



LITTLE PINE TOWNSHIP  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



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*This plan was prepared by the **Community Growth Institute**  
in partnership with the citizens of **Little Pine Township**.*



*Little Pine Township would like to recognize the **Initiative Foundation** for providing technical support and funding assistance with this project.*





# LITTLE PINE TOWNSHIP

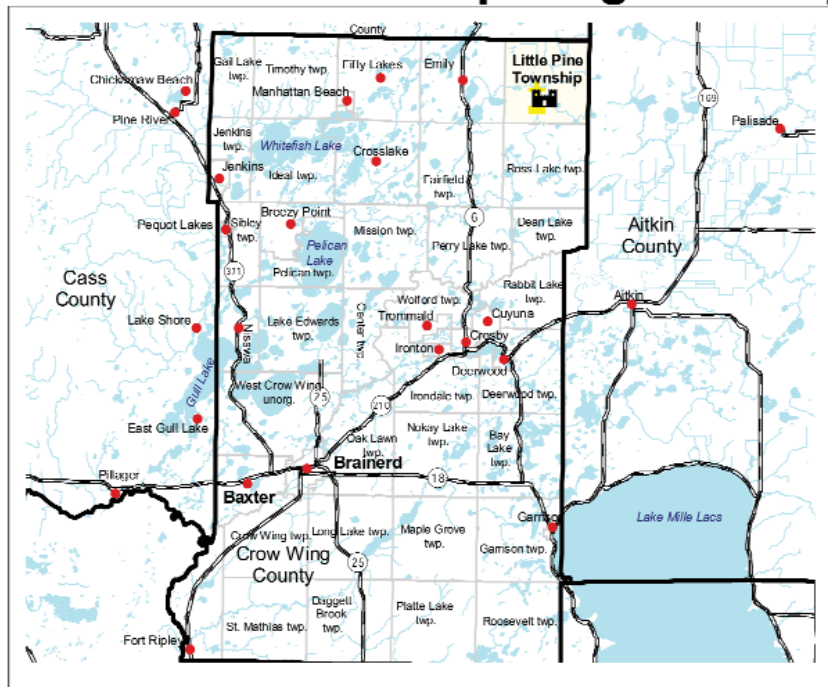
## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## I. INTRODUCTION

### The Need for a Plan

Located in the northeast corner of Crow Wing County, Minnesota, Little Pine Township is part of Minnesota's Central Lakes Region and home to a diversity of lakes, streams, wetlands and heavily forested areas. Little

### Little Pine Township: Regional Map



Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Center for Urban and Regional Affairs  
Crow Wing County  
Minnesota Planning  
Compiled by Community Growth Institute 2003

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Pine Township has had a small, stable population ranging from 80 – 110 citizens since 1910. Although the township hasn't experienced significant population growth during that time, growth pressure within the Central Lakes Region is likely to make its way into the area in the future. Due to the size of its current population, even a small addition of 40 people would increase the township by 50%, leading to new demands and unexpected challenges.

In order to accommodate future growth with minimal negative impacts to Little



Pine Township, residents came together over the summer of 2002 to create a long-term comprehensive plan. The plan, contained herein, lays the groundwork for desired land uses and future growth for the next 10 – 20 years. Review and updating of the plan will be ongoing, with annual review by the Town Board. The plan should be used as a guideline to direct and shape the zoning, subdivision regulations, and ordinances, which are tools for implementing the comprehensive plan.

### **Sustainable Development**

The plan is based on the concept of "Sustainable Development". Sustainable Development is a planning tool that balances what are often perceived to be conflicting goals: preserving the natural environment and quality of life while



improving the economic situation of the community. In Little Pine Township, these goals are critically interrelated. The economic health of the community is dependent on preserving the natural quality of the environment and the quality of life. Sustainable Development encourages diversification and development of the economy in a way that provides stability and prosperity for the community.

To implement Sustainable Development, three objectives must be met:

- 1. Expand, diversify and improve income and job opportunities.**
- 2. Sustain and enhance resource productivity and improve environmental qualities.**
- 3. Enhance the quality of life of each resident.**

This concept depends on the active involvement and participation of all citizens to find solutions to problems, identify opportunities, and create the type of community that meets their needs and those of future generations. Citizens involved



in creating the plan were asked to operate within the Sustainable Development framework and develop the comprehensive plan using the following principles:

- 1) **Think long-term about the quality of life of our children and grandchildren.**
- 2) **Respect the opinion of others; everyone has something to contribute.**
- 3) **Balance competing interests; economy, environment, and quality of life.**
- 4) **Think globally but act locally. How do world trends impact Little Pine Township?**

### **The Planning Process**

The planning process began in the summer of 2002 with a Town Hall meeting held in June, followed by a second meeting in July and a final meeting in September. Community residents were invited to participate in a joint planning process along with the City of Emily. Citizens were asked to contribute their ideas, impressions, knowledge and expertise on Little Pine Township, where it is today, how it has changed and how it should develop and function in the future. They completed the following tasks at the Town Hall meetings:



**Town Hall Meeting I:** Identify strengths and weaknesses with respect to land use and quality of life in the Little Pine Township.

**Town Hall Meeting II:** Create goals to address issues identified at the first Town Hall meeting.

**Town Hall Meeting III:** Develop and prioritize strategies to meet the goals created at the second Town Hall meeting.

Many citizens volunteered to be on special committees that met between the Town Hall meetings. These committees formed around the topics of economic development, environmental issues, parks and recreation, and zoning and land use. An additional committee was formed to focus solely on Little Pine Township. Citizens were given information packets on their topics and worked diligently to refine and expand on the work done at the Town Hall meetings.





## II. HISTORY

### Early Settlement

Little Pine Township was organized on May 5, 1903. Prior to its organization, only eight residents and several transient settlers inhabited the township. Being one of the last townships to be logged off, settlers weren't attracted to the area until 1901, when the timber industry was strongest in the area and the Little Pine River was used for lumber drives. By 1910, 97 people called Little Pine Township home. School District 69 was organized in 1901 and settlers built two log schools. The Paul Held School on Section 8 burned down during a forest fire in 1912. In 1902, a third school was constructed for the newly organized District 103. Settlers also established a post office in 1906, as well as Bethlehem Evangelical Church, which was constructed in 1915 and later became the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1917.

### A Land-Based Economy



photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Logging in Little Pine Township occurred during the 1890's and early 1900's, at the tail end of "the golden era of lumbering in Minnesota.<sup>i</sup>" Little Pine and its surrounding townships provided valuable pines for building construction in the Twin Cities and across the United States. As mature pine trees disappeared, however, the lumber industry in Minnesota declined and

logging companies shifted operations to the Pacific Northwest and the South for timber. Today, small-scale logging operations persist in the Little Pine Township, primarily for cordwood, pulp, paper, and manufactured building materials.

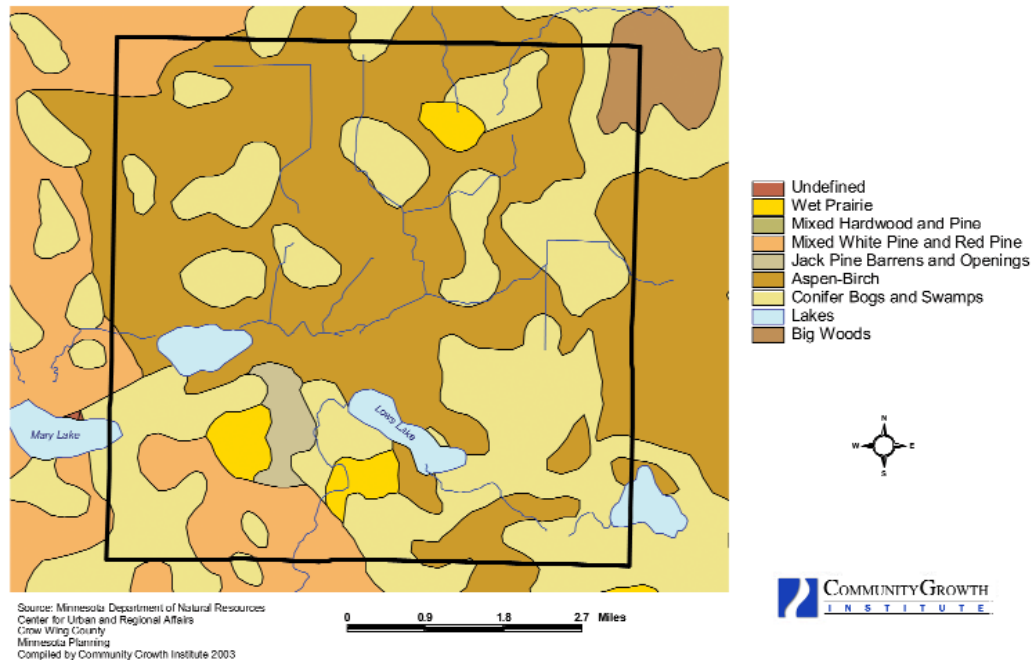
Farming helped homesteaders provide food and income for their families and continues to support citizens living there today. However, a short growing season and wetland soils characterized by poor drainage and high acidity have kept crop farming from becoming a stronghold of the local economy. With state and nation-wide shifts away from small, family-run farms to large commercial operations, agriculture is declining in the area.

Harvesting of other natural resources besides timber, particularly plant and animal species, has provided area residents with the means for making a living for nearly 100 years. Deer, waterfowl, and other game species have always been bountiful. Blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, mushrooms, and wild rice grew in abundance in area woods and wetlands and were commonly harvested by settlers. Wild rice was so plentiful that, in the 1950's, a wild rice plant was established in the neighboring City of Emily. Reportedly, it was "the best equipped, and only completely modern, processing plant in the state of Minnesota.<sup>ii</sup>" Today, wild rice is disappearing as development and wetland drainage negatively impact the riparian systems that support it. Other harvesting



activities are done primarily for recreation rather than for subsistence. These activities, coupled with the scenic beauty of the area, have drawn visitors from far and wide to local resorts and campgrounds for nearly a century.

