometry, podiatry, primary care, behavioral health, lab, radiology, chiropractic and CHR services. The Center accepts multiple insurance carriers and is also a Veteran's Choice clinic. The hours of operation on Monday through Friday are from 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM. Full details of all the services provided and to make appointments call (906) 358-4588.



H. Arts and Culture

Watersmeet is home to many local artists employing various mediums. Oil painters, watercolor artists, jewelry makers, furniture makers, writers, poets and more draw inspiration from our beautiful Northwoods surroundings.



LVD hosts two traditional pow-wows, one in March and the other in August. The March Pow-Wow is held at the Watersmeet Township School gymnasium during the first week of March. The traditional August Pow-Wow is held on the second week of August at the LVD Indian Village Pow-Wow grounds.



I. Communication

The Township website currently provides citizens with access to local events, public meetings and a wide variety of information about the local area.



VII. Parks and Recreation Element

Watersmeet Township has these recreation goals:

Goal 1: To provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities to all residents and visitors of Watersmeet Township.

Goal 2: Make maximum use of the recreational opportunities offered by the area's natural environment.

A. Issues and Findings

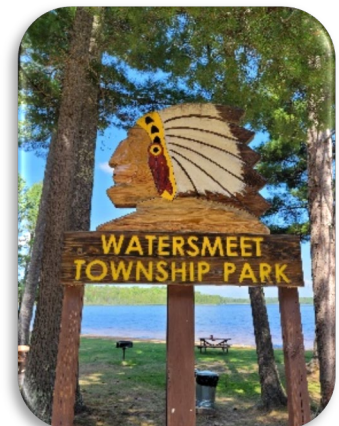
Watersmeet Township residents have access to many recreational opportunities provided by both the public and private sectors, such as the USDA Forest Service, the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and the Township. Residents also have access to a wide range of facilities and programs in neighboring communities.

Community Parks: Located in downtown Watersmeet, the Pavilion Park features a covered pavilion complete with kitchen and service bar facilities, picnic tables, handicap accessible restroom facilities, and an outdoor covered gas grill. The Park also has open space, trees, shrubbery, walks, and benches. The Park is available for rent by the public.



Bass Lake Community Park is located just north of downtown on Bass Lake Road. The Bass Lake

Community Park offers picnic tables, a covered pavilion, swimming beach and public boat landing.



Western Upper Peninsula Boundless Playground: Initiated through a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Playground is more than seventy percent handicap accessible, ensuring that all children regardless of their physical, mental, and emotional abilities are provided an opportunity to learn and exercise while playing on the equipment.



Exercise Center: Located within the Watersmeet Township School, the Center has workout equipment such as free weights, cardiovascular machines, and selected weight equipment. The gymnasium can also be divided into two full sized basketball courts. During the summer months, the Center has open hours to the public.



Boating and Fishing: Naturally, due to the abundance of lakes and streams in the Township, residents have huge amounts of boating and fishing opportunities. There are twenty boat launches/landings located throughout the Township on the following Lakes: Langford, Cisco, Clearwater, Thousand Island, Beatons, County Line, Bass, Long, Clark, Crooked, Duck, Moon, Lac Vieux Desert, Dinner, Grass, Allen, Marion, Imp, and Taylor. The boat launches are maintained by USDA Forest Service, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, or the Township. There is also a canoe landing located near the intersection of U.S. 45 and the Middle Branch Ontonagon River. Canoeing and kayaking is also available within the Sylvania Wilderness. The Cisco Chain of Lakes is also particularly well suited to boating. Several types of fish

abound in the area lakes and streams, including Walleye, Bass, Musky, Trout (Brown, Brook, Rainbow, Steelhead), and panfish. In fact, the Michigan record Silver Musky was caught in Thousand Island Lake and the world record Tiger Musky was caught in Lac Vieux Desert.

Camping: The Ottawa National Forest provides many camping opportunities. There are 50 backcountry campsites scattered along the lakes within the Sylvania Wilderness. Sylvania Wilderness also includes a campground on Clark Lake. Primitive camping is also available on Taylor Lake. Private campgrounds are located on Marion Lake, Imp Lake, Langford Lake and along the north shore of Lac Vieux Desert and next to the Lac Vieux Desert Resort and Casino along U.S. 45 north of Watersmeet.



