

Chapter 5 EXISTING LAND USE

A. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter, entitled "Natural Features" was an investigation of the land forms and water features occurring in Chocolay Township. This included all aspects of the township that were naturally occurring and could be altered by human impact.

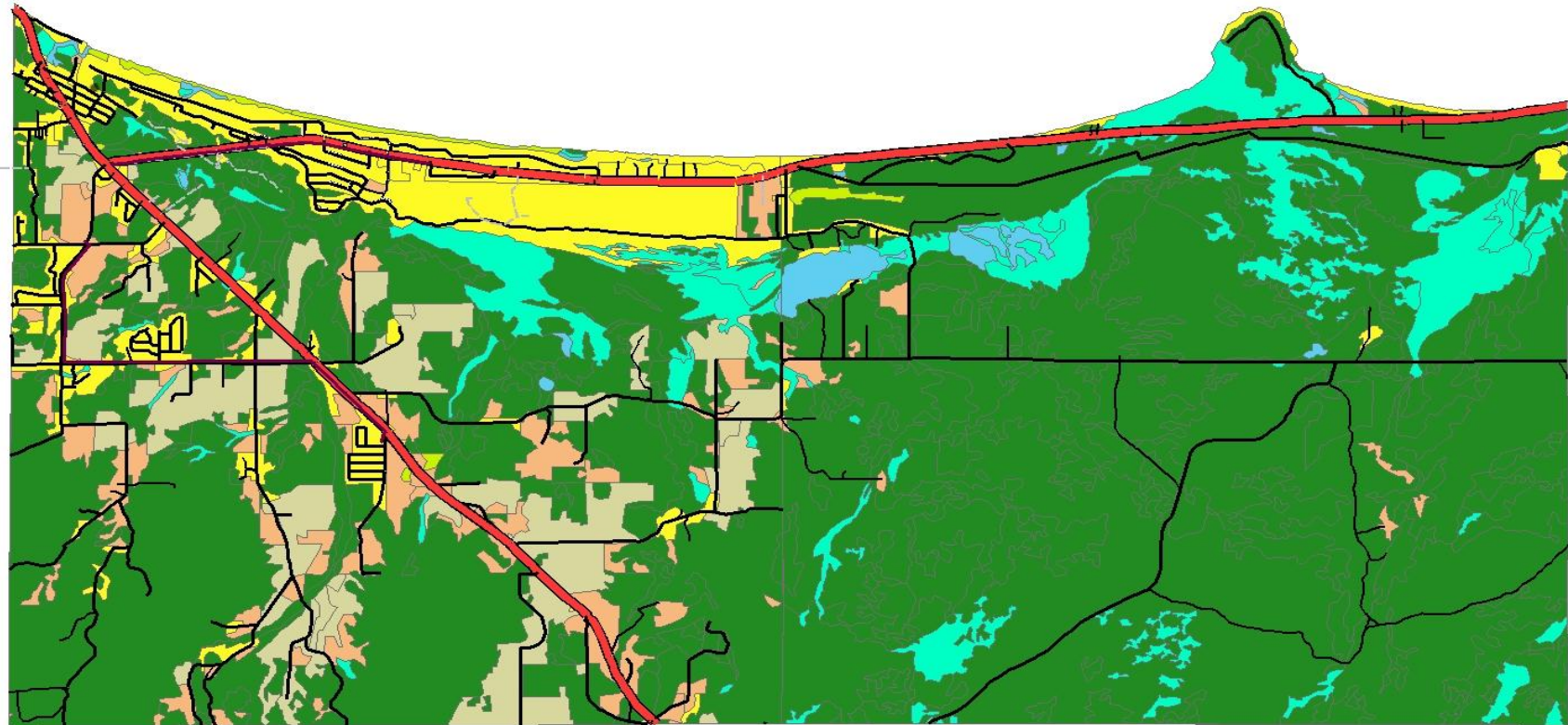
This chapter looks at current development in the Township. This is done by an inventory of the various land uses within the Township. It shows the areas of the Township that are developing and the types of uses present. Two forms of inventory are examined in this chapter. One is a land use/land cover inventory. It is based on the interpretation of aerial photographs and mapping in a Geographic Information System (GIS). It classifies land into different land uses (how land is used, such as for residential, commercial, industrial or agricultural purposes), or land cover (the type of vegetation on it or the lack of vegetation). The second is a land use by tax class inventory. This looks at how land is classified by assessors, such as for residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural use. This classification system is parcel based does not include such land cover types as wetlands, upland conifers or dunes.