## Little Pine Township: Pre-Vegetation

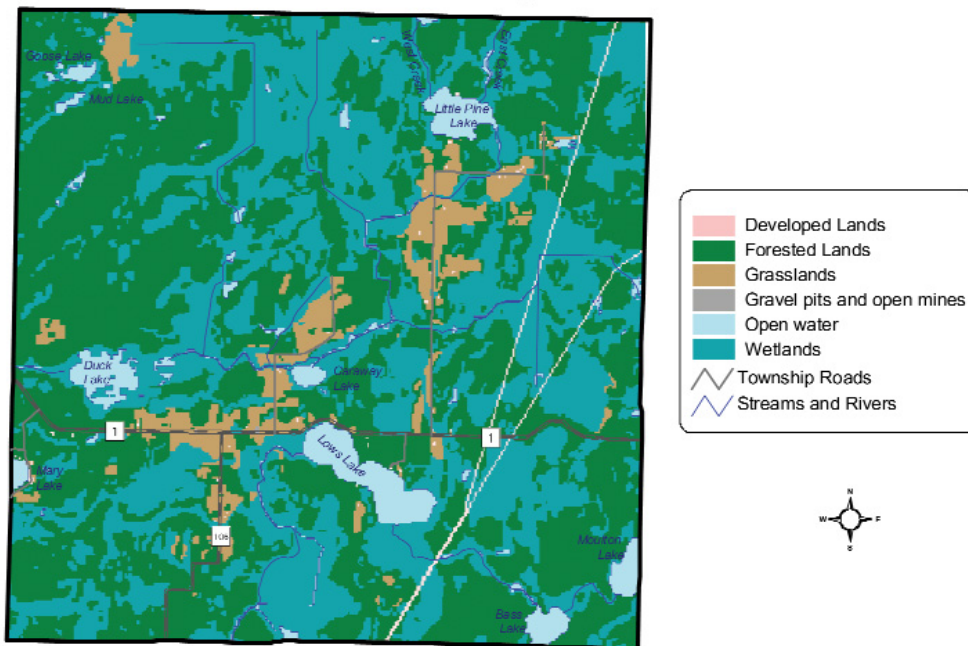


### III. CURRENT TRENDS

#### A Testament to the Past

Today, Little Pine Township is a testament to the past. It has not changed much since the turn of the 20th century, still possessing a wealth of uninterrupted, high quality natural areas and open space and an abundance of wildlife species. The timber industry, agriculture, and home-based businesses continue to support local residents. The majority of Little Pine Township's 82 residents are elderly and has lived in the township for many years. The township has not experienced a population increase since 1930.

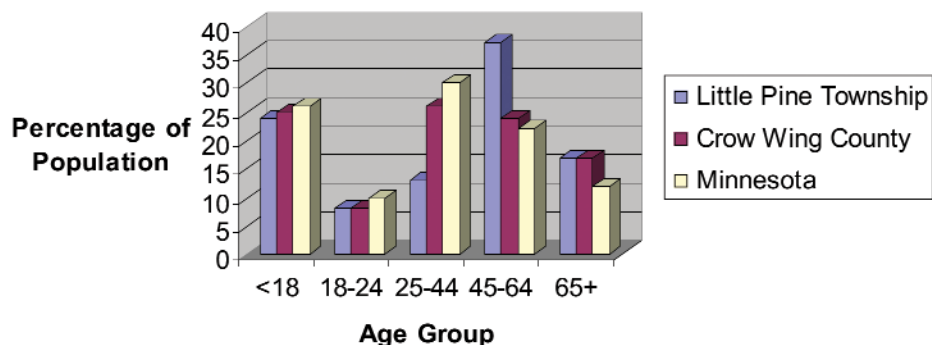
**Little Pine Township: Current Land Use**



Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Center for Urban and Regional Affairs  
Crow Wing County  
Minnesota Planning  
Compiled by Community Growth Institute 2003

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**Little Pine Township - Age Distribution 2000**



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census





### Regional Access and Demand for Scenic Amenities

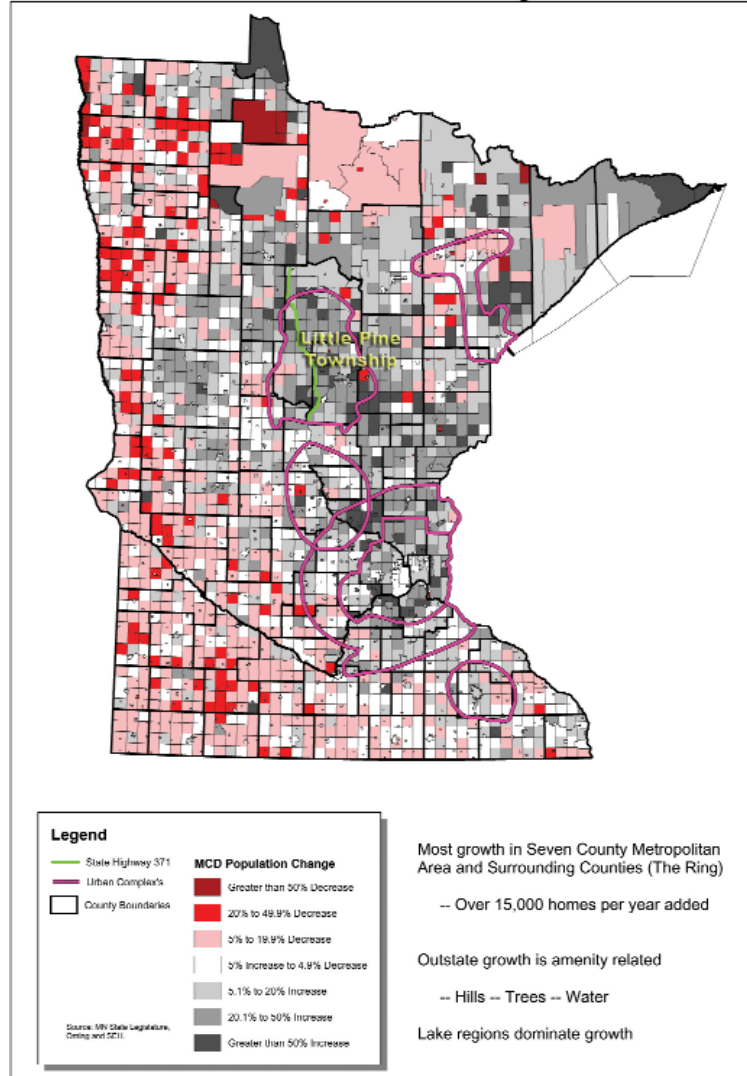
Despite a stable and relatively unchanging population for over 70 years, Little Pine Township is located in the Central Lakes Region, the fifth fastest growing region in Minnesota. People are drawn to this area for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is its natural beauty.

As such, land speculation is on the rise as people become aware of the high quality of life in Little Pine Township.

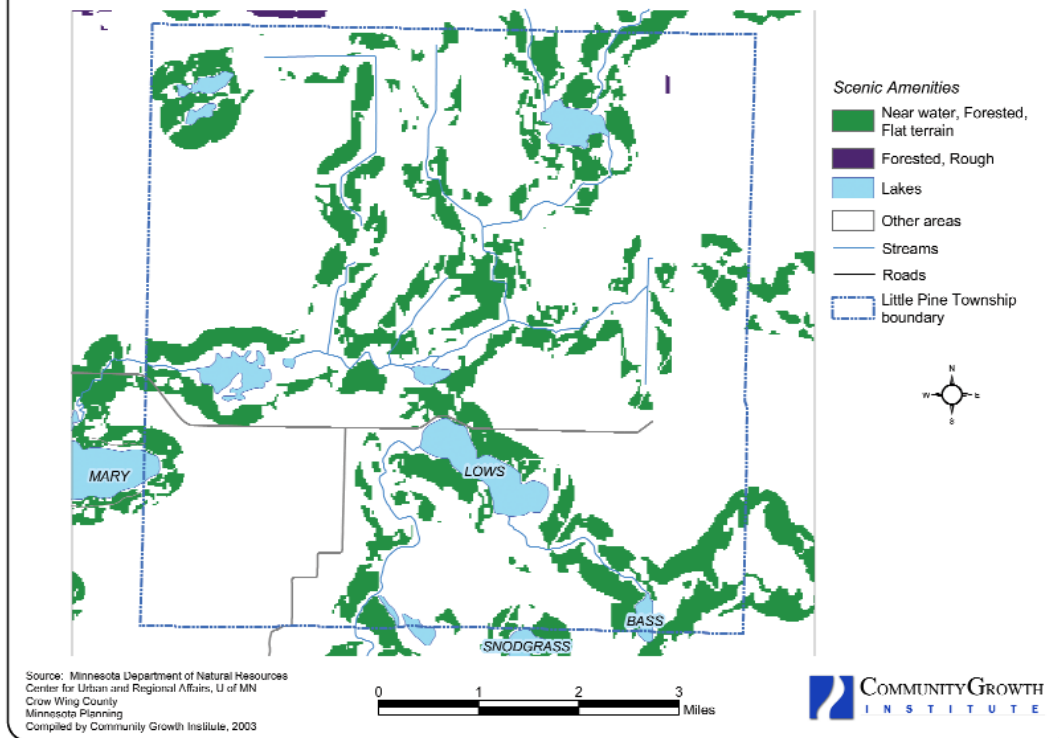
Many factors are driving this phenomenon. First, advances in technology, such as personal computers, cell phones, e-mail, fiber optics, and the Internet, have severed ties to central offices and larger cities by enabling people to stay connected to their jobs from remote locations. Second, improvements in transportation have enabled people to live farther away from jobs and services and provided

easier access to tourists and weekend vacationers. The expansion of Highway 169 and improvements to State Highway 6 have made travel to Little Pine Township easier and safer for people in the Twin Cities. A drive that used to take four hours twenty years ago now takes two. Lastly, the baby boomer generation – those individuals born in the years immediately following World War II – are nearing retirement age. With years of accumulated wealth, this generation has the ability to enjoy the flexibility that technological advances provide. As quality of life becomes the deciding factor for relocation, many will opt for the beauty and serenity of Minnesota's Central Lake Region, including Little Pine Township. Little Pine Township, with its wealth of forests, lakes, wetlands, and rolling hills, is a prime target for future development, especially as neighboring communities become congested and lose their natural appeal.

### Minnesota Population Change 1990-2000



## Little Pine Township: Scenic Amenities



### Redevelopment Potential

What will this potential growth mean for Little Pine Township? One need only look to the neighboring city of Emily to see the impacts. In Emily, new residents are converting lakeshore property to affluent residential areas. Here, the value



of old cabins is dwarfed by the value of the land that they sit on. This disparity is a prime indicator of redevelopment potential. As a result of these high land values, lake lots are purchased primarily by wealthy individuals or families who establish new homes that tend to be larger than the older cabins and homes in the area. Landscaping accompanying these new homes is suburban in character, typified by the

clearing of trees, removal of shoreline vegetation, and the addition of turf and sandy beaches. This sort of redevelopment can be very traumatic to the character of the area and to the ecological health and function of its natural systems. In Little Pine Township, property likely to be redeveloped in this manner is located around lakes and Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) that are attractive because they will never be developed.

