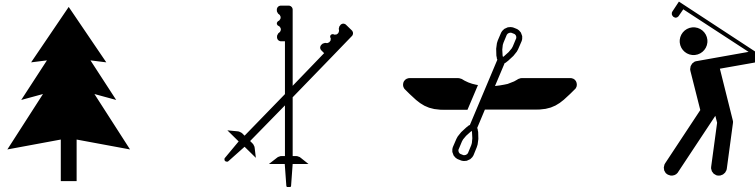


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Kearney Township, Antrim County  
Michigan

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# Master Plan



MAY 17, 2024  
KEARNEY TOWNSHIP  
4820 Aero Park Dr. Bellaire, MI 49615

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# SECTION I – BACKGROUND

## Statutory Basis and Purpose of Plan

This Plan is developed pursuant to the requirements of Act 184 of 1943, Act 168 of 1959 and The Michigan Enabling Act, Act 33 of 2008 as amended, being the Township Rural Zoning Act. This Act requires that a zoning ordinance be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of the Township residents, 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 insure that uses of the land shall be situated in appropriate locations and relationships.

The purpose of the Plan is to:

- Be a sound basis for administration of the Township Zoning Ordinance
- Provide a guide for the conservation of natural resources and property values and the general development of land and population for Kearney Township, Antrim County, Michigan
- Avoid the overcrowding of population
- Lessen congestion on public roads and streets
- Reduce hazards to life and property
- Facilitate adequate provisions for systems of transportation, sewage disposal, safe and adequate water supply; education, recreation and other public requirements
- Conserve the expenditure of funds for public improvements and services to conform to the most advantageous uses of land resources and properties.

## Township History

The Township of Kearney was split from Forest Home Township at the January 1875 meeting of the Supervisors of Antrim County. The first annual election was held April 5, 1875. The land was designated as “all that part of Town 30 North, Range 7 and 8 West, lying East of the center of Intermediate Lake and the thread of the Intermediate River,” and the boundaries remain the same today.

While no actual connection can be found to an early settler, the name Kearney likely referred to a place in Ireland. It was habit to name places after that country because this area reportedly reminded our forefathers of the beautiful Irish countryside.



## SECTION II – EXISTING CONDITIONS

### The Regional Setting

Kearney Township is located in central Antrim County. The County lies along the east shore of Grand Traverse Bay and contains several major lakes, the most notable of which are Torch Lake and an “upper and lower” Chain of Lakes which is well known throughout the Midwest for its scenic beauty. Torch Lake is rumored to be the third most beautiful lake in the world by National Geographic Magazine.

Both U.S. 31 and U.S. 131 cross the County in a north-south direction; U.S 31 along the Lake Michigan coast and U.S. 131 further inland. The Township lies between the two highways and has the Chain of Lakes as its western boundary. Ski and golf course complexes are located within the Township and are accessed primarily from U.S. 131 via M-88.

Therefore, the western, central and southern portions of the Township experience residential and resort development pressures, while the balance of the Township is made of rugged hills and wetland valley with low density residential living, farms and forestry uses.

### Existing Land Use

The predominate land use in the Township is forest (60%). Eighty-five percent of the Township is covered in vegetation. Of this, thirteen percent is classified as wetland, primarily narrow lowlands along streams and at the base of hills and ridges. Agriculture uses account for approximately five percent of the land use, and is located in the central and northern portions of the Township.

Residential uses comprise 11 percent of the land use although it is scattered generally throughout the township, with the highest density in the Village of Bellaire and local golf and ski resorts.

The balance of the land use, consisting of utilities such as the Antrim County Airport, Bellaire Wastewater Treatment Facility, and commercial and industrial uses is about one percent of Kearney Township’s existing land use.

Existing Land Use Table:

Land Cover Type	Percent Coverage
Forest	60%
Wetlands	13%
Water	3%
Agriculture	5%
Grass and Shrub	7%
Residential (including resorts)	11%
Other (including utilities and industrial)	1%

Kearney Township Natural Features:

The Township enjoys the unique natural feature of the Chain of Lakes (part of its western boundary), Lake Bellaire, and Intermediate Lake. A large valley runs east and west through the south-central part of the Township with drainage areas branching out from the valley and creating extremely broken terrain. The valley is made up of vast areas of wetlands and contains the Cedar River.

Most of the Township is forested, with the eastern portion containing parts of the Mackinaw State Forest as well as several Christmas tree plantations.

Soils

The Township is made up of four basic soil associations as follows:

Emmet-Montcalm: This soil group consists of well-drained gently sloping to very steeply sloping loamy sands and sands occurring mostly on knolls, ridges and hills.

These soils offer few limitations to development where the slopes are gentle except for some problems with frost heave for road and highways.

Where there are slopes involved, moderate to severe problems develop. These involve cave-in of excavations, some wetness in digging basements, and side hill seepage from septic tank tile fields.

Tawas-Ensley-Roscommon: These are very poorly-drained soils consisting of mucks, loamy and sandy soil consisting of shallow depressions in level plains. These soils are largely unsuitable for on-site septic systems due to the humus content of the soil and high-water table.