It is important to study land use and land cover, and to the extent possible, change in land use/cover over time, in order to understand how and where land is being developed in the community, where there may be important land resources that should be considered in the planning process, and to better understand the implications of current trends if they continue into the future.

The most current land use inventory was completed in 2010. See Map 5-1 and Table 5.1. It was based on the Michigan Resource Inventory System data that used 1978 aerial photography, and then was updated through a ground-level visual survey.




Existing Land Use/Land Cover Map
 Chocolay Township: 2010 Land Use Map



Legend

landuse

 <all other values>

THEME

 Agricultural

 Barren

 Forest Land

 Rangeland

 Urban

 Water

 Wetlands

Table 5-1
Summary of Land Use/Cover Types for Chocolay Township

Land Use/Cover Description	1978 Acres	1978 % Total Area	2004 Acres	2004 % Total Area	2010 Acres	2010 % Total Area
Urban and Built Up	2,423	6.2%	2,917	7.6%		
Agricultural Land	2,684	6.9%	2,564	6.7%		
Open Land	1,896	4.9%	1,620	4.2%		
Forest Land	28,146	72.5%	27,894	72.5%		
Water	348	0.9%	348	0.9%		
Wetlands	3,186	8.2%	2,987	7.8%		
Barren	148	0.4%	145	0.4%		
Total Acres in Chocolay Township	38,831	100.0%	38,476	100.0%		

*Sources: 1978 Michigan Resource Information System and 2004 visual survey by Chocolay Township
 Note: The difference in total acres between 1978 and 2004 is due to differences in the location of boundaries in the base maps from the two periods.*

LAND USE/LAND COVER IN CHOCOLAY TOWNSHIP



Urban and Built Up. There were 2,917 acres of urban and built-up land in Chocolay Township in 2004. Then in 2010, there were ____ acres of urban land. While single-family residential comprises nearly 90% of all urban and built-up land, Chocolay Township also has multi-family residential, mobile home park, commercial, services, institutional, primary/central business, secondary/neighborhood business, institutional, industrial, transport, communication, utilities, open pit, sand and gravel, and outdoor recreation

uses. Most of the urban and built-up lands are in the western part of the Township, along the Lake Superior shoreline or along the US-41 and M-28 corridors.

The most visible change in land use/cover in Chocolay Township occurred with an increase of about 500 acres of urban and built-up land between 1978 and 2004. At the same time there were decreases in the areas of agricultural land, forest land and wetlands. In part these decreases are due to conversion of those land uses to urban uses, and in part they may be due to conversions of agricultural land, forest land, open land and wetlands into other non-urban land cover categories, and in part they may be due to differences in interpretation between the two inventory dates.



Agricultural Land. Agricultural land, totaling over _____ acres in Chocolay Township is mostly crop land.

Open Land or Rangeland. This category comprises land that is not developed, forested or used for agriculture. It may at one time have been farmed or cleared of timber, but at the time of the land use inventory, was not actively used for either farming or forestry. This land use/land cover typically has meadows or fields of annual, biennial or perennial herbaceous plants and grasses. It may also have shrub growth and seedling trees.



Forest Land. This category comprises the largest percentage of land in Chocolay Township, with nearly _____ acres, or almost _____% of the entire Township area. Forest land in Chocolay Township is primarily northern hardwood, which generally contains Maple, Beech and associated other species. Pine and other upland conifers are the next most common species group, followed by Aspen/Birch, lowland hardwoods, lowland conifers and a small area of Christmas tree plantation.



Water. Excluding Lake Superior, open water areas comprise nearly 350 acres of Chocolay Township. There are many rivers, streams and creeks, but most of the water area is in inland lakes, such as Lake Le Vasseur and Lake Kawbawgam. The James Leske flooding is being drained, and is changing from open water to wetland.