Current trends in growth and development in the Central Lakes Region, if they continue to Little Pine Township, will likely lead to:

- **All developable lakeshore being subdivided and built upon.**
- **Most older, small lake cabins being expanded or replaced by larger, more expensive homes.**
- **Off-lakeshore land adjacent to roads and land with views of water and forested valleys will be developed.**
- **Areas of old and blighted housing.**
- **County Highway 1 becoming a commercial strip leading out from Emily.**
- **The natural, rural character of Little Pine Township will be changed.**

Given the choice, many people would choose to live in a beautiful area like Little Pine Township. Advances in technology and transportation as well as rising affluence among Americans have provided more opportunities for people to choose where they want to live. As technology continues to advance, areas like Little Pine Township should expect to see accelerated development pressures.

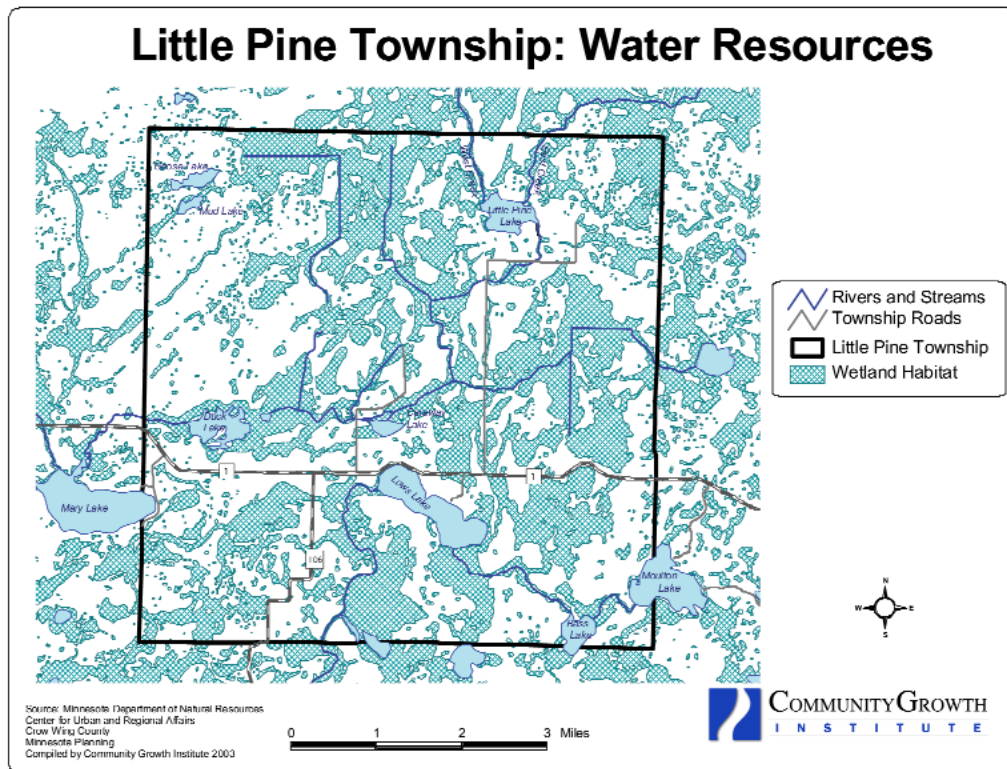


## IV. THE FUTURE

### A Natural Heritage Worth Preserving

Little Pine Township's natural amenities are its strongest assets. As such, current land uses and natural resources were mapped to provide a baseline for future land use decisions. These maps identify significant natural amenities that are particularly susceptible to development. By preserving these areas and targeting future development in more suitable areas, Little Pine Township seeks to grow in a sustainable manner so as to preserve its natural heritage for future generations to use and enjoy.

Lakes and wetlands constitute 39% of the land cover in Little Pine Township, providing many recreational opportunities and habitat for aquatic plants and animals. Wetlands act as water storage areas to prevent flooding, filter nutrients



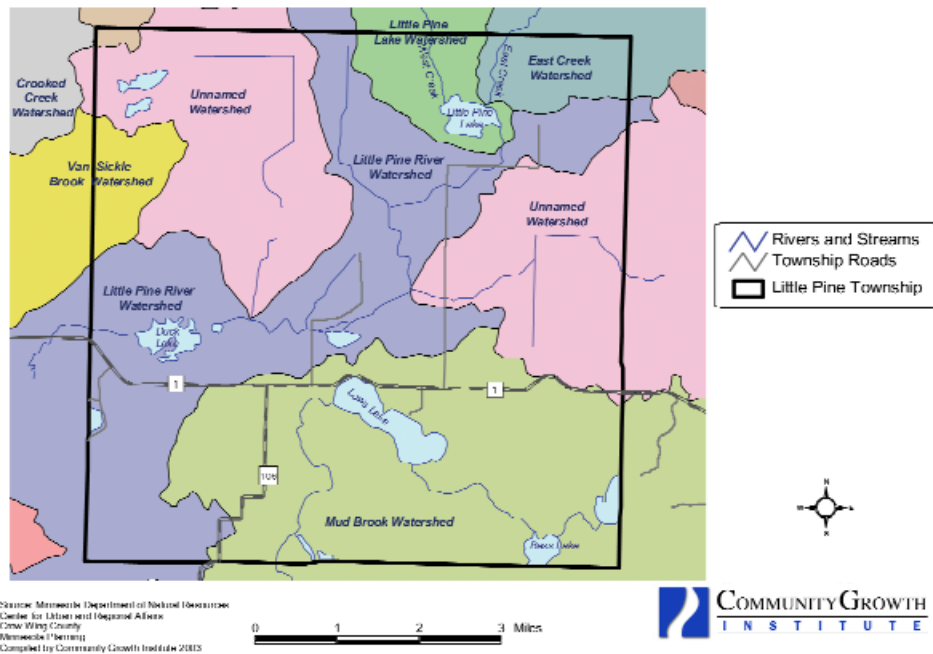
and sediments from runoff, and provide wildlife habitat for many rare species. They support a higher degree of species diversity and higher individual species populations compared to upland landscapes.

Forests constitute 50% of land cover. Large tracts of inner-forest areas also exist throughout Little Pine Township, with the potential to support many rare plant and animal species that can only survive in undisturbed interior forest cores, such as songbirds, wolves, and pine martens. Smaller forest tracts and areas on the outskirts of large cores are considered edge forest and provide habitat for many game species.



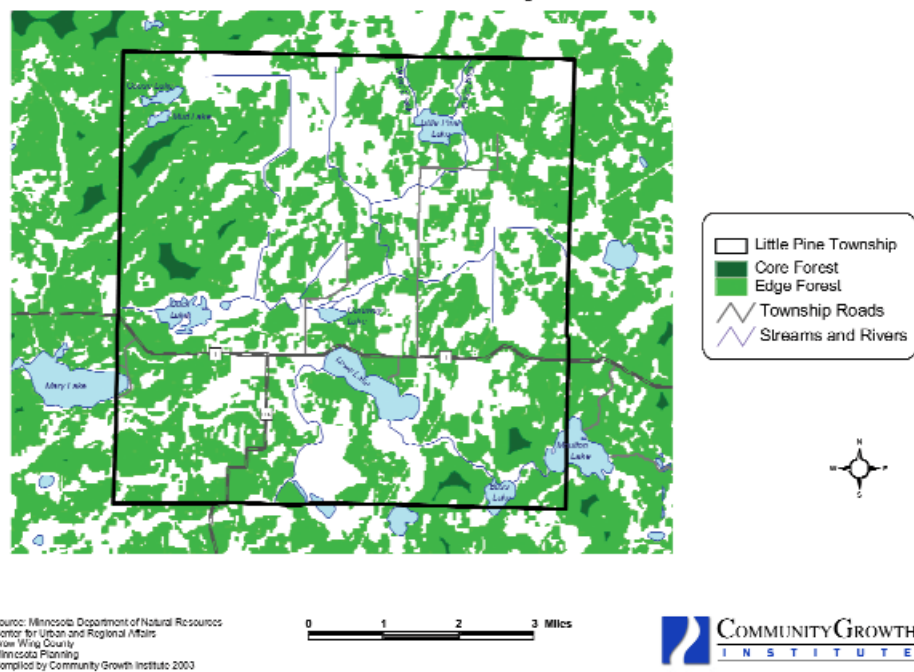


## Little Pine Township: Watersheds

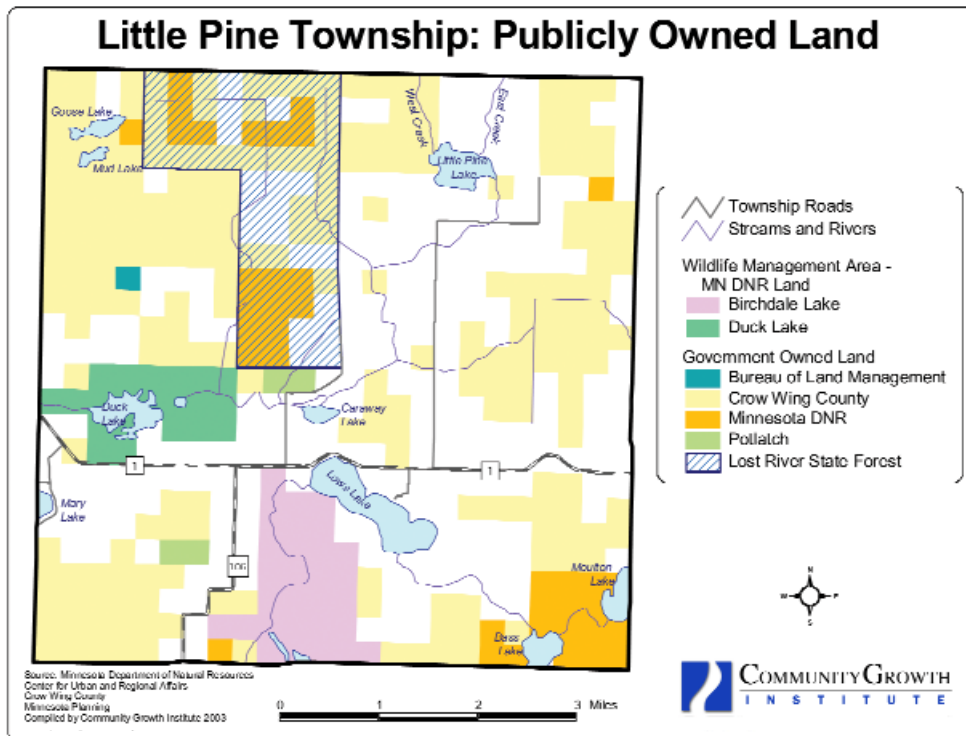


Because roughly a third of wetlands and forested areas in Little Pine Township are publicly owned, residents have no control over their management, especially with respect to logging practices. Clear cutting is of particular concern to area residents, who worry about erosion and sedimentation in the watershed, loss of tree species and age diversity, aesthetics, and disruption to and degradation of wildlife habitat caused by this practice. This is of particular concern where rare, non-game species exist within the township.