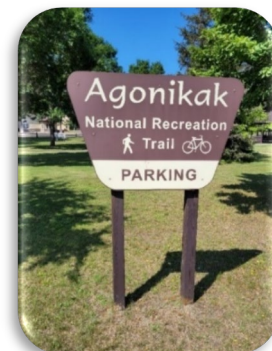
Hiking: There are about twenty-six miles of trails throughout the Sylvania Wilderness. Shorter hiking trails are also found near the Ottawa National Forest campgrounds at Imp Lake and Burned Dam. There is also a very short paved interpretive trail at the Ottawa National Forest Visitor Center.

Cross-Country Skiing: About twenty-six miles of un-groomed trails are located throughout the Sylvania Wilderness. Out of these trails, there are thirteen miles of beginner trails, seven miles of intermediate trails, and twelve miles of expert trails. Parking is located at the Sylvania Entrance Station. Of these trails there are thirteen beginner trails, four intermediate trails, and one expert trail beginning at Sylvania Outfitters. The Land O' Lakes cross country ski trail is groomed and maintained by volunteers from the Land O' Lakes Fish & Game Club in partnership with USDA Forest Service. There are just over 6 miles of groomed cross country ski trails. These trails also adjoin the ungroomed Sylvania Wilderness Trails. Free parking is available on the east side of Duck Lake Road.



Golf Courses: There are two golf courses in the Watersmeet Township area. Lac Vieux Desert golf course is an eighteen-hole course located behind the Lac Vieux Desert Resort and Casino, just north of Watersmeet on U.S. 45. Gateway Golf Club, Inc. located in Land O' Lakes, Wisconsin, which is just over the state line along U.S. 45.

Biking: The Agonikak National Recreation Trail begins at the Ottawa National Forest Visitor Center and extends south 12.2-miles, ending at the Michigan Department of Transportation Wayside located just north of Land O' Lakes, Wisconsin on U.S. 45. The trail is maintained by volunteers from Wilderness Lakes Trails in partnership with USDA Forest Service. The Whitefish Lake Road was converted from a National Forest System Road to a National Forest System Trail and is part of the Wilderness Lakes Trails system.



Hunting: Public hunting grounds are supported by the Ottawa National Forest, which is home to ruffed grouse, woodcock, snowshoe hare, ducks, geese, white-tailed deer, and black bears.



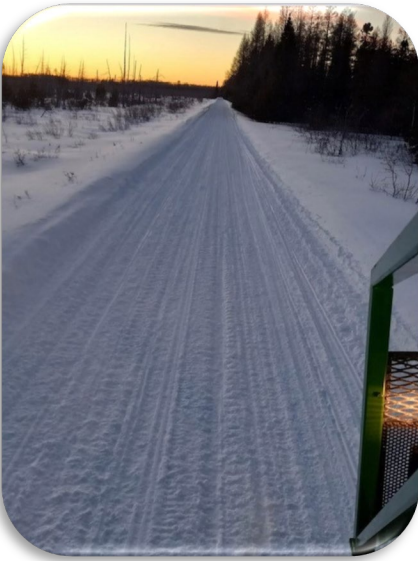
Motorized Recreation (Snowmobiles/ATVs): There are approximately 450 miles of groomed snowmobile trails within the boundaries of the Ottawa National Forest. Snowmobiles are permitted on any designated trails or unplowed Forest Service roads. Snowmobiles are prohibited from the Sylvania Wilderness (and other designated Wildernesses). After March 1, the area of the Ottawa National Forest which lies south of M-28 and east of Highway M-64, is closed to cross-country snowmobile use to prevent disturbance of nesting eagles. Snowmobile use in this area after March 31 is only allowed on designated snowmobile trails or unplowed Forest Service roads. These trails are maintained by a cooperative

effort between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, numerous local snowmobile clubs, and USDA Forest Service. There are two main snowmobile and ATV trails that intersect in the unincorporated community of Watersmeet, which are Trail 2, which runs east to west from Iron River to Marenisco, and Trail 6, which runs north to south from Watersmeet to Land O' Lakes, Wisconsin. The U.P. Thunder Riders Snowmobile Club maintains and grooms some seventy miles of trails found throughout Watersmeet Township, including the Lac Vieux Desert Casino spur.

