

2026 MASTER PLAN

-DRAFT-

White Pigeon
township



Southcentral Michigan
Planning Council





White Pigeon Township Board

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INTRODUCTION

A Brief History

White Pigeon Township is located in the southern region of St. Joseph County, bordering the Indiana State Line, covering about 27.5 square miles, with a population of about 2,074. The Township shares borders with five surrounding townships, including Mottville Township to the west, Constantine Township to the north, Sherman Township to the northeast, and Sturgis Township to the east. The Village of White Pigeon lies in the northwestern region of the Township, encompassing approximately one and one-half sections in the Township.



COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

POPULATION

Population growth in White Pigeon Township has been inconsistent. From 1990 to 2010 the population was relatively flat. According to the 2020 Census however, the population fell by nearly 200 people. However, since 2020 the population estimates suggest a return to population growth.

Figure 1 shows the population projection for the White Pigeon Township. The population estimates show a slowly rising population from 2010 through 2019. From the 2020 Census through 2024 the US Census estimates an annualized growth rate of about 0.5%. The projected growth rate shows that continuing through 2030.

Figure 2 compares the age profile in White Pigeon Township to St. Joseph County and Michigan. The age profile shows noticeable spikes in ages 55 to 59 and 65 to 74, compared to the county and state, suggesting an aging population. However, there appear to be more younger families in the White Pigeon Township as well. There are more younger children (0 to 9), though fewer older children (10 to 19), than the county and state.

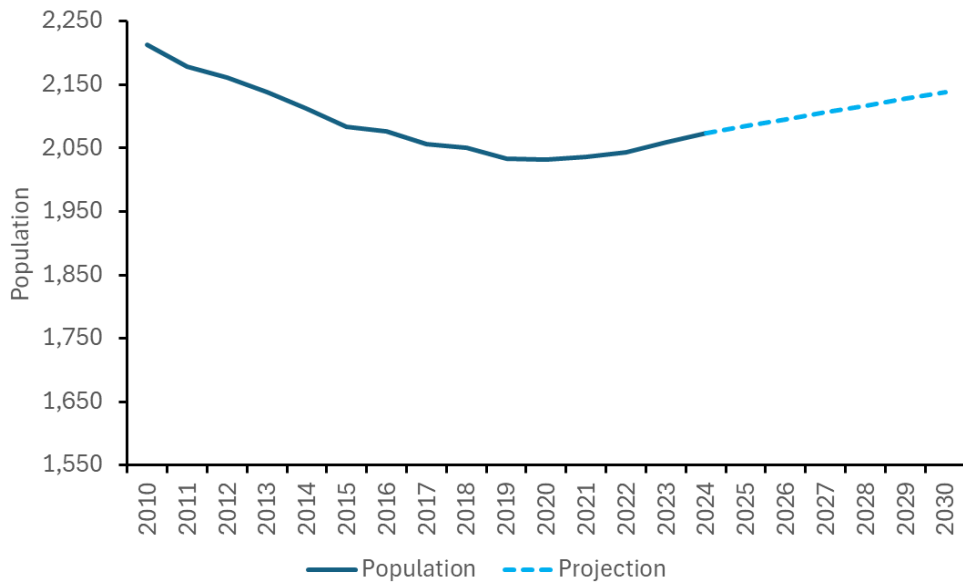
Note for all population data, individuals are counted at their primary residence in the US Census. Seasonal residents of White Pigeon Township do not appear in these data.

Table 1: Population History

YEAR	POPULATION	PERCENT CHANGE
1990	2,196	
2000	2,220	1.1%
2010	2,231	0.5%
2020	2,044	-8.4%
2024	2,074	1.5%

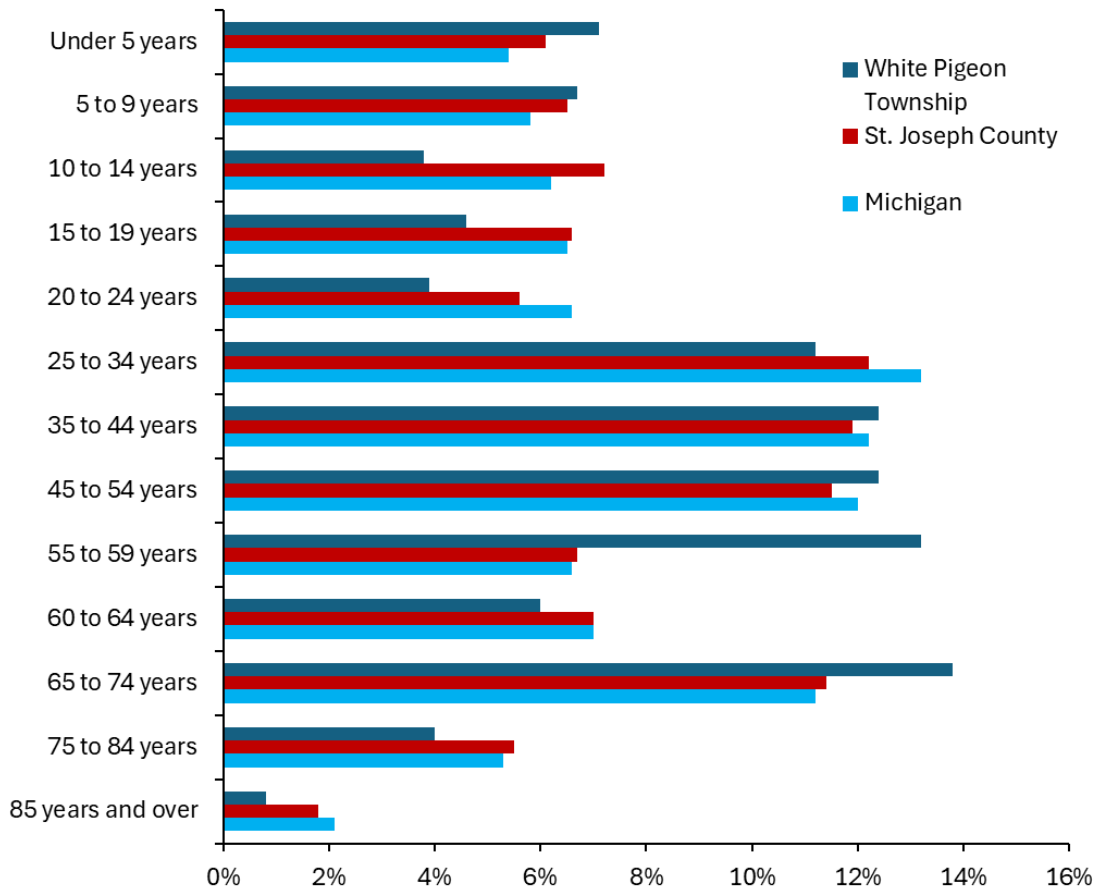
Source: US Census, Decennial Census and Annual Population Estimates

Figure 1: Population Projection



Source: US Census Population Estimates and SMPC

Figure 2: Age Distribution



Source: US Census American Community Survey, 2020-2024, Table DP05

SOCIO-ECONOMIC

These tables below show the socio-economic characteristics of White Pigeon Township, relative to St. Joseph County and the state of Michigan as a whole. Whenever possible, data from the Village of White Pigeon is excluded. However, when showing median values, such as age or income, Village data is included. These data are marked with an asterisk (*).