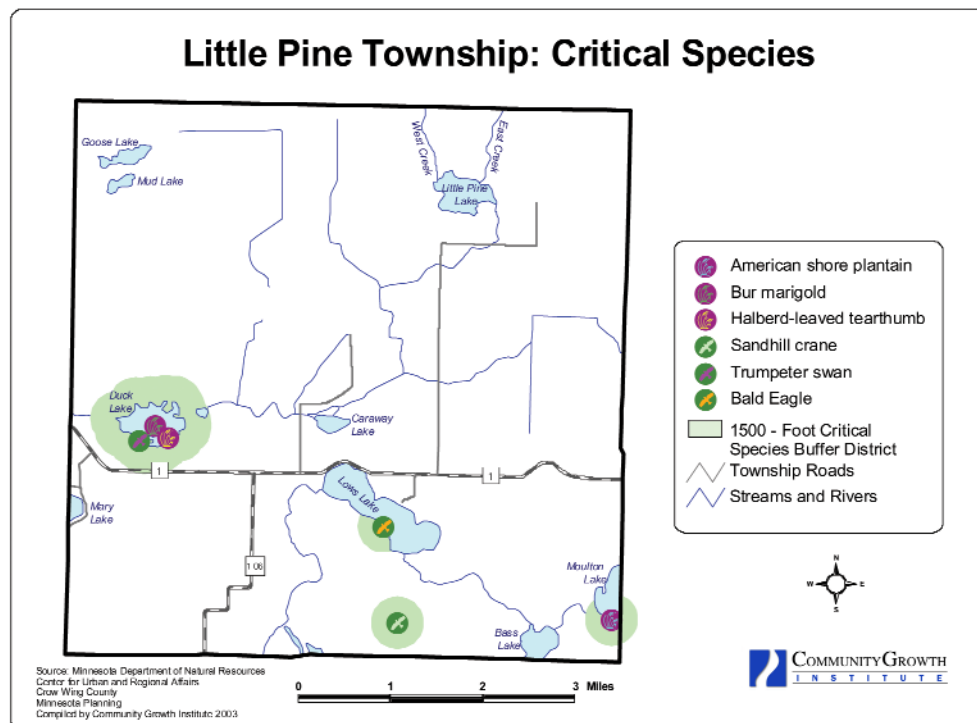
## Little Pine Township: Forest Habitat







Approximately 45% of land in Little Pine Township is privately owned. Wetlands and lakes limit development potential to the point that only 2/3rds of private land in the township is available to be developed. Because the township population is so small, zoning and the issuance of building permits and subdivision approval has historically been done by Crow Wing County with little or no input from the township. By establishing a stronger relationship with the county and creating a vision for





its future, Little Pine Township hopes to gain more control of its destiny.

### **Creating a Long Term Vision**

Over the course of three community workshops and interim special committee meetings, residents of Little Pine Township created a vision of a well-informed community making good decisions in an open and inclusive government system. They seek a balance of regulations and taxation, with policies that are clear, consistent, and fair to all citizens while ensuring the good of the community as a whole.

They also identified issues important to them and to the future of their community. These issues centered on the township's lack of ability to govern itself and forge its own future. As a rural community with no local zoning controls of its own, residents of Little Pine Township face unique challenges as they strive to improve their quality of life and shape the future of their community. Of special concern is the township's relationship to Crow Wing County; preservation of the natural beauty and diversity of its forests, lakes, and wetlands; long term maintenance of its roads; regulation of all terrain vehicles; and the aesthetic, financial, and environmental impacts of future development. These five issues, along with information collected on demographics and land use in the Township, formed the basis for dialogue during the planning process and led to a framework of goals and strategies to guide future policy and decision-making in Little Pine Township.



## V. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Through a series of three community workshops and over twenty special committee meetings, Little Pine Township residents developed goals for their community. After goals were developed, the groups worked to develop strategies to implement those goals.

**Goal 1:** *Work with Crow Wing County to increase local influence over land use decisions in Little Pine Township.*

With only 82 residents, Little Pine Township is governed by a town board. In the State of Minnesota, townships are weaker forms of government than cities and counties. Land use decisions for Little Pine Township are made and administered by Crow Wing County. Unfortunately, the citizens of Little Pine Township often feel uninformed and have little say in what types of developments are permitted in the township. Since it is the township that must ultimately bear the burden of dealing with conflicts and paying for infrastructure and services for new development, township residents wish to have a stronger voice in land use decisions.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Adopt a zoning map for the township that reflects the desired pattern of development.**
- **Develop land use and subdivision ordinances to implement the Comprehensive Plan and the zoning map.**
- **Present Crow Wing County with the Comprehensive Plan, land use and subdivision ordinances and consider requesting the authority to administer these documents locally.**
- **Consider an agreement with the City of Emily for day-to-day administrative services of Little Pine Township's land use and subdivision ordinances.**

**Goal 2:** *Maintain commercial logging practices on public land in a manner that is not detrimental to the environment, public safety, or well-being of residents. Recognizing that not all commercial logging practices are detrimental to the environment, citizens wish to ensure a balance of clear-cutting and selective cutting practices on public to prevent same-age, single-species stands. They also wish to be notified of and involved in planning for logging activities on public land.*

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Work with public land managers to inventory, identify, and plan for the protection and restoration of undeveloped public land for wildlife habitat, focusing especially on ecologically significant areas such as inner forests or rare plant communities.**



- **Consider options for managing logging activities to reduce impacts by setting minimum standards and potentially requiring permits.**
- **Request that all public agencies inform the township before logging activities take place.**
- **Request coordination among state and county agencies that harvest timber within the township limits.**
- **Prohibit detrimental logging practices in areas with threatened and endangered species.**
- **Be proactive in consulting with private and public land owners to try and obtain a balance of harvesting techniques.**
- **Over time, seek to develop a forest management plan for the township.**

**Goal 3:** *Maintain adequate roads to serve the needs of residents in Little Pine Township.*

Residents want a fair road maintenance system where damage is paid for by those who cause it. Citizens were also concerned about building occurring within the road right-of-way.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Develop a regular schedule for maintaining township roads.**
- **Work to develop a system where damage to roads caused by heavy loadings is paid for by those causing the damage.**
- **Require notification when loggers are using the roads. Inspect the condition of the roads before and after logging activities.**
- **Encourage that hauling of harvested timber be done in the winter.**
- **Cost-share with landowners who request dust-control.**
- **Work with the state and the county to obtain money that is supposed to go towards road maintenance within the township.**

**Goal 4:** *Regulate all-terrain vehicles (ATV) so that they are compatible with the community.*

Many concerns emerged around the damage caused by misused motorized vehicles such as ATVs, personal watercraft, and snowmobiles. Residents hope to accommodate ATV enthusiasts without impacting delicate ecosystems, private roads, or public enjoyment of peace and tranquility.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Communicate with law enforcement officials to identify offenders.**
- **Provide all residents with the phone number to call to report illegal ATV use.**
- **Develop a hand-out educating people on the damage caused by ATV's and**



**the cost of that damage to taxpayers.**

- **Require that ATV's not ride in the ditch but instead ride on the road surface. Require ATV operators to meet all vehicle regulations when riding on public roads.**

**Goal 5:** *Ensure that non-agricultural development occurs where it fits with the area, respects the environment and does not obligate current taxpayers to future expenses.*

Residents value the rural, natural feel of the area. While many wish to control or stop development altogether, they realize that this cannot be accomplished without excessive use of regulation and negative consequences for current residents. Thus, they opt to manage future growth by preserving significant natural areas and encouraging development in areas where it is most suitable. The costs of new development will be borne by developers and future residents so as not to place an unfair burden on existing residents.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Do not allow variances for the creation of smaller lots.**
- **All new developments must be accessible from public right-of-way.**
- **All new roads must be improved to township standards prior to the township taking over maintenance of the road.**
- **Zone land based on the land characteristics.**
- **Establish a minimum buildable area for each lot. Buildable area should exclude wetlands and other marginally developable property.**

**Goal 6:** *Exert influence over the management of public lands in order to buffer development, maintain wildlife habitat, ENHANCE PASSIVE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES and preserve the natural environment.*

Nearly 55% of the land within Little Pine Township is publicly owned, providing a valuable but relatively untapped recreational resource. Local, county, state and federal governments manage it with little collaboration among the agencies. This land is critical because it serves many important environmental functions and provides residents with open space, natural beauty, wildlife habitat, and opportunities for recreation. Residents wish to be informed of future management activities on public lands and, more importantly, want to be involved in management decisions to ensure that public lands aren't over-logged or developed.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Designate a volunteer person or committee to attend Crow Wing County meetings and maintain regular communication with other county and state**





public land managers and policy makers.

