

# MASTER PLAN | 2025

ADOPTED ON: SEPTEMBER 17, 2025

This Master Plan was prepared by the Baraga Township Planning Commission with technical assistance from  
*Northwoods Planning & Zoning Services, LLC*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The Planning Commission would also like to thank the following residents and stakeholders for their thoughtful input and attendance at various meetings throughout the planning process: Ellen Lutz, Philip & Mary LaCourt, Phill Accaicca, Bill Olson, and Verna Ross.

The *Baraga Township Master Plan – 2025* was prepared for the community by residents, stakeholders, the Township Board of Trustees and Planning Commission, along with technical assistance by Jason McCarthy, from *Northwoods Planning & Zoning Services, LLC*.

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The Master Plan Document

The [Baraga Township](#) Master Plan details a vision for the community's future in the areas of future land use, economic trends, sustainability and resilience planning, housing, community facilities and services, recreational assets, and transportation planning. This vision was established by researching economic and social trends, demographic data mining, as well as with community and stakeholder input. The document represents a predictable plan for future land use through the formation of measurable goals and objectives.

The [Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008](#) (as amended), provides for all local governments (township, village, city & county) to conduct land use planning in the state. It does not amend the zoning of property, and it does not have the force of law. It is merely a set of policies, strategies and goals to enhance and improve the community over a projected period. The Master Plan update process also creates a framework for public participation and community involvement which promotes regional cooperation and contributes to the rural quality-of-life found in Baraga Township.

The Michigan [Zoning Enabling Act 110 of 2006](#) (as amended), provides for all local governments (township, village, city & county) to conduct zoning in the state. The act requires that the zoning ordinance be based on a Master Plan. Zoning promotes health, safety, and general welfare, and is the legal mechanism used to adjust the classification and regulation of land use.

The Master Plan is the community's road map to the future, while zoning provisions provide a legal mechanism to ensure its success. With an active Master Plan in place, zoning decisions consistent with the plan and zoning ordinance are presumed to be valid and defensible in the court of law.

## 1.2 The Master Plan Update Process

The sections presented in this document represent the conclusion of months of discussion and study by the Baraga Township Planning Commission, with technical assistance provided by Northwoods Planning & Zoning Services, LLC.

A Public Input Session was held at the Baraga Township Hall on February 4, 2025, where approximately twenty (20) members of the community gathered to offer their input on the future of the community. A robust discussion was held, and those suggestions and recommendations are documented later in this document. An additional work session was held on Monday, March 10, 2025, and a Community Survey was administered during the months of March and April of 2025.

The final draft plan was posted on the Baraga Township website in July of 2025 and made available at the Baraga Township Hall. Residents also had the opportunity to provide comments at the Planning Commission's public hearing on September 17, 2025. This Plan was adopted by the Baraga Township Planning Commission on September 17, 2025. Finally, a Resolution of Concurrence was adopted by the Baraga Township Board of Trustees on October 9, 2025.

## 2.0 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

### 2.1 Introduction

Social characteristics are an essential component of the Master Plan when estimating the future needs of the community. They provide the foundation upon which a major portion of this plan is based. While an evaluation of a community's current characteristics provides insight into immediate needs and deficiencies, population trends also provide a basis for determining future land use requirements, public facility needs, and essential service delivery.

This section of the plan examines several elements which are central to understanding a community's overall population and household characteristics. These items include population trends, age distribution, race and ethnicity, household relationships, household size, marital status, household type and ownership status.

### 2.2 Population Trends

Like many communities in the Upper Peninsula, the population of Baraga Township has mirrored its transition from an economy rooted in industrial activities to a more diverse and sustainability-focused economy. Historically, Baraga County, including the township, relied on manufacturing and industrial jobs, which created wealth and supported extensive development. However, the decline of the manufacturing sector, particularly after the recession in the late 2000s, caused significant economic challenges and population loss. The closure of manufacturing facilities in the late 2000s likely exacerbated this trend.

Population projections are useful for the Planning Commission and Township Board for forecasting future residential demands for public services, recreational needs, and other capital improvements.

The majority of Baraga Township's population is concentrated in the Village of Baraga and the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Lands. The southern part of the township features a mix of year-round and seasonal homes around Big Lake. Beyond the concentrated areas, Baraga Township has smaller, scattered population centers along its rural roadways. These include homes, farms, and small clusters of residential properties surrounded by the township's extensive forested lands.

According to the 2020 Decennial Census, Baraga Township has a population of 3,478 residing within 187 square miles, resulting in 18.9 people per square mile.

### 2.3 Age Distribution

Overall, the age of the population within the Township is following state and national trends, which result from a combination of factors. The primary causes of this aging are increased life expectancies, combined with the fact that the largest segment of the population, the so-called "baby boomers," are aging. A trend toward smaller families, with many people choosing to delay childbearing or not having children at all, also contributes toward this trend.

