

June 28, 2022

To: Almira Township Planning Commission

Fr: Mathew Cooke, Community Planner

Re: Almira Township Public Input Session Report

Please see the attached report from the Almira Township Public Input Session held on Thursday, June 23, 2022. At your August meeting, I would like to discuss some of the input we heard, primarily in relation to finalizing the Future Land Use Map and the Goals and Objectives of the Master Plan. As always, please let me know if you have any questions or comments!

Summary

The Almira Township Public Input Session was held on Thursday, June 23, 2022 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Almira Townhall in Lake Ann, Michigan. The session was advertised in the Record Patriot, Record Eagle, social media, fliers, and emails to those who provided one during the 2021 Almira Township Master Plan Survey. 18 members of the public attended the session to provide their input.

Goals and Policies Exercise

Attached you will find the drafted Almira Township Master Plan Goals and Policies that were presented for comment at the Public Input Session. Public members were asked to mark goals and policies that they did not support for Almira Township. These are signified with red circles to represent each sticker that was placed by the goals or policies that were not supported.

Future Land Use Map Exercise

Please see the attached maps that have been drawn on with comments. There were six (6) stickers placed on the map to object to the possibility of Light Industrial zoning being placed near CR 669 and the Airport. Below are additional comments beyond the map exercise relating to the Future Land Use Map.

- Part of Barber Farm Trust FLUM Zoning - Keep as is – Agriculture. As a family we would like to return the farm land to a natural sustainable operation! The divisions of this land was not for development, but to define family members financial responsibility for it! The family is and hope if allowed to expand agricultural operations in the near future.
- We as a family do not want to loose agricultural land to home development! Our goal is a farming operation that would result in being able to supply natural agricultural products in the local community.
- Leaving this as agricultural at this time benefits the community, our family and the social/cultural of Almira!

Housing, Signage and Solar Preference Exercises

Please see the attached Housing, Signage and Solar preference sheets. Please note that a red circle represents a vote that does not support the option in Almira Township.

What are three (3) things that can be improved in Almira Township?

- Long term solution to Village parking

- Lake Ann needs a graduated speed limit approaching village from east and south. It appears to jump from 55 to 25 and always unsure where to begin slowdown. Also downstate people are confused if a sudden 25mph = ticket.
- Graduated speed limit outside of Village proper. Maybe 35-45 mph between Reynolds and Ann St.
- Waterfront Park – The Lake is full of uncomfortable stones. My grandkids asked to leave and find somewhere else sandy without all those many, many stones that hurt feet.
- Area has grown so much the Post Office seems like it may need added onto. But I have never worked there, just know area is growing in population.
- Need more sidewalks and curbs in Village for rainwater management. Protect pedestrians and Lake Ann storm water entering.
- Commercial Goals consider: light pollution limit, rain water management of site
- Enforce clearing of greenbelt strip along lakefront property, limit short term rental properties.
- Zoning enforcement: Too many violations go unaddressed for years, eliminate short term rentals.
- Recreation access and opportunity (trails- trail access), thoughtful development without gate keeping, and finding the right balance for commercial activity.
- Downtown area needs speed bumps! Too many heavy feet!
- 1) Yearly short term rental fee is too expensive - \$50 rather than \$200 would be more appropriate, 2) I am not in favor of roaming chickens in residential neighborhoods, 3) have proper (blue lines and signage) handicapped parking spots and enforce fines on people using them without sign or license plate.
- Limit VRBO/short term rentals.
- No short term rentals.
- More input meetings like this. :)
- Please provide Township e-news on website to include information and updates, more community engagement opportunities, perhaps thru library.

What are the top three (3) things you like about Almira Township?

- Parks, Fire Department
- Low cost of living, Papa J's Pizza, seriously, and low density of people.
- State Land/Conservation areas, recreational opportunities: biking, skiing, and hiking, and slow pace of life.
- Rural, quiet, woods, lakes.
- Ice cream shop, park, people who live here are friendly.
- All the parks are fabulous! Connecting bike paths would be great, people are very friendly and helpful, and Lake Ann – the lake.
- Almira Park – Ransom Lake, small town feel, 25 mph speed limit.
- Open space and farmland, lake access, parks.
- Fire department/EMS, parks, and multiple lakes/hiking access points.

Please feel free to leave any comments or thoughts relating to the Master Plan here.

- What logic was used in the future plan to choose what agricultural land would be changed to residential?
- Traffic studies should be a prior requirement to inform locations in proposed site plan for commercial and mixed residential locations.