- **Secure township representation on county commissions and advisory boards that deal with parks and public lands.**
- **Obtain copies of state and county land management plans. Coordinate local decisions between Little Pine Township's Comprehensive Plan and state and county land management plans.**
- **Get on mailing lists for state and county decision-making processes. Create, publish, and circulate a township-adopted statement recognizing the importance of wildlife habitat and preservation of the natural environment.**
- **Seek ways to use public lands for trails and other recreational activities.**
- **Ensure that public lands remain accessible to citizens.**

**Goal 7:** *Preserve the natural beauty of the lakes, wetlands and forests.*

As Little Pine Township grows, there will be pressure to alter the natural shoreline and clear and develop more forests. Both dramatically change the natural, open appearance of the area. "Suburban-style development"—characterized by the clearing of native vegetation, draining of wetlands, and replanting with turf and ornamental landscaping—poses the biggest threat to natural beauty in the area. Other factors detracting from natural aesthetics include litter and roadside dumping, debris on private and public property, poorly maintained properties, and building structures that clash with the natural environment. Citizens wish to retain the natural appearance and scenic value of the lakes and forests for future generations to enjoy.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Require natural buffers on lakes and rivers in new developments.**
- **Encourage properties that are currently developed to reestablish natural buffers around lakes, wetlands, rivers, roads and forests.**
- **Establish shoreline preservation standards to limit clearing of vegetation along the shorelines of lakes, wetlands and rivers.**
- **Educate current landowners and newcomers about the benefits of preserving natural shorelines.**
- **Collaborate with the DNR, area lake associations, businesses, real estate companies, schools, and environmental groups on education and restoration activities.**
- **Prohibit new water oriented accessory structures and other structures within the shoreline setback zone unless there are no other reasonable alternatives.**
- **Examine and, if feasible, implement voluntary growth management strategies such as Purchase of Development Rights, Conservation Easements and Transfer of Development Rights or Land Acquisition (See Appendix on Land Preservation Policy Tools).**



**Goal 8:** *Protect the ecological balance and fishing opportunities of the area's lakes, streams and rivers and work to improve those that have suffered damage.*

The removal of native vegetation, introduction of invasive plant species, pollution from septic systems, increased use by boats and personal watercrafts, increased stormwater runoff, and damming and channeling streams and rivers all negatively impact the riparian systems in Little Pine Township. Citizens wish to preserve current water quality, fishing opportunities, and shoreland habitat and work to negate damage that has already been done.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Require natural buffers on lakes and rivers in new developments.**
- **Identify the watershed in which new developments lie and regulate development impacts based on the sensitivity of the water body.**
- **Manage stormwater run-off in new developments and on road projects to prevent runoff into water bodies.**
- **Identify ditches and pollution point sources that discharge to water bodies. Work with lake associations to obtain infrared photos of all the lakes in Little Pine Township to determine where sewer contamination is occurring. Target faulty systems for updating and work to eliminate these sources of pollution.**
- **Encourage currently developed properties to reestablish natural buffers on lakes, wetlands, rivers, roads and forests.**
- **Establish shoreline preservation standards to limit clearing of vegetation along shorelines. Make the issuance of permits contingent on meeting these standards and make sure people are aware that permits are needed for construction along shorelines.**
- **Collaborate with lake associations and the DNR to provide education to people about the environmental benefits of preserving natural shorelines.**
- **Inform lake associations when a new development is proposed within the minor watershed of their lake.**

**Goal 9:** *Protect and maintain area wetlands as a critical watershed resource. Citizens are concerned with fluctuating water levels and flooding of tamarack and aspen swamps, agricultural land, and residential areas. As mentioned in Goal 8, they are also concerned about the ecological balance of area lakes, streams and rivers. Wetlands are highly valued for their function in maintaining water levels, filtering run-off before it enters riparian systems, providing habitat for a diversity of wildlife species, and their scenic value. Residents wish to protect them from future drainage or development.*

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:



- **Enact more stringent rules that make it more difficult to destroy wetlands through dredge and fill.**
- **Do not count wetlands as buildable areas when computing minimum lot sizes.**

**Goal 10:** *Maintain abundant, healthy and diverse populations of area wildlife. Citizens in Little Pine Township enjoy wildlife watching and hunting. Habitat fragmentation, pollution, disease, invasive species, and increased interactions with people pose serious threats to local wildlife populations and could lead to localized extinction of many species. Citizens want to protect, connect, and enhance existing ecosystems to maintain stable populations of both game and non-game wildlife species well into the future.*

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Encourage corridors between large habitat areas and restore and maintain buffers around this habitat to enhance it and make it easier for species to disperse and migrate.**
- **Encourage voluntary conservation easements, transfer of development rights, and/or purchase of development rights from private landowners to maintain and restore buffers and corridors. Work with the state and county governments, as well as non-profits, to establish conservation easements on a city, county and regional level.**
- **Work with the DNR to obtain a local species inventory and use the DNR species inventory to identify and provide for food, cover, and breeding needs for area wildlife.**
- **Zone adequate habitat buffers around endangered and threatened species.**

**Goal 11:** *Sustain edge and inner forests with a diversity of native plant species at varied stages of maturity.*

Little Pine Township is heavily forested with a diversity of cover types ranging from conifers to mixed hardwoods. Citizens wish to protect and, where possible, connect large, uninterrupted tracts of forested land. They want to preserve the diversity of trees, shrubs, and ground cover vegetation at different stages of succession. They wish to minimize fragmentation of forested land caused by development. They strive to have sustainable forest practices in place in the township.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by the Little Pine Township:

- **Obtain a species inventory to determine the current diversity.**
- **Using the results of the species inventory and working with different levels of government, develop a sustainable forest management plan.**
- **Consider options for managing logging activities to reduce impacts by set-**



ting minimum standards and potentially requiring permits.

- **Request coordination among state and county agencies that harvest timber within the township limits.**
- **Proactively work with private landowners to preserve forested lands through management programs such as those contained in the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act and statewide Best Management Practices.**

**Goal 12:** *Protect the quality of groundwater.*

Although Little Pine Township currently has clean groundwater, faulty or poorly maintained septic systems and deep-hole mining practices threaten the quality of this resource. Citizens wish to protect their wells and groundwater from future contamination.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Work to prevent mining operations that allow chemicals to enter the groundwater.**
- **Educate citizens about the problems individual sewage treatment systems and private land use practices (like landscaping and fertilizing) pose to watersheds and groundwater.**

**Goal 13:** *Maintain the peace and serenity of the natural environment, uphold the relaxed, quiet way of life and maintain the low level of crime in Little Pine Township.*

People are attracted to Little Pine Township because of the peace and quiet it offers – a stark contrast to the noise and chaos of urban areas. They enjoy the sounds of nature, but increasingly those sounds are being drowned out by motorized recreational vehicles including ATVs, boats, and personal watercraft. Increased traffic and congestion also detracts from the serenity of the area. Citizens don't want Little Pine Township to lose its quiet appeal. Too many people actively using a resource for recreational purposes can lead to destruction of the resource. For example, ATVs, snowmobiles, and personal watercraft, when used at high speeds and in the wrong areas, can destroy vegetation, shorelands, and increase run-off and sedimentation in watersheds (especially from ripped up ditches and trails that run through wetlands and small streams). They are also noisy and disruptive in residential and natural areas. Most citizens appreciate the enjoyment associated with motorized recreational vehicles, but are concerned about those who abuse their rights to use them. Citizens wish to encourage responsible usage in order to alleviate the negative impacts these vehicles can have. Citizens also wish to eliminate trash and debris often left behind by users.



To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Ensure zoning is consistent with peace and quiet by separating or buffering conflicting uses and nuisances.**
- **Utilize public lands as a buffer from development.**
- **Work with lake associations to develop lake management plans for each lake in the township. Lake management plans would include lake-specific regulations on items such as boat speeds, time-of-day restrictions on jet skis, motorized and non-motorized uses and no-wake zones.**
- **Work with ATV and snowmobile clubs to consolidate trail systems that won't interfere with residential or environmentally sensitive areas and educate users of these active recreation devices on ways to reduce conflicts and improve safety.**
- **Partner with neighboring cities and townships to provide more police enforcement and increase the law enforcement presence.**
- **Work with local residents to establish Neighborhood Watches.**

**Goal 14:** *Allow home-based businesses that are compatible with residential properties and have minimal environmental impacts in order to provide employment opportunities, promote start-up industries, and provide services to the public.*

Home-based businesses are beneficial to communities as long as they do not conflict with surrounding residential areas or negatively impact the environment. Little Pine Township wishes to encourage small home-based businesses that exist in harmony with their surroundings.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Use a large-lot zoning strategy so that home-based business operations can operate without causing a nuisance or worry of encroachment from neighbors.**
- **Provide clear definitions to determine whether or not a home occupation is suitable and work with local business owners to ensure business practices compatible with neighboring uses.**
- **Establish clear criteria to guide the establishment of all new home-based businesses.**

**Goal 15:** *Land use approvals should be made to provide efficient use of the land so as to not obligate the township to increasing expenditures in the future. Development should pay FOR ITSELF.*

Residents are concerned about increasing property taxes. Development that does not pay for itself obligates future residents to an even higher tax burden. Currently, costs for road maintenance comprise the largest portion of the town-





ship's budget. Even where developers construct the roads within their developments, the increased tax revenue from the new lots often does not pay the costs to provide long-term maintenance and services to the properties in the development. This forces existing property owners to pick up the slack, increasing taxes for all and providing an unnecessary subsidy for developers. This is especially true where density is low and development patterns are dispersed.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **The township should require cost-benefit analysis on each development.**
- **Limit new road development unless it can be justified through a cost benefit analysis. Zone to have additional development use existing roadway infrastructure.**
- **Require stormwater management within each new development to contain stormwater runoff impacts both within and outside of the development.**
- **Inform developers and residents on the hidden costs of development.**
- **Work with state and county representatives to limit the amount of property valuation increases.**
- **Require development agreements to ensure the performance of developers when subdividing land.**

**Goal 16:** Ensure that elected leaders and appointed officials know and understand goals and strategies contained in the Comprehensive Plan. Many residents and concerned individuals have volunteered a great deal of time working on the details of this Comprehensive Plan. There has been some skepticism throughout the entire process that the work would be in vain, that elected and appointed officials will choose to not follow the plan as soon as it becomes difficult to do so. Residents want to make sure that the plan is not discarded but is repeatedly referred to. The Comprehensive Plan needs to be the driving vision behind the decisions that are made locally.

To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Have an annual briefing for local leaders where the Comprehensive Plan is reviewed.**
- **Monitor the plan annually to measure the progress made.**
- **Distribute a copy of the Comprehensive Plan to Town Board candidates and elected officials.**
- **Work to keep citizens and local groups involved as advocates.**
- **Officials should not feel rushed but should slow down and conduct research before making decisions.**
- **Get professional help when needed to make informed decisions.**



**Goal 17:** *Protect agricultural land and agricultural practices as an important economic and cultural component of Little Pine Township.*

Little Pine Township has a long tradition of farming. Agricultural land and agricultural practices are part of the character of the community. It provides income to residents, provides wildlife habitat and helps the township maintain low development densities. Little Pine Township residents want to maintain this important part of their culture and protect agricultural life from encroaching development.