The Township has a strong economic base. The residents have a lower unemployment rate and higher labor force participation rate than St. Joseph County or the State of Michigan. Income levels are above the county, though less than the state. However, residents have slightly less education than St. Joseph County. Table 3 shows both lower bachelor's degree attainment and higher rates of those over 25 that did not complete high school.

Housing quality in White Pigeon Township is higher than St. Joseph County. Data are shown in table 4. Home values in the township are higher than in the rest of the county, with a lower rate of Pre-1939 homes. Home value is an underestimate, as White Pigeon Village data is lowering the overall value. The lakefront property in White Pigeon Township likely brings the actual median well above the St. Joseph County median.

Table 2: Economic Characteristics

YEAR	WHITE PIGEON TOWNSHIP	ST. JOSEPH COUNTY	MICHIGAN
MEDIAN INCOME*	\$71,071	\$66,425	\$72,875
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	3.3%	5.9%	5.7%
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION	65.2%	55.1%	57.3%
IN POVERTY	15.3%	11.4%	13.2%

Source: US Census American Community Survey, 2020-2024, Table DP03

Table 3: Social Characteristics

YEAR	WHITE PIGEON TOWNSHIP	ST. JOSEPH COUNTY	MICHIGAN
MEDIAN AGE*	45.1	39.9	40.2
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER (AGE 25 AND OVER)	14.3%	16.9%	32.4%
LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL (AGE 25 AND OVER)	13.9%	13.3%	7.9%

Source: US Census American Community Survey, 2020-2024, Table DP02, DP05

Table 4: Housing Characteristics

YEAR	WHITE PIGEON TOWNSHIP	ST. JOSEPH COUNTY	MICHIGAN
MEDIAN HOME VALUE*	\$180,400	\$178,300	\$231,600
OWNER %	86.5%	76.1%	73.2%
RENTER %	13.5%	23.9%	26.8%
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2.36	2.55	2.42
HOMES BUILT BEFORE 1939	11.2%	24.6%	14.6%

Source: US Census American Community Survey, 2020-2024, Tables DP02, DP04

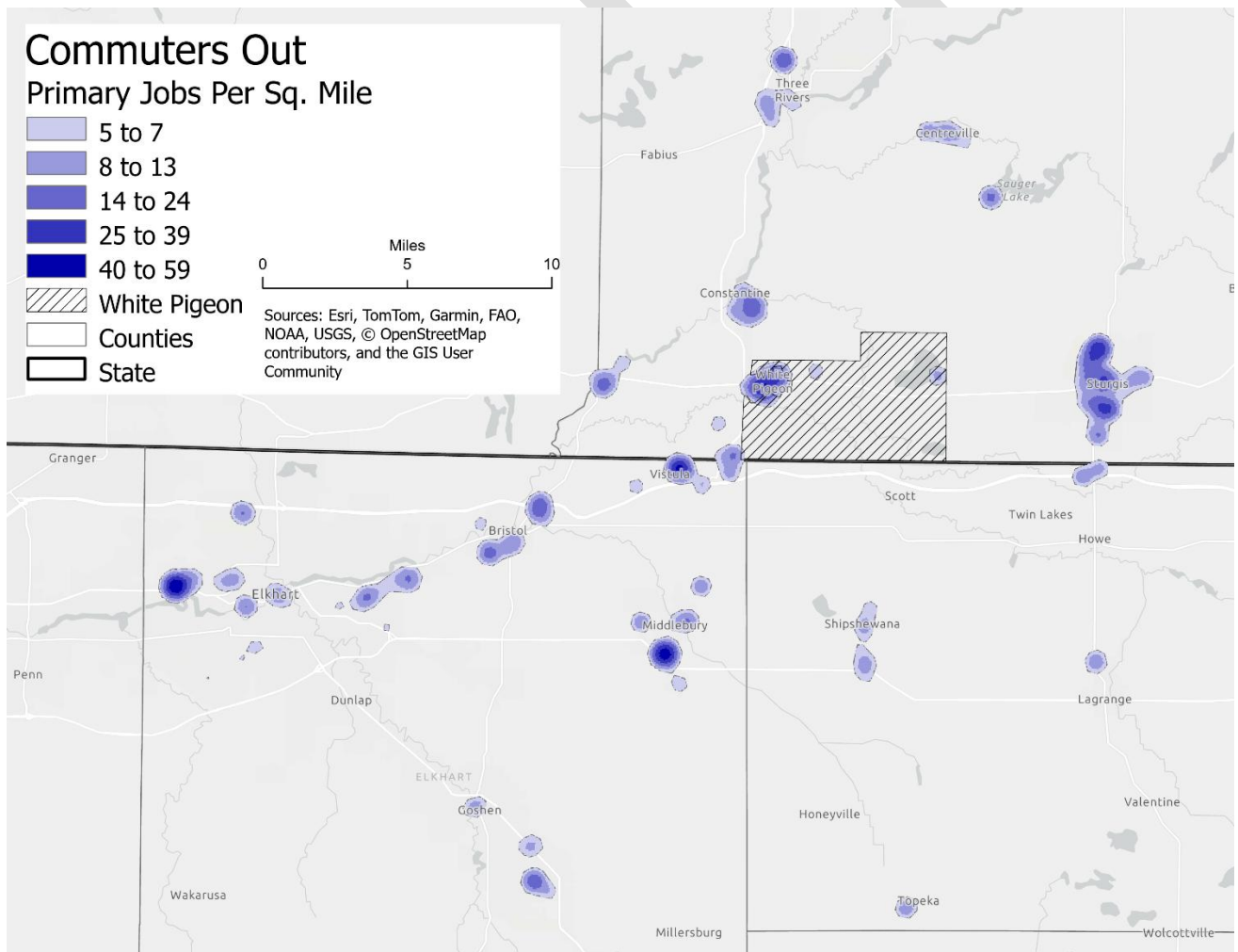
COMMUTING

Commuting patterns are important to understanding the nature of a community. While these data are from 2021, the patterns show how White Pigeon Township fits into the region's economy.