- Under signage; mobile signs should have a temporary status.
- No questions- very nice presentation, nice to be asked for input.
- I believe that municipal water-sewer is not a feasible fix unless grants are obtained. It is not reasonable for residents to assume financial burden. More aggressive enforcement/education on septic use and care is needed.
- Thanks for the session. I believe most issues are on point. We need to watch commercial development closely.
- Why are changes necessary? Long term effects?
- I believe the Township should not encourage light industrial growth due to environmental impact on our large quantities of water within the Township. Farmland development to housing use should be done with caution. The Township should consider adopting a policy of allocating an exact amount (acres) permissible (10% of current, etc.).
- Any proposed zoning changes to change from Ag to residential should be brought to the current owner to discuss with prior to making changes to Master Plan.
- Bike Paths are costly. I am not in favor of any unless they are similar to the TART trail.

General Goals
PRESERVE THE UNIQUE BEAUTY OF ALMIRA TOWNSHIP-- by protecting the waterfront setting, small town/rural character, and maintaining an overall clean, healthy and well maintained living environment.
PROTECT THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE of Township residents by coordinating the land use so that efficient public services are provided.
Promote and maintain a centralized business area.
Protect and PRESERVE HISTORIC areas, sites, buildings, structures and features.
Recognize the importance of the tourist industry to the local economy. ○

Planning and Development
Goal: Maintain a balance between human activities and the natural environment.
Policies:
1. Encourage site designs and plans that preserve and protect natural assets and the rural character of the township.
2. Require planning review of the following types of public projects, including:
a. The opening, closing, vacating, widening, or extension of roads.
b. The acquisition or enlargement of any park, playground or public open space.
c. The construction, acquisition, or authorization of public buildings or structures.
3. Encourage roadside and open space buffer strips of vegetation, both to enhance the visual image of the Township and to protect the land uses adjacent to the roadway from traffic noise, dirt and glare. ○ ○ ○
4. Encourage buffers (e. g., berms or vegetative screening) to shield residential properties from adjacent non-residential development. ○ ○
5. Encourage general public, civic organizations and all commissions to provide input for Township decisions.
6. Encourage the preservation, maintenance and restoration of historic sites, structures and features.
7. Periodically review and revise both the Zoning Ordinance and this Master Plan to be easily understood and to conform to the character of the Township and the prevailing priorities of its residents.

Housing
Goal: Allow for suitable housing opportunities for all income levels and age groups.
Policies: ○
1. Consider the development of housing to meet the needs of all household types and income groups, including affordable single family housing and housing options for seniors.
2. Encourage the maintenance of the existing housing and residential neighborhoods in good repair, appearance, usefulness and safety.
3. Protect the residential neighborhoods from intrusion of incompatible uses.
4. Encourage high-density residential development only in those areas that are suitable for such use.
5. Encourage the development option of clustered single-family housing in buildable portions of the Township, to protect open space.

Natural Environment
Goal: Protect and preserve natural resources.
Policies:
1. Encourage a land use pattern that respects the natural features and water resources of the area. Promote the protection of sensitive features including wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors, wetlands, lakes, streams, steep slopes and wooded areas.
2. Evaluate the environmental impact of all new development.
3. Protect land resources and water quality related to our lakes, streams and wetlands, including shorelines.
4. Encourage the continued natural use of wetlands as groundwater recharge and stormwater holding areas.
5. Utilize Best Management Practices (BMP) to regulate and minimize direct stormwater discharge into lakes and rivers.
6. Identify and protect desirable open space areas, scenic vistas and environmentally sensitive lands.
7. Collaborate with conservation agencies and private groups to preserve natural areas.

Agricultural Lands
Goals: Recognize the importance of agricultural lands within Almira Township
Policies:
1. Maintain and provide for the preservation of agricultural farmland where feasible, including tree farming and specialty crop farms.
2. Allow for and encourage farmland protection through the “transfer of development rights” and “purchase of development rights”. Encourage clustering of non-farm development to minimize agricultural land consumption.
3. Support legislative reform measures to assist in retaining farmland.
4. Discourage the conversion of farmland into other more intensive uses.
5. Recognize farmland as contributing to the scenic and rural character of the Township.