There are frost heave problems and cave-in problems for excavations, and these soils are quite often subject to seasonal flooding.

[Kalkaska-Montcalm](#): This soil association consists of well-drained sands on level to very steep hills, ridges and knolls.

Due to the sandy content of these soils, cave-ins of excavations are a problem. Septic systems operate successfully in these soils except in steep-slope areas.

[Kalkaska-East Lake-Karlin](#): These soils are well-drained, level to very-steep, sandy soils of plains.

#### Natural Gas Wells

Natural gas lies beneath most of Kearney Township trapped in Antrim Shale about 2,000 feet below the surface.

#### Water Quality Assessment of Lake Bellaire, Intermediate Lake, and the Cedar River

Assessing the water quality of Kearney Township's major waters requires the collaboration between several monitoring agencies. For the latest information on water quality consult the Three Lakes Association, the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and the Friends of the Cedar River.

#### Cedar River:

The Cedar River remains on the northwest Michigan's listing of Class A trout streams. The water is cold, clear, and richly oxygenated. High quality macro invertebrates found on the bottom of the river serves as the main food source for brook, brown, and rainbow trout populations.

The major concern for the Cedar River water quality is the detection of TCE (trichloroethylene) from the Mancelona plume that is traveling at approximately 350 feet per year. While TCE concentrates entering the river are well below the EPA limits for surface waters, Three Lakes Association, in cooperation with the Bellaire Public Schools, have been monitoring macro invertebrate populations above and below the point of TCE entry since the spring of 2005. Three Lakes Association is also active in the efforts to remove the toxic plume.

#### Intermediate Lake:

Intermediate Lake is an All Sports lake with activities including fishing, boating, and swimming. It is also popular because the lakes of the Upper Chain of Lakes, including Hanley, Ben-Way, Wilson, Ellsworth, St. Clair, and Six Mile, can be travelled to by boat using Intermediate Lake as a starting point. However, the Lower Chain of Lakes (Bellaire, Clam, Torch, Elk, and Skegemog) cannot be accessed by boat from Intermediate Lake because of the dam on the Intermediate River in Bellaire. Fish that have been reported through various Department of Natural Resources surveys include walleye, bluegill, logperch, yellow perch, large- and smallmouth bass,

pumpkinseed, longnose gar, white sucker, rock bass, whitefish, cisco, muskellunge, northern pike, rainbow trout, lake trout, brown trout, and sunfish.

Known Aquatic Invasive Species: Zebra mussels, Purple Loosestrife, Invasive Phragmites.

#### Lake Bellaire:

Formerly known as Grass Lake, Lake Bellaire is located southwest of the Village of Bellaire in Antrim County. Major inlet tributaries include the Intermediate River, which drains the upper Chain of Lakes through Bellaire, and Grass Creek, which flows into the north end of the North Arm. Water leaving Lake Bellaire flows through the Grass River into Clam Lake and eventually into Lake Michigan at the Village of Elk Rapids on East Grand Traverse Bay.

Lake Bellaire is a deep lake (95 feet max, 42 feet mean depths) surrounded by extensive and ecologically important wetlands. These include conifer or mixed hardwood/conifer swamps on the north end, marshy areas west of the mouth of the Intermediate River, and marshy and swampy areas on the south end. Along with their ability to filter pollutants in the water, wetlands provide habitat to amphibians, mammals, birds, trees, flowers, and other forms of life.

There are virtually no natural rocky shorelines on Lake Bellaire, which is unusual for a lake of this size (1793 acres) in the Elk River Watershed. This has been identified as a potential problem for successful spawning of some fish species. Most of the nearshore sediments in Lake Bellaire consist of sand or gravelly-sand. The remainder, largely in the north arm, consists of muck or marl-sand bottom. Muskgrass (*Chara* spp), a common 'plant' found in the nearshore areas of Lake Bellaire, is actually, a multicellular branching green alga. Muskgrass gets its name from its "musky" smell.

Because the deep water of Lake Bellaire remains cold and oxygen-rich during summer months, the lake is able to support a cold-water fishery. Warm water fish inhabit shallower areas. Fish that have been found in Lake Bellaire include whitefish, perch, herring, northern pike, rock bass, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, bluegill, lake trout, longnose gar, white sucker, brook silverside, blunt nose minnow, walleye, brook trout, black crappie, yellow perch, white sucker, brown trout, splake, pumpkinseed, brown bullhead, cisco, smelt, rainbow trout, and brown trout.

Known Aquatic Invasive Species: Zebra mussels.

#### Transportation:

The transportation system is most complete on the western edge of the Township where M-88 runs along the eastern side of Lake Bellaire and through the Village of Bellaire and on to Central Lake. County Road 620 enters the Township from M-66 and runs through the Village of Bellaire

and then west to Torch Lake. The portion of the Village of Bellaire east of the Intermediate River lies within the Township.

Door-to-door public bus transit is available within Antrim County by Antrim County Transportation.