Wetlands. Wetlands are a land cover type characterized by certain soils and vegetation types and at least the seasonal presence of water. A precise determination of whether a parcel of land contains wetlands requires expert inspection, but the interpretation of aerial photographs can be fairly accurate. In 2004 there were nearly 3,000 acres of wetlands in Chocoley Township, a decline since 1978 of almost 200 acres. Wetland types in Chocoley Township include woodland wetlands, shrub/scrub wetlands, aquatic bed wetlands, and emergent wetlands. Wetlands provide many important values, including stormwater storage, groundwater recharge, water filtering and purification, a nursery for the food chain, habitat for desired wildlife species and scenery.



Barren. This land cover category includes types that have very sparse vegetation. There were 145 acres of barren lands in Chocoley Township in 2004, including beaches & riverbanks, sand dunes, and a small area of bare, exposed rocks. While not a very extensive land cover type in Chocoley Township, it is an important one, due to the potential for erosion of beaches, riverbanks and sand dunes. These areas can also contain unique ecosystems and rare and fragile species.

LAND USE BY TAX CLASS

According to assessment records for 2010, over 30,000 acres of Chocoley Township were classed as residential, about 55% of the land. See Table 5-2 and Map 5-2. This was in striking contrast to the area of the Township that was in urban and built-up use, which was less than 3,000 acres or 7.6% (which also included commercial and industrial land uses).

Compare Tables 5-1 with 5-2. One measures existing area of land devoted to a particular use or land cover, whereas the other measures land use by tax class on a parcel basis, so if a part of a parcel is used for residential purposes, the whole parcel is classified that way.