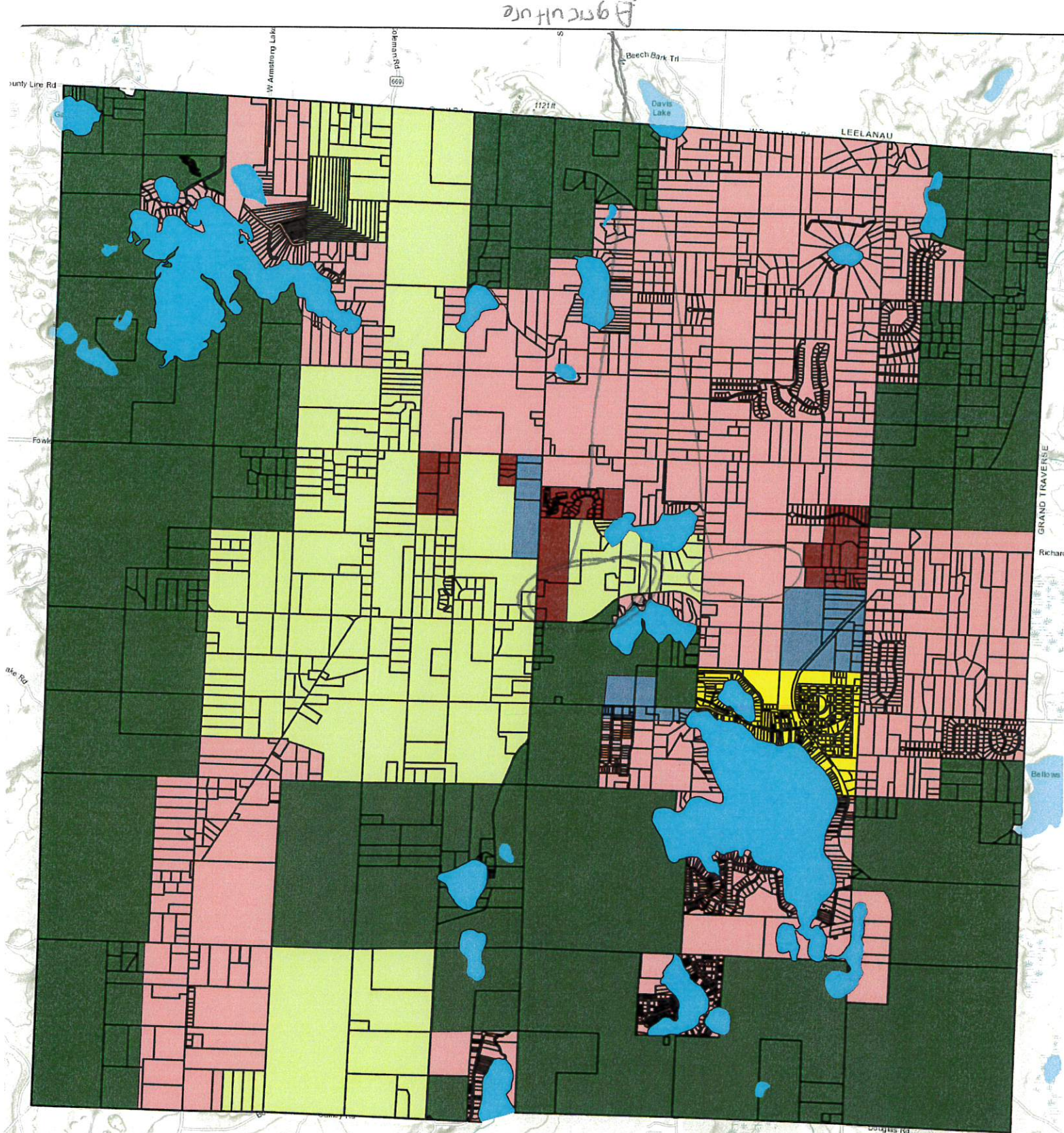
Recreation and Public Lands
Goals: To preserve, protect and maintain environmentally sensitive areas, open space and public parks for the enjoyment of residents, visitors and future generations
Maintain and improve the current high level of recreational facilities.
Policies:
1. Preserve and maintain our state land, public parks, access sites and natural areas.
2. Preserve environmentally sensitive lands for open space and passive recreational purposes.
3. Encourage creative design and planning techniques for all new development so as to produce visual harmony, preserve special features and protect vital natural resources.
4. Evaluate, periodically, the need for public acquisition of environmentally sensitive and available properties located in the Township.
5. Preserve and maintain existing active recreation areas, especially the Township Park.
6. Continue efforts to provide seasonal outdoor recreational opportunities.
7. Support cooperative recreational planning and development with the Village of Lake Ann, the surrounding townships and the schools.
8. Expand, improve or develop recreational facilities, especially playgrounds, bike paths, picnic areas and a public beach.
9. Provide more recreational activities, such as youth programs, baseball/softball, soccer, swimming lessons and senior programs.
10. Pursue outside funding sources, such as grants for land acquisition and/or recreational development either passive or active.










Commercial Areas and Activities	
Goal: Promote a varied business environment to serve the needs of residents and visitors while preserving the natural environment and small town appeal.	
Policies:	
1. Encourage development of stores and small businesses such as professional offices.	○
2. Provide areas for future commercial development adjacent to already existing commercial zones, i.e. Village of Lake Ann.	○
3. Encourage zoning techniques such as clustering and/or shared parking.	
4. Promote safety by controlling the size, number, illumination and configuration of signs.	
5. Encourage the re-use of existing facilities where appropriate and consistent with existing zoning.	
6. Encourage home occupations compatible with existing residential areas.	
7. Ensure developments occur in a sensitive manner and are harmonious with the existing community.	○
8. Encourage light industries that do not pollute the air, soil or water nor offend because of noise, odor or visual impact to locate in designated industrial park areas.	○
9. Promote greenbelt buffers and landscape regulations.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
10. Foster cooperation with businesses in the Township.	