#### Community Facilities:

Bellaire is the County Seat for Antrim County and houses governmental offices, the Courts and the County Jail. The County operates Meadow Brook Medical Care Facility and Meadow View Apartments for Seniors, just south of the Village along M-88, along with The Animal Control Building, the Ambulance Authority, Antrim County Transportation Authority.

The Bellaire Public Library and the Bellaire Fire Department are located in the Village of Bellaire, while Antrim County Ambulance Authority Emergency Services are located in the township.

The Bellaire Public School District encompasses 75.1 square miles of Antrim County. The district consists of two school buildings: John R. Rodger Elementary and Bellaire Middle/High School. Enrollment in 2022-2023 was 299 students.

Bellaire Public Schools partners with the Kalkaska Memorial Health Center for preschool, Head Start and Great Start Readiness Programs. The high school sends several students to the Northwest Education Services Career Tech Center where they can participate in one of 22 programs. Students may also take online courses, dual enrollment courses and or participate in an Early College Program.

The Bellaire Public School's Performing Arts Center is an auditorium-style setting available to community groups and organizations (in which a majority of the members are residents of the Bellaire Public School District).

There are several golf and ski resorts in the Township. Extensive seasonal and permanent housing has been developed along Lake Bellaire and Intermediate Lake. A year-round hiking trail, including several miles along the Cedar River, has also been established from Craven Park on Stover Rd. to Burrell Road. The trail head leads to a variety of bridges and marked trails on Burrell Road.

The Antrim County Airport is located in the Township just north of the Village of Bellaire with access from County Road 620.

Kearney Township Hall is located on Aero Park Drive and houses the township offices and a large hall that is available for rent.

In Spring 2015, Bellaire Family Health Center relocated to their new building located on M-88. The new facility has the ability to house six providers, along with a full drive-thru pharmacy, laboratory, mammography, and X-ray services.

#### Businesses:

Kearney Township and the Village of Bellaire are home to a variety of local retail businesses and restaurants. The top employment industry in Kearney Township is Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Service (18.9%), followed by Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance (18.5%), and Manufacturing (15.2%). Public sector, retail, manufacturing, resort, restaurant, construction, agriculture and forestry provide a wide range of employment opportunities for township residents.

*Anchor Lamina America* is the township's largest manufacturing facility. Industrial parks are home to several small service businesses. Captain's Choice Marine expanded to become the township's largest water recreation center.

#### Population Trends:

Township growth stabilized between 2010 to 2020; the 2020 census indicated the Township has 1780 residents, a 0.8% increase since 2010. Kearney Township has a median age of 54.5 years. Per capita income is \$28,321 which is approximately 80% of the amount in Antrim County and the State of Michigan. Household income is \$55,694 which is approximately 90% of the amount in Antrim County and the State of Michigan.

#### Housing

In Kearney Township 75% of the housing stock is owner-occupied. The median value of owner-occupied housing is \$181,800 which is 10% higher than the amount in Antrim County and a little bit higher than the amount in the State of Michigan.

## SECTION III- GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The Kearney Township Planning Commission has established the following goals as the basis of the Master Land Use Plan:

Goal 1: Preserve a natural and peaceful environment.

### Strategies:

- A. Rural traits of quietness, privacy, stable property values, and an identity apart from the city should be a priority and enforced by strong zoning.
- B. Update zoning requirements to include methods for preservation of larger lot sizes in agricultural areas.
- C. Pursue participation in the Antrim County Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program in order to take advantage of available grant opportunities. Complete all requirements and submit the required resolution<sup>1</sup>.
- D. Review and update zoning and site plan review requirements which promote the protection of lake and water quality such as impervious surface limits, building location restrictions, setbacks for buildings, wells and septic systems, and shoreline landscaping.
- E. Include MDOT Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) research in amending zoning ordinances related to the watershed<sup>2</sup>. Utilize the FEMA floodplain maps
- F. <sup>3</sup>
- G. for flood insurance and MDNR High Risk Erosion Area map as overlay zones to simplify regulation and avoid duplication of state and federal regulation.
- H. Amend Site Plan Review section of the Zoning Ordinance to include both regulated and unregulated natural resources, such as wetlands and floodplains, to be shown on the site plan.
- I. Promote and/or develop recreational facilities such as, but not limited to, walking/biking/equestrian trails, fishing facilities, launch ramps, parks and public access sites for the benefit of residents and visitors to the Township.
- J. Protect surface and ground water quality of the Township by establishing land use restrictions appropriate to soil type, terrain, and other characteristics to ensure absorption, filtration, and runoff control.

Goal 2: Provide for growth of business within the Township, taking into account Goal 1.

### Strategies:

- A. Evaluate zoning ordinances to ensure that commercial requirements are not unreasonably restricting businesses from starting or succeeding in the Township.
- B. Review and adjust zones to accommodate usage demands.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://cms5.revize.com/revize/antrim/Administration\\_Planning/Ordinances/Farmland.pdf](https://cms5.revize.com/revize/antrim/Administration_Planning/Ordinances/Farmland.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/programs/highway-programs/environmental-efforts/stormwater/stormwater-management-plan>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/floodplain-management/floodplain-mapping>

- C. Identify businesses that are compatible with the Township and develop a plan to attract them.
- D. Concentrate commercial uses in those areas where adequate public infrastructure (transportation, water, and sewer) is available to support such activity. Evaluate and cluster commercial uses to better serve traffic through the Township.
- E. Amend zoning ordinance to identify appropriate commercial areas without negatively impacting the natural landscape.
- F. Investigate the viability of overlay districts for improved business growth.
- G. Encourage development in appropriate areas while minimizing public expenditures needed for public improvements and public services.