Age distribution, sex, and ethnicity within Baraga Township is denoted in the below graphics, as provided by the [2020 American Community 5-Year Survey](#):

#### Age

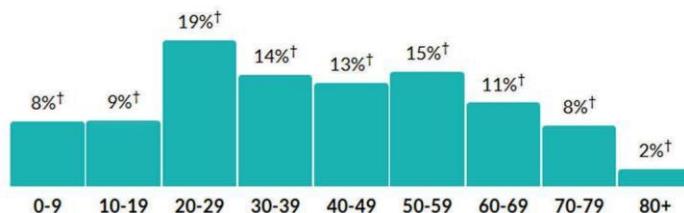
**39.6**

Median age

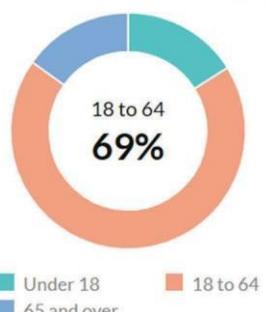
about 80 percent of the figure in Baraga County: 46.5

about the same as the figure in Michigan: 39.9

#### Population by age range



#### Population by age category



Show data / Embed

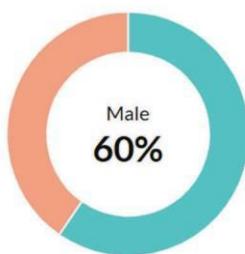
Under 18

18 to 64

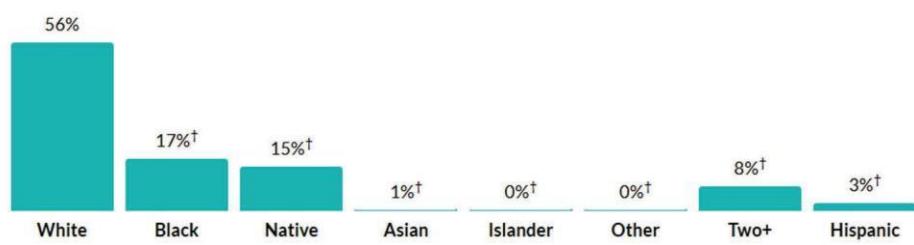
65 and over

† Margin of error is at least 10 percent of the total value.

#### Sex



#### Race & Ethnicity



† Margin of error is at least 10 percent of the total value.

It should be noted that unlike most rural areas in the Upper Peninsula, Baraga Township is enriched by its location within the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) and the presence of the L'Anse Indian Reservation, which contributes to the area's diversity and cultural heritage. Further, the Baraga Correctional Facility employs over 300 workers and should be considered as a large economic contributor to the area.

## 2.4 Household Characteristics

As of 2020, Baraga Township had 1,167 households, with 2.2 persons per household. 61% of the households were occupied by married couples. Marital status in Baraga Township was listed as 41% married. By sex, 12% of males and 16% of females were divorced.

#### Households

**1,167**

Number of households

Baraga County: 3,241

Michigan: 4,009,253

**2.2**

Persons per household

about the same as the figure in Baraga County:

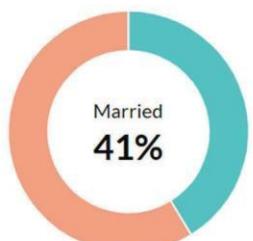
2.2

about 90 percent of the figure in Michigan: 2.5

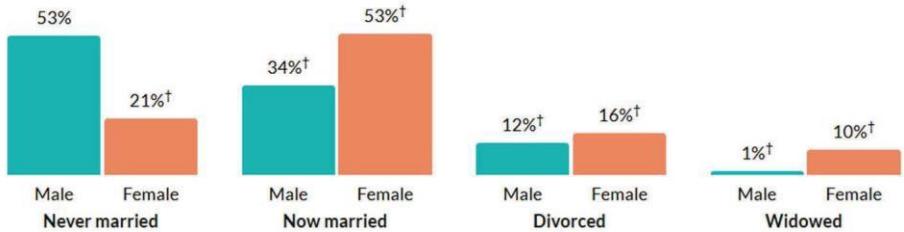
#### Population by household type



Married couples  
Male householder  
Female householder  
Non-family

**Marital status**

\* Universe: Population 15 years and over

**Marital status, by sex**

† Margin of error is at least 10 percent of the total value.

Of the 1,716 total housing units, 68% were listed as occupied, indicating that Baraga Township has less of a seasonal residency where, “snowbirds” reside in the area during the warmer months and spend the winter months in warmer climates. Regarding the ownership situation of occupied units, 28% were listed as being rented, with 72% being owner-occupied.

**Units & Occupancy**

**1,716**

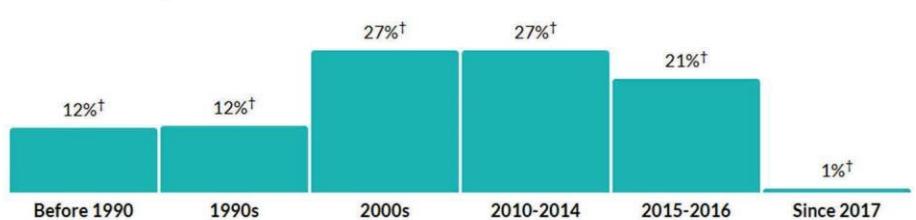
Number of housing units

Baraga County: 5,079

Michigan: 4,580,447

**Occupied vs. Vacant****Ownership of occupied units**

Regarding types of residential structures, it is notable that 78% of the units available are single-family dwellings, as seen below.

**Types of structure****Year moved in, by percentage of population**

† Margin of error is at least 10 percent of the total value.

Baraga Township has 5.5% of its population identified as having veteran status, compared to 9.2% of Baraga County and the state average of 6.3%. Veteran status and wartime service areas are shown below.