Picnicking: Ottawa National Forest picnic areas are located on Marion Lake, Imp Lake, Ottawa Visitor Center, and Clark Lake (Sylvania Recreation Area). Other picnic areas are located at the Lac Vieux Desert Pow-Wow grounds on Lac Vieux Desert and at the Community Park as well as the Bass Lake Park in Watersmeet.

Swimming: Swimming and beach facilities are located at Clark Lake in the Sylvania Wilderness and Recreation Area, and at Imp and Marion Lakes located in the Ottawa National Forest. The Bass Lake Park is also available.

Recreation Resource Center: The Ottawa National Forest Visitor Center is packed with interpretive exhibits and animal mounts explaining the Forest's natural and cultural history. Here you will find recreation information, maps, and special summer programs.



VIII. Housing Element

A. Housing Analysis

A housing analysis provides information about a community's current housing stock, as well as trends and changes in housing needs. This information will provide the basis for decisions about housing in the Township.

Housing Unit Trends: In 2020, the census showed 1587 housing units in the Township, yet there were 1,456 residents. Only 526 (33%) were occupied or year-round residents, the remaining 1061 (67%) are classified as vacant housing. Vacant housing is primarily for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, meaning that Watersmeet Township has a very large number of part-time residents. The Township has a large number of residents that reside part-time in the Township but are still eligible to vote.

Household Type and Relationship: The Census categorizes households into three types: family households, non-family households, and group quarters. In many cases, the housing needs of these three household types vary greatly. Families, for example, often base their selection of housing on number of bedrooms, size of yards, distance to schools and parks, etc. Non-family households, which often consist of persons living alone, may want smaller homes and yards with less maintenance. The third group; Group quarters include college dormitories, nursing homes, of which there are none in the Township currently.

Household Size: The number of persons per occupied housing unit in the Township and Gogebic County have continued to decline as the median age of the population continues to rise. An estimate of average household size would be slightly over 2, identifying the fact that the median age of the population is 61 and consequently there are very few children in households on average.



IX. Environmental Resources Element

A. Introduction

Environmental resources help to define the character of the community, support natural systems that provide for wildlife and a healthy environment, and provide opportunities for recreation. These features can have a profound effect on a community's development by directly or indirectly constraining or supporting growth.



Goal and Principles

The Township will conserve natural systems and resources, integrating them with development and recreation opportunities to provide a sustainable community.

The supporting principles for Environmental Resources are the following:

1. Natural systems will be conserved wherever feasible and the impact of development on natural resources will be minimized.
2. Public access to natural resources will be expanded provided it does not adversely impact such resources, including the integration of natural areas into public parkland and private open space systems.

B. Resource Management

1. Issues and Findings

The outstanding natural features in the planning area are of high value to the community. These include the numerous inland lakes (i.e. Cisco Chain, Lac Vieux Desert, Bass, etc.), the meeting of three watersheds (Lake Superior, Lake Michigan,

Mississippi River) and the rivers and streams within each watershed, several waterfalls, extensive forestland, natural habitats, rolling topography, and species habitats. Development impacts should be prohibited or minimized. Management tools include zoning overlay districts, well-designed sites, and best management practices.



C. Water Features and Watersheds

1. Issues and Findings

Water features play an important role in the Township. As the Township name implies, it is "where the waters meet". Sitting on a watershed divide, from the community of Watersmeet, the Ontonagon River flows north to Lake Superior, the Wisconsin River flows south to the Mississippi River, and the Paint River flows east to Lake Michigan. These watersheds boast 241 miles of trout streams and 302 lakes within the Township. Also within this "Water Wonderland" are wetlands and waterfalls.



The Cisco Chain of Lakes, located in the southwestern corner of the Township, face the greatest development pressure. One of the largest chains of lakes in the world, the lakes form the border between Wisconsin and Michigan and are perfectly suited for boating, fishing, and other recreational pursuits. The lakes within the Township as a whole have also become popular second home or vacation sites.