Infrastructure and Public Facilities	
Goal: Maintain and improve the Township's transportation systems, community facilities, programs and public utilities to accommodate the needs of residents and visitors.	
Policies:	
1. Encourage the efficient use and maintenance of existing roadways and infrastructure.	
2. Maintain 2-lane roads where ever feasible for controlling speed and maintaining the rural character.	
3. Plan for safe access and movement of vehicles as well as pedestrians.	
4. Support the development of bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways.	
5. Encourage the placement of utilities underground.	
6. Plan utility improvements to coincide with development, where possible.	
7. Encourage cooperative Township and Village planning for public utilities, such as water and sewer systems.	○
8. Require fire hydrants or necessary fire protection systems to be installed as development occurs with the costs borne by the developer.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○

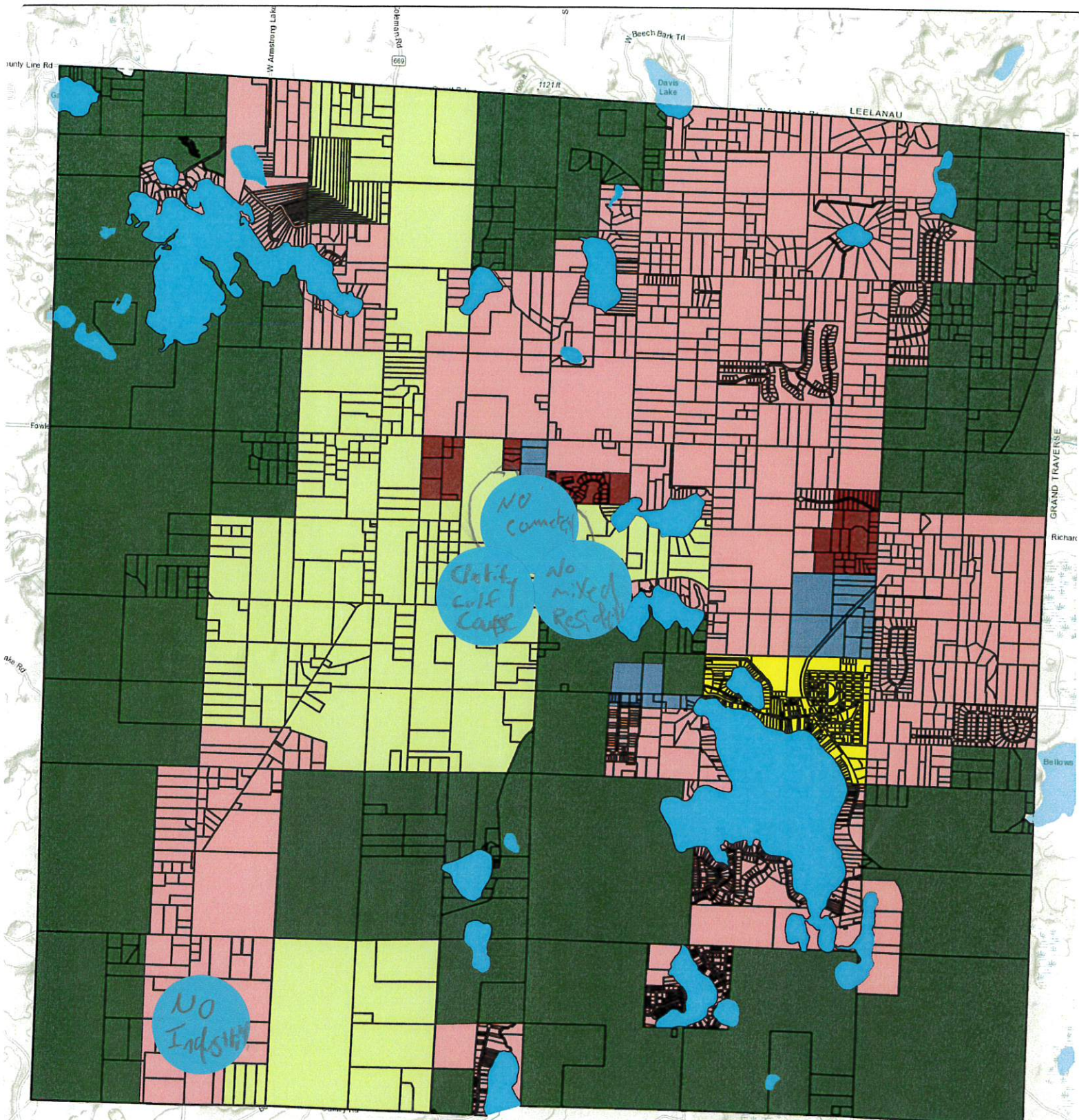
Government	
Goal: Provide services in an efficient, environmentally responsible and caring manner to meet the needs of the residents, property owners, business people and visitors.	
Policies:	
1. Promote intergovernmental and regional cooperation on issues of mutual concern.	
2. Ensure a responsible fiscal policy and budget process to finance the Township government.	
3. Promote the involvement of volunteers in the government process.	
4. Utilize the proactive master planning process as a check and balance on decision-making.	