## Veteran status

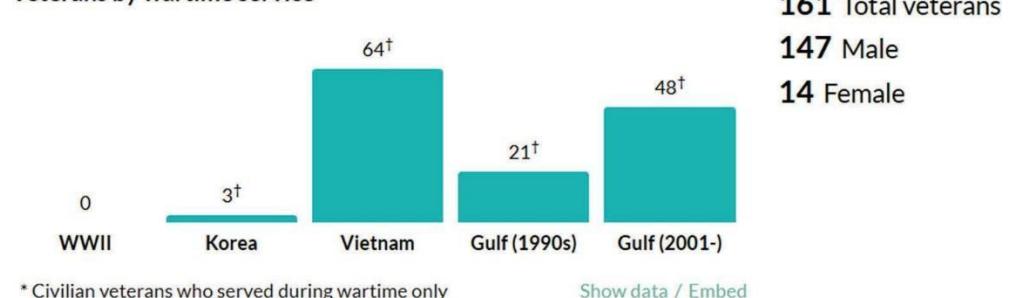
**5.5%**

Population with veteran status

about three-fifths of the rate in Baraga County: 9.2% †

about 90 percent of the rate in Michigan: 6.3%

## Veterans by wartime service

**2.5 Summary**

Baraga Township, like many areas in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, has seen population decline tied to the downturn of the manufacturing sector. The 2020 Census recorded a population of 3,478 across 187 square miles, reflecting a low density of 18.9 people per square mile. The population is aging, driven by national trends such as longer life expectancy and smaller family sizes. Unique to the township is the cultural influence of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and the economic impact of the Baraga Correctional Facility. Household data shows 1,167 households with an average size of 2.2 people, predominately married couples, and a homeownership rate of 72%. While 68% of housing units are occupied—indicating a smaller seasonal population—most homes (78%) are single-family dwellings. Additionally, 5.5% of residents are veterans, slightly below county and state averages. This demographic snapshot informs key decisions for land use, infrastructure, and community services.

## 3.0 ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

### 3.1 Introduction

Numerous factors contribute to the economic development of a community, many of which extend far beyond the community's boundaries into the region as whole. Understanding the history of economic development in the community is imperative to knowing the culture of its population.

Current economic aspects such as income, workforce industry type, and educational attainment will also be detailed below.

### 3.2 Historical Economic Factors

Baraga Township, like much of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, thrived during the 19th century due to its vast forests. The timber industry, particularly logging and sawmills, was a primary driver of economic growth, benefiting from proximity to Lake Superior for shipping. Mining for copper and iron ore, though less dominant in Baraga Township compared to other parts of the Upper Peninsula, influenced local infrastructure and economic activity. Railroads were constructed to transport lumber and minerals, enhancing trade and development. Keweenaw Bay and nearby waterways supported a thriving fishing industry, catering to local and regional markets.

In the mid-20th century, the area saw the rise of small-scale manufacturing and industrial operations, including machine shops and equipment manufacturers. These companies played a significant role in the local economy, producing heavy machinery. As the logging and mining industries declined, tourism emerged, leveraging the county's natural beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, and access to Lake Superior. Hunting, fishing, and camping attracted visitors, contributing to local businesses.

During the late 20th to Early 21st century, the decline of manufacturing led to rising unemployment. By 2009, Baraga County had one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, peaking at 27.7% during the Great Recession. This timeframe also saw the KBIC emerged as a key economic contributor through enterprises, tribal services, and cultural initiatives.

### 3.3 Current Economic Factors

Baraga Township's economic history showcases resilience and adaptability, transitioning from reliance on extraction industries to a broader focus on tourism, cultural heritage, and small-scale manufacturing. Government services (e.g., Michigan Department of Corrections), the KBIC, and some small manufacturers play a key role in the current economic scene. Additionally, adventure tourism, including hiking, biking, and water-based recreation, continues to be a growing sector. It is also important to note that continued support of infrastructure and placemaking will be pivotal in the revitalization of Baraga Township.

In that mindset, income levels and educational levels are important factors when considering future economic development planning. Shown below are average per capita income, median household

income, poverty level and educational attainment are displayed graphically, according to 2020 American Community 5-Year Survey results.

The average per capita income was listed as \$21,268, slightly less than Baraga County and significantly less than the state average of \$37,929. Median household income was \$46,771 which was slightly lower than the Baraga County average, and approximately two-thirds the amount in Michigan.

#### Income

**\$21,268**

Per capita income

about three-quarters of the amount in Baraga County: \$28,665

about three-fifths of the amount in Michigan: \$37,929

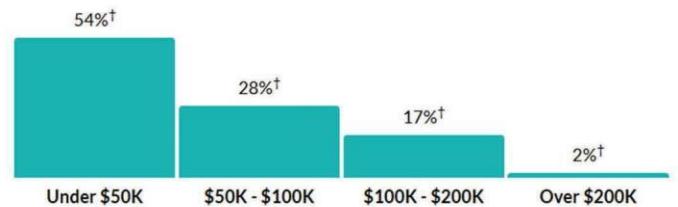
**\$46,771**

Median household income

about 90 percent of the amount in Baraga County: \$51,911

about two-thirds of the amount in Michigan: \$68,505

#### Household income



[Show data / Embed](#)

At the time of the survey, 16.9% of the population was below the poverty line, including 24% of children (under 18 years old) and 12% of seniors (65 years and older).

#### Poverty

**16.9%**

Persons below poverty line

about 1.4 times the rate in Baraga County: 12.2%<sup>†</sup>

about 1.3 times the rate in Michigan: 13.1%

#### Children (Under 18)



#### Seniors (65 and over)



Poverty  
Non-poverty

As detailed below, Baraga Township features a lower level of educational attainment when compared with the rest of Baraga County and the State of Michigan. 33% reported some college-level education. 7% have obtained a bachelor's degree, and approximately 5% have a post-graduate degree.