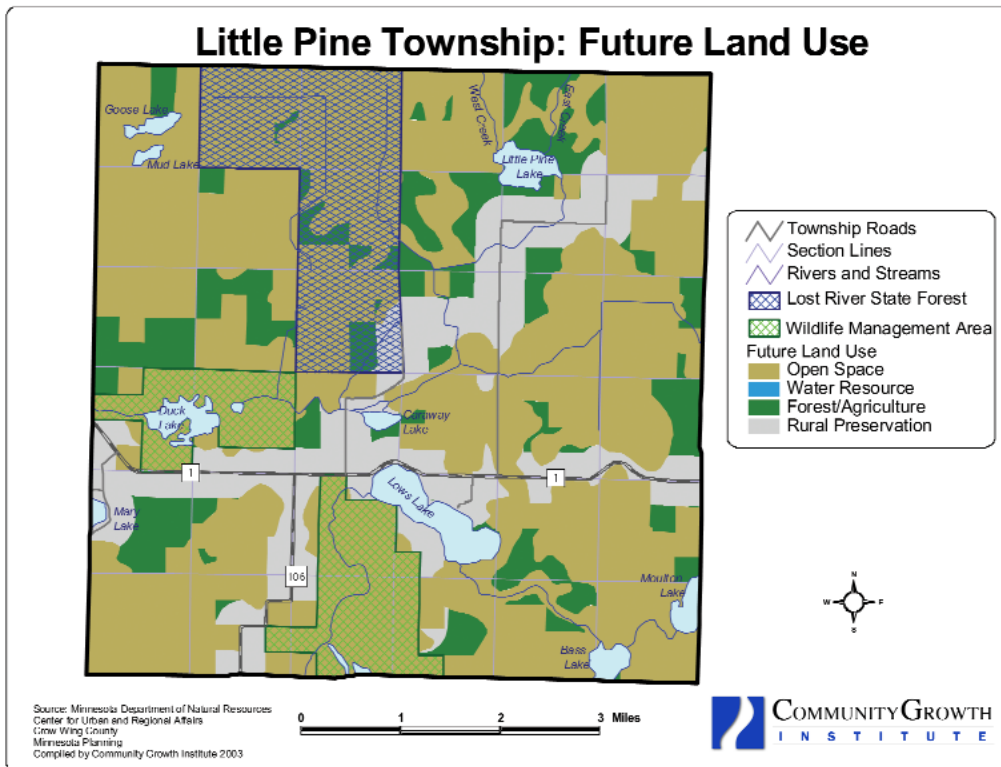
To achieve this goal, the following strategies should be implemented by Little Pine Township:

- **Protect agricultural land from encroachment of development by maintaining large minimum lot sizes, especially around existing farming operations.**
- **Inhabitants of new development near long-standing agricultural areas should sign a waiver acknowledging the agricultural operation and any negative impacts the operation has.**



## VI. FUTURE LAND USE

The bridge between the Comprehensive Plan and the local ordinances is the Future Land Use Map. The Future Land Use Map lays out in a graphic format the long-range vision of the community.



To enact the vision contained in this Comprehensive Plan, the following land use patterns should be followed in Little Pine Township:

- 1. Open Space** - A land use designation for preservation of sensitive areas, unique resources and designated non-developable property. Areas such as wetlands, bluffs, threatened and endangered species habitat, historic sites, government owned land and lands set-aside as part the development process should be zoned as Open Space.
- 2. Forest/Agriculture Preservation** - A land use designation for sustainable management of forested areas, agricultural areas and limited residential development. Lands in these areas are not currently served by public roads. Minimum lot sizes in this land use classification should be one dwelling per 40 acres.
- 3. Water Resource** - A land use designation for water bodies classified by the State of Minnesota.
- 4. Rural Agriculture Preservation** – A land use designation that provides for low density, rural development along existing roadways. Minimum lot sizes in this land use classification would be 15 acres.

The township has intentionally left out any land use designations that resemble the state shoreland standards as the lots sizes provided in the recommended state guidelines are not consistent with the Township vision or the goals of this Comprehensive Plan.

County zoning classifications should be kept as they currently are unless there is a request by the landowner to change them. In light of such request, properties should only be rezoned to fit development patterns outlined in the Future Land Use Plan.



## VII. IMPLEMENTATION

Preparing the Little Pine Township Comprehensive Plan document has accomplished two important aspects for planning the township's future. First, it serves as an organizing tool that says who the citizens of Little Pine Township are and expresses their passion on the issues and challenges affecting the quality of life in Little Pine Township. It provides background information on the township's environmental, social and economic assets as the basis for future policy and decisions.

Second, it provides a community vision, a look into the future at the kind of community citizens seek, focusing on what kinds of improvements need to be made, and providing a framework for how and where these improvements should occur.

The third piece of this plan that is crucial to its ultimate success is the implementation system. Implementation of the plan is going to take hard work and commitment, not just from community leaders, but from other government units (including Crow Wing County and the State of Minnesota), local citizens, and a wide variety of volunteers and interest groups. Because there are too many strategies in this plan for the township to implement on its own, cooperation among these stakeholders must happen to implement the plan and make the community vision a reality.

To create this plan, 122 volunteers from Little Pine Township and the City of Emily worked at Town Hall meetings and as members of various committees, many of whom have expressed interest in forming community volunteer groups to carry out the strategies of this plan. There are many more people in Little Pine Township who would be willing to volunteer their time to the community if they knew their efforts would not be wasted. With a large number of retired and semi-retired individuals in the township, there is a lot of wisdom and knowledge available. There are also quite a few working-age people who have a vested interest in the area. The township needs to organize these people, and mobilize and support them to do great things.

This comprehensive plan is a long-term vision and framework for action for Little Pine Township. As such, the Township Board should update it periodically, recommending minor changes when aspects of the plan no longer reflect the will of the community. Such changes will require a public hearing in order to take effect and should not be done half-heartedly. A community-wide review of the Comprehensive Plan should be done at least every five years.

The plan, once adopted, becomes the guiding document for township policy. It takes precedence over other planning documents and other rules, ordinances and policies. The only way to make sure that the plan is implemented is for concerned citizens to stay involved.

This plan will only be as effective as the people it serves.





## VIII. APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

#### Active Recreation

The term “active recreation” in this plan refers to any type of recreation that results in the consumption or intense use of the natural environment. It also refers to competitive sporting events. Active recreation activities include any use of motorized vehicles – including ATVs, watercraft, or snowmobiles – hunting, fishing, team sports, tennis, horseshoe tossing, and berry or mushroom picking.

#### Buffers

Several strategies mention the use of “natural buffers” or “vegetative buffers” around natural features such as lakes, streams, wetlands, inner forests, steep terrain, and other amenities. These buffers are simply areas in which development is restricted and native vegetation is maintained in order to protect and maintain ecological function. Also suggested in some strategies are “buffer zones” around the perimeter of public lands and new developments, along certain stretches of roads, or surrounding existing farms or mines. These buffer zones are areas in which land use activities are limited in order to reduce the impacts of new developments, such as noise and visual pollution, and to protect existing land uses valued by residents from future conflicts with new development.

#### Cluster Developments

Clustering is a method of land preservation in which homes in a new subdivision are constructed at a higher net density in one portion of the development in order to maintain another part of the property as permanent open space, usually for common use. Maximum gross density specified in the zoning code is maintained so that, in essence, allowable density from areas to be preserved as open space is transferred to build-able areas on the site.

The Fields of St. Croix is an example of a cluster development in Lake Elmo, Minnesota. Homes are grouped tightly together in one portion of the development with the remaining land set aside as “community agriculture”, which includes a working farm that residents can purchase stock in. Due to the flexibility in its design, the development also features an innovative wetland wastewater treatment system, permanently preserved woodlands and prairies along steep slopes for wildlife, and on-site storm water management. The shared open space is held in covenant by the community association and enjoyed by all residents without the threat of future development. The Fields of St. Croix features a mix of affordable housing choices and has been so successful that people must sign on to a waiting list to purchase a home there.

#### Consensus

A decision-making process in which all viewpoints are considered and solutions are derived not from majority vote (win/lose), but rather by addressing all needs in a manner that is fair to all (fair/fair).



### **Exactions, Dedications and Impact Fees**

Exactions, dedications, and impact fees are types of land use controls commonly used to get new development to pay for itself. They ensure that new residents pay the costs for the needs they generate – such as roads, parks, and schools - without committing existing residents to additional expenses. To be considered legitimate, exactions, dedications and impact fees should meet the following criteria: 1) the proposed development is creating a need for additional public facilities, 2) required provisions or fees should be proportionate to the impact of the development, and 3) fees collected must go to a designated fund, not into a municipality's general fund.

Minnesota Statute § 462.358, subd. 2a allows municipalities to condition approval of a subdivision upon the provision of public facilities or amenities, including streets, utilities, and parks required by the proposed development. This is known as an exaction.

Impact fees are a type of exaction levied by municipalities to pay for additional capacity and maintenance of off-site infrastructure, including roads and sewers. (Mandelker & Payne, 2001) Impact fees tend to be fixed monetary fees based on such measures as road frontage or percentage of total acreage.

Minnesota Statute § 462.358, subd. 2b allows for the dedication of a reasonable portion of a proposed subdivision to be preserved for conservation purposes, such as wetland conservation or open space, or for public use, such as playgrounds or trails. When there is no land within a proposed subdivision, municipalities can demand a cash equivalent, or “in lieu fee” to be paid to a fund used to acquire open space or public land elsewhere in the municipality to meet the need generated by the proposed development.

### **Impervious Surface**

Any hard surface material - such as asphalt, concrete, brick, or wood - that limits the infiltration and absorption of rainfall and induces high surface runoff rates. (Marsh, 1998) Usually referred to as anything that is not “green” on a development site (Schueler, 1995), including but not limited to roofs, driveways, decks, sidewalks, and patios.

### **Invasive Species**

Non-native plant and animal species that have been introduced into one area from another area that aggressively compete with native plant and animal communities and often destroy entire ecosystems.