### Goal 3: Utilize zoning to drive 21<sup>st</sup> century technology enhancements in the Township.

#### Strategies:

- A. Review zoning ordinances to ensure continued technological advancements throughout the Township.
- B. Provide regulations for Wind Energy Conversion Systems (wind turbines).
- C. Simplify regulations for small-scale, individual, onsite-use alternative energy generation.
- D. Address as needed utility-scale alternative energy generation while providing appropriate protection for adjacent properties.
- E. Encourage the development of clean energy sources for private use and commercial energy generation.
- F. Consider appropriate language and requirements for solar energy in zoning.

### Goal 4: Planned Residential Zones.

#### Strategies:

- A. Utilize zoning for planned development of affordable housing.
- B. Focus on maintaining low residential density.
- C. Ensure through zoning the residential character and rural peacefulness of the Township are maintained.
- D. Ensure that any multiple unit/ parcel developments will preserve open space, natural features, wetlands, and wildlife.
- E. Direct development to areas most suitable and provide guidelines for good development practices by maintaining "Zoning districts" appropriate to the soil type, terrain, and other characteristics of the area.

### Goal 5: Provide for public parks, recreation and open space opportunities within the Township.

#### Strategies:

- A. Seek funding to improve existing Township-owned land.
- B. Identify and promote the availability of public access for Township residents.
- C. Encourage private development which retains natural space, open space, and provides

recreational facilities.





## SECTION IV - KEARNEY TOWNSHIP FUTURE LAND USE

A review of the existing conditions of the Township, together with a study of the unique natural features including the soils and surface water, and in relation to the goals that the Township Planning Commission wishes to achieve, leads to a future land use plan made up of the following planning districts:

### Commercial:

Commercial development in the Township is expected to be limited in the future. Most commercial growth will likely occur within the Village of Bellaire, which is governed by the Village of Bellaire's Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance. It is recommended that an area along M-88, just south of the Village, be designated for future commercial development outside the Village. The Village has limited capacity to add water and sewer customers to its system so development will likely require well and septic systems.

Although the soils are not particularly well-suited to development, the area already has some commercial activities. Special care will be needed to ensure that waste and stormwater run-off from commercial developments is retained on site and allowed to percolate slowly into the ground water to prevent sediments and pollution from entering Lake Bellaire.

### Manufacturing:

An area for manufacturing development is located east of the Airport, south of Eddy School Road. This district includes the existing industrial park. Care in the development of industrial sites will be needed to account for stormwater run-off, sewage, and handling of special wastes.

### Residential:

The primary area designated for residential growth is north of Schuss Mountain and east of the Village. Development will require well and septic systems due to limited capacity of existing water and sewage facilities. Soil conditions are fairly suitable for urban-type development.

It is recommended that subdivision and cluster/open space type development be encouraged in this district as well as duplexes, long-term rentals, and multi-family uses. It is expected that the full range of public services will eventually be available to this district and that these services will be provided by developers on a project basis as the need and desire for development projects take place.

A secondary residential district is recommended east of the manufacturing district along Derenzy Road. The proximity of the manufacturing district was also considered and this area may serve as a housing area for future employees of businesses in the industrial districts.

### Forestry, Agricultural and Low Density Residential:

The vast majority of the Township consists of this district. This is due to the following factors:

- Much of the Township is made up of very fragile soils with steep hills, wetlands, and a lot of surface water.
- Water quality is very important to the quality of life of the Township and is at risk due to the fragile nature of the land and conventional development practices.

This district is designated to encourage forestry and agriculture as the primary uses, with low-density residential allowed. The township does not expect to provide the full range of urban services to this area, and subdivision development should be discouraged.

Residential development will be permitted on an acreage basis, where there is sufficient space to ensure no degradation of groundwater and the need for road improvements, utility extensions and additional funds for emergency services will not be required.

### Resort Residential:

This planning district is intended to provide for recreational facilities requiring large land area (such as golf courses and ski resorts), and associated residential development. This may include both short-term overnight rental accommodations and year-round residential structures ranging from detached single-family dwellings to attached multi-family structures. Retail and service businesses would be allowed to the extent that they are a usual and necessary part of the recreational and residential development. They exist for, and are of a scale appropriate to, the primary purpose of serving the resort.

Much of the Township is made up of steep hills, fragile soils and seeps from the hilly terrain to the valleys, which in many cases contain wetland areas.

Future development near these environmentally sensitive areas is best addressed on a case-by-case basis so that the development can be directed away from the fragile areas. Care needs to be taken to protect the water of the Township from insecticides, pesticides, fertilizers and septic waste pollution. Soil erosion can easily occur from both earth disturbance activities as well as storm water runoff.