#### Educational attainment

**88%**

High school grad or higher

a little less than the rate in Baraga County: 91.3%

a little less than the rate in Michigan: 91.8%

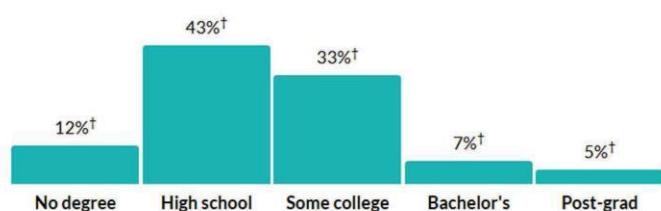
**11.8%**

Bachelor's degree or higher

about three-quarters of the rate in Baraga County: 15.6%<sup>†</sup>

about two-fifths of the rate in Michigan: 31.1%

#### Population by highest level of education



\* Universe: Population 25 years and over

[Show data / Embed](#)

### 3.4 Economic Development Strategies

Baraga Township's natural resources and aesthetic assets continue to provide tourism as a significant component of future economic development strategies. Area attractions include coastal areas, public forest lands, trails, and a variety of parks. These resources attract outdoor enthusiasts from many recreational sectors.

Economic efforts should also focus on diversifying the township's economy, supporting small businesses, and leveraging its natural and cultural assets for tourism. This would help offset the area's main employers including the Michigan Department of Corrections, Keweenaw Bay Tribal Services, and the Ojibwa Casino Resort. Above all, Baraga Township should work to retain and encourage expansion of existing businesses and industries. Where and when feasible, attract new economic developments such as light manufacturing and research and development to help provide various levels of desired employment opportunities in the community.

Other, future economic development possibilities include recreation tourism, eco-friendly tourism, and cultural and/or historic tourism. Opportunities to market the community's rich history by developing cultural-based interpretive tours do exist. Eco-tourism provides unique educational opportunities and experiences to those who value the area's natural and cultural areas. This sector of tourism also typically provides financial benefits that support conservation and stewardship. Opportunities to enhance tourism such as additional ORV trails, sport fishing, camping, hiking, hunting and mountain biking, could also be developed with sound fiscal and long-range planning efforts.

### 3.5 Future Development Considerations

To understand the growth needs of Baraga Township, we need to understand the physical requirements of that growth. Aside from the economic conditions which exist, there are four primary principles which determine the type and pattern of growth that occur: available utility services, available road systems and conditions, the preservation and conservation of existing environmental features, zoning regulations and land use planning.

#### Utility Infrastructure

The primary utilities needed for development are electric, gas, water service and sanitary sewer service. Gas and electric services are provided by utility companies and the demand for these services, along with the ability to afford their installation, drives their expansion.

#### Transportation Network

If the Township expects an increase in development, the demands of this development will depend on the extent and condition of the local road network. The relative remoteness of the area may benefit the overall character of the community and be a draw to those that are looking for the rural setting; however, it does not provide ideal accessibility and traffic-based visibility that developers often seek to locate primary businesses. Baraga Township will continue to work with the road commission to address future transportation needs as they arise.

#### Environmental Considerations

Environmental features can certainly influence development in previously undeveloped areas, especially

where floodplains, wetlands, and coastal areas exist. Policies continue to be implemented regarding the impact of growth on the environment, and developments have become more sustainable as a result. The goal of this Township is to work with all levels of government, as well as private property owners, to encourage sustainable development and to minimize any adverse impacts of development on the environment.

#### Existing Zoning & Land Use Planning

Policies regarding land use are typically expressed within a general plan called the Land Use Plan. As growth occurs, the plan must be reviewed to make sure that the new growth is consistent with what has been planned and anticipated. As new industries reveal themselves and evolve, it may be necessary to revisit and amend the plan to accommodate the new ideas. Since the plan is designed to be flexible, future generations can work with community officials to make changes, as needed.

Local land use regulation is a valuable and accepted legal principle. Land use is controlled through the separation of certain land use types into zoning districts. The rules governing these districts are contained in a zoning ordinance, created by the community, which contains provisions regulating the type, size and intensity of the development permissible. Zoning is designed to provide for the orderly development of land. From time to time, zoning regulations should also be reviewed to ensure that consideration is given to new or evolving industries that may be looking to locate in Baraga Township.

### **3.6      Summary**

The Economic Characteristics section outlines Baraga Township's shift from a historic economy based on logging, mining, and manufacturing to one increasingly driven by tourism, government services, and tribal enterprises. Economic resilience is evident despite setbacks like high unemployment during the Great Recession. Today, the township's key employers include the Michigan Department of Corrections, KBIC, and small manufacturers. Income and education levels lag behind county and state averages, with 16.9% of residents living in poverty. Future development strategies focus on leveraging natural assets for eco-tourism, supporting small business growth, and attracting light industry, all while considering infrastructure, zoning, and environmental constraints.

