

INTRODUCTION

Picture quiet tree shaded country roads, eight fishing boats bobbing lazily up and down in the clear-blue lake waters, colorful birds singing in the trees, friendly neighbors waving as you pass by, laughing children playing among the quaint cabins and lake residences, and all of this will remind you of many other warm childhood memories of your younger days which echo through your mind as you drive through scenic Wabedo Township. Sooner or later, those childhood memories draw you back again to an area similar to this to enjoy the full measure of the seasons with its fall orange leafed landscape and snow-covered pines in the winter.

The landowners in Wabedo Township (Township) have a very distinctive area with picturesque lakes located in the eastern part of Cass County that is undoubtedly the most pristine in the region. This is why the Township, with its residents and landowners, has endeavored in past years to protect and preserve these valuable assets. One way to do this has been by Community Comprehensive Planning, which helps to determine if additional protection and management of growth is needed to preserve this beautiful locale.

Townships themselves are the oldest form of “grass roots” democratic government dating back to the colonial days when the United States first were settled. While Townships have different sizes and shapes, it is the meaning of the term that gives them their significance. This “town” form of government came from England and was brought to our new nation in the late 1700s. In 1776, we celebrated the first Independence Day for our new nation and in 1784 a federal law was passed by the Constitutional Congress called the North West Ordinance. This Ordinance created Townships for rural areas of these new United States. This happened even before the Constitution of the United States had been written. Townships were to be squares of six-by-six miles (thirty-six square miles in all) with 23,040 acres in size. Some Townships today have different sizes due to geographic boundaries, annexation by cities, combining with neighbors, and other issues.

Township geographic lines are like “markers” identifying the geographic and political lines between cities, counties, and state governments. While we don’t see them physically, they are there. These basic lines were drawn in 1859 when the United States Government, through a geodesic survey, put in place a very historical monument down in southwestern Minnesota. It is called the Tri-State Marker which was used to determine the lines such as whether you were in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota or even in Canada. These lines also determine the 87 Counties, 800 cities and some 1790 plus Townships as they are in our state today and which ultimately determined the history of the state.¹

Today, Minnesota is one of the largest states that continue to have a thriving grass roots form of democracy called Townships where the people make their own decisions with their town form of government. Annually, on the second Tuesday in March, residents come to the Town Hall and set their levies for the budgets which run the Township for the next year and make decisions on items of concerns for their community. It is perhaps the most unique but least understood process. And yet, it continues to work for communities across the State no matter whether they are very rural or if they have become very urban and are adjacent to developing cities. This is one of the reasons why Townships feel planning for their communities has become so important and why Wabedo Township has decided to continue to update their Community Comprehensive Plan to give their resident citizens a guide to understanding the potential future for their community.

CULTURAL HISTORY

The earliest European settlers in Cass County were mainly trappers, traders, and lumbermen along with a few farmers. Wabedo Townships’ first beginnings came with the discovery of the lucrative timber industry by the lumber barons in the 1890s, with the first logging camp located on the east side of Girl Lake in 1894. The St. Anthony Lumber Company built the Northern Mississippi Railroad in 1890. Huge logs were moved from Lantern Bay on Woman Lake and placed on railroad cars for use elsewhere. In 1895, the

¹ Minnesota Association of Townships Tape: *The Shape of Democracy Grassroots Government of Minnesota 2000*

industry was in full production with movement of many cords of wood being loaded on the Northern Mississippi Railroad three times daily, and being transported down to Cross Lake which was forty miles away.² Hoists were located on Wabedo and Little Boy Lakes and spanned both of these lakes to help move the lumber. The remnants of the structure pilings can still be seen above the water at these sites today. Once these logs arrived down at Cross Lake, they were off-loaded into the lake just north of the Pine River outlet, and driven down the Mississippi River to Little Falls and beyond to be cut up into the board feet used for furniture, carts, commercial buildings, homes, and many other needs of the day.

In 1909, the last train of wood left for Cross Lake, and the main line tracks and numerous spurs were removed by 1910. Some of the old grade can still be seen today. By 1914, the entire area supported by the railroad was completely logged out with all of the White Pine and Norway Pines cut clean from the land. There were no Jack Pines present in this area at that time. With the demise of the lumber industry around 1910, the land along this right-of-way³ was then opened up and sold for real estate development.

In 1907, Wabedo Township actually was organized. The name of the Township is derived from an Ojibwa Warrior, named “Wab-ud-ow” which means white gore or mushroom lake. This Ojibwa warrior was the first to be killed by a Sioux Indian war party in a skirmish at this lake in 1768. The Township is closely associated with neighboring Longville, which became a plat in 1904. In 1905, a school was established in Longville, and they became a village in 1906. Taxes came into being in 1915 to help pay for fire protection and building phone lines, and in 1919, the “Longville Fire Phone Exchange” was established. As time has passed, the surrounding area and Wabedo Township has again regained its original beauty of the old trees and instead of a lumber industry, it now supports a strong base of tourism, retirement and a self-employed community of people who fiercely protect and continue to preserve the environment they live and work in.

NATURAL HISTORY

The current topography of Cass County is a product of glacial activity from about 40,000 years ago. The state of Minnesota experienced every type of climate from the Pleistocene period through the Holocene period in which the type of weather continued to be very cold and inhospitable. A tundra-like climate existed. When the glaciers began to retreat around 10,000 years ago, spruce vegetation covered the northern part of the state for approximately 1,000 years before the pines replaced them. Deciduous trees such as elm, oak and basswood gradually replaced the pines as the climate warmed. Then a dry period came about 7,000 years ago and encouraged prairie vegetation to grow. In Cass County, some of our present forests of aspen, birch and alder have been here in existence for at least 2,000 years. Wabedo Township is in an area called the Laurentian Mixed Forest and sustains the following selection of trees; Ash, Aspen (trembling), Balsam poplar, Basswood, Birch (paper and yellow), Maple (sugar) and Oak. This area covers most of the NE portions of the State of Minnesota.

The last two ice sheets to cover the region came during the Wisconsin Age, which was the last period of glaciations for Minnesota. This Wisconsin Period, approximately 75,000 years ago, was composed of four major ice lobes, the Wadena, Rainy, Superior and Des Moines lobes. The types of materials deposited by these four lobes depended on the kind of bedrock over which they crossed.