### **Overlay Zones**

A zoning district, applied over one or more other districts, that contains additional provisions for special features or conditions, such as historic buildings, wetlands, steep slopes, and downtown residential uses. (Porter, 1997)

### **Passive Recreation**

The term “passive recreation” in this plan refers to any type of recreation that



does not result in consumption of or intense use of the natural environment. Passive recreation activities include snow-shoeing, walking, hiking, canoeing, wildlife watching, and enjoying the scenery.

### **Planned Unit Developments**

Also referred to “planned communities” or “master-planned communities”, Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) are developments that provide a mix of different land uses and building types. PUDs allow for more flexibility in designing creative developments that are better able to meet the needs of present and future citizens, to preserve unique assets in a given area, and to lower infrastructure costs and preserve more open space by reallocating project densities (Mandelker & Payne, 2001). This flexibility stems from the loosening or removal of zoning code restrictions and subdivision regulations. It should be noted that greater flexibility requires a higher commitment of time from local planning commissions, city councils and developers for extensive site review at different stages of development.

Sustainable Development: Minnesota Statute § 4A.07(1) defines sustainable development as that which "maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

### **Watershed**

Everyone lives in a watershed, which is simply a drainage basin for rainfall, comprising a complex network of channels, streams, wetlands, rivers, and lakes. Lakes usually serve as basins.

### **Wildlife Corridors**

A strip of habitat connecting two or more large tracts or patches of wildlife habitat. Corridors are usually located along natural features such as streams, wetlands, or valleys. Corridors enable the movement of animal species for purposes of migration, dispersal, breeding, and finding food.



## Appendix B: Tools for Protecting Natural Resources

The following policy tools have been provided as innovative solutions for protecting natural resources without infringing on private property rights. Each tool has pros and cons that should be weighed seriously before they are adopted, and all will rely heavily on coordination and partnerships between Little Pine Township and Crow Wing County:

### Best Management Practices (BMPs)

BMPs are voluntary guidelines on how to manage property in an environmentally sound manner. These guidelines can be provided to private landowners in booklets, welcome packets, or taught by land management professionals in local workshops. The U.S. Forest Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, University of Minnesota Extension Service, and numerous other government agencies and conservation organizations publish readily-available BMPs targeted to Minnesota forests, lakeshores, wetlands, prairies, and other areas. Benefits of BMPs are that they are completely voluntary and place little to no cost on the local government. They also allow private land to stay in the tax base. However, local governments have no control over where BMPs are being implemented, their success is difficult to measure, and they cannot be enforced.

### Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is the voluntary and usually permanent transfer - through donation or sale - of specified development and land use rights from a landowner to a qualifying organization, such as a non-profit organization, land trust, or government agency. The legal basis of easements as a conservation tool is provided for in Chapter 84C of the Minnesota Statutes, which states that a conservation easement may be established on land in order to “assure its availability for agricultural, forest, recreational or open space use, protecting natural resources, maintaining or enhancing air or water quality, or preserving the historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural aspects.” (The Nature Conservancy, 1996) To be eligible for an easement, land must be evaluated by a conservation organization and determined to have qualities that serve these purposes. If the land qualifies, an easement is placed on the title to the property and recorded with the county. Title to the land is retained by the landowner. Easements are beneficial in that they are completely voluntary for private landowners; land becomes permanently protected from development pressure; private landowners may receive income, estate, or property tax benefits; the cost to local governments is low; and land remains in private ownership as part of the local tax base. The drawbacks of conservation easements include limited compensation to landowners through tax incentives and limited government control over which areas are protected.

### Sources: The Land Protection Toolbox and The Nature Conservancy



**Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)**

Similar to conservation easements, Purchase of Development Rights (often referred to as 'PDRs') are voluntary legal agreements allowing landowners who meet certain criteria to sell the right to develop their property to a conservation organization or government agency. A conservation easement is then placed on the land and is recorded on the title to permanently limit future development of the land. Similar to conservation easements, PDR permanently protects land from development pressure, land remains privately owned and on the local tax roll, and landowners may receive estate and property tax benefits. Unlike conservation easements, PDR ensures that landowners are paid to protect their land and local governments have more control over locations that need to be protected. PDR is also more costly for local governments since they must raise funds to purchase the development rights.

**Source: The Land Protection Toolbox**

**Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)**

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a more complex tool for protecting resources that allows landowners to basically exchange development rights. It involves the creation TDR ordinance that designates a 'sending area' – or preservation area that should not be developed – and a 'receiving area' – or suitable high-density development area. Landowners in a sending area can sell their development rights to landowners in a receiving area, who can then build at higher density. Like PDR, TDR permanently protects land targeted by the local government from development, landowners are compensated for protecting their land and may receive estate and property tax benefits, and land remains in private ownership as part of the tax base. In addition, TDR uses free market mechanisms. TDR tends to be less costly than PDR, but it is difficult to manage and is only successful in areas with a strong real estate market and willing landowners in both receiving and sending areas.

**Source: The Land Protection Toolbox**

**Land Acquisition**

Land acquisition is simply the fee simple purchase of land from willing landowners or the outright donation of land to a government agency or non-profit group from landowners wishing to conserve their land. Unlike any of the other tools, land acquisition assures the local government total control over the land and provides the maximum flexibility for targeting areas in need of protection and determining future use of the land. It also provides financial incentives for landowners. This tool is also the most costly for local governments, not only for the actual purchase of land at market value, but also in lost revenues from removing land from the tax base and taking on the costs and liability of land management.

**Source: The Land Protection Toolbox**





## Regulation

Zoning ordinances and maps, along with subdivision regulations and overlay districts, restrict how land can be used by designating permitted, conditional, accessory, and excluded uses. They also stipulate densities, clustering, setbacks, and lot and building requirements. Regulation tools provide a physical framework for local governments to guide growth and development in a manner that minimizes conflicts and nuisances and ensures public health, safety and welfare. Regulations can be costly for local governments to administer and enforce, are often met with opposition from private property owners, can lead to the separation of uses consistent with “suburban-style” development, and can be weak if not consistently upheld.

## Appendix C: Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA)

Over six million acres of privately owned forest land exist in Minnesota today, five million of which are owned by individuals and families. This land contributes to the economy, ecology, aesthetics, and quality of life of local communities throughout Minnesota. Recognizing the importance of forest lands and the fact that property taxes pose a high cost to forest land owners, the Minnesota State Legislature created the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA). SFIA provides property tax relief to private forest landowners willing to set aside their forested land from development for at least eight years. Rather than seeing credit on their property tax bill, landowners enrolled in the SFIA program will receive annual incentive payments based on the number of acres enrolled in the program.

Landowners are eligible to enroll in the program if they meet the following six requirements:

1. Enrolled property must be at least 20 contiguous acres in size and contain at least 50 percent forest cover.
2. Enrolled property must have a forest management plan and be actively managed according to the plan.
3. Owner(s) must use the Timber Harvesting and Forest Management Guidelines established by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council in 1998.
4. Property must be enrolled for a minimum of eight years; there is no maximum.
5. Enrolled property must have no delinquent property taxes.
6. Enrolled property exceeding 1,920 acres must allow year-round non-motorized public access.

Interested landowners must apply to enroll land under SFIA; enrollment is not automatic. Before applying, landowners must have completed two things:

1. Prepare a DNR certified forest management plan for all land to be enrolled, and
2. Record a covenant stating that all land to be enrolled is not and will not be developed in a manner inconsistent with SFIA requirements for a minimum of eight years.



For more information, contact:

**SFIA Frequently-Asked Questions Website**  
[www.cnr.umn.edu/cfc/nryb/nrr](http://www.cnr.umn.edu/cfc/nryb/nrr)

**Minnesota Forest Resources Council**  
**(651) 603-0109**  
[www.frc.state.mn.us](http://www.frc.state.mn.us)

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources**  
**(888) MINNDNR**  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)

**Minnesota Forestry Association**  
**(800) 821-TREE**  
[www.info@mnforest.com](mailto:www.info@mnforest.com)  
**Source: University of Minnesota Extension Service –**  
**Natural Resource Reports**

## **APPENDIX D: Results From Joint Emily/Little Pine Township Town Hall & Special Committee Meetings**

### **Environmental Strengths (In order of priority.)**

The following assets were identified as environmental strengths valued by residents of Emily and Little Pine Township. Citizens agree that these strengths should be protected and enhanced. The strengths are listed in order of priority – the number in parenthesis next to each heading is the total number of tallies given by participants to items under the heading. Items under the headings are also listed in order of priority.

#### **Forests (9)**

- Diversity (Ashes, maples, poplars, tamarack, hemlock, oak, basswood)
- Emily park
- Pine trees
- Beauty

#### **Wetlands (9)**

- Water Quality (Natural filtration and maintaining water levels)
- Beauty and scenic value
- Habitat and wildlife diversity

#### **People (8)**

- Low population
- Lake associations
- Environmental ethic



- Volunteer base/private-public partnerships
- Committed people

### **Lakes (5)**

- Good water clarity
- Diversity (spring-fed, deep, shallow)
- Aquatic wildlife

### **Wildlife (4)**

- Diversity of species (see attached list provided by Jo Sheldon)
- Hunting
- Managing for wildlife

### **Threats to the Environment (In order of priority.)**

The following challenges and issues were identified as threats to the environment in Emily and Little Pine Township. They are listed in order of priority – the number in parenthesis next to each heading is the total number of tallies given by participants to items under the heading. Items under the headings are also listed in order of priority.

### **Logging (9)**

- No accountability by loggers or managing agencies
- Clearcutting
- Not much old growth/mature woodlands
- Lack of diversity
- Too much poplar

### **Development (8)**

- Urban-style development
- Lack of education...how can we teach people (including new homeowners and non-homesteaders) how to make the right environmental decisions?
- People/ damaging recreational activities
- Invasive species
- Disease
- Habitat fragmentation and degradation

### **Varying water volumes due to watershed activities (6)**

- Poor logging practices (especially clearcutting) that are unchecked
- Lack of communication between governing agencies
- Too many beavers (no trappers)...how do we manage them?
- Dams
- Loss of wetlands
- Loss of wildlife



- Poorly managed rivers (Mud Lake and Little Pine)

### **Mining (6)**

- Manganese mining (groundwater contamination and sulfur dioxide killing trees )
- Gravel pits
- Peat mining

### **Lakes (6)**

- Poor/ improperly maintained septic systems
- Invasive species (Milfoil in Ruth Lake)

### **Government Agencies (3)**

- Weak enforcement
- City apathy toward the environment
- Lack of collaboration/communication

### **Participant Concerns about the Environment**

Citizens voiced their biggest concerns about the environment - the reasons they joined the environment committee. A number in parenthesis indicates that additional citizens voiced the same concern.