## 4.0 NATURAL RESOURCES

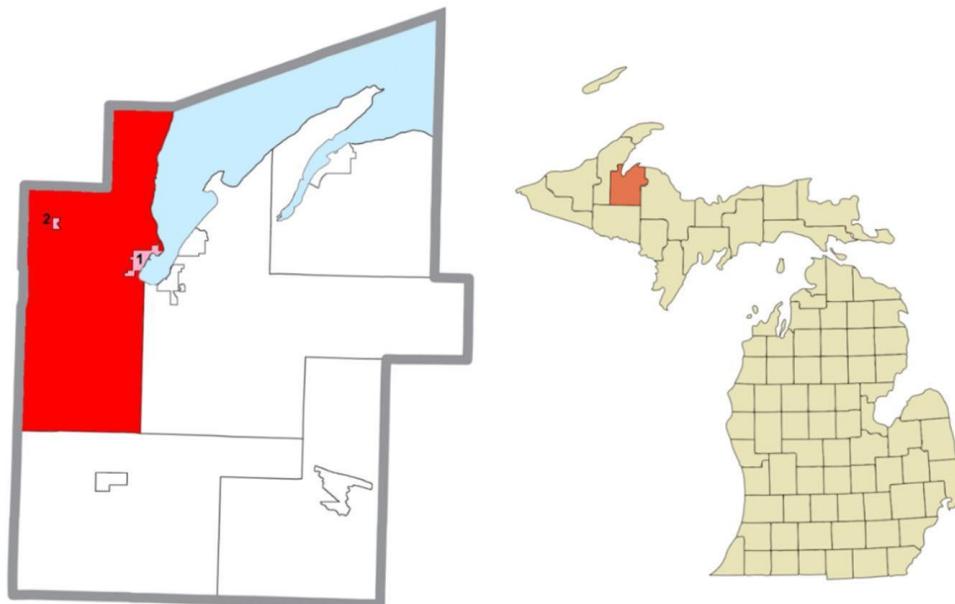
### 4.1 Introduction

Baraga Township is in the west central portion of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in [Baraga County](#). It has a total area of 187 square miles, of which 184 square miles is land and ~3 square miles, or 1.8%, is water. The township encompasses a mix of rural, small-town, and natural areas, known for its scenic beauty, forests, and proximity to Lake Superior. Within Baraga Township, you'll find several communities, each with their own unique features and character.

**Baraga (Village)** - The village of Baraga is the primary population center within the township. It is situated along the shores of Keweenaw Bay, an inlet of Lake Superior. Baraga is known for its lakeside location, small-town charm, and historical significance. It is home to various businesses, schools, and services, including parks and marinas. The village often serves as a gateway for exploring the Upper Peninsula. Baraga has strong ties to the Native American community, particularly the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC), which has a rich cultural presence in the area.

**Keweenaw Bay** - Keweenaw Bay is a small, unincorporated community located along the bay of the same name, north of the Village of Baraga. The area is known for its natural beauty, with stunning views of the bay and access to recreational activities like fishing, boating, and kayaking. The community is closely tied to the Native American heritage of the region.

**Pelkie** - Pelkie is a rural community located west of Baraga. It is characterized by open farmland, forests, and a close-knit community. This small community has a rich Finnish heritage, which is celebrated through local events and traditions. It offers a glimpse into the agricultural roots of the region.



Baraga County map with Baraga Township in red.

State of Michigan map with Baraga County highlighted.

Baraga Township is rich in natural resources due to its diverse landscapes, which include forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and mineral deposits. These resources play a significant role in the local economy, recreation, and culture. Below is a general inventory of the community's natural assets.

## 4.1 Natural Resource Types

**Forest Resources** - Baraga Township is part of the vast northern hardwood forest region. Dominant tree species include maple, birch, aspen, oak, hemlock, and pine. These forests support ecosystems, wildlife habitats, and a thriving timber industry. Uses include logging and timber harvesting are significant economic activities, maple syrup production, which is a cultural tradition in the region, and recreational uses include hiking, camping, hunting, and wildlife observation.

**Water Resources** - Baraga Township is located along Keweenaw Bay, part of Lake Superior, the largest freshwater lake in the world by surface area. Additionally, it is home to several rivers, streams, and inland lakes. Keweenaw Bay provides drinking water, supports commercial and recreational fishing, and offers boating and water-based tourism opportunities. The Sturgeon River, a major waterway, is known for its fast-flowing waters, making it popular for fishing (particularly trout and salmon), kayaking, and canoeing. Smaller streams and tributaries support diverse aquatic ecosystems and serve as spawning grounds for fish. Wetlands in the area help purify water, provide wildlife habitats, and act as buffers against flooding.

**Mineral Resources** - The Upper Peninsula has a long history of mining, and Baraga Township is part of this legacy. Historically, copper and iron were mined in the broader region, particularly during the 19th and early 20th centuries. While mining has declined, remnants of this history remain. Further, granite and other building materials are quarried in the area and used for construction. Sand and gravel are also abundant and used in local infrastructure projects.

**Wildlife & Biodiversity** - Baraga Township's forests, wetlands, and waterways create habitats for a wide range of species. The area is home to white-tailed deer, black bears, wolves, coyotes, moose, beavers, and a variety of bird species, including eagles and waterfowl. Lake Superior and local rivers support species such as trout, salmon, walleye, perch, and northern pike, making fishing a popular activity. Deer, bear, and small game hunting are also integral to the local culture and economy.

**Renewable Energy** – Although a controversial topic, the local landscape does offer potential opportunities for renewable energy development. Open areas along Lake Superior shoreline and elevated inland regions have potential for wind energy development. Although the Upper Peninsula has limited sunlight compared to other regions, small-scale solar projects have been implemented. Finally, the abundance of forestry resources creates potential for biomass energy production.

**Soil & Agricultural Resources** - The township's soil varies from sandy and well-drained in upland areas to rich, loamy soils in lowlands. While not a primary economic driver, small-scale farming exists, particularly in areas like Pelkie, where Finnish farming traditions are strong. Crops include hay, potatoes, and other cold- weather staples. Wild edibles, such as berries (blueberries, raspberries, and thimbleberries) and mushrooms, are abundant throughout the community.