The ones that seem to have influenced Wabedo Township the most were the Rainy Lobe and partially the St. Louis Sub Lobe, although only a very small influence with the latter. Soils left were the Warba, Stuntz, and Menahga soils as well as fine sand, silts, some clays, and peat. The Rainy Lobe carried materials from the highlands along the Rainy River to the south and east of Leech Lake from the granitic area of western Ontario. Many of the local wastewater installers’ state that they encounter this glacial till rock and/or very fine sandy soils when they work in these areas. In fact, the Cass County Soils Survey shows three general soils types for the Township. They are Menahga-Markey-Friendship soils, which are located on nearly level to steep, sandy, loamy over sandy or gravelly, and organic soils on outwash plains and lake plains and at the margins of terminal moraines. The second general soils are called Warba-Stuntz-Cathro soils, which

² Purchased in 1893 by Weyerhaeuser Paper Company.

³ Currently this old right-of-way is now known as County State Aid Road 54, but was first designated as County Road 28 in 1935 by the Cass County Highway Department.

are located on nearly level to rolling, loamy, and sandy over loamy, silty, clayey, and organic soils on moraines and lake plains. Finally, the third sets of soils are called Demontreville-Menahga-Cushing soils, which are usually found on nearly level to steep, loamy, sandy and sandy over loamy soils on terminal moraines and outwash plains⁴.

Cass County is the sixth largest County in Minnesota. It has a total land area of about 1.5 million acres, of which 517 lakes occupy 258,217 acres⁵. Cass County has about 250,000 acres of water including lakes, rivers and ponds. The most impressive natural features of Cass County and Wabedo Township are their large lakes, which are glacial in their origins. In Wabedo Township, a third of the 36 square miles is in lakes (40 water bodies), rivers and streams, while approximately another third is in state, county tax forfeit land and the rest of its acreage are landowners located mainly around the lakes regions.

In Wabedo Township, there are four large bodies of water; the eastern part of Woman Lake, Little Boy Lake, Wabedo Lake, and the northeastern portion of Mule Lake. Smaller lakes are Hunter, Rice, Shurd and Cooper. These are interspersed with many streams with connections flowing in and out of these lakes. The Township is located in the Boy River Watershed and has had a Diagnostic Study done on some of their lakes to determine their environmental status. To date, the local lake associations continue their work to protect the lake water quality and groundwater. The water quality of the lakes today continues to be of good quality and local community lake associations continue their vigilance with secchi disk readings and lake assessment programs to monitor the lakes health.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The “goal” of this section is to update the background information of the Wabedo Township community to its present standing today. The idea behind a Community Comprehensive Plan is to discover how the community became itself (its history of how it came to be), what it is like today (its present status as it is today) and then to determine how it may wish to grow and change in the future (its goals and policies with implementation plans and timelines). The following information in the next sections gives the current status of the Wabedo Township community. While this is just a “chapter in time” as it is written, it gives a new benchmark to work from for the Planning Commission to update again sometime in the future. Therefore, these next sections will look at Population, the current Community Survey with their comments, Environment, Land Usage, Transportation, Housing, Community Services, and Governmental Relations.

POPULATION INFORMATION

In May of 1998, Wabedo Township was identified as growing at a faster rate than the neighboring cities of Remer, Hackensack, Longville, and Backus. In looking at the 2000 census data from the MN Department of Administration, it shows the following relationships with these same cities and neighboring townships:

<u>Entity</u>	<u>1990 Data</u>	<u>1995 Data</u>	<u>2000 Data</u>	<u>% Change</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Remer	342	337 est.	372	8.80	Rank 7
Hackensack	245	277 est.	285	16.30	Rank 6
Backus	240	285 est.	311	29.60	Rank 5
Longville	224	232 est.	180	-19.60	Rank 8
Wabedo Twp	269	338 est.	375	39.40	Rank 4
Kego Twp	297		465	56.60	Rank 1
Woodrow Twp	459		667	45.30	Rank 2
Inquadona Twp	135		190	40.70	Rank 3

Table 1: Census data for Cities and Townships from 1990 – 2000⁶

⁴ October 1997, Soil Survey of Cass County, Minnesota, General Soils Map.

⁵ October 1997, Soil Survey of Cass County, Minnesota. Page 2 & 3.

⁶ Census Data: From <http://www.demographics.state.mn.us/DownloadFiles/PLData/cen2000Places.CSV>

Entity	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Census	2020 Census	% chg. From 1990-2020	Rank
Remer	342	372	370	391	+14.33	Rank 6
Hackensack	245	285	313	294	+20.00	Rank 5
Backus	240	311	250	263	+9.58	Rank 7
Longville	224	180	156	153	-31.70	Rank 8
Wabedo Township	269	375	341	423	+57.25	Rank 2
Kego Township	297	465	505	613	+106.40	Rank 1
Woodrow Township	459	667	611	710	+54.68	Rank 3
Inquadona Township	135	190	190	176	+30.37	Rank 4

Table 1A: Census data for Cities and Townships from 1990-2020^{6.5}

As one reviews the previous data, it becomes apparent that nearby cities are not showing appreciable growth from the 2020 census data. However, the Townships are continuing to show significant increases in their populations, possibly due to the lakes and the “country nature” of the surrounding areas.

Here, Wabedo Township continues to show a healthy increase in population and is continuing to outpace the nearby cities. The Township should persevere in review of their land uses against their environmental constraints and always strive to find that balance between the two. It may be necessary in the future to consider a development model that allows a slow growth development with land usage that is aesthetically pleasing to the community and its environs. The Township could consider developing a build-out model, based on a set of qualified criteria, and with thoughtful contemplation, in order to help them to identify what types of growth the Township may wish to maintain for their future.

SURVEY INFORMATION

In October of 1997, as a part of their first Community Comprehensive Plan, the Township sent out a community-wide survey to all residents and landowners in the Township. It was a fairly large and encompassing survey and a 57% response was received. This survey is on file along with the written comments at the Town Hall. To summarize, the responses established the following points:

- Large per cent of long-term residents 62%
- Property ownership 99%
- Single Family Dwellings 91%
- Housing built after 1970 54%
- Quality of life satisfaction 81%
- Wastewater concerns 72%
- Land Use by Twp 73%
- Lower Taxes in the Twp # 1 issue
- Assets: lake and rivers, rural living and recreational opportunities

Questions that generated strong reactions were the regulation of jet skis (85%), joint planning with other local governmental units (83%), and that landowners wished to designate areas for commercial and industrial developments (90%). In addition, when the question was asked about who should regulate the “use” of land within the Township, respondents answered that the Township (73%) should regulate said land usages.

