

6.0 Existing Land Use

A land use survey for Little Traverse Township was conducted in November 1999. It involved aerial photo interpretation, computer mapping, geographic information system (GIS) analyses and local knowledge. Township representatives were involved at each stage of this process. This approach developed a customized land use analysis enabling Township decision makers to recognize current development patterns and new issues facing the community. The information contained in this chapter will serve as a useful reference on land development as Little Traverse Township officials consider future land development proposals as well as the need for public facility and infrastructure improvements.

Methods of Inventorying Land Use

A unique combination of resources was employed to develop a final land use inventory and map. Land uses were first divided into developed and undeveloped classes. The undeveloped land classification included large parcels (greater than 5-10 acres) occupied by outdoor recreation, forests, agricultural, or other open space uses. The developed land classification includes residential, commercial, industrial, institutional or active recreation uses, as well as road right of ways.

The Michigan Resource Inventory System (MIRIS) developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) was used as an initial land use snapshot. The MIRIS system, authorized by the Michigan Legislature in the 1970's, established a state-wide land use computer mapping database for land management and resource protection purposes. This inventory reflects land uses in the late 1970's. While dated, it provided an excellent starting point for the Little Traverse Township. Wade-Trim then conducted a photo interpretation using 1998 aerial photos acquired from the MDNR Indian River Field Office. This updated the 1978 MIRIS map and provided a more accurate representation of current land uses within the Township. A computer map of the revised MIRIS layer was prepared for further review.

Next, land use in the Township was examined at the parcel level by obtaining a computer parcel base map from the Emmet County GIS and Computer Mapping Department. The County GIS database also included property tax classification information. After reviewing all available map information, Township officials assisted the consultant in developing use categories for the developed and undeveloped classes. Then through several workshop sessions involving the Township supervisor, assessor, and other interested officials, parcels were classified according to criteria established by both the consultant and Township. The resulting land use categories are illustrated in **Table 6-1** on the following page. Each parcel was assigned to the appropriate land use category and map color. Then the total land area for each land use category was calculated, enabling an existing land use map and land use statistical table to be created for reference (see **Figure 6-1 and Table 6-2**).

General Land Use Characteristics of Little Traverse Township

The existing land area of Little Traverse Township is approximately 18 square miles or about 11,490 acres. The predominant existing land use is Upland Forest, followed by Outdoor Recreation/Preserve Lands. Older residential development, on relatively small parcels, is concentrated along the shores of Little Traverse Bay and Crooked Lake, while commercial development is limited to a few major road corridors. The open space uses of State Forest and

**Table 6-1
Little Traverse Township Land Use Classes
1999 Existing Land Use Inventory**

Developed Land Use Classes	Undeveloped Land Use Classes
Vacant Residential Parcels	Outdoor Recreation/Preserve
Single Family Residential – Detached	Grassland/Beach/Other Open Land
Single Family Residential- Attached	Upland Forests
Multi-Family Residential	Lowland Forests/Wetlands
Institutional	Agricultural
Governmental	
Commercial	
Industrial	
Right-of-Way	

Source: 1999 Little Traverse Township Existing Land Use Map

the Nubs Knob Ski area are located in the Township’s north sector, while remaining farmlands occur in the northwest. An extensive area of industrial development has located in the south central sector of the Township, along West Conway Road. Large-lot residential development, mostly of recent vintage is distributed widely throughout the Township. A summary of the Township’s existing land uses is provided in **Table 6-2** rank orders the developed and undeveloped land uses, by percent of total land area occupied. The characteristics and extent of both the developed and undeveloped land use types are detailed more fully below.

DEVELOPED LAND USE CLASSES

According to the 1999 land use inventory, approximately one-third of the Township is presently developed. The nine developed land use classes will each be described in the following sections.

Vacant Residential Parcels

The parcel base map supplied by Emmet County identified the location of existing land divisions. Many recently created parcels are located in areas with no visible site improvements or infrastructure like roads, cleared lots, and electrical service. Therefore, they would not be readily identifiable during site reconnaissance or photo interpretation on parcel information. This class is the fourth largest class among the developed land uses. The number of recently divided residential parcels indicates rapid residential development in Little Traverse Township.

Figure 6.1 Map of Existing Land Use

**Table 6-2
1999 Existing Land Use Summary For Little Traverse Township
Ranked By Percent Of Total Area Occupied**

Developed Land Use Classes			
Land Use Classes	Land Area In Acres	% of Developed Land Area	% of Total Township Area
Single Family Residential (detached)	1819	42.4%	15.8%
Governmental	802	18.7%	7.0%
Vacant Residential Parcels	555	12.9%	4.8%
Right-of-Way	495	11.5%	4.3%
Institutional	219	5.1%	1.9%
Industrial	167	3.9%	1.5%
Single Family Residential (attached)	95	2.2%	.8%
Commercial	93	2.2%	.8%
Multi-Family Residential (including duplexes)	42	1.0%	.4%
Developed Land Totals	4,287	*99.9%	37.3%
Undeveloped Land Classes			
Land Use Classes	Land Area in Acres	% of Undeveloped Land Area	% of Total Township Area
Upland Forests	2,630	36.5%	22.9%
Outdoor Recreation/Preserve	1,835	25.4%	16.0%
Agricultural Lands	1,128	15.7%	9.8%
Grassland/Beach/Other Open Land	1,058	14.7%	9.2%
Lowland Forests / Wetlands	548	7.6%	4.8%
Undeveloped Land Totals	7,199	*99.9%	62.7%
Comprehensive Totals	11,486	-----	100.0%
Source: 1999 Existing Land Use Map *Due to Rounding			

Single Family Residential – Detached

This class represents the largest class of all the developed uses. Single family development occupies 42% of the Township's developed land area. This category includes those areas having detached single family residential structures used for either permanent or seasonal occupancy. When a single family dwelling only occupied a small portion of a large acreage parcel (greater than 5 acres), the undeveloped portion was categorized as undeveloped land.