Relatively few individuals live and work within White Pigeon Township, though some do work in White Pigeon Village. Only about 8% of Township residents are employed within the Township.

The out-commuting pattern shows most residents commute to nearby communities such as Sturgis, Constantine, and Three Rivers. Additionally, many residents work in Indiana, along Highway 120 into Elkhart and south to Middlebury as shown in Map 1.

Map 1: Commuting destination of White Pigeon Township Residents

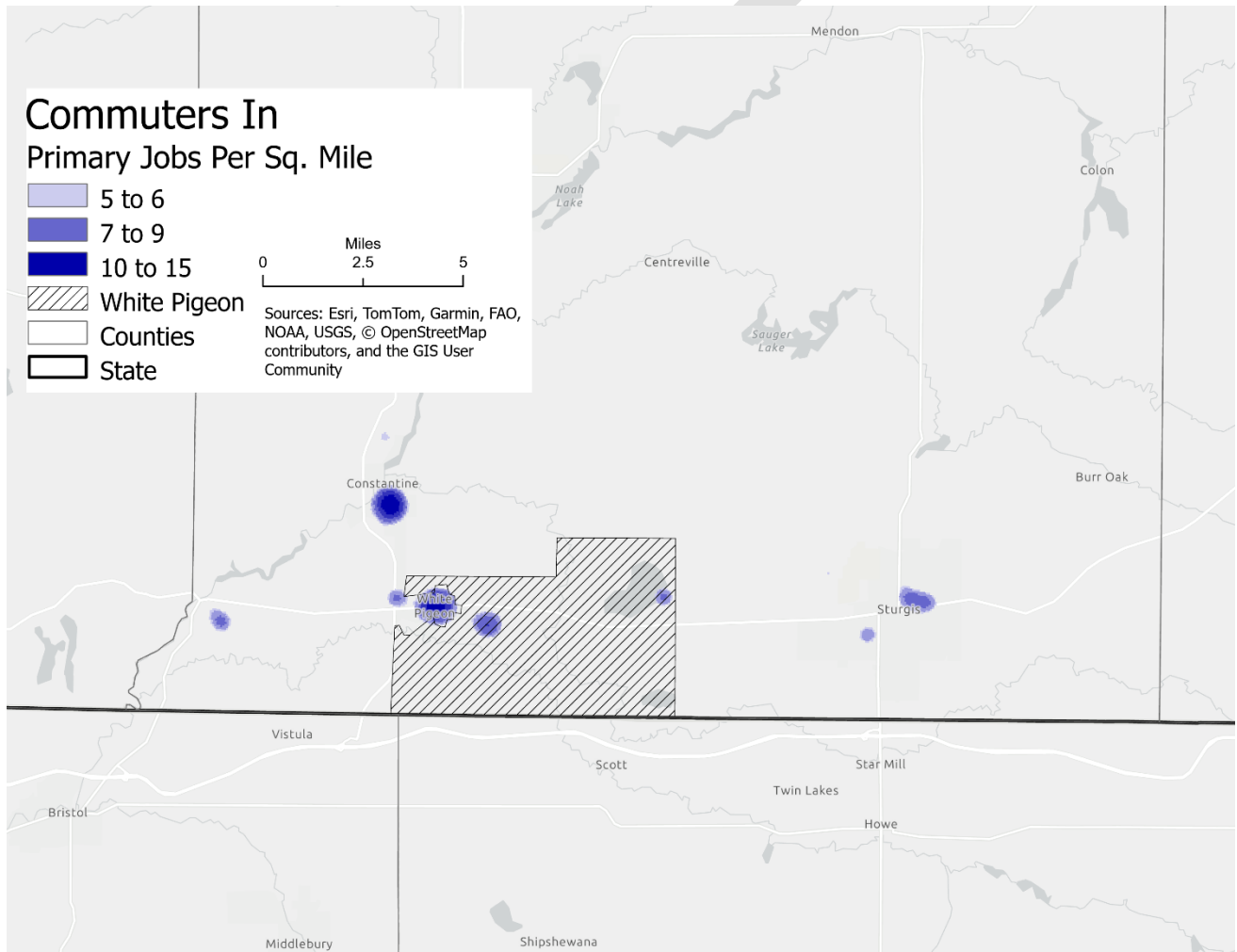


Source: US Census on the Map, 2021

Map 2 shows the residence of commuters into White Pigeon Township. As a residential community, there are fewer jobs within White Pigeon Township than residents commuting out.

For those employed within the township, similar to the out-commuters, most in-commuters, live in nearby places such as White Pigeon Village, Constantine, or Sturgis.

Map 2: Residence of People Commuting into White Pigeon Township



Source: US Census on the Map, 2021

MISSION AND GOALS

MISSION STATEMENT

White Pigeon Township is committed to encouraging development that supports local prosperity, strengthens our economy, and enhances the overall quality of life for residents.

We strive to balance growth with preservation by protecting our rural atmosphere, natural landscapes, and community character, ensuring that current and future generations can continue to enjoy a safe, vibrant, and distinctive place to live, work, and visit.



GOALS

To achieve the mission, the following goals were created to help guide the White Pigeon Township for the future. These goals contain elements of previous plans, ensuring continuity, and new goals that reflect emerging priorities.

1. Preserve the area's small-town atmosphere
2. Maintain the Township's agricultural character
3. Support a safe, healthy, and vibrant quality of life for everyone in the Township
4. Guide orderly development to support the population
5. Maintain and grow infrastructure to meet the needs of the community into the future

STRATEGIES

These strategies were developed to provide examples and guidance for implementing the goals. As with the goals, the strategies contain elements from previous plans as well as updated strategies.