**Tourism & Recreational Resources** - Natural resources contribute to a growing eco-tourism and outdoor recreation industry. Baraga State Park provides access to Lake Superior and offers camping and hiking opportunities. The Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness is a rugged natural area with waterfalls, cliffs, and dense forests, ideal for hiking, hunting, and fishing. Several waterfalls, such as Silver Falls, attract visitors and highlight the area's hydrological features.

**Climate & Environmental Features** - Baraga Township experiences a humid continental climate, with cold, snowy winters and warm, humid summers. This climate supports diverse ecosystems and seasonal recreational opportunities. Of environmental importance, the region's forests act as carbon reservoirs, wetlands provide flood control, and Lake Superior influences the local climate, moderating extreme temperatures.

**Conservation & Challenges** - Conservation efforts by organizations and government programs work to preserve the township's natural resources, including forestry management, wildlife protection, and water quality initiatives. Environmental challenges such as invasive species threaten native ecosystems (e.g., sea lamprey in Lake Superior, emerald ash borer in forests). Climate shift impacts, such as fluctuating lake levels, more severe storms, and shifting habitats, also pose long-term risks. These challenges and potential solutions will be discussed in greater detail later in the plan.

In summary, Baraga Township's natural resources are central to its identity, supporting the economy, culture, and recreational lifestyle of its residents and visitors.

## 4.2 Natural Resources & Land Use

Natural features can either improve or restrict development, depending on the type and extent of the feature. For example, the extensive shoreline overlooking Keweenaw Bay may provide an attractive view but may create additional costs, both financial and environmental. Erosion control measures and tree clearing can increase development costs dramatically.

Several areas throughout the Township have environmental features that could impact the intensity of development. These lands include wetlands, certain soils, areas of steep topography, extensive shoreline and large tracts of woodlands.

**Woodlands** - As buffers and moderators of flooding, erosion, and noise and air pollution, woodlands are important to the region's quality of life. Apart from the economic value of the timber industry, some of the values of woodlands include:

1. Providing a varied and rich environment for plants and animals. Forest layers, including canopy, branches, trunks, shrubs, and plants on the forest floor provide breeding, feeding, and refuge areas for many species of insects, birds, and various mammals.
2. Protecting watersheds and soils. Forest vegetation moderates the effects of winds and storms, stabilizes and enriches the soil as well as slowing runoffs which in turn allows the forest floor to filter ground water.
3. Serving as buffers to the sights, sounds, and odors of civilization. Forests can mute the noise from industries and can help absorb air pollutants created by large and small-scale manufacturing.
4. Moderating climate. The microclimate of a forest, created in part by the shade of the trees and the transpiration of water from the leaves, keeps surrounding air at an even temperature. Forest temperatures are typically cooler in the day and warmer at night than the more widely varying temperatures of non-forested areas, creating natural air conditioners.

Baraga Township is broadly forested with most of the township covered with some type of woodland. The largest portion of the forest is considered northern hardwood primarily consisting of sugar maple, red maple, yellow birch, oak and basswood. The large tracts of hardwood provide a vital resource for the area's major industry – forestry and logging. A good portion of this land is on highly productive sites that can provide high quality products for the forest industry.

Another large woodland type is aspen/white birch. This area also is vital to the forest industry and plays a major role in the wildlife habitat of the Township. This cover type is most valuable for population of the more popular game species – deer and grouse. Other tracts of woodlands include conifers as well as various stands of apple trees scattered throughout the township, some of which were planted by early homesteaders.

These woodland types provide a very large land base for all types of outdoor recreational activities including hunting, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road trails for ATV's, camping, and many other uses. This recreational activity is a vital factor to the local economy as well as the quality of life in the Township.

One of the major factors that make these lands available for such use is the public access provided by state lands and the many acres of [Commercial Forest Program](#) lands within the Township.

To maintain the forest base and to sustain the current forest activities, planning needs to keep at a minimum the conversion of forest land to other uses. With the reduction of the forest base, the logging and recreational activities will become more concentrated on fewer acres, which could lead to more conflict.

How these lands are managed depends on ownership. Each owner has the freedom to manage their woodland as desired. However, to ensure a continued and growing economic base for forestry and recreation, the practices that take place on these lands will have a very definite effect on the future use and opportunities. Proper long-term management should be encouraged and emphasized at all opportunities. Personal use and treatment of the land does influence the Township dynamics of business and lifestyles.

**Soils** - Soil types play a critical role in determining the feasibility, safety, and cost of development projects, as they influence everything from the foundation's stability to water management. Different soils have varying abilities to support structures. For example, rocky or sandy soils often have high load-bearing capacity, making them suitable for building foundations. Clay or silt soils can have lower load-bearing capacity and may compress under heavy loads, leading to instability. Soils like clay tend to shrink and expand with moisture changes, which can cause uneven settling and cracks in buildings.

**Wetlands** - The [Michigan Resource Information System \(MIRIS\)](#), Division of Land Resources Programs, Department of Natural Resources designated wetlands within the township from the data compiled from aerial imagery.

“Wetland” is the collective term for marshes, swamps, bogs, and similar areas often found between open water and upland areas. In the past, people viewed wetlands as wastelands – sources of mosquitoes, flies, and unpleasant odors. They believed wetlands should be avoided and often felt that they should be eliminated. Attitudes towards wetlands have changed in the past 20 years. Scientists have discovered that wetlands are valuable natural resources that provide many important benefits to people and their natural environment.