The recreational and residential use areas that are expected to experience the highest growth are those having the greatest changes on elevation. These same areas will attract large numbers of visitors. Therefore, transportation both to the resort area from other areas of the state and township, as well as movement of people within the resort itself, are of major concern. Both the pedestrian and vehicular traffic must be accommodated while ensuring that emergency vehicles have the ability to reach and service the development. Due to elevation changes, the number of people attracted, and the distance of this type of development from the Village of Bellaire, the potential exists for very high costs to service this type of development. A relatively small portion of the population of the township would benefit from these infrastructure improvements.

The necessary utilities and infrastructure shall be installed prior to, or in conjunction with, the proposed development with the cost to be borne by those proposing the development



## SECTION V – IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of a future growth plan for the Township can take many forms. The most common form is to use the Zoning Ordinance as a way to regulate and direct growth. In this way, decisions made on rezoning are guided by the Master Plan. The setting of lot sizes, density, and permitted uses all influence the direction that development will take. It is recommended that the Township use the Special Use Permit process and site plan review as a technique to guide development. The soil factor maps available from the Antrim County Soil and Water Conservation District should be used to ensure adequate protection of fragile soil conditions when proposed developments are reviewed.

A subdivision control ordinance will also help achieve goals. It is recommended that a township ordinance be written to include provisions for erosion control that could create “greenbelts.” This will help retain the valuable natural character of the Township.

A wetland ordinance, following the guidelines of the State Wetlands Act, will help the Township protect water quality by recognizing these special areas and prescribing measures to insure their future.

The Township Board, in its capital improvements planning and budgeting, can influence implementation of the plan by budgeting funds to improve roads in portions of the township where growth is planned to occur.

### Renewable Energy

Renewable energy is energy produced from sources like the sun and wind that are naturally replenished and do not run out. Renewable energy can be used for electricity generation, space and water heating and cooling, and transportation (energy.gov). The Planning Commission is currently working on plans to encourage solar and wind energy generation including provisions to protect soil, water, and environmental quality, public safety, and restoration of the site to its original state upon abandonment. There are several state laws that the Township can utilize to help with implementation of the plan.

### Act 166-Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act

This Act requires a minimum of forty (40) acres in size; a farm of five (5) to forty (40) acres with a gross annual income of \$200 per cleared and tillable acre; or a specialty farm of at least fifteen (15) acres designated as a specialty farm by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and with a gross annual income of \$2,000 or more.

Beginning in the 2001 tax year, the state of Michigan began offering an enhanced benefit for landowners enrolled in PA-166 agreements which enables land owners to claim a tax credit for the amount by which their property tax exceeds 3.5% of their household income. (The previous threshold for eligibility was 7% of household income).

Another benefit of enrollment is that land covered by the agreement is exempt from special assessments for sanitary sewer, water, lights and non-farm drainage, unless the assessments were imposed prior to the recording of the Farmland Development Rights Agreement. The purpose of the agreement is to ensure that land remains in agriculture use for a minimum of ten (10) years and is not developed for any non-agricultural use.

Any questions about this Act should be addressed to the Division of Land Resource Program, Department of Natural Resources, Box 30028, Lansing, MI78909.

#### [Commercial Forest Act:](#)

This Act requires a minimum of forty (40) acres of established trees to be open to hunting and fishing. The owner pays thirty (30) cents per acre annual tax plus a 10% stumpage fee on any timber harvested.

#### [Natural Beauty Road:](#)

This Act allows citizens or governmental units to request the County Road Commission to designate a road or portion of road for non-development/improvement. This results in preserving the natural character of rural or forest settings.