1. Preserve the area's small-town atmosphere
 - a. Designate areas for residential development
 - b. Identify areas for large lot residential development in non-prime farmland areas for other rural open space areas
 - c. Preserve large parcels in areas of prime farmland
 - d. Examine zoning and land use to consider updating nonconforming parcels
2. Maintain the Township's agricultural character
 - a. Identify existing farmland areas to promote as preservation areas
 - b. Encourage farmers to participate in existing farmland preservation programs
 - c. Do not zone existing agriculture areas for higher intensity uses
3. Support a safe, healthy, and vibrant quality of life for everyone in the Township
 - a. Promote the natural areas of the Township, such as the lakes, streams, rivers, and woodlots
 - b. Expand recreational facilities
 - c. Encourage home ownership and safe rental units
 - d. Provide management guidelines for floodplains
4. Guide orderly development to support the population
 - a. The township will designate areas appropriate for commercial and industrial development
 - b. The township will work with economic development to maintain an up-to-date inventory of sites available for development

5. Maintain and grow infrastructure to meet the needs of the community into the future

- a. Ensure sewer and water capacity meet the needs of current and future residents
- b. Work with appropriate agencies to provide safe and efficient network of roads
- c. Work with appropriate agencies to provide adequate police and fire protection
- d. Enforce zoning codes to maintain a safe and attractive community
- e. Review existing zoning codes to ensure fairness and enforceability

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LAND USE

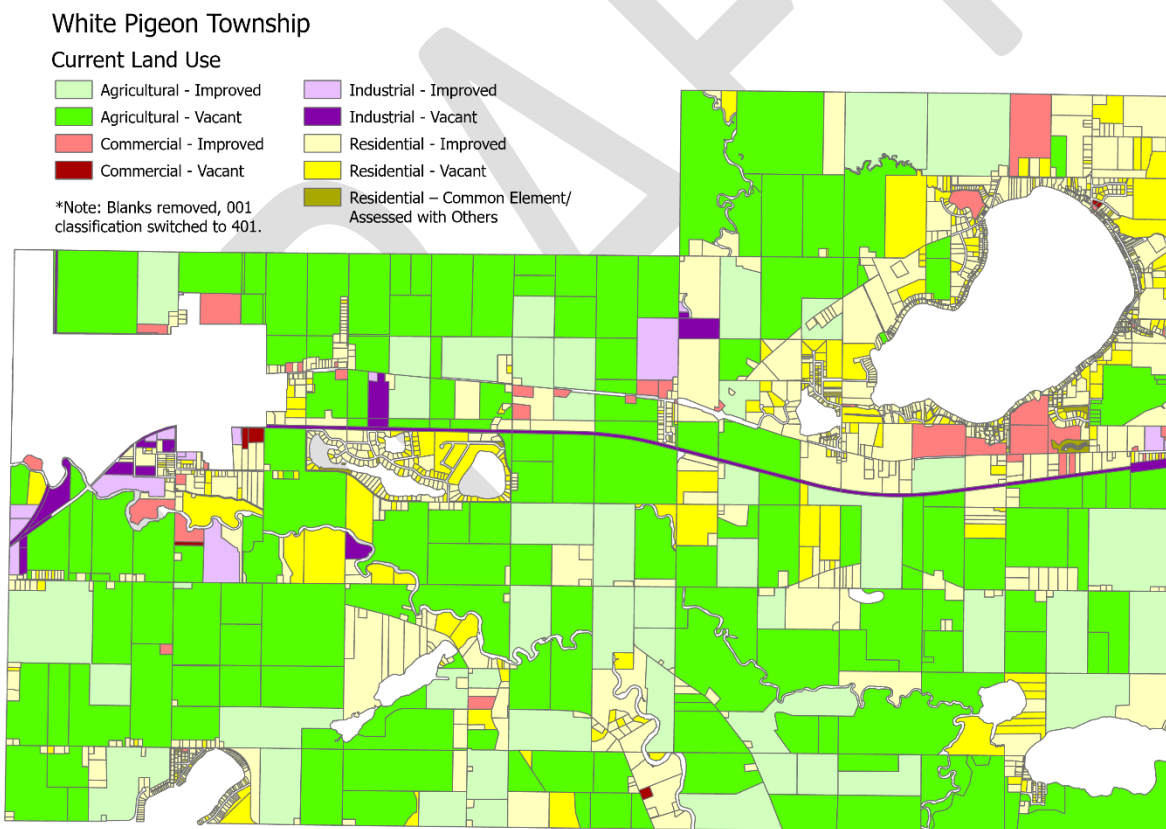
EXISTING USE

Land Classifications

Map 3 shows the land used based on tax classification. This map does not reflect current zoning, but rather current use.

The majority of the land use in White Pigeon Township is for agricultural purposes. Residential uses are concentrated heavily along the many lakefronts of the township, with limited commercial and industrial uses in limited areas.