^{6.5} Census Data:

In November 2003, a second community survey went out to update the prior survey information with a return response of 44.3%. A copy of this community survey and a compilation of the responses are in the Appendix (Exhibit A) and they are also on file at the offices of the Town Clerk. Similar questions brought the same answers and about the same percentages in response. This time there were some new questions. It was noteworthy that 70% responding had e-mail. This tells the Township that their website at (<http://wabedo.govoffice.com>) will become very useful in helping landowners to become knowledgeable about the activities in the Township community.

Two additional questions in the survey received strong responses. The first asked; “What attracted you to Wabedo Township?” The responses varied from family ownership to the quiet peaceful life, beautiful and pristine lakes, the relaxed pace, the serenity of life and the friendly atmosphere. This again re-affirms that since May of 1998, the community believes that the Township has continued to do a good job in keeping the quality of life at a high level.

The second question was also very revealing. When asked if a Community Center should be considered, a mix of comments and responses showed concern for the economy and an unwillingness to pay more taxes to support a singular Town Hall other than what was presently there. These responses show the same concerns that all communities now share and may further reflect the conservative nature of Townships. In the prior first community survey, 83% suggested jointly planning with other local governmental units and it seems that a Community Center to serve more than one group and more than one need could be one solution to consider.

In the final summary of both surveys, it can be said that Wabedo Township landowners generally approved of the Township’s direction and their work, have strong opinions regarding this, and want the Township to continue with what they are doing to protect the lakes and streams, their drinking water and groundwater, keep development moderate, provide road maintenance and possibly begin upgrading the road system. This survey, along with the comments and critiques on file, will be used to identify suitable goals, objectives and action plans for the Planning Commission as they consider those areas in the second portion of this Plan.

ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

Wabedo Township is located in an area known for its beautiful scenery and lakes. Comments such as relaxing sandy beaches, clear pristine lakes, friendly people, serenity, and the slow pace of life are adjectives used by many. The landowners of the Township believe that it is important to preserve this feeling for the generations that will follow.

However, while the Township has these many wonderful amenities, this beauty usually brings with it a sensitive environment that can be harmed by overgrowth and un-managed development. On the other side of this picture, present land use that has been around since the early 70s may also be just as harmful due to small lot sizes, overbuilding, over-use of their properties, inadequate wastewater protection and individual wells situated too close and not meeting current setback regulations. Resort properties have closed down and the individual cabins have been sold as separate parcels causing close proximity of landowners to one another instead of having one-two citizens staying there on a seasonal basis. This is more reflective of a small city block and can create damage and more harm with this intensive use to a small area. As increased development interest becomes focused on Wabedo Township and its beautiful lakes, we may harm the very beauty that they wish to protect. In fact, some of these issues have already begun to surface. Below is a brief discussion about the sensitivity of the area and their relationship to these very issues.

WASTEWATER

Wabedo Township has long been an advocate for wastewater planning and implemented the first Subordinate Service Districts in this state for wastewater management to address water quality concerns in the mid 1990s. Wastewater planning, and the use of a qualified wastewater management entity when needed, has been demonstrated to be a wise investment. Currently, this model is being used statewide by many Townships to manage their community's water quality environment and to prepare for future needs. As small lots of many unusual configurations, high water tables and poor soils begin to affect quality of life and value of property in rural areas, Townships now have taken on this very vital environmental role. In addition, wastewater management for new developments can also help to protect the environment from future problems and consequently is a wise investment for consideration. With a well-developed community wastewater plan, financial institutions can see the "bigger picture" and often this planning will help to find and secure needed funds for residents.

In early 1993, Cass County conducted a Phase I Diagnostic Study of the Boy River Watershed. See Appendix (Exhibit B) for a summary review of some of the lake areas in the Township from that study as well as current water quality data. In its review, the study identified the water quality in Wabedo Township and the clarity of the lakes. The four major lakes had secchi disk readings ranging from nine to twelve feet with an average of fifteen feet for Mule Lake. They were generally considered "mesotrophic" which means that the water was moderately clear, but that there was an increasing probability of anoxia (lack of oxygen) in the hypolimnion portion during the summer. The residence times (for a lake to empty out and refresh itself), were as follows; Woman Lake was split in two with the N.E. portion taking 139 days and the S.E. portion taking 2.16 years, Wabedo Lake was also split in two portions with the N.E. portion taking 1.29 years and the S.E. portion taking 4.53 years and Little Boy Lake averaged 3.86 years. Further there were higher phosphorus levels occurring naturally in Wabedo Lake thereby making it much more sensitive to developmental growth⁷.

The Best Management Practices in this Diagnostic study indicated that wastewater could be a mitigating factor in these lakes due to the long residence times and naturally occurring phosphorus levels, and that management of wastewater systems should be considered as a good management practice to sustain the quality of the lakes. Since that study, three Subordinate Service Districts with cluster systems have been completed on Little Boy Lake. Other areas have been identified in the Township and it would be a good recommendation that management tools continue to be offered to areas that ask for remediation and help regarding their wastewater needs.

In addition, Cass County has regulations that state whenever a structure is built on the property, an addition is added to the home, and at the sale of a property, that a Certificate of Compliance for the wastewater treatment system be provided. These actions help the County find, repair and replace failing on-site wastewater treatment systems and then they can help to bring a management tool into the picture. To date, Wabedo Township averages approximately eight to ten reviews for Certificates of Compliance per year. New wastewater treatment systems for new properties are now reviewed for management and it is strongly promoted to protect the environment. Wabedo Township supports these efforts and continues to work with their residents when asked. Local Lake Associations further help with education and doing lake assessment programs as well. In 2003, wastewater studies were done around Wabedo Lake. Ninety-seven lakeshore properties were done on Wabedo Lake. Of these forty-seven properties were found to be compliant and about fifty properties were not in compliance. Several others did not enter the study for various reasons. Other lakes in the Township are being considered for wastewater studies in 2004 and beyond

In 2009, septic system compliance checks were offered at no cost to 98 property owners on Little Boy, Cooper and Rice Lakes who had not had their systems checked in the past three years or replaced in the past five years. The checks indicated that there were 71 compliant septic systems, 21 non-compliant systems, and 19 that declined the check. Cass County Environmental Services require septic compliance before any permits are granted, thus ensuring that faulty systems are updated.