Education and Training	
Goal: Provide access to quality education, training and community facilities for all residents.	
Policies:	
1. Continue to work with the schools to present information programs about the community to school classes and other groups	
2. Promote quality education and training opportunities for all residents.	
3. Support and expand the public library.	



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|---|---|
|  Water |  Mixed Residential |
|  Parcels |  Commercial |
| FLU |  Light Industrial |
|  Agricultural |  Forest Recreation |
|  Low Density Residential |  Lake Ann |

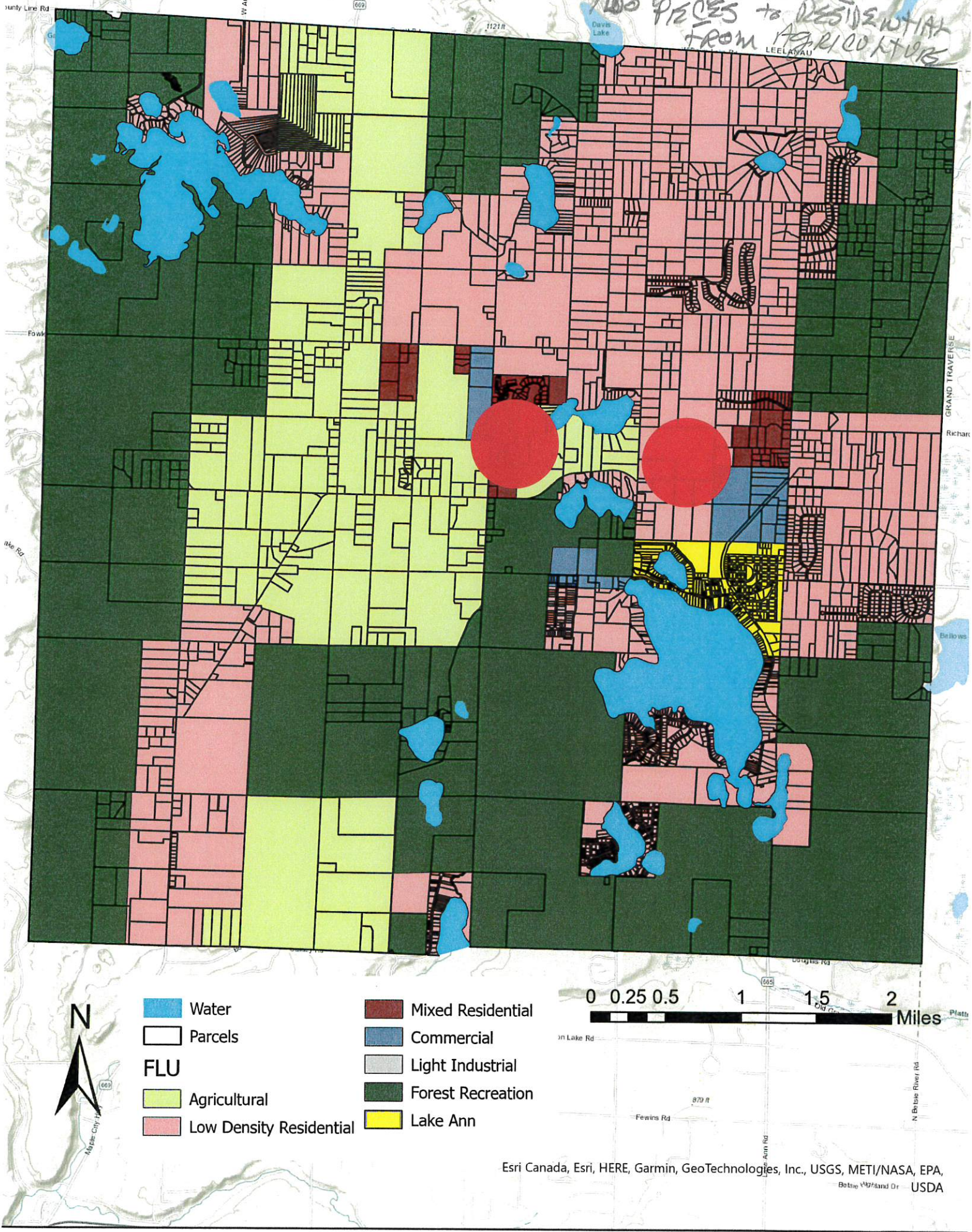













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|---|---|
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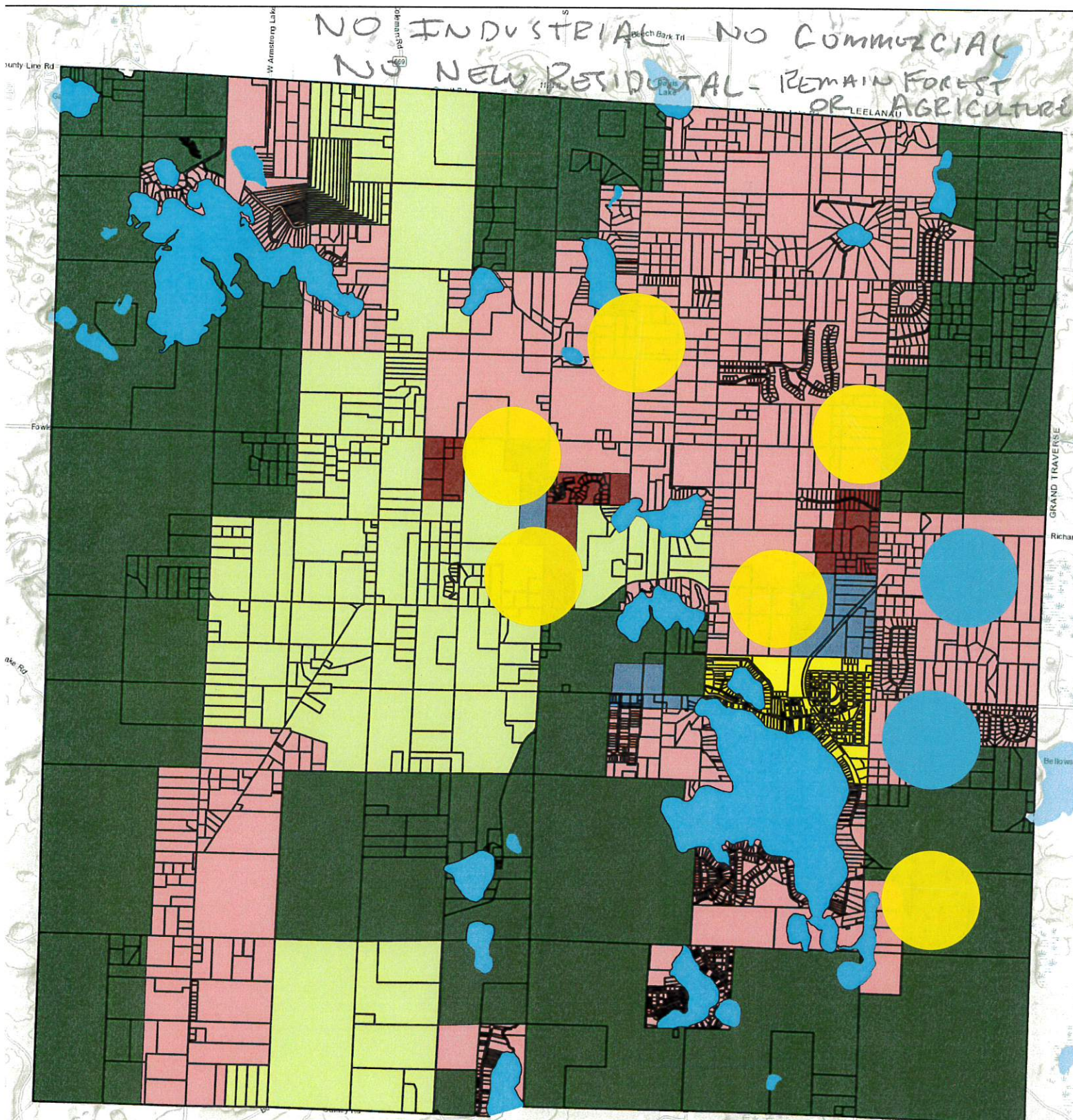
THE 2 RED DOTS ARE TO SAY
DO NOT CHANGING THESE
TWO PIECES TO RESIDENTIAL
FROM AGRICULTURE



- | | |
|---|---|
|  Water |  Mixed Residential |
|  Parcels |  Commercial |
| FLU |  Light Industrial |
|  Agricultural |  Forest Recreation |
|  Low Density Residential |  Lake Ann |