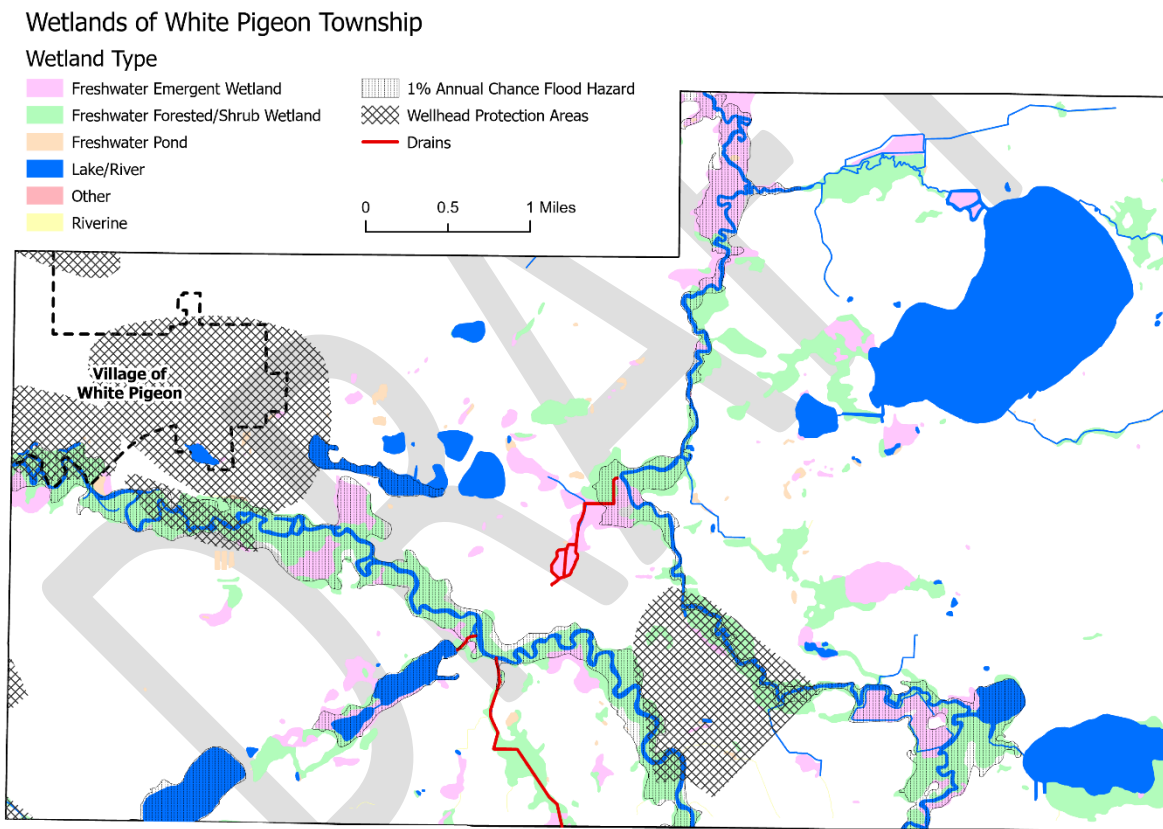
Map 3: Current Land Use



Wetland and Drains

The wetland and drain map (Map 4) shows areas prone to periodic flooding and environmentally sensitive wetland systems. This map is used to guide land use planning, infrastructure decisions, and development review by identifying locations where natural constraints may limit or influence future growth. Development in areas with a 1% annual flood hazard should be discouraged. By delineating these areas, White Pigeon Township can better protect public safety, reduce potential property damage, and preserve important ecological functions.

Map 4: Wetlands and Drains



ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS

The following are the zoning classifications in the White Pigeon Township zoning code. These classifications illuminate the intent of the zoning code.

Agricultural

It is the purpose of the AG agricultural district to preserve prime soils for agricultural use and to protect viable agricultural enterprises. It is to be applied to areas which have soils well suited to agricultural activities. The district is designed to preserve these areas by prohibiting the intrusion of non-agricultural and incompatible uses into the prime agricultural areas. The district is intended to create large contiguous blocks of agricultural land, both by original designation and by future annexation of smaller holdings, at the owner's request, to existing blocks. It is also the intent of this district to help maintain land values at levels which farm activities can support and to avoid property value increases through speculation for higher density uses, which force prime farmland into nonagricultural uses.

Rural Residential

The RR rural residential district is intended to accommodate single-family dwellings in areas that are semirural in character in order to provide for new housing development while preserving open space and rural qualities and promoting appropriate nonfarm uses of land.

R-1 Medium Density

It is the purpose of the R-1 medium density residential district to provide for a variety of housing types: single-family, duplex, apartments, and townhouses. This housing is intended to provide a low to moderately high density living environment. However, it must be recognized that, without sanitary sewage treatment facilities, allowable densities for such housing must respect the limitations of septic systems.

R-2 Manufactured Home Park

It is the purpose of the R-2 manufactured home park district to provide for the location of manufactured home dwellings in an attractive and orderly manner in the township. It is the particular purpose to concentrate such dwelling units in areas of similar housing and to avoid whenever possible scattering of such units throughout the township. The township recognizes that manufactured home dwellings provide respectable, lower cost housing for persons who might otherwise be unable to economically locate within the township. No travel trailer, camper trailer, or other manufactured living unit may be used or occupied for

dwelling purposes in any area of the township; provided, however, manufactured homes designed for permanent residential living may be located in the residential districts or in areas zoned as manufactured home park districts as approved by the Planning Commission and township board following a public hearing to be advertised in the same manner as prescribed for amendment to this chapter in accordance with the zoning act. Determination by the Planning Commission and the Township Board shall be made based upon the requirements and standards set forth in the Mobile Home Commission Act, Public Act No. 96 of 1987 (MCL 125.2301 et seq.), and the mobile home code and the standards for manufactured home parks as set forth in this division.

R-3 Waterfront Residential

It is the purpose of the R-3 waterfront residential district to provide for single-family residential uses, at moderate densities, in areas adjacent to lakes, streams and rivers. It is further the purpose to require lot areas large enough to protect township lakes, streams, rivers and groundwaters from excessive pollution due to an overconcentration of septic tank systems adjacent to them. It is further the desire and intent of the township to control, regulate and maintain the physical characteristics of its waterfront districts and to prevent overpopulation, overuse, safety and pollution of the waters, streams, ponds and drainageways within the township. It is a further desire and purpose to protect the integrity of riparian rights associated with the lakes, streams, rivers, ponds, and drainageways of the township and to regulate and prohibit the funneling to such waters.

C Commercial

It is the purpose of the C commercial district to provide a variety of commercial land uses. This district is designed to provide locations for business within the township in a manner which serves residential needs while at the same time does not encroach in an undesirable manner on such uses.

I Industrial

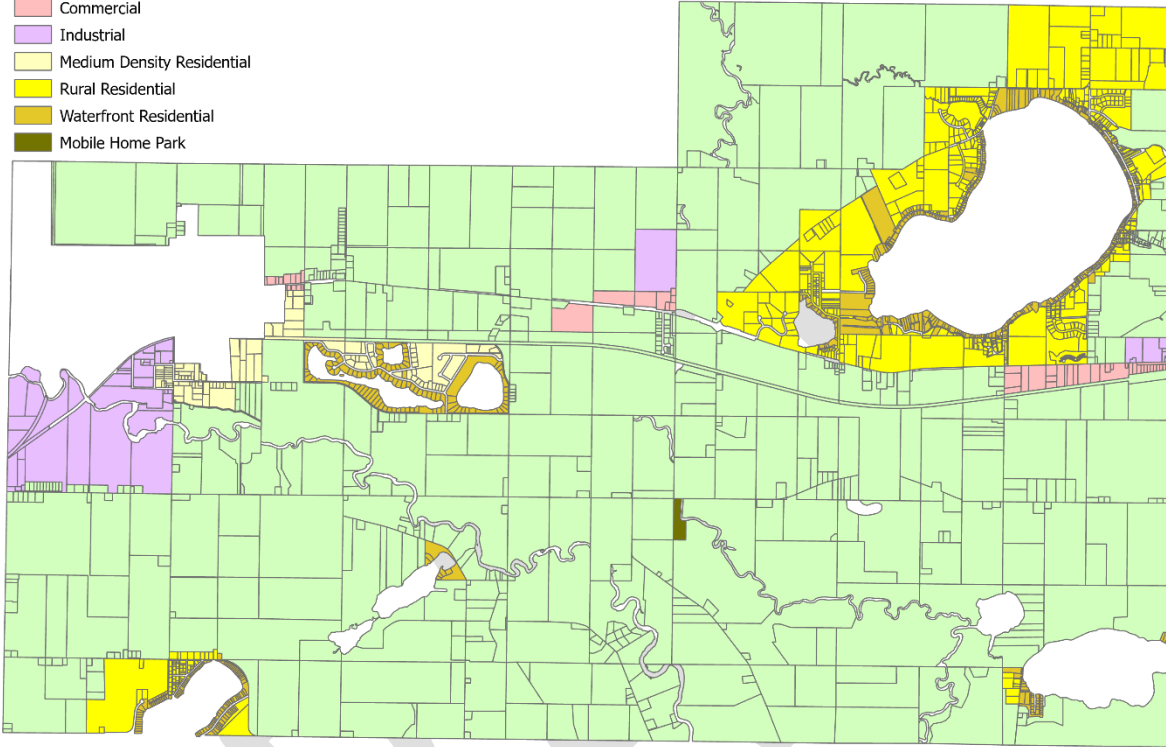
It is the purpose of the I industrial district to provide for a variety of industrial land uses. This district is designed to provide for the location of industry in a manner which is compatible with and serves those persons living and working within the township.