Wetlands help improve water quality and reduce flood and storm damage. They provide important fish and wildlife habitat and support hunting and fishing activities. Finally, they add interest to the landscape.

Because they occur where the dry land meets the water, wetlands play a critical role in managing the Township's water-based resources. Acre for acre, wetlands produce more wildlife and plants than any other Michigan resource.

Benefits of wetlands include:

1. Reducing flooding by absorbing runoff from rain and melting snow and slowly releasing excess water into rivers and lakes.
2. Filtering pollutants from surface runoff, trapping fertilizers, pesticides, sediments and other potential contaminants and breaking them down into less harmful substances, improving water clarity and quality.
3. Contributing to natural nutrient and water cycles and producing vital atmospheric gases including oxygen.
4. Providing commercial and recreational values to the economy, by producing plants, game birds and fur-bearing animals. Survival of certain kinds of fish directly depends on wetlands because of the shallow, still waters they provide.
5. Serving as nutrient traps, when wetlands occur next to the Great Lakes, inland lakes or streams.

In Michigan, the [Goemaere-Andersen Wetland Protection Act \(Public Act 203 of 1979\)](#) provides for statewide regulation of certain wetlands. The Act specifies that activities such as filling, dredging or draining require a permit from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, Energy (EGLE). The Act also provides for remedies and penalties. The state wetland laws provide the basis of a wetland protection program. To be more effective, however, these regulations should be coordinated with preservation techniques.

**Surface Water** - Water features are plentiful in Baraga Township. With approximately 13 miles of Lake Superior shoreline, Baraga Township boasts some of the most beautiful and scenic areas in the State. These areas consist of sandy beaches and rocky shoreline and provide a significant scenic corridor and places for abundant recreational activities in summer and winter. The Township also boasts several inland lakes, streams and rivers that provide ample hunting and fishing opportunities within the Township.

In addition to the aesthetic values, clean, protected surface waters are critical to human health and safety and provide added benefits such as potential municipal water supply source, irrigation supply, drainage and flood controls, water purifying and ground water recharge, as well as providing wildlife habitat. Protection measures for surface waters must extend beyond the development site to include the entire watershed.

**Groundwater** - Michigan has long been known as the "Great Lakes State" and enjoys an abundance of surface water. The government has gone above and beyond in its efforts to protect this resource. However, including all the available surface water, groundwater makes up 97% of the world's freshwater supply.

Almost 50% of the State's population and a large portion of Baraga Township's residents use ground (well) water as the sole source of drinking water. Despite this obvious dependence on this resource, little public understanding exists regarding the nature and importance of groundwater. Like other natural

resources, ground water is more vulnerable in some areas than others, depending largely on quantity and quality.

Three primary factors determine ground water vulnerability: soils, depth to the aquifer, and general aquifer condition and type. Sandy soils offer considerably less protection than heavier clay soils. Confined aquifers are safer than unconfined ones. Once these things are understood, more effective protection measures for ground water are possible. Special considerations to the types and densities of permitted land use should apply in areas that offer little natural protection to ground water. This should also apply where the protection level is unknown. Government leaders must consider ground water resources when they are considering future land use planning within their communities.

#### 4.3 Summary

This section highlights Baraga Township's rich environmental assets, which are central to its character, economy, and recreational appeal. The township spans 187 square miles and features vast northern hardwood forests, inland lakes, rivers, wetlands, and 13 miles of Lake Superior shoreline. These resources support industries such as forestry, tourism, and agriculture, while offering abundant recreational opportunities like fishing, hunting, and hiking. Key natural systems—wetlands, woodlands, and water bodies—provide vital ecological services such as flood control, habitat protection, and water purification. Conservation challenges include invasive species, climate change impacts, and forest land conversion. The plan emphasizes responsible land use, woodland management, and water protection to sustain Baraga's environmental and economic future.

## 5.0 EXISTING LAND USE

### 5.1 Introduction

Land use is impacted by the natural environment, economics, transportation patterns, conservation and preservation interests, land ownership, and the desires of the public. Policies at all levels (federal, state, county, and local) also play an important role in land use through regulation and public investment. Public investment in schools, parks, roads, and tourism all provide opportunities for development and will often determine what type of development will occur.

The natural environment impacts land development because of topography, soil conditions, drainage potential, and tract size. Conservation land placed into public ownership provides additional recreational opportunities. Local governments are endowed with the ultimate authority for controlling land use through zoning regulations and building and sanitation codes. These factors establish parameters within which development can occur. It is important that future land use decisions be tangible considering the ability of local governments to provide public services in a fiscally responsible manner.

### 5.2 Existing Land Use Categories

The existing land use in Baraga Township, Baraga County, Michigan, reflects a mix of natural, residential, commercial, recreational, and industrial uses, shaped by its rural character, natural resources, and proximity to Keweenaw Bay and Lake Superior. Below is a detailed breakdown of the key land use categories in Baraga Township:

**Residential Land Use** - The township is predominantly rural, with low-density single-family homes scattered across the area. Residential development is concentrated in the village of Baraga (the most densely populated area) and in the smaller communities of Keweenaw Bay, and Pelkie. In more remote areas, homes are often situated on larger lots or mixed with small-scale agriculture or forested land.