⁷ Attachment: Water Quality Report for Wabedo Township, Wabedo Township Comprehensive Plan, May 1998

CRITICAL HABITAT

With the beauty and pristine nature of the lakes and streams in the Township, the flip side to this usually means a somewhat sensitive environment and therefore one needs to find a balance to the land use that comes with it. Critical habitat mapping for the Township shows areas such as wetlands as described below, animal and wildlife habitat such as the owl and bald eagle, as well as fish habitats and recharge areas within the Township around the lakes and streams. The special beauty of these wonderful habitats is why so many people wish to live here and enjoy this exceptional natural environment. Deep Portage Nature Preserve is only miles away from Wabedo Township and Camp Olson is a non-profit organization that actually is situated in the Township and encompasses major portions of Cooper Lake, Little Boy Lake and Shurd Lake. These types of areas will provide for a safe haven for all types of wildlife habitat that will add to the natural character and beauty of Wabedo Township. On Wabedo Lake, there is an old public access which was purchased by the State to be used to stock the lake with fish; however, the terrain is too difficult to be used for any type of boat access. An older map of the areas in Wabedo Township considered "critical habitat" is currently on file at the Town Hall-see Exhibit C. Also included in Exhibit C are the Rare Feature Database Reports, including rare plants and wildlife.

In addition, there are two Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) in Wabedo Township. One is called George Cook WMA on Woman Lake. The other is Mule Lake WMA on Mule Lake. These two WMAs are described in more detail in Exhibit C.

There are six conservation easements in Wabedo Township. One is located on the south shore of Lake Louise on County Road 120. The second is on the YMCA property on the west shore of Little Boy Lake. A third is on the Gackle/Helland property on Little Boy Lake. A fourth is at Iowa Point on Wabedo Lake and the fifth is from the Siemering property on the west shore of Wabedo Lake. The most recent easement, the sixth, is the channel property across from the Little Boy boat access, encompassing acres south from County Road 54 to County Road 120.

Further information on conservation easements, such as their location and terrain, are available on the Cass County Web site under the mapping option.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are usually identified by their most recognizable features such as bogs, sloughs, swamps, marshes and actual wetlands; however, there are wetlands that have less recognizable features. Wetlands share common characteristics such as hydric soils, they are wet above the ground or wet within a few inches of the ground surface all or part of the growing seasons, and they have vegetation adapted to wet soil conditions. Wetland areas in Wabedo Township have many direct benefits for the community. They serve to protect water quality, help with flood control and during dry weather, they can help with maintaining nearby streams with their slow release to them. In addition, they can provide a fish and wildlife habitat. Consequently, these wetlands are of concern when development begins to encroach on them or when they are allowed to be replaced thus changing the physical environment of the area.

Wetlands classifications are shown and located as general areas in the Wabedo Township Wetlands mapping and must be "delineated" further when a property owner wishes to build or develop. According to the Wetland Circular 39, there are eight types of wetlands; flooded basins or floodplains, inland fresh meadows, inland shallow fresh marshes, inland deep fresh marshes, inland open fresh water wetlands, shrub swamps, forested swamps, and bogs.

Despite their benefits, wetlands in other parts of Minnesota are usually considered a nuisance and have been drained for agriculture and development over the years. Lack of awareness about the benefits of

wetlands and governmental policies that encourage draining, replacing and/or filling of wetlands account for less than half of the original 53.6 million acres that once were in Minnesota⁸.

Cass County has 384,000 acres of wetlands. This represents 92% that are still intact in Cass County. This means that the County has only lost 8% of its wetlands that originally were here. Wabedo Township is showing some development of these areas as most of the more suitable land around the better-quality lakes has been used up. The community is now indicating that this is a concern as more and more of this “marginal” land is being disturbed and used. A current copy of the Wetland Map is on file and displayed at the Wabedo Township Hall and can be found in Exhibit C.

LAND USAGES

RESIDENTIAL / HOUSING

Wabedo Township’s residential uses have traditionally been single-family dwellings located around their major lakes and streams. Both community surveys recently completed showed that residential single-family dwellings are the predominant theme. Both surveys further indicate that 99% of the property owners actually own their property with many of them having them for twenty or more years. Comments indicated that many generations of the same family have enjoyed the area and its beauty for many years thereby showing a strong sense of identity and enjoyment for the area⁹. In the Community Comprehensive Plan of 1998, some very good recommendations were stated. Among them were the following; a). Rural character should be preserved, b). Lakeshore development should receive careful review, c). High-density developments should be discouraged, especially in shoreland areas where single-family dwellings are predominant d). Public access issues and e) wastewater concerns with development due to the topography of the lake areas.

In the May, 1998 Comprehensive Plan, the 1990 census data stated the following below. The current 2000 census shows the following data and both are referenced side by side below:

Residential Information	1990 Census Data	2000 Census Data	2020 Census Data
Number of Residents	269	375	423
Households	556	650	744
Year-round residences	104	175	227
Seasonal residents	452	461	Not available
Median Household Income	\$26,250	\$36,979	\$46,250
Housing	Most built 70’s & 80’s	Not available	Not available

The above chart seems to show an increase in more full-time residences suggesting more people are either retiring to their seasonal homes and making them full-time residences and/or landowners are deciding to live here and can work directly from their homes due to the technological society we now live in. This became much more prevalent during the Covid Pandemic.

With regards to actual housing types, the 2000 census data shows the following information below:

⁸Wetland Circular 39

⁹1997 and 2004, Wabedo Township Community Surveys

UNITS IN STRUCTURE

Subject	Number	Percent
Total housing units	682	100.0
1-unit, detached	628	92.1
1-unit, attached	4	0.6
2 units	2	0.3
3 or 4 units	0	0.0
5 to 9 units	0	0.0
10 to 19 units	2	0.3
20 or more units	0	0.0
Mobile home	31	4.5
Boat, RV, van, etc	15	2.2

Table 2: Total Housing Units by Type¹⁰

The differences in the chart above may be due to the fact that mobile homes often are rental units. Some housing and boats, RV, Vans, etc. are not really residences, but are used as a semi or permanent structures un-like an actual household. They may be somewhat difficult to count as seasonal units as well.