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

NO INDUSTRIAL NO COMMERCIAL
NO NEW RESIDENTIAL - REMAIN FOREST
OR AGRICULTURE



Water
Parcels

FLU

Agricultural

Low Density Residential

Mixed Residential

Commercial

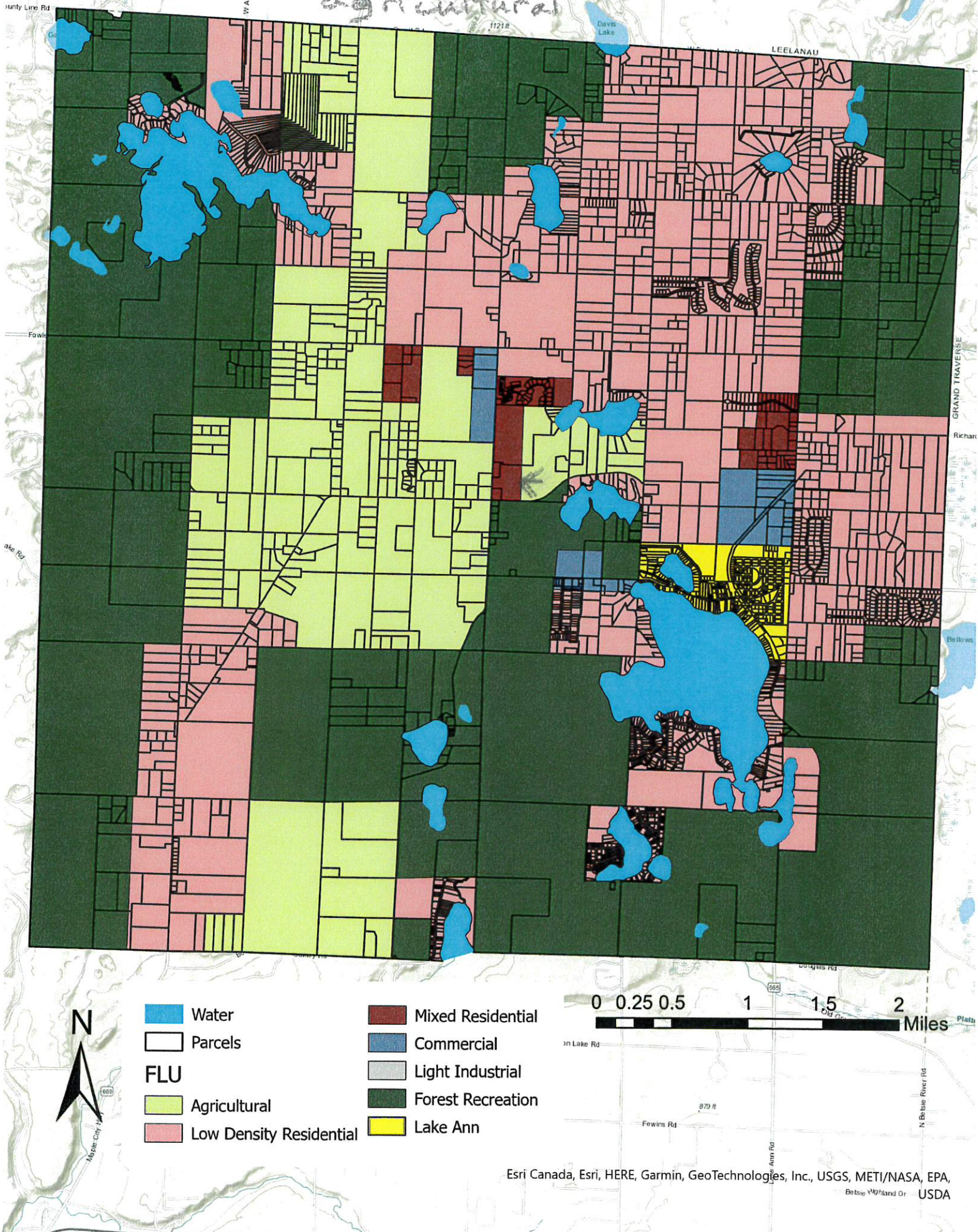
Light Industrial

Forest Recreation

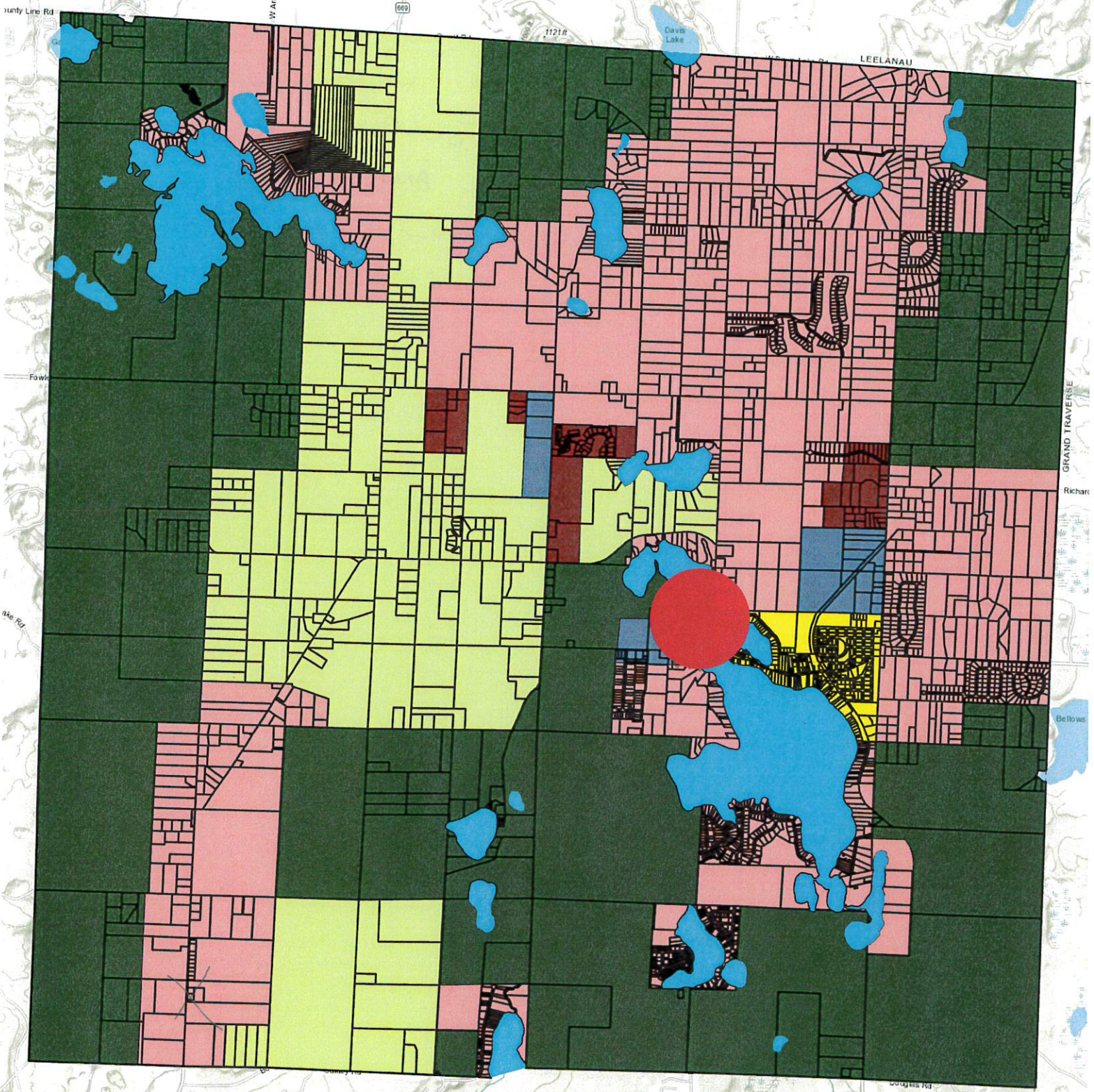
Lake Ann

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

Corner of Barber & Old White Drive
outside sub station should remain
agricultural



I believe A Light INDUSTRIAL AREA Is NOT SUITABLE
for THE Airport AREA.



- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Water | Mixed Residential |
| Parcels | Commercial |
| FLU | Light Industrial |
| Agricultural | Forest Recreation |
| Low Density Residential | Lake Ann |



I Believe A Light INDUSTRIAL District IN THE
AIRPORT AREA IS NOT SUITABLE. I ALSO BELIEVE THE
COMMERCIAL DISTRICT ON THE WESTERN END OF LAKE
ANN IS NOT SUITABLE. I BELIEVE OUR COMMERCIAL
AREAS SHOULD BE CLUSTERED AND POSSIBLY LIMITED BY
USE. OUR RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES SHOULD BE EXPANDED.

Housing Options and Types



**Vote
Here**
→



**Vote
Here**
→

Instructions: Please review the housing options provided in the pictures above. If you feel one or more options should **NOT** be permitted within the Township, please take a sticky dot (any color) and place it in the appropriate box(s) below the image. If you feel all options should be allowed no action is necessary.

Signage Options and Types



Vote
Here
→

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Vote
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Instructions: Please review the signage options provided in the pictures above. If you feel one or more options should **NOT** be permitted within the Township, please take a sticky dot (any color) and place it in the appropriate box(s) below the image. If you feel all options should be allowed no action is necessary.

Vote Here ↓

Solar Energy Options and Types

<p>Accessory Roof Mounted</p>				
<p>Accessory Ground Mounted</p>				
<p>Principal Use (Small)</p> <p>○ ○ ○ ○ ○</p>				
<p>Principal Use (Large)</p> <p>○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</p>				

Instructions: Please review the solar energy options provided in the pictures above. If you feel one or more options should **NOT** be permitted within the Township, please take a sticky dot (any color) and place it in the appropriate box(s) of the four options provided. If you feel all options should be allowed no action is necessary.