Map 5: Current Zoning

White Pigeon Township

Zoning

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Medium Density Residential
- Rural Residential
- Waterfront Residential
- Mobile Home Park



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FUTURE USE

Land Classifications

The future land use map reflects the Township's priorities of encouraging future development in the areas most suited to those spaces. Agricultural and natural spaces should be preserved when possible. Commercial development is suggested along US-12. Medium density-residential along waterfront spaces and rural residential as a buffer to those zones.

Agricultural – Agricultural enterprise

Commercial – Commercial uses

Industrial – Industrial uses

Rural Residential – Low-density, single-family dwellings with open space

Medium Density – Single-family, duplex, apartments, and townhouses

Recreation – Golf, water park or similar recreational use





Public – Township, county, school district, state agency uses, including water treatment

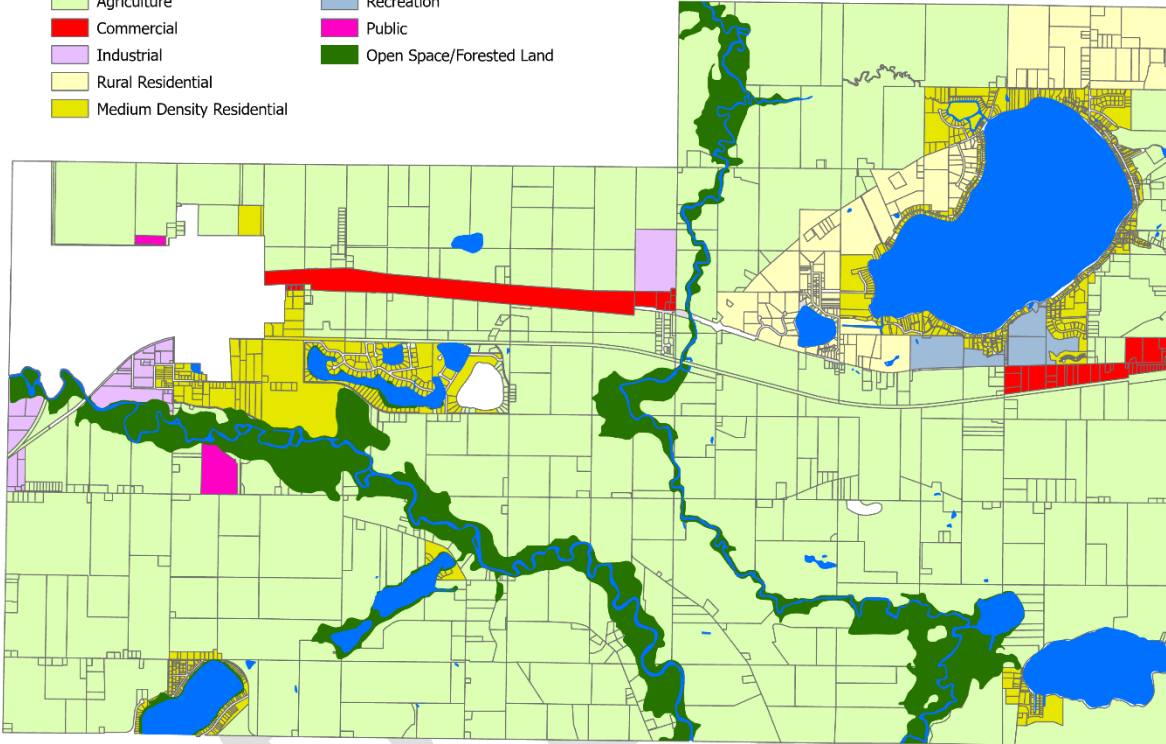
Open Space – Areas with deciduous and coniferous species of trees and shrubs and abandoned agricultural areas. Also includes floodplain areas not suitable for development.

Map 6: Future Land Use

White Pigeon Township

Future Land Use

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Agriculture |  Recreation |
|  Commercial |  Public |
|  Industrial |  Open Space/Forested Land |
|  Rural Residential | |
|  Medium Density Residential | |