Wetlands

When wetlands are drained and filled, their capacity to retain storm water runoff is greatly lowered; causing increased flooding during rainy periods and reduced stream flow in the dry seasons. Development of wetlands in contact with groundwater can result in direct contamination of the groundwater and any water supply wells dependent upon it.

Moreover, wetland destruction eliminates the populations of plants and wildlife dependent upon the unusual conditions occurring there.

Wetland regulation in Michigan is provided for by the Wetlands Protection Act, Part 303 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, PA 451 of 1994, which is administered by the Department of Environmental Quality.



Benchmarks

- a. No wetlands will be lost to development or other land activity unless approved by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality consistent with a required wetland mitigation plan.
- b. Provide for future development in waterfront areas which is consistent with the ability of the environment to support development.
- c. Encourage preservation of areas providing high quality fish and wildlife habitats.

2. Objectives and Strategies

ER1. Avoid wetlands. Wetlands are critical components of the natural environment and played an important role in managing storm water runoff and recharge of underground aquifers. They are appropriate for open space preservation and wherever feasible, should be conserved.

ER2. Expand Management Measures to Protect Rivers and Streams as Natural Systems. The Township will promote conservation along rivers and streams through the location of parks and open space, floodplain preservation, requirement of forested buffers, and promotion of conservation easements.



X. Implementation

A. Introduction

A great deal of effort and energy went into preparing the Plan, but the "real" work begins as the objectives and strategies are implemented over the next five years. Successful implementation is critical to ensuring that the Plan has a marked impact on the community. The Implementation section of the Plan addresses key issues related to implementing the Plan; it presents a summary of the objectives and strategies; and it addresses amendments and future updates.

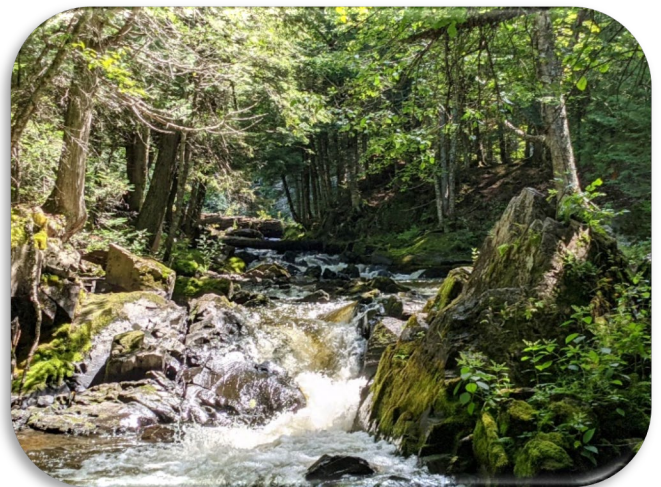
B. Goal and Principles

The Township's goal for Implementation is:

The Plan will result in measurable, positive change in the community that is consistent with the vision established in the Plan.

The supporting principles for Implementation are the following:

1. Implementation will occur in a diligent, deliberate, and consistent manner.
2. Flexibility will allow the Township to react to unexpected changes to assumptions and conditions that create constraints or opportunities.
3. Success in implementing objectives and strategies will be constantly monitored.
4. Partnerships with other government entities, civic organizations, and the business community at every level will be maximized to ensure successful implementation.
5. Communications within the community will be emphasized.
6. The use of technology will be maximized to gain efficiencies, especially with limited financial resources.
7. Funding for Township facilities and services will meet community needs.



C. How to Use the Plan

The Plan is intended to be used on a daily basis as public and private decisions are made concerning development, redevelopment, capital improvements, economic incentives, and other matters affecting the community's growth. Implementation of the Plan will be partially driven by the availability of resources (staff and/or funds) sufficient to guarantee success. This section summarizes the ways in which the Plan will be used.

1. Work Programs and Budgets

Township departments and administrators should review their annual work programs and budgets cognizant of the policies and recommendations presented in the Plan. Numerous objectives and strategies can be implemented in this way. As the Township budget is prepared and reviewed, the Plan should be referenced to ensure capital and operational investments are consistent with the Plan and its growth priorities so that important aspects of the Plan are not inadvertently overlooked.