¹⁰ Ibid: Census Data 2000: Units in Structure

The following Table below identifies approximate years when structures were built:

Year Structure Built		
Subject	Number	Percent
Total housing units	682	100.0
1999 to March 2000	11	1.6
1995 to 1998	66	9.7
1990 to 1994	74	10.9
1980 to 1989	133	19.5
1970 to 1979	92	13.5
1960 to 1969	110	16.1
1940 to 1959	143	21.0
1939 or earlier	53	7.8

Table 3. Year Structures Were Built¹¹

If you look at the data presented in the table above, it confirms the survey data that there were two growth periods of home building in the Township: the 1940s to 1950s, and steadily continuing in the 1960s with another spurt from the 1980s to 1990s. Note that both tables above identify the trends to the year 2000-census data. It is expected that there is a new growth spurt of homes presently going on. The Township should consider reviewing the new building permits being issued by the Cass County Environmental Services Department as a good resource and use these permits to identify trends going on within the area such as home size, types, and values.

As the Township population ages, consideration of different types of housing stock may be something to take into account. There are new options for lifestyle housing which are beginning to become popular and may answer some of the concerns about tax values of properties within the area. In a limited fashion and with blending of the housing stock to the local area where it is built, these new types of housing may allow many to continue to live out their lives in this area where they originally came to enjoy for their vacations. And while many think that this type of housing should be located within the city limits, it is becoming more and more common to do it in a more rural setting due to the technologies available for water wastewater treatment and disposal, management and the infrastructure needs.

¹¹Ibid. Census Data 2000: Year Structures Built

PLATS / SUBDIVISIONS

Wabedo Township has approximately thirty-eight plats, many of them located around the lakes. The ages of the Plats vary from 1927 to the present day. Seven of these plats show covenants with the more recently created plats having very clearly defined covenants. The Township has these Plats and their covenants on file in the Town Hall.

Another trend that is happening is resorts continuing to be sold off as individual lots for cabin usages or conversely older property conversions into planned unit developments. This creates some new problems with these new individual lot sizes being unable to re-build due to the newer ordinance codes for setbacks, wastewater, well regulations, and marginal soils. Outlots have also been problematic. Originally an outlot was usually a parcel that was not buildable due to features such as topography, small size, soils, drainage, the location within the plat, etc. Now that the value of land near water is increasing, this type of marginal property has received more scrutiny for sale and use. As first tier properties on the lake become built out, a second tier of subdivisions usually begins. This increases the problem of how to get access to the lakes, heavier build-out on each lake, heavier usage year-round on the lakes, and the potential for private easements for access to the lakes crossing over marginal property and/or near quiet residential land uses. As more people want to use the lake in the future, issues with water safety, noise, water pollution, garbage, etc. will need to be addressed. It may become the case where people will “love their lakes to death.” Wabedo Township residents have commented that this is becoming an issue that the Township needs to become pro-active now and address this concern. Cass County has prohibited controlled access lots and Wabedo Township fully supports these prohibitions.

In Cass County Ordinance 2005-03, paragraph 1113.4B states the following: “Controlled access lots, or parcels of land intended or used to provide accesses to public water for owners of non-riparian lots, shall be prohibited.” In the next paragraph, 1113.4C it states the following: “Easement access. Easements to non-riparian lot owners to allow access to public waters shall be prohibited.”

COMMERCIAL / ECONOMY

There are numerous mixtures of businesses in Wabedo Township such as water oriented commercial resorts, Camp Olson which is a non-profit organization, storage buildings, landscaping, excavating operations, and many small home occupations such as craft shops and service industry businesses. And in 2022, the Little Boy Resort and Campground added a restaurant to their operation. All of these businesses contribute to the commercial tax base and economics of the Township community with the exception of a tax-exempt organization. Tax-exempt organizations can add local revenue from sales.

The community’s predominant individual businesses are the resorts and some have been in business for many years. As time passes and the market value of the older resort property exceeds the amount of profit margin that a resort owner can obtain, these resorts will be sold off for re-development. This is now beginning to happen and is a big concern for the community since the history of this area began with lake resort owners, and they helped the community to grow to what it is today.

As stated earlier in this section, there are a number of small home occupations located in Wabedo Township. While they are a vital portion of the community and its tax base, nevertheless they are interspersed among residential homes and uses. Some standards may be needed to retain similar “like settings” among their neighbors and retain the “up north” county look.

Nuisances come with all types of land uses; however, they are normally more problematic with a commercial use due to the influx of goods for making something, the outflow of a produced product, a sales room and/or restaurant with people coming and going and many other items associated with a business. To date, this does not appear to be a big problem in the Township. As the Township sees more growth and development causing a larger density of landowners in the area, this may be something to watch for possible negative consequences, such as garbage, parking of materials on the lot, noise, lighting, etc.

Cass County has had a recycling program for the County's residents for a number of years. This has been a wonderful tool for use and re-cycling. Education about what, when, how and why residents should use this opportunity, through the Township's website, could further help to reduce some nuisance problems. Other ideas such as annual clean-up days, community solid and hazardous waste recycling opportunities, Township community days, opportunities with the Fire and Ambulance District, CPR classes, nuisance Ordinances (when needed) are many different options and opportunities to promote the ideas of community pride and protection of the environment

LAND USE COMPATABILITY / ZONING

Cass County has Countywide zoning which includes Wabedo Township. A current zoning map of the Township is on file at the Town Hall and is located in the appendix of this Plan (Exhibit D). The Township Planning Commission also has on file at the Town Hall a present land use map of the Township. The main uses within the Township are identified as follows:

Within Shoreland Zones

Resource Protection
Shoreland Residential
Water Oriented Commercial
Commercial 2 (C2)
Public Lands

Non-Shoreland Zones

Forestry (Agricultural is not present)
Commercial 2 (C2)
Rural Residential – 5 acres

Urban growth is not presently defined and the Agricultural base no longer exists in the Township. Rural Residential zoning defined at 10 acres is not present on the current zoning map, although large tracts of land are still available. Most of the area is defined with small acreages around the shorelines of the lakes within the Township. Consequently, the Shoreland regulations are very important to the Township.