- Uncontrolled development (2)
- Balancing the natural environment with the people it attracts
- Steps to preserve and protect natural beauty (3)
- Valuation of trees by the county and state
- Improve area in terms of wildlife – look 20 years in the future. Do we still have songbirds, loons, eagles, swans, pelicans and coral hens? (3)
- Need education and communication about environmental issues (i.e. pink lady slippers dug up) (3)
- Need to improve safety with respect to hazards to residents, including speeding and extending the boundary of Emily (2)
- De-calcification of soil – DNR practices
- Appearance – logging of pine trees, old tires (mosquitoes), leakage from old cars (3)
- Wetlands serve as drinking water resource – threatened by mining
- Over-logging
- Meth labs in ice houses and in the forest – local enforcement
- Flooded tamarack and ash swamps

### **Parks and Recreation Strengths (In order of priority.)**

The following strengths were identified by residents of Emily and Little Pine Township. The strengths are listed in order of priority – the number in parenthesis next to each heading is the total number of tallies given by participants to items under the heading. Items under the headings are also listed in order of priority.



**Recreational Opportunities (7)**

- Non-busy roads and road shoulders for walking (Highway 1 shoulder)
- Golf
- Resorts and beaches (Ruth Lake Resort)
- Fishing – public access
- Softball/baseball
- Hunting

**Trees (7)**

- Inner forest
- Wildlife
- Diversity
- Beauty

**Low Population (4)**

- Privacy
- Quality of the environment
- Hunting
- Low crime
- Low demand for government services

**Availability of Public Land (3)**

- Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)
- Trails

**Emily City Park (3)****Natural Beauty (2)****Snowmobile Club (1)**

- Trails
- Economy

**School Site Forest****Parks and Recreation Challenges (In order of priority.)**

The following challenges were identified by residents of Emily and Little Pine Township. These challenges are listed in order of priority – the number in parenthesis next to each heading is the total number of tallies given by participants to items within the heading. Items under the headings are also listed in order of priority.





**Emily City Park (11)**

- Protect existing trees
- Need to manage park for tree diversity
- Lack of planting
- No vegetation management plan
- No understory
- Keep as green-space park
- Gazebo

**Development (8)**

- Land speculation/development
- Too much privatized land resulting in “bottling off” of public lands

**Lakes (6)**

- No public access
- Public fishing pier on Ruth Lake
- Too much development and too many out of towers
- Increased valuation of lake front property
- Mansions replacing cabins
- Milfoil in Ruth Lake

**Baseball Park (2)**

- Need a public park with many activities for Emily residents, but is existing multi-use park in best location?
- Need water fountain
- Need bathrooms
- Need shade/no woods
- No lights
- No horseshoe pits

**Lack of Resorts (2)**

- For summer and winter recreation, including snowmobiles

**Control ATVs (2)****“Lake” Park (2)****Lack of Recreational Opportunities (1)**

- Lack of walking trails in woods
- Lack of swimming/ public access



**Public Land Administration (1)**

- How is public land administered?
- Disjointed administration

**Too Much Government (1)****Not Enough Government**

- Too many variances
- Lenient regulations

**Groomers Not Staying on Snowmobile Trails****Economic Development Strengths (In order of priority.)****Lakes, Natural Beauty and Tourism**

- Beauty of area to keep people here that wish to remain here in later years
- Six local lakes
- Good tourism
- Quality environment
- Many recreation type of events to build on – snow, water, walking, trails
- Tourism
- Lakes
- Beauty of area

**Accessibility**

- Roads running east/west and north/south
- Good cross roads to produce location, location, location
- Easy to get to
- Area able to grow

**Potential to Grow**

- People willing to do long range planning
- Growing population
- Necessity – Potential
- Size of Emily – large with 36 miles

**Nearby Services**

- Hospital in Crosby
- County offices only 36 miles away
- Health center in Crosby (18 miles)

**Existing Businesses**

- Businesses that we do have
- Base businesses



**Senior Citizens**

- Retirement friendly
- Senior population

**Schools & Churches in Emily**

- Charter school great!
- Four churches near

**Economic Development Obstacles (In order of priority.)****Jobs and Job Diversity**

- Lack of business jobs for our citizens
- Plan long and carefully enough to develop business that will stay
- City growth businesses
- Advertise for business
- Workforce
- Need a year-round business for employment
- Need a newspaper or TV communication
- Type of business needed – drug store, dry goods, doctors and dentists

**Regulations and Planning**

- Too many zoning restrictions
- Too many permit fees
- Undefined business area
- Balance the beliefs and feelings of opposing “factions” that have strong opinions of how Emily must be
- Need commercial area
- Enlarge business area
- Zoning

**Roads and Traffic**

- Speed limits too high on highly traveled roads
- Traffic
- Widening of road
- Speed going through town and approaching town

**Sewer and Water**

- Need sewer and water
- Lack of amenities like water, sewer, and services

**Drugs and Crime**

- No police full or part time
- Drugs in Emily are destroying our youth



## Damage to Environment

- Keep the environment sacred

## Miscellaneous

- Blue collar area changing to retirement area
- Low cost housing
- Necessity – detriment
- Growth vs. no growth
- Seasonal population (June to September)
- Cleaning up property in the city
- Cleaning up property entering the area

## Comments and Discussion

- Non-functioning EDA committee.
- Not enough commercial zoning.
- Need to grow in a positive manner – service the elderly in Emily.
- Control growth – low impact industries.
- Committees all intertwine.
- Balance growth and development – there will be some disturbance.
- People that are “natives” are being squeezed out.
- Find balance between growth and no growth.
- Need water and sewer – help with senior housing.  
Should have been done a long time ago.
- Need a public beach.
- Centralizing commercial development important, not stretching it out.
- Highway development OK...don't need to jam in town.
- Need visibility – maybe signs.
- Undefined business area:
- Spread vs. centralized
- Spread out/ highway: Provide division between commercial and residential areas, accessibility, land availability, visibility, traffic and speed limits
- Planning and zoning red tape, need to be more welcoming.
- Emily is already set, too late to concentrate to one area.
- What is wrong with being another Cross Lake?
- Potentially, the city could buy property north of downtown to be commercial.
- Advertise for future capitalists.
- The commercial needs to develop somewhere.
- Should develop businesses that will stay.
- Loan available from the City – does not have any strings to hire employees.
- Need to get things into place, need to have things ready:
- Workforce
- Housing availability
- Schools to keep parents here



- Should look to build on tourism industry.
- Home occupation permits stop businesses.
- Size of Emily – 36 square miles, lots of room – someone thought ahead.
- Lack of opportunity for young people.
- Roads not wide enough –Highway 6 and 1, downtown accessibility.
- City could use a newspaper – maybe get the school to do it.
- Need a clothing store for everyday clothes.
- People like to shop and be social where everybody knows everybody.
- Try to get people to clean up their property.
- People used to list off a number of things that they did to scrape by a living. Those people are the backbone of the community.
- Relocated city and county buildings.
- Should be budgeting and planning at the same time.

## **Zoning and Land Use Issues, Concerns & Visions**

### **Written Comments**

Residents were asked to write their issues, concerns, and visions regarding zoning and land use on a piece of paper. These comments were collected and listed as follows:

### **Land Use**

- Zoning – commercial or residential
- Definite commercial area with sewer, water, and gas available
- Commercial zoning
- Keep area as primarily residential in character
- Encourage development (commercial and industrial) to provide employment
- Encourage expansion of broadband facilities throughout area
- Keep this beautiful area primarily residential rather than industrial
- Find a balance between residential vs. commercial
- Restrict commercial area of development to town
- Incentives for business growth

### **Consistency and Enforcement**

- Consistent enforcement of rules (but with some flexibility)
- Update ordinance
- How to enforce ordinance
- Local enforcement available
- Apply equally to all rules and cases
- No changes of any status of an individual's property without prior review with property owner. Currently changes are made and owners try to get it back.
- Enforcement
- Vision for future – clear ordinances, consistency





### **High Degree of Restriction**

- Control developers to subdivide without restrictions or thought to the future
- Control starter castles
- Limit subdivisions
- Limit size of "starter castles"
- You have to have zoning regulations and enforcement
- Control type of industry and location

### **Infrastructure**

- Speed signs out farther on County 1 and State 6, as well as at Birchwood Drive (east), the golf course (west), Poplar Drive (north), and Emily Resort (south)
- Continue effort for city sewer
- Get municipal water and sewer
- Get natural gas into area

### **Environmental Protection**

- Protect wildlife
- Manage forest resources
- Preservation of natural resources (lakes, woods, etc.)

### **Minimal Restriction**

- Do not over control with too strict zoning
- Don't try to tell people what they can have in their yards

### **Managing Future Growth**

- Creative growth planning

### **Discussion Notes**

After writing their comments on paper, citizens discussed what they had written. The following discussion notes were taken:

- Stay rural
- Growth on Highway 6 & 1 – speed of traffic an issue, should extend speed limit
- Enforcement of speed limit – need local police
- Business district – keep it in one place with trees and landscaping, state R.O.W. encroaches on development, highway alignment was originally planned
- Limit industrial use on lakes – conflicts with industrial and other uses
- Industry should be light – low impact, cottage industries, keep young people....should city work to attract "industry"?
- Non-conforming uses – need to notify people of changes
- Keep taxes from increasing so much – limit home size
- Timeshare – intensive use is a problem...are we OK limiting people's use of their property?



- Public land – do we develop or maintain for green space, wildlife habitat and recreational activities?
- Water/Sewer/Natural Gas – ISTS should be enforced, growth management based on future utilities (limiting growth by not supplying utilities)...do we need sewer and water for developing or for controlling run-off?
- Preservation of natural resources, as well as archeological and historical resources
- Home occupations – necessary to keep track of, can have impacts on neighbors, need balance, should establish criteria, need to regulate them
- Garbage – clash between urban and rural, we are progressing too fast, city needs to set example by removing trees behind the fire department and cleaning up the city mulch dump...explore reduced rates for dumping from county, having a clean-up day, or getting donations for wrecked autos
- Develop better communication – TV, newsletter
- Need to get youth involved
- Coop is great – need broadband

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<sup>i</sup> Minnesota Historical society

<sup>ii</sup> Zumault, 1950's

<sup>iii</sup> Marsh, 1998