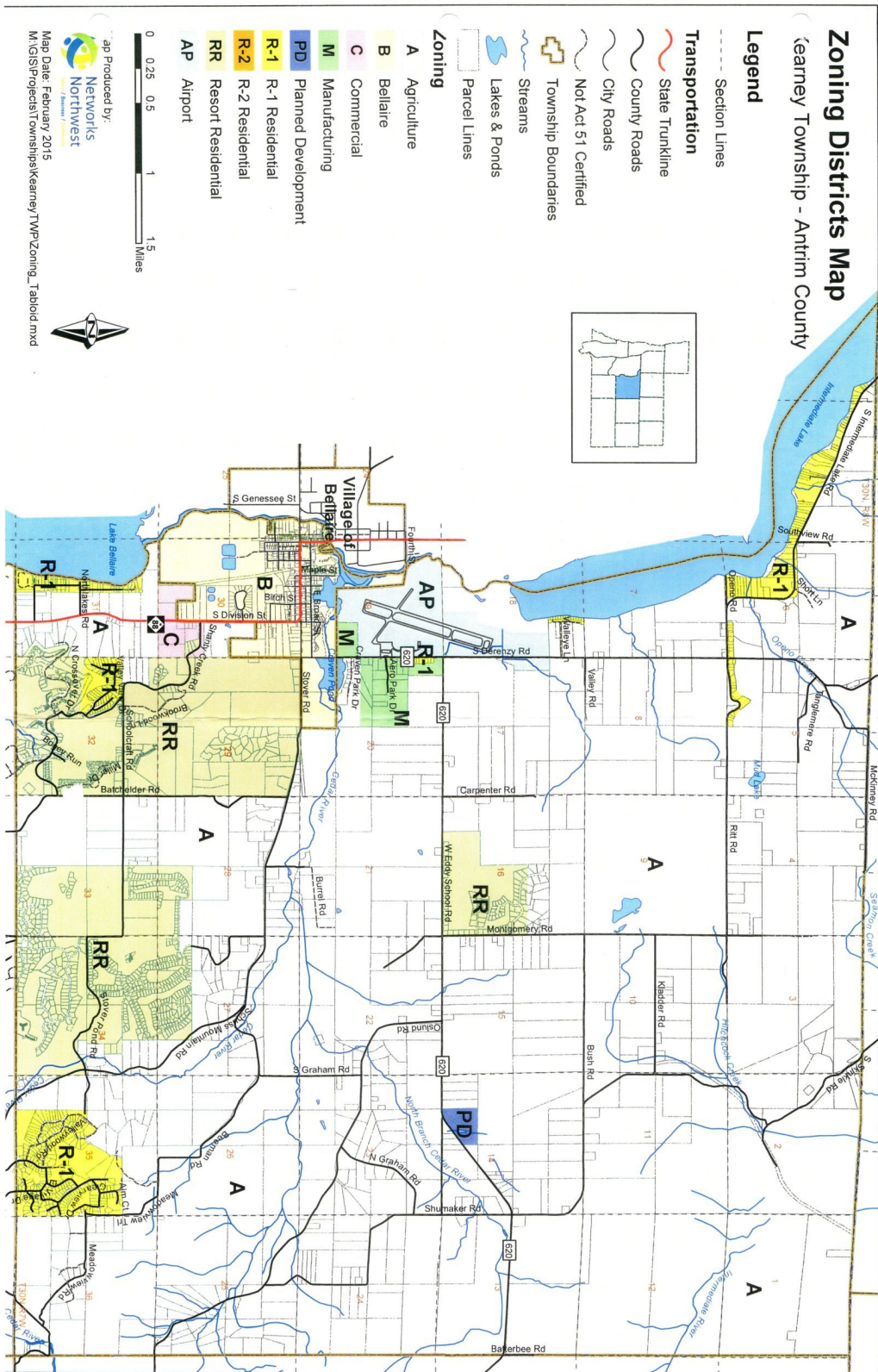
#### [Lot Size and Density](#)

The stated goals of this plan are to guide growth near the Village and to preserve the rural and natural character of the Township so that water quality can be protected. Therefore, the lot size and overall density allowed through the zoning ordinance becomes a critical factor in plan implementation.

It is recommended that the current zoning map be reviewed and, in the forestry, agriculture and low-density residential areas, as shown in the future land use plan, have a two (2)-acre minimum lot size.