A chart of the shoreland lot sizes for buildable area and the width of the lots for Conventional Developments are identified below:

Terms: Riparian lot – means a lot on water
NE – Natural Environment Lake
GD – General Development Lake

Non-Riparian lot – means a lot off water
RD – Recreational Development Lake

Residential Use	Lake Class	Land Area	Buildable Area	Width	Structure Setbacks
Single Riparian	NE	80,000 sq. feet	40,000 sq. feet	200 feet	150 feet
Single Non-Riparian		80,000 sq. feet	40,000 sq. feet	200 feet	
Duplex Riparian		120,000 sq. feet	60,000 sq. feet	300 feet	
Duplex Non-Riparian		160,000 sq. feet	80,000 sq. feet	400 feet	
Single Riparian	RD	40,000 sq. feet	16,000 sq. feet	150 feet	100 feet
Single Non-Riparian		40,000 sq. feet	20,000 sq. feet	150 feet	
Duplex Riparian		80,000 sq. feet	40,000 sq. feet	225 feet	
Duplex Non-Riparian		80,000 sq. feet	40,000 sq. feet	265 feet	
Single Riparian	GD	30,000 sq. feet	12,000 sq. feet	100 feet	75 feet
Single Non-Riparian		40,000 sq. feet	27,000 sq. feet	150 feet	
Duplex Riparian		60,000 sq. feet	27,000 sq. feet	180 feet	
Duplex Non-Riparian		80,000 sq. feet	40,000 sq. feet	265 feet	

Table 4. Shoreland Lake Classifications and Land Sizes¹²

The Wabedo Township Planning Commission (Planning Commission) has had a long-standing working relationship with Cass County since 1998. They have worked cooperatively to implement the present

¹² Cass County Land Use Ordinance

Comprehensive Plan within the Township and the Planning Commission has been vigilant in trying to guide and manage the growth issues in the Township to the present. It is hoped that this working relationship will continue. Continued good relations with Townships that have completed the task of Comprehensive Plans will give Cass County a great opportunity to supplement their general ordinances with good reliable information for their decision processes. This working relationship will become more necessary as growth and development appears in the Township and the land use issues become more technical and difficult to decide.

Land uses are not always harmonious or compatible with one another. Land use compatibility is a difficult goal to achieve unless planned in advance. Wabedo Township has attempted to identify in their land use goals and policies a better way to see the Township in the “bigger picture” and to give their residents an idea about how it will help to preserve the “north country” character of the Township. One such issue in the future may be larger land uses on the non-riparian parcels in the Township to protect the environment and prevent heavy build-outs on the lakes so they can be sustained and even recover from their year-round usage.

DEVELOPMENT / GROWTH CONCERNS

Wabedo Township has begun to see growth and development moving up from the southern part of the state as people look for a quiet peaceful place from their daily stressful work lives and which may only be a gas tank away from where they live. Market and assessed values have now begun to “creep upward” and many residents are beginning to feel these costs in their budgets, especially those on fixed incomes. The average resident age in Wabedo Township is in the mid 60s and many are of modest means and on fixed incomes. Many are also some of the original settlers to the area and have had their homes and/or resorts in the family for generations. There is a strong tie to this area and the concern now is that they may literally be pushed out of their homes and resorts due to increasing taxes and values.

Just in the period from 1995-1999, there have been three newly created platted subdivisions, creating approximately thirty new parcels within the Township. In the period from 2000 to the present there have been seven newly created platted subdivisions, creating approximately 61 new parcels within the township. Greater population density does not always create adequate tax revenue for local units of government to cover the added expenses for all of the services that people may want, such as better roads (often with pavement), better fire and ambulance services, more police protection, and more community services in general. Lots in older plats cannot sustain large home sites with all of the amenities and marginal lots with difficult soils and high-water tables often cannot sustain the basic core services such as wastewater and water infrastructure. Added housing does not always equate to lower taxes. More people coming into the Township to reside generally equate to more costs and services that the Township is asked to provide. Since Townships are “grass roots” in nature, budgets may need to increase to accommodate these requests.

Growth and development is not all bad. It can bring new tax base, new and different types of housing stock, and a vitality to the community. A balance needs to be struck through different regulatory tools to protect the sensitive nature of the area and still allow some growth to happen slowly and with deliberate care. The above fears were addressed in both community Township surveys. The many reasons residents and landowners love their area are due to the quiet serenity of the area, its trees, water quality, and the quality of life. Development overload may “kill” this northern serene nature of the area and careful management of this is a worthy goal to protect what is now there.

One of the issues in addition to the types and sizes of development on second tier properties and their locations to the lakes is the concern about controlled accesses. Wabedo Township has identified below the lakes in the township, their type and complete size and the number of public accesses on each. Discussion has now begun on how to minimize this proliferation of accesses and yet allow the public use for second tier properties. Goals and policies have been suggested in the next section on possible solutions to this concern and working with the Cass County Environmental Services Department and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in the development of a new model for shoreland management may provide an

answer in the future. This is one of the most important issues facing Wabedo Township now. See the names of the lakes in Wabedo Township listed in the table below

LAKE NAMES	TYPE	SIZE OF LAKES/ACRES	PUBLIC ACCESS
Cooper Lake	NE	147.10	No
Heffron Lake	NE	46.50	No
Little Boy Lake	RD	1,372.00	Yes
Wabedo Lake	RD	1,185.00	Yes
Hunter Lake	RD	168.00	No
McCarthy Lake	NE	NA	No
Swede Lake	NE	NA	No
Shurd Lake	NE	54.00	No
Mule Lake	RD	456.00	Yes
Jack Lake	NE	84.2	No
Brackett Lake	NE	NA	No
Charles Lake	NE	32.4	No
Girl Lake	RD	406.00	Yes
Woman Lake	GD	4,782.00	Yes - 4
Rice Lake	RD	428.00	No

Table 5. Lake Names, Types and Sizes with Known Public Accesses¹³

As stated earlier, the Wabedo Planning Commission has established a strong working relationship with Cass County. That relationship and the experience that they have had with different permits and applications since 1998 gives the community a unique opportunity to creatively find good solutions with Cass County that will help the residents and landowners in the future. The concerns identified with growth will offer a challenge to both entities to find answers that work for everyone. It would seem that this challenge is going to build a better answer with both offering different solutions from different perspectives. In the end, the landowners will be the winners by this continued dialogue.