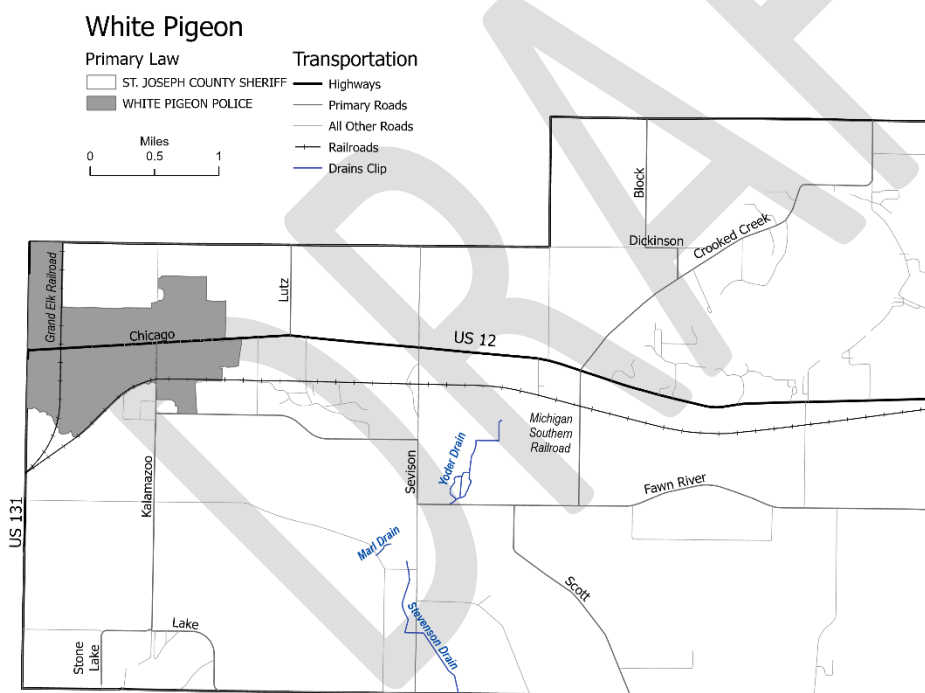


TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

TRANSPORTATION AND COMPLETE STREETS

HIGHWAYS: The main north-south highway in White Pigeon Township is US-131, which runs along the western border of the township. This four-lane divided highway, with restricted access, provides access to I-94 (12 miles to the north. A limited access freeway) and I-80/90 (three miles to the south in Indiana. A limited access toll-road). Both of which are major national east-west routes.

Map 7: Transportation



In addition, running east-west through the White Pigeon Township is US-12, a two-lane highway following the route of the old Detroit to Chicago military road.

RAILROADS: The Grand Elk Railroad is a freight-only railroad which operates two lines in St. Joseph County.

The main line runs

between Grand Rapids, Michigan and Elkhart, Indiana. Within the County, from the north the line enters Park Township, runs through the City of Three Rivers, through the Village of Constantine, then just to the west of White Pigeon and then angles southwest to Elkhart. The secondary line begins on the east side of the City of Sturgis and heads west to White Pigeon where it connects to the main line.

NON-MOTORIZED FACILITIES: Many communities in southwest Michigan aspire to provide nonmotorized facilities for their residents and visitors and have been working to establish a connected regional system. A nonmotorized transportation system vision for the Michigan Department of Transportation’s (MDOT) Southwest Region, was developed which includes Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren counties. That plan does not replace local, metropolitan, or county plans; in fact, it builds and depends upon these local plans and initiatives. Below is a list of local/regional efforts to expand nonmotorized opportunities in the White Pigeon Township. The list of on-road (shoulders/bike lanes) and off-road network priorities were identified through public input and from local planning efforts.

1. Kalamazoo/White Pigeon Corridor - There is a gap from White Pigeon to the Kalamazoo County line.
2. US-12 Corridor - There is a gap between the Cass County line to White Pigeon, from Shimmel Road to Sturgis, and from Sturgis to the Branch County line.



5 YEAR ROAD PLAN

ITEM	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
COST PER MILE OVERLAY	\$160,000	\$164,800	\$169,744	\$174,836	\$180,081
DICKINSON ROAD FROM US-131 TO LUTZ ROAD	\$329,600				
ALDRICH LAKE ROAD + SUB		\$285,104			
FAWN RIVER FROM KALAMAZOO TO FAWN RIVER				\$461,568	
FAWN RIVER FROM SEVISON TO MILLPOND					\$304,338
MARLS LAKE AND SEVISON TO FAWN RIVER					\$138,663
BENHAM BEACH			\$57,713		
FAIRVIEW DRIVE			\$66,200		
WILDWOOD			\$64,503		
LIMA FROM US-12 TO FAWN RIVER				\$111,895	
TOTAL	\$329,600	\$285,104	\$188,416	\$573,463	\$443,000
WHITE PIGEON PORTION	\$124,000	\$142,552	\$94,208	\$286,732	\$221,500