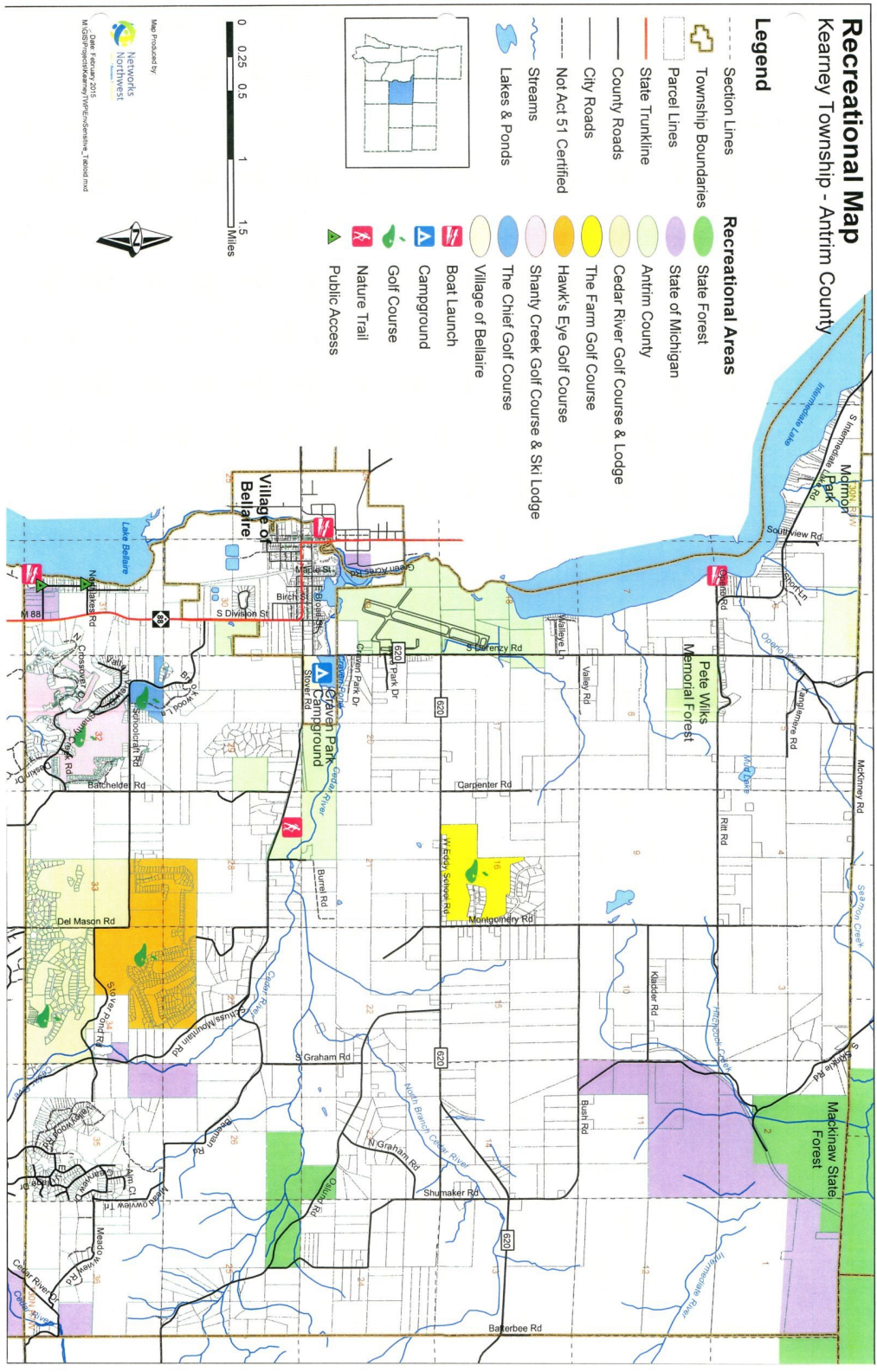
**SECTION VI – APPENDIX**

# Appendix A: Current Zoning Map





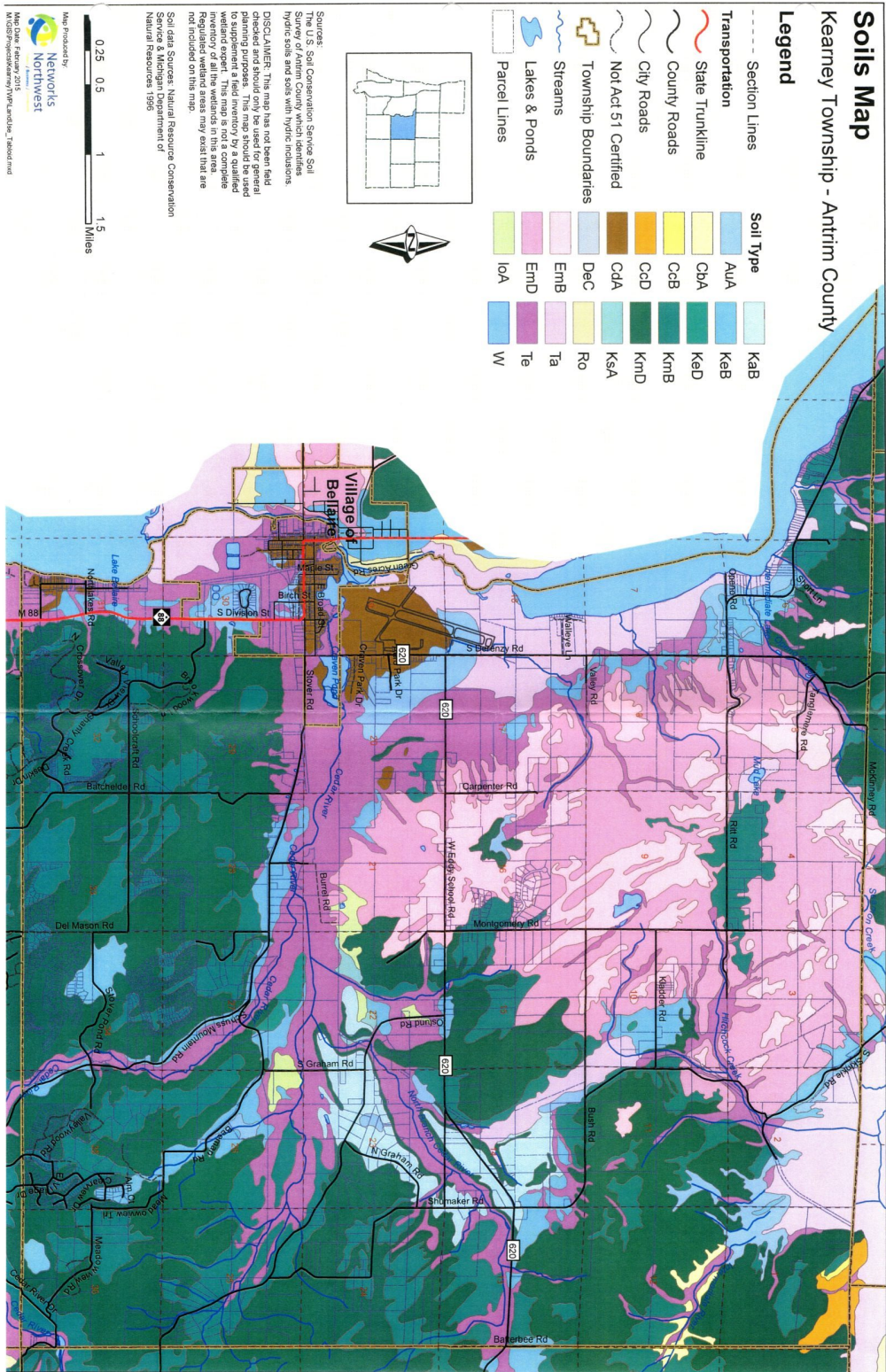
# Appendix B: Recreational Map







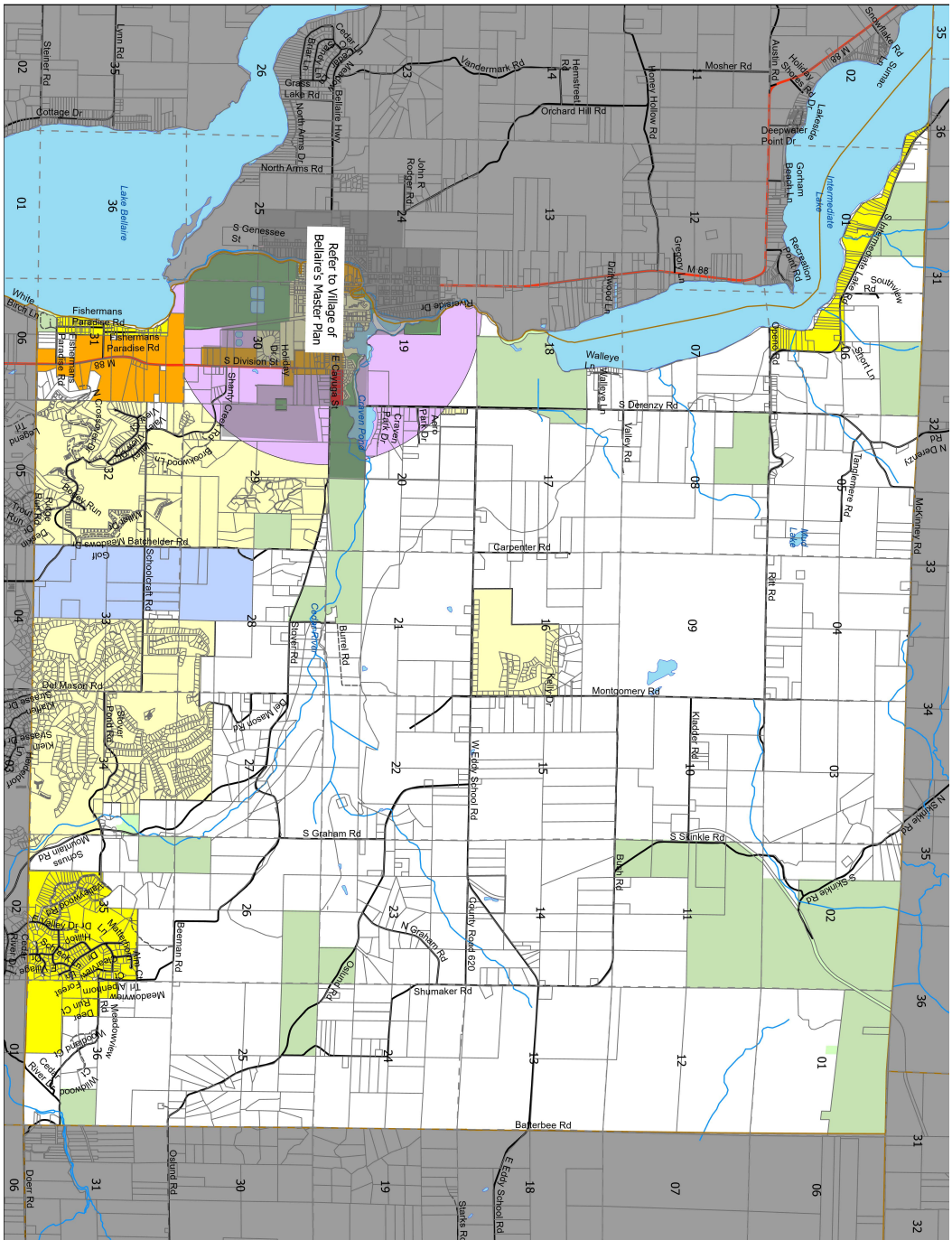
# Appendix D: Soils Map



# Appendix E: Future Land Use Map

## 2023 Kearney Township Future Land Use Map

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Residential (R-1)
- Resort Residential
- Mixed Use
- Multi-Family (R-3)
- Natural Area
- Public Land
- Agricultural, Forestry, Low Density Residential
- State Trunkline
- County Roads
- City Roads
- Not Act 51 Certified
- Village of Belaire
- Township Boundaries
- Section Lines
- Lakes & Ponds
- Streams





# Appendix F: Land Use & Zoning Map