TRANSPORTATION

ROAD STANDARDS/ FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE

Since the first Comprehensive Plan was completed, the Township has now approximately some fifty miles of public roadways within its border. The Township has about twenty-four miles of their own that they maintain and repair. There are many other public roads that are in the Township but are not designated as Township or County roads. Both Township surveys indicate that landowners are generally satisfied with the local road management programs. The Township annually approves snow removal, gravel maintenance and improvement programs as well as a chloride program on those roads that have higher traffic volumes.

The road system is functionally classified with three designations. They are Arterial Roads (high volume roads), Collectors (roads that have higher volumes and still provide private property access), and Local Streets (low volume roads with a primary function of providing access to private property).

A listing of the Township road system is included below. At this point, there are no paved Township roads. The main Arterial road is State Trunk Highway 84. Collector roads in the Township include the following: County State Aid Highways # 7, # 54, & # 47 along with County Road # 120.

¹³ Cass County Land Use Ordinance

PRESENT ROAD SYSTEM

Road maintenance activities consist of snow removal, gravel application, clearing road rights-of way from rocks and obstructions, rubbish and trees, maintaining signs and culverts. The Township had two bridges with one recently changed out to large culverts. These two bridges are located on the Sioux Camp Road. A chloride program for dust was implemented in 2002, and continues today. With more traffic and an increased population that comes into the Township, the costs for the road and bridge maintenance budget will continue to increase. New residential developments that are planned in the Township will need to take stock of their impacts on the present transportation system in the future. New homes usually have driveways and with this, careful consideration will be needed as to how they will impact the Township road transportation system as well as future safety, maintenance and road patterns. In November 2002, the Township revised their road standards as well as their snow policy. In 2009 the Township approved a driveway ordinance detailing requirements for new driveways. These road standards, snow policy, driveway ordinance, road transportation map, and a possible future road linkage map are included in the Appendix (Exhibit E).

The Wabedo Township Road Transportation systems are all considered local roads and are listed below with their respective mileages and prior names. In recent years, Cass County has changed over the road system to the 911 addressing system that allows the fire, rescue and emergency services to find people in a more efficient manner.

ROAD NAME	OLD NAME	LENGTH ROAD
1. Wabedo Springs Road	A	.7 miles
2. Pine Crest Road & Pine Crest Trail	B	1.2 miles
3. Stoney Creek/Diamond Crest Trail	C	3.2 miles
4. Diamond Crest(Little Ponderosa Road)	C-1	1.0 miles
5. South Little Boy Road	D	1.8 miles
6. Sioux Camp Road	E	2.7 miles
7. N. Rice Lake Road		.8 miles
8. Glenmar Road (shared with Kego Twp)	G	3.0 miles (1.5 shared)
9. Pikie Point Road	H	1.0 miles
10. N. Hunter Lake Road and Hunter Lake Trail	I	1.8 miles
11. Wood Duck Lane		.6 miles
12. Island View Drive		2.5 miles
13. Shangri-La Road		.5 miles
Roads recently acquired from Cass County:		
14. Cooper Lake Road		.45 miles
15. Little Boy Road		1.13 miles
16. Wabedo Frontage Road		.98 miles
17. Coryell Drive (Dead End off Co. Rd. 47)		.19 miles
18. North Bay Drive NE		.50 miles
Total Wabedo Township Road Miles		24.05 miles

Table 6. Wabedo Township Road System

RPELS (Road Parcels Ending in Lakes)

Wabedo Township has four RPELS (Road Parcels Ending in Lakes). These four road parcels are located in the following plats:

1. Wabedo Springs Plat-Wabedo Springs Road NE, Lot 1, Sec 33 (Wabedo Lake)
2. Wabedo Pass Plat-Wabedo Pass Road NE, Lots 8&9, Blk 1 Sec 22 (Wabedo Lake)
3. Manders Broadwater Beach Plat-Glenmar Drive NE, Lot 1, Sec 5 (Woman Lake)
4. Manders Broadwater Beach Plat-Glenmar Drive NE, Lot 12, Sec 5 (Woman Lake)

Maps of these four RPELS can be found in Exhibit E.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ROAD LINKS

In order to reduce the number of trips back and forth for the road contractors in Wabedo Township and in order to provide for more through Township road activities for residents to get around the Township, and to be efficient in the Township's road transportation system, a number of possible linkages were identified within and adjacent to neighboring jurisdictions to consider. These possible future road links would be created when developers decide to improve areas of land for residential and/or other uses. The Township utilizes developer agreements that require the developer to pay the costs to improve the transportation system and the impacts they have on the other portions of the township road system as part of their subdivision work. The developer's agreement includes a requirement by developers that the roads be built to the required standards for the Township.

AGGREGATE RESOURCES

Wabedo Township has, through an agreement with Cass County, developed a gravel aggregate resource within the Township. Crushing their own gravel for use within the Township keeps costs down for road maintenance and repairs. Since aggregate is finite, and the Township's roads are continually using aggregate to make Class 5 road mix, it might be wise to consider reviewing the soils within the Township and/or neighboring Townships in order to secure the Township's need for perhaps a twenty-year supply or for use with others. This keeps everyone's budgetary costs down and allows a quality supply to be available and keeps maintenance labor and travel time costs down.