Single Family Residential – Attached

The single-family attached category represents a relative new, but growing, style of development in the Township. At present, just 95 acres, or 2.2% of developed land, is occupied by this use.

Multi-Family Residential – Including Duplexes

Generally this category includes apartment housing and duplexes in the Township. Currently this is the smallest developed class at 1.0% of the developed land area.

Institutional

Institutional parcels are those containing privately owned educational, religious, utility, and health facilities including hospitals and medical clinics. Related improvements or structures on property owned by these entities are also included in this classification. This class also contains utility easements for primary power transmission lines. The total class accounts for 5.1% of the developed land area in the Township.

Governmental

Government-owned parcels developed for public use are included in this class. Mapped facilities and uses include the Harbor Springs Area Sewer Authority, Harbor Springs Airport, Emmet County Road Commission, and Little Traverse Township Hall. This class is the second largest within the developed categories, representing 18.7% of the Township's developed land area. Although State forest holding are extensive in Little Traverse Township, these forest lands have been included in the "underdeveloped" category discussed below.

Commercial

Commercial activity involves the sale of products and services. Commercial uses included in this class are retail establishments and the business, financial, professional, and repair services of the area. This category includes 2.2% of the developed land area. Commercial uses are primarily concentrated along M-119, U.S. 31 and West Conway Road.

Industrial

Industrial areas include a variety of uses from light manufacturing to industrial parks. Activities present in this group include design, assembly, finishing, and packaging of products. In addition, extractive activities like sand and gravel operations are included in this class. Industrial uses represent 3.9% of the total developed area in the Township, slightly below the size of the institutional class. Much of the industrial activity in Little Traverse Township is located in an industrial park in the southeastern third of the Township

Right-of-Ways

This classification includes the road right of ways as shown on the tax parcel map acquired from the Emmet County Computer Mapping Department. This category is the fourth largest of the Township's developed categories, encompassing 11.5% of the developed land area.

UNDEVELOPED LAND CLASSES

In many areas, Little Traverse Township retains a rural character. Overall, 65% of the total Township land area was classified as undeveloped during the 1999 land use survey. Five land use classes make-up the undeveloped land category, and each is described in further detail below.

Outdoor Recreation / Preserves

This class includes both public and privately owned lands providing recreational and resource conservation opportunities. The largest public ownership holding is the Mackinaw State Forest located in the north-central and northeast portions of the Township. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Forest Management Division administers this land. In addition, the Little Traverse Conservancy owns 242 acres of land located in the Southwestern and South-central portions of the Township. This private conservancy group is dedicated to preserving lands by encouraging private land owners to establish conservation easements. They also purchase lands to prevent development in areas where unique wildlife and vegetation resources exist. Other land uses belonging to outdoor recreation groups include golf courses, parks, and outdoor recreation facilities. This class occupies over 16% of the total land in the Township and represents nearly 25% of the total undeveloped land.

Upland Forests

Upland forests are the most predominant land cover in the Township, occupying nearly 24% of the Township's total land area and 36% of the land area in the undeveloped land category. These forests include northern hardwoods like sugar/red maple, beech, yellow birch, cherry, white aspen, oaks, and hickory. Coniferous trees in the class include white, red, jack, and scotch pine, white, black spruce, douglas fir, larch, and hemlock. This category includes only undeveloped forests in private ownership. State-owned forest land is included in the outdoor recreation/preserve category, above.

Lowland Forests/Wetlands

This classification includes land that is exposed to water tables at or near the ground surface for most of the year. Generally lowland forest and wetland vegetation is water tolerant or water loving, and supports important wetland ecosystems. These areas are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes, and bogs. Lowland forest species can include ash, elm, soft maple, cedar, tamarack, and black and white spruce. Lowland woods and wetlands are primarily located in the south-central and southeastern portions of the Township, near Little Traverse Bay and Crooked Lake. The lowland forest/wetland class composes 7.6% of the undeveloped land class area and nearly 5% of the total land area in the Township.

Agricultural

Agricultural lands include active farms, pastures, orchards, Christmas tree farms, fallow fields (when part of a crop rotation), and feedlots for livestock. They can generally be defined as land used for the production of food and fiber. Lands belonging to this class have increasingly been converted to developed uses over recent years. At present, this class still occupies 15.7% of the undeveloped land area and 9.8% of the total Township land area. Most of the Township's active agricultural land is located in the northwest part of the community, off Quick and Bester Roads. A small concentration of agricultural activity is also located east of Crooked Lake and U.S. 31, near the Township's southern boundary.

Grasslands/Beach/Other Open Lands

This class incorporates a mixture of undeveloped lands including open grasslands, beaches, and non-forested lands. Many of these lands are former agricultural lands presently laying fallow. In addition, this category includes the undeveloped portion of large-acreage residential parcels, if no woods or wetlands are present. This class contains 14.7% of the undeveloped land area and 9.2% of the Township's total land area.