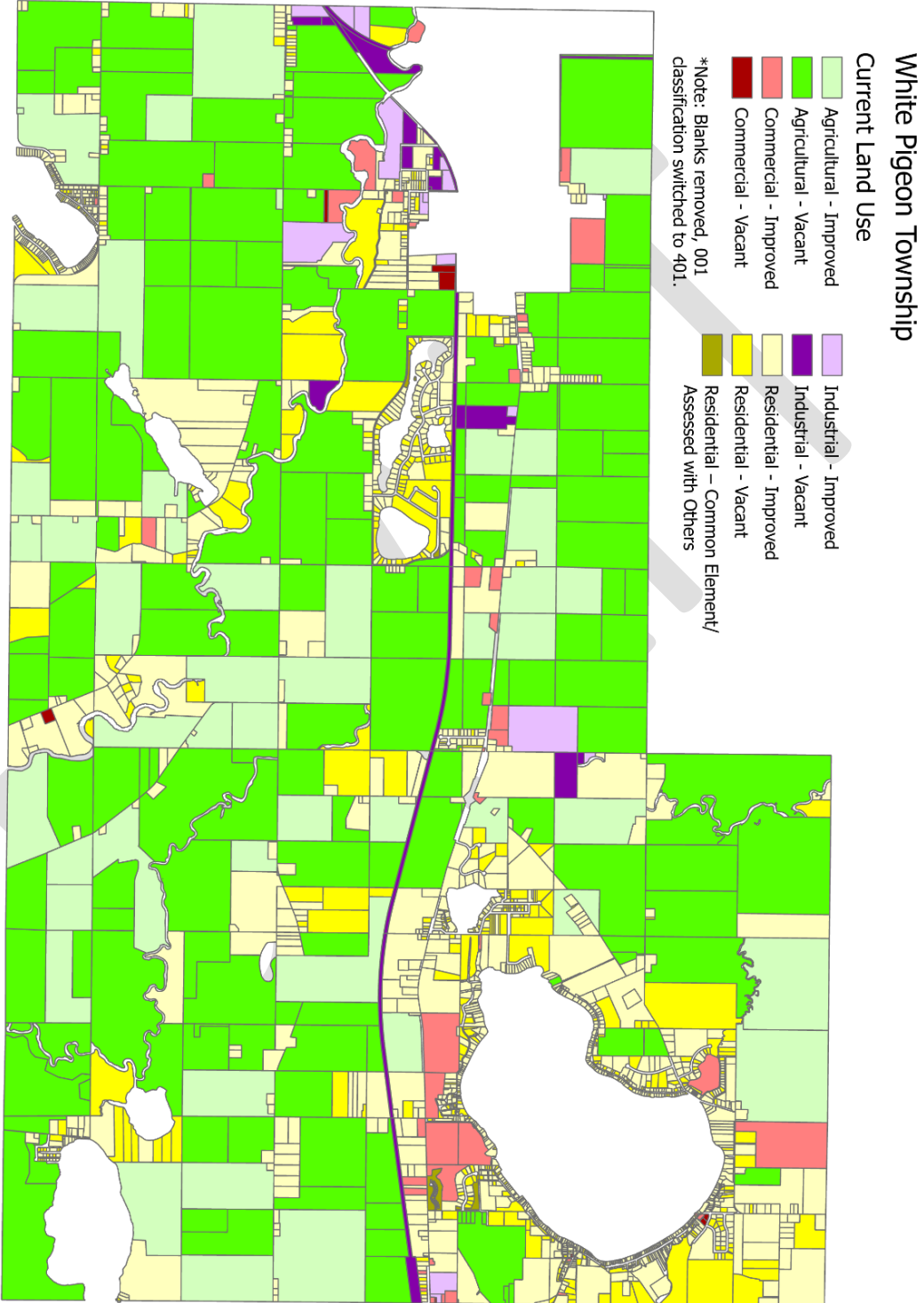
Totals may not sum due to rounding

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

ITEM	ESTIMATED AMOUNT
WPSS 2020 Capital Improvement Project	\$2,931,000.00
Replace 3 work trucks/cranes (10+ yr rotation)	\$150,000.00
Replace the final effluent sample line	\$10,000.00
Replace the 6" trash pump with a float system pump	\$50,000.00
3-4 automatic gate openers	\$25,000.00
Update lab equipment adding glassware dishwasher	\$40,000.00
Pave drive around the new barn	\$45,000.00
Clean the sludge pond	\$400,000.00
Security lighting down driveway	\$30,000.00
Portable generator that can run all stations and plant	\$150,000.00
Concrete between loading dock and garage*	\$10,000.00
New entry door for blower building*	\$2,600.00
Resurface the drive and parking area**	\$20,000.00
Rehab the plant office with flooring and equipment*	\$20,000.00
Replace air diffusers in lagoons	\$25,000.00
Replace lawn mower	\$25,000.00
Update office computers/backups**	\$18,000.00
Office copier	\$5,000.00
Update security cameras and equipment	\$15,000.00
Rehab Plant office area	\$10,000.00

*Completed

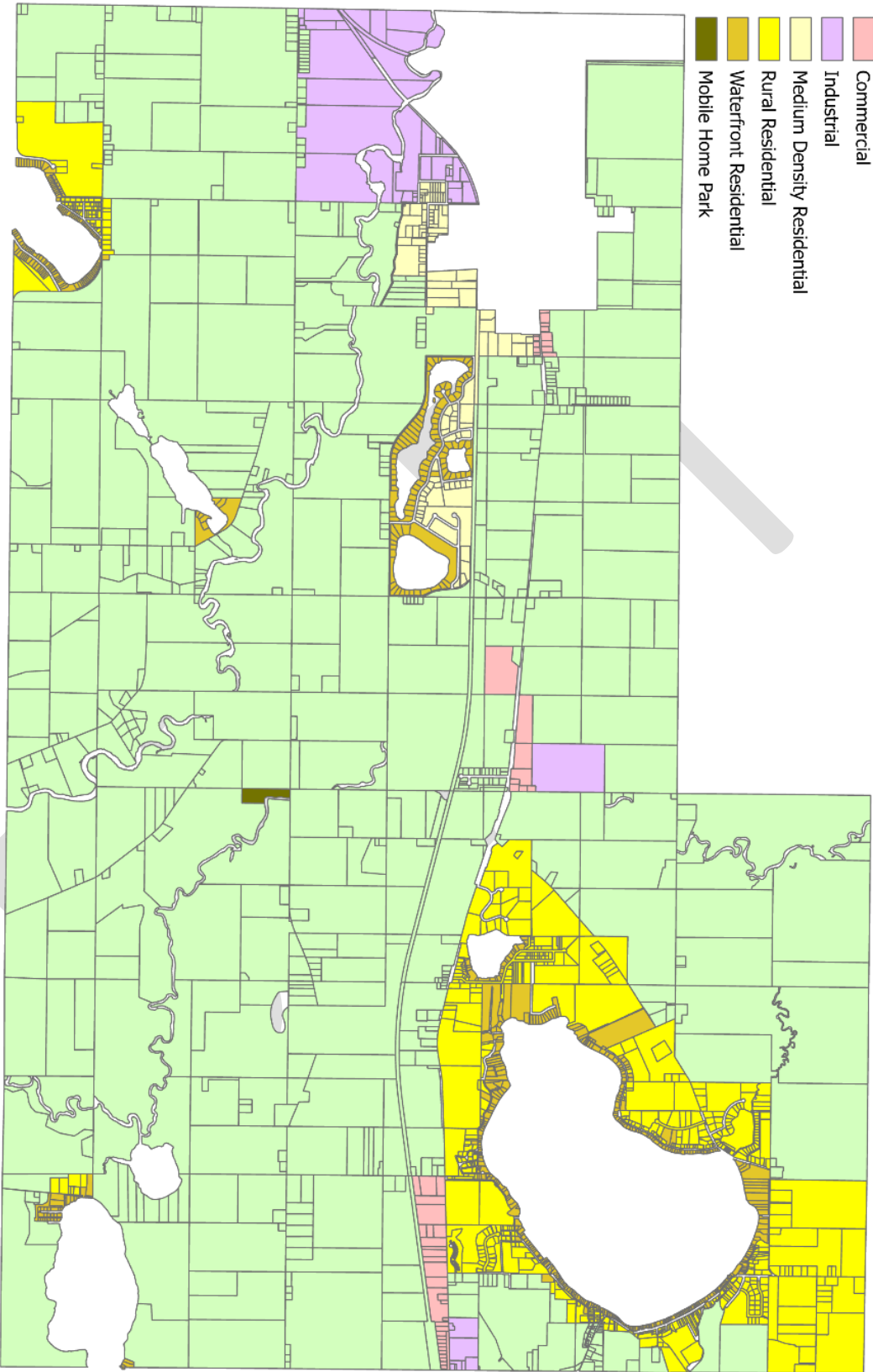
** Scheduled



White Pigeon Township

Zoning

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Medium Density Residential
- Rural Residential
- Waterfront Residential
- Mobile Home Park



White Pigeon Township

Future Land Use