Wabedo Township also implemented a chloride program for dust control and road stabilization. Together with adequate aggregate supplies, there could be an economy of savings to giving consideration of a long-term program for the present and future road system. The community, as a whole, did not show a desire to pave the Township roads; but they did ask for road repairs and a continuing on-going chloride program. Discussions to continue the present program by working with either Cass County or nearby local governmental entities would possibly create an efficiency of costs and spread them across a bigger population. By working together and with the right scheduling, this can reduce the maintenance issues in the Township. Secondly, developing a sound gravel maintenance program and possibly bringing in training for the road contractors on different aspects of road maintenance, new materials, and better technologies for road maintenance of the Town's roads may all help further these goals as well.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATION

Parks are often the center of a community's beauty and social gatherings, and most often are used for other multiple purposes including, but not limited to, family reunions, weddings, summer concerts, contests, and theatre, etc. They also give a sense of belonging and ownership to a community and Townships often have

a variety of things going on such as Community picnics, Art in the Park, weddings, car shows, etc. Presently, there are no Township designated parks within the Township for this to occur. The nearby City of Longville does have parks for neighbors to meet and visit. A very nice park is situated on the south side of Longville and is named the Scott and Jane Stuart Memorial Park.

Wabedo Township, along with the Longville Lions Club, did build a Community Garden on its property in 2021. This is very popular, and all plats have been sold, both in 2021 and again in 2022, even with an increased number of garden plats available.

There are numerous public accesses on the lakes (which are designated on the road transportation map-Exhibit E). There are also four road parcels that end in lakes that the township is currently reviewing to determine what, if any, use will be made of these parcels (see Exhibit E). Developments in the future may wish to contain private park structures in their subdivision work; however, in lieu of doing that and through developer agreements, the Township could take a cash donation towards development of a future larger Township Park in the community.

There is a recreational snowmobile trail on the eastern edge of the Township called the Aspen Snowmobile Trail. This trail connects to the Chippewa and Woodlake Snowmobile Trails in Inquadona Township. Currently there are no existing Township or County sponsored hiking or biking systems in the Township. However, Camp Olson has some on their grounds. Consideration of possibly working with the Camp Olson community to extend the trails out for further community use may be one way to help develop a larger trail system for biking, walking, nature work, roller blading, etc. In 2022, Wabedo Township developed a hiking trail around their property.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Essential community services such as Fire, Ambulance, and Emergency Medical Technicians are housed nearby in the City of Longville, as well as in Wabedo Township. There are Certified First Responders that are in the Township and neighboring areas. Cass County does not have a hospital located in the County and therefore ambulances must go approximately forty to fifty miles in either direction to Crosby, Bemidji, or Brainerd for emergencies. This factor may inhibit older citizens from locating here if they have medical health issues. While this is a drawback for the Township, they have promoted the education and certification of very qualified medical personnel to help serve the area. Located in Longville is the Longville Lakes Area Medical Clinic which is staffed Monday through Friday. Wabedo Township supports the actions of Cass County in attempting to build a hospital located in the Walker area.

Wabedo Township, with its neighboring entities, has worked together to build the Longville Fire Districts' buildings, as well as the Ambulance District building which is now located in the township itself. The Ambulance Service is now provided by North Memorial Ambulance Service and costs are recouped through a tax administered by Cass County in the entire ambulance service district.

The Longville Airport is located just outside of the City of Longville which has a paved runway, is lit and has refueling capabilities with available rental hangars. Many use these services with private planes landing frequently. Having an airport close nearby allows for growth and economic opportunities for the whole regional area.

Finally, there are two tower systems in the Township and there are others in neighboring Townships for communications and emergency services. These are essential services, and the Township supports Cass County's efforts with some ideas about co-location wherever possible and emphasizing the present rules that Cass County has put forth. As conditional uses, the Planning Commission can review them on a case-by-case basis for compatibility with the surrounding area that many times may have some residential land uses close by.

GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

In the first Wabedo Township survey in 1997, 52% of the respondents were very favorable and another 31% were favorable in indicating that jointly planning with other local governmental units in order to promote more orderly development was important. In the most recent survey, again 24% and 41% respectively still felt that this was important. By jointly planning together for the future, it allows everyone to build a better picture of what they can do together and how they can provide cost efficient services for their local citizens. It also furthers the idea that multi-jurisdictional planning can provide more funding opportunities in the future for bigger infrastructure needs as growth comes into the area. By working together now, it helps to build the trust and those necessary bridges to work together should a crisis or problem arise.

As stated earlier, Cass County has developed a good working relationship with Wabedo Township and often will follow Wabedo's Comprehensive Plan and the comments coming from the Township when an application is being processed. Additionally, the Township and its community has jointly worked with neighboring Townships and the City of Longville and has implemented a volunteer Fire Department and Ambulance District with First Responders and Certified Emergency Medical Technicians. Each governmental entity contributes to the local library located in Longville. Cass County just completed updating portions of their Comprehensive Land Use Plan for all of Cass County. The City of Longville has also recently developed and updated their Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Neighboring jurisdictions are in the process of doing their own Comprehensive Plans. Consideration of all of the dynamics within the above plans and the ramifications of their goals and objectives should be the basis for communications and working together in the future.

Where inconsistencies are identified, compromise and/or working agreements could be executed. Joint Power Agreements have been done in the past and continue to work fairly well. In the future, joint boundary agreements and arrangements should be considered. With a good relationship obtained in advance by the above prior agreements, these will be easier to complete.

As part of the 2005 update on the Comprehensive Plan, Wabedo Township Planning Commissioners spent time interviewing the neighboring jurisdictions (Exhibit F). Future ideas for collaboration such as developing a fluid transportation system, parks and trails, residential growth and development on boundaries of each governmental unit, lake quality efforts, and possibly joint code enforcement/and or administration work are just some thoughts for additional future discussions.

Today, government has become more interdependent with each other in order to sustain themselves. Developing those necessary working arrangements with the neighboring governmental entities in the area and pooling their efforts, will help everyone to keep costs down for their residents as well as potentially qualifying for possible future funding opportunities. This advances the whole regional area and allows everyone to benefit and continue to grow for a successful economy and tax base.

As an example of townships being able to cooperate with each other, in 2020, Planning Commission Chair Craig Anderson was contacted by officials of Wabana Township, a township just north of Grand Rapids. Since their township has similar characteristics to Wabedo Township, these officials wanted to discuss our Comprehensive Plan and how we do business with Cass County. Chair Anderson explained Wabedo Township's procedures for handling variance requests and Conditional Use Permits. This discussion explained site visits by PC members, writing up Findings of Fact documents and attending County public hearings. Other topics included Wabedo Township's use of Developers' agreements for plats and construction of towers. Wabedo Township Planning Commission also holds public meetings when necessary, such as for a proposed power line through the township.