Map 5-2
Chocolay Township Land Use by Tax Class

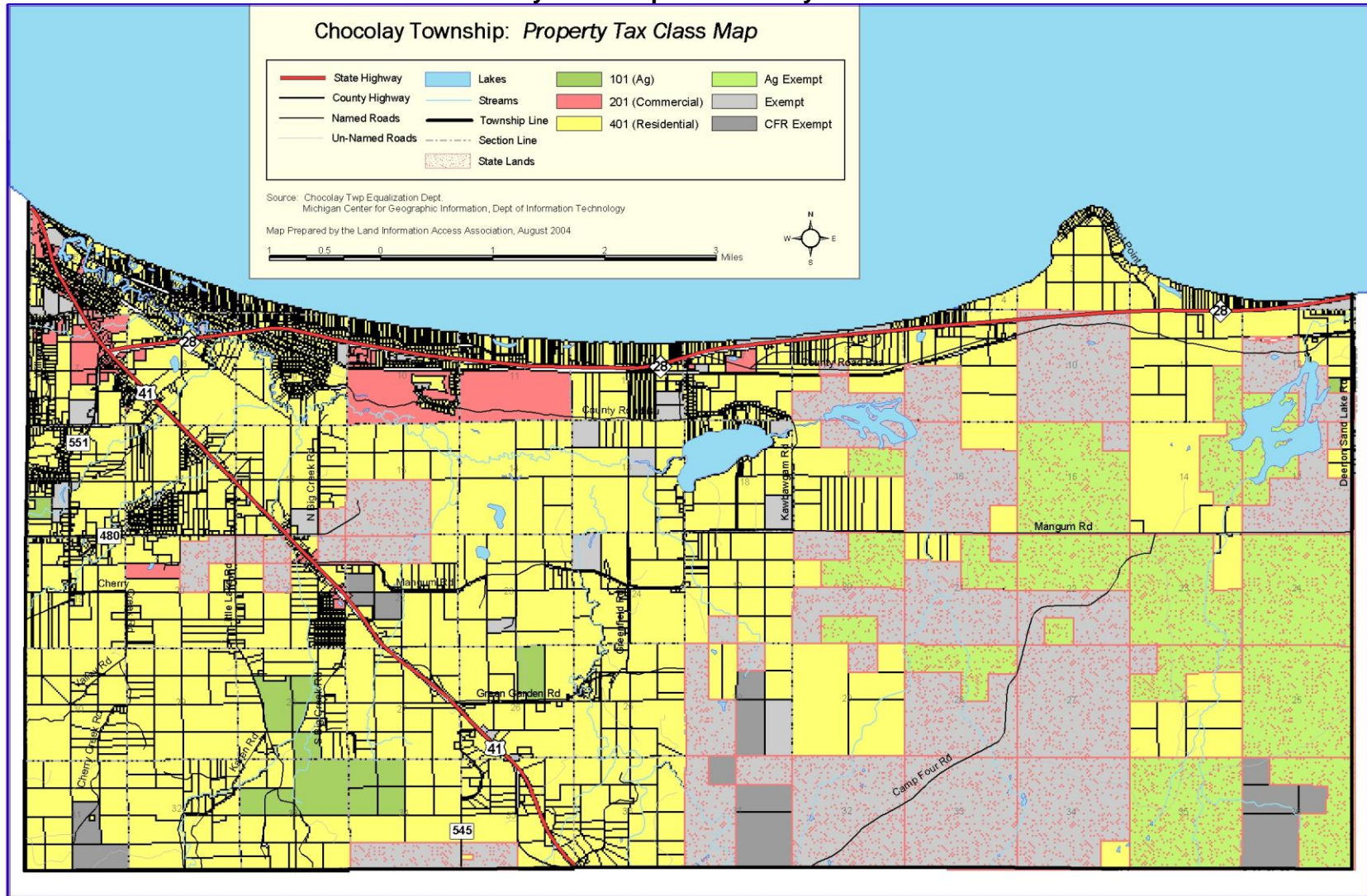


Table 5-2
Land Use by Tax Class in Chocolay Township, 2010

Property Class	Acres	% of Total Acres
Agriculture	6,503	17.03%
Commercial	412	1.08%
Residential	20,839	54.60 %
Commercial Forest Reserve	1,646	4.31%
Exempt, ROW, lake, private and public	8,769	22.97%%
Total	38,169	100%

Source: Chocolay Township Assessor

Commercial Forest Act (CFR) lands accounted for 1,646 acres of Chocolay Township in 2010. These are private lands, and under the CFR agreement, the owners pay a reduced tax of \$1.20 per acre on forest lands greater than 40 acres if a management plan is developed. The Department of Natural Resources, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division, offers the property tax incentives to owners of forested lands if they agree to properly manage their commercial forest lands for recreation or wildlife. Forest species benefit from this program, such as deer, turkey, grouse, nongame forest birds, amphibians, reptiles, etc. Cutting of trees is approved by permit only.

Properties classed as “commercial” accounted for 412 acres in 2010. There was over 800 acres zoned commercial in the 2005 comprehensive plan, but due to one of the local golf courses being donated to the University, it reduce the acres of commercial land. Those acres are now counted under the exempted category. The Township does have small parcels along the US-41/M-28 corridor in the northwestern part of the Township.

There were only 6,503 acres with a tax classification of “agriculture” in 2010, while 2,564 acres were identified as agriculture exempt, which means that that land is owned by the State. State-owned lands included portions of the Escanaba River State Forest, the Marquette Branch Correctional Facility Mangum Farm and other Department of Corrections properties, MDOT Lake Superior shoreline and highway scenic turnouts and several smaller parcels owned by the DNR, including the Cherry Creek Fish Hatchery.

Table 5-2 displays a tax classification, “ROW and Lake,” and that it comprises about 1,000 acres in Chocolay Township. This classification includes portions of the land not within the boundaries of identified parcels. It includes the rights-of-way of roads, lakes and other land or water areas not part of a parcel. This is land that is not likely to change in area over time.

RELATIONSHIP OF LAND USE/COVER INVENTORY TO LAND USE BY TAX CLASS INVENTORY AND OTHER INFORMATION

A comparison of the land use inventories, one of actual use, or type of development (as well as land cover) and the other by tax classification illustrates that far more land is assessed at a higher development level than that for which the land is used.

Already developed parcels and most of those classified as residential (and thus presumed to be developable) are in close proximity to sensitive natural features or have severe development limitations. These natural features include the Lake Superior shoreline, the Chocoday River and the many high quality streams and creeks that feed the River, inland lakes and Lake Superior. There are also large areas of floodplains, wetlands and soils with development limitations.

The natural features of Chocoday Township provide for the rural quality of life that residents prefer, and help the local economy. It will be important to ensure as land is developed, that these natural features are protected.



Chocoday Township Marina/Chocoday River 2010