2. Development Approvals

Legislative and administrative approvals relative to development should be strongly predicated on the policies of the Plan. Land use and density recommendations in particular should be followed when considering zoning decisions. A degree of flexibility will be necessary to ensure that decisions are made based on current circumstances, which may dictate flexibility in applying Plan policies.

3. Capital Improvement Plan

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the Township should be strongly linked to the Plan policies for 2023 and beyond. The CIP presents the Township's capital investments for a five-year planning period. Each improvement should reference a specific objective or strategy as recommended in the Plan, when such policies support the improvement. Timing of the implementation should also be consistent between the two documents.

4. Economic Incentives

The Township's economic incentives should only be awarded when the proposed project is consistent with the Plan - especially relative to land-use, density, and infrastructure. This is recommended in the Economic Development Element.

5. Educating the Community

The Planning Commission will summarize the Plan and will make a presentation to the Township Board. Copies of the Plan will be available in the Township

Community Center.

6. Annual Report

The Planning Commission will issue a report each January beginning in 2024 that summarizes the status of each objective and strategy relative to implementation. It will also note the status of the major assumptions that underlay the Plan, such as population levels. The report will be presented to the Township Board and will be available to the public.

D. Interpreting the Plan

The Plan is the set of official Township policies to manage development and growth, and the implementing strategies that together establish a vision of the Township for the future. The narrative that explains specific objectives and strategies provides insight to the thinking behind those policies. Changing circumstances could influence the interpretation of a policy, but that should only occur where the broader goals and principles of the Plan are consistently followed.

E. Amending the Plan

If the Planning Commission supports a development proposal that would markedly deviate from the Plan's policies, a formal amendment of the respective Plan policy would be required. Such an amendment should cite in the ordinance the facts supporting such change. The Planning Commission will provide a recommendation regarding each amendment, prior to action.

F. Updating the Plan

The Plan covers the planning period of 2023-2027. The Township requires a review of the Plan each five years. In 2027, a review will be started with recommendations presented to the Planning Commission for adoption by mid-2028. It will be conducted by the Planning Commission who will review and consider the recommended changes.

G. Objectives and Strategies Summary

The following table (*Table 1: Objectives and Strategies Summary*) summarizes, by Element, each objective and associated strategy or policies within each section of the Plan. Timeframes and responsible parties are indicated for those objectives and strategies with such information. Other items are policies for which that information is not as specific. The first entity noted under Responsible Party is the lead to implement that particular strategy.



TABLE 1: OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES SUMMARY**GROWTH MANAGEMENT**

No.	Objectives and Strategies	Timeframe	Responsible Party
GM1	Work with Owners and Developers. The Planning Commission will work with property owners and potential developers to properly create zone and plat sites that are considered most appropriate for that type of development.	2023-2027	Planning Commission
GM2	Protect the Township's Land by Ensuring that New Development Enhance those Areas and does not Compromise Development Potential. Land is a finite resource and the Township should conserve lands identified for business or light industry development to ensure some balance in the Township's growth.	2023-2027	Planning Commission and Township Board
GM3	Develop expanded internet infrastructure to ensure every Watersmeet homeowner has access to high speed, reliable and secure internet.	2023-2027	Township Board

LAND USE

No.	Objectives and Strategies	Time Frame	Responsible Party
LUI	Protecting the Desired Residential/Family In these areas, the Township would not permit commercial or industrial development in an effort to protect the desired residential/family setting of the area.	2023-2027	Planning Commission and Township Board
LU2	Corridor Uses. Along the US2 corridor compatible uses such as churches, schools and commercial facilities would be permitted under the current Zoning Ordinance.	2023-2027	Planning Commission

LU3	Guidelines to Provide Direction to Commercial Developers. The unique aspects of the Township should be protected and promoted in new construction.	2023-2027	Planning Commission
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COMMUNITY CHARACTER			
No.	Objectives and Strategies	Timeframe	Responsible Party
CC1	Promote Investment in Area. If the area is designated as an investment opportunity, then the Planning Commission, with the Support of the Township Board will promote investment in the area.	2023-2027	Planning Commission and Township Board
CC2	Promote Effective Edges for Development. Developments along major arterials should include landscaping and mounded buffers.	2023-2027	Planning Commission and Township Board
CC3	Ensure Enforcement of Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Administrator has the authority to enforce the current Zoning Codes as established by the Planning commission and approved by the Township Board.	2023-2027	Zoning Administrator and Township Board

TRANSPORTATION			
No.	Objectives and Strategies	Timeframe	Responsible Party
Road Network			
T1	Prioritize Road Projects to be Consistent with Comprehensive Plan. All road projects undertaken by the Township or a developer should be done in terms of the transportation, connectivity, land use and economic development policies of the Plan, as well as other considerations.	2023-2027	Roadway Committee and Township Board
T2	Seasonal Road Evaluation and Upgrade. If new growth occurs with the Township the need for an upgrade in seasonal roads may become necessary.	2023-2027	Roadway Committee and Township Board
T3	Safety Zones will be Enforced. The safety of motorized and non-motorized traffic will be considered on all projects.	2023-2027	Roadway Committee and Township Board
T4	Signage and Walkways. Appropriate markings will be provided for both motorized and non-motorized traffic as they come into use.	2023-2027	Roadway Committee, Township Board, Gogebic County Road Commission and MDOT
T5	Working Partnerships. The Township will continue to work with US Forest Service, the town of Land O' Lakes, and the LVD Tribe to identify potential non-motorized trail networks.	2023-2027	Planning Commission
T6	State, Federal and Private Funding Mechanisms. Identify all possible sources of funding to enable projects to be implemented.	2023-2027	Planning Commission, Township Board, Land O'Lakes Trail Committee and LVD Tribe
T7	Speed Limits. Work with the Michigan State Police and Department of Transportation to review current speed limits throughout the Townships	2023-2027	Township Board and County Road Commission
T8	Increase and Advertise Bus Trips from Ironwood. Work with County Transit.	2023-2027	Planning Commission and Gogebic County Transit

COMMUNITY FUTURE		
No.	Objectives and Strategies	Timeframe
CF1	Plan for Future Needs. Complete Public Protection Classification (PPC) which help the community evaluate its public fire-protection services.	2023-2027
CF2	Expand Continuing Education Opportunities. The Township will continue to seek opportunities to partner with local Community Colleges and Universities to bring in distance learning opportunities taught within the Watersmeet community.	2023-2027
CF3	Promote Local Healthy Lifestyle Events. Provide the public with information regarding upcoming health and welfare related events sponsored by the LVD Health Center, Public Health Department or other regional health service	2023-2027
CF4	Township Website. Continue to develop the website to meet the needs of the community and keep them informed of local events.	2023-2027
CF5	Develop Township wide Emergency Response Plan.	2023-2027

RECREATION PLAN			
No.	Objectives and Strategies	Timeframe	Responsible Party
PRI	Task Force for Recreation Plan. Create a task force to update the Current Recreation Plan.	2023-2027	Planning Commission

HOUSING			
No.	Objectives and Strategies	Timeframe	Responsible Party
H1	Adopt "Northwoods/Rural" Development Strategy. Retain the present “northwoods atmosphere” in any future housing expansion.	2023-2027	Planning Commission and Township Board
H2	Update Zoning Ordinance. Make changes as deemed necessary to current Zoning Ordinance.	2023-2027	Planning Commission and Township Board

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES			
No.	Objectives and Strategies	Timeframe	Responsible Party
ER1	Engineering Controls. When developing property within the Township, engineering controls will be based on existing site conditions, proposed changes in site conditions and risk to the environment. All affected protective governmental agencies, such as the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy and County Health Department, will be part of the control process.	2023-2027	Planning Commission
ER2	Require Appropriate Land Use Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance along Lakes, Rivers and Streams. The most appropriate use in these areas is single family residential development, parks and open spaces. The Township will also ensure proper usage.	2023-2027	Planning Commission and Township Zoning Administrator
ER3	Expand Management Measures to Protect Rivers and Streams as Natural Systems. The Township will promote conservation along lakes, rivers and streams through the location of parks and open spaces, floodplain preservation, requirement of forested buffers, and promotion of conservation easements. The Planning Commission should evaluate the Zoning Ordinance to protect lakes, rivers and streams. Work should be done in conjunction with the ISCCW to encourage the best methods to avoid the spread of, or elimination of, invasive species in area lakes.	2023-2027	Planning Commission and ISCCW