**Commercial Land Use** - Most commercial activity is concentrated within the Village of Baraga, which serves as the economic and service hub of the township. Small businesses, shops, restaurants, and service-oriented enterprises are mixed with tourism-focused businesses, such as hotels and marinas, serving residents and visitors to Keweenaw Bay and Lake Superior. Gas stations, convenience stores, and other facilities are also available to both residents and travelers along US-41. In addition, small-scale enterprises located outside the village can be found in the more rural areas, often associated with agriculture or tourism.

**Industrial Land Use** - Baraga Township's extensive forest resources support timber-related industries. Logging is an essential land use in the region, with parcels of land dedicated to harvesting and reforestation. Light manufacturing and processing facilities, such as those related to forestry or food production, exist but are limited in scope. Historically, the broader Baraga County area has had mining activity. While current active mining is limited, there is land still being used for gravel pits, quarrying, or similar operations.

**Agricultural Land Use** - Agricultural use is primarily seen in areas like Pelkie, where farmland is interspersed with forested areas. This region is known for small-scale farming operations, including hay,

potatoes, and other cold-climate crops. Livestock grazing on some rural properties is also present. While agriculture remains part of the land use mix, much of the area's agricultural land has reverted to forest or is used for rural residential purposes.

**Recreational and Tourism Land Use** - A significant portion of the township's land is dedicated to recreation and tourism. Baraga State Park, located along US-41, provides camping, hiking, and lake access for visitors. There are also scenic views of Lake Superior and Keweenaw Bay. Public lands along Keweenaw Bay and nearby rivers support recreational activities like fishing, boating, kayaking, and swimming. Snowmobile and hiking trails cross the township help enhance the appeal as a recreation destination. Cultural sites, like the Hanka Homestead Museum, and areas important to the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC), are also important to tourism and cultural activities.

**Forest and Natural Land Use** - A significant portion of Baraga Township is covered by dense forests, reflecting the township's location in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. These lands are used for logging and forestry production, as well as for conservation and recreation. Wetlands and Watersheds provide the region with biodiversity. Wetlands are prevalent in low-lying areas and play a crucial role in maintaining water quality and ecological balance. These areas are protected or minimally developed. Wildlife areas like the land near the Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness and other natural features support hunting, wildlife observation, and conservation efforts.

**Tribal Land Use** - The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC), part of the Lake Superior Band of Chippewa Indians, owns and manages land within Baraga Township. Tribal land uses include residential and community development, cultural preservation sites, such as sacred grounds and historical landmarks, commercial ventures, including the Ojibwa Casino and related tourism enterprises, as well as natural resource management for fishing, hunting, and conservation.

**Transportation and Infrastructure** - Major transportation corridors like US-41 and M-38 pass through Baraga Township, influencing adjacent land use for commercial and residential development. Secondary or local roads connect rural areas and outlying communities. Land is allocated for public utilities, such as water treatment plants, schools, and government buildings, are primarily located in and around the village of Baraga.

**Undeveloped and Vacant Land** - Much of Baraga Township remains undeveloped due to its rural nature, rugged terrain, or conservation restrictions. Some undeveloped parcels are zoned for residential, commercial, or industrial use, though development is limited by demand, economic and environmental factors, and infrastructure availability.

**Environmental and Conservation Land Use** - Certain areas are preserved for their ecological importance, such as wetlands and forests that are part of larger conservation initiatives. While not entirely within Baraga Township, nearby wilderness areas, such as the Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness Area, influence land use by limiting development and encouraging conservation.

In summary, Baraga Township's land use reflects a balance between development, natural resource management, and conservation. The Village of Baraga serves as the economic hub, while the surrounding township is dominated by forests, water features, and low-density residential and agricultural uses.

Tribal land managed by the KBIC adds a cultural and economic dimension to the land use pattern. The township's focus on preserving natural beauty and fostering sustainable development will continue to help maintain its rural and scenic character.

## 6.0 HOUSING

### 6.1 Introduction

Housing is a fundamental component of a thriving community. A variety of housing options contribute to economic development, community stability, and quality of life. Ensuring a balance of housing types—ranging from single-family homes to multi-family units, senior housing, and workforce housing—is essential to meet the needs of current and future residents in Baraga Township. A lack of adequate housing choices can result in population decline, workforce shortages, and economic stagnation. This section of the Master Plan outlines the importance of diverse housing options, current housing trends, available funding opportunities, and zoning provisions that can facilitate improved housing choices.

### 6.2 Current Housing Trends

Baraga Township, like many rural communities in the Upper Peninsula, faces unique housing challenges and opportunities. Key trends include:

**Aging Housing Stock:** A significant portion of the township's housing is older, requiring maintenance and updates to remain viable. Many homes were built decades ago and may not meet modern energy efficiency or accessibility standards.

**Limited Rental Availability:** There is a shortage of quality rental housing, making it difficult for young professionals, seasonal workers, and lower-income families to find suitable accommodations. The lack of rental housing options can deter new residents from relocating to the area.

**Increasing Demand for Senior Housing:** As the population ages, there is a growing need for senior-friendly housing, including accessible homes, independent living communities, and assisted living options. Many seniors prefer to age in place, but their homes may require modifications to support their needs.

**Affordability Concerns:** Rising construction and utility costs impact the ability of residents to find affordable housing that meets their needs. Homeownership is becoming increasingly difficult for first-time buyers due to limited supply and higher mortgage rates.

**Rural Housing Development Constraints:** Infrastructure limitations, such as access to water, sewer, and broadband, can hinder new residential development. Additionally, the availability of skilled labor and contractors in rural areas may impact construction timelines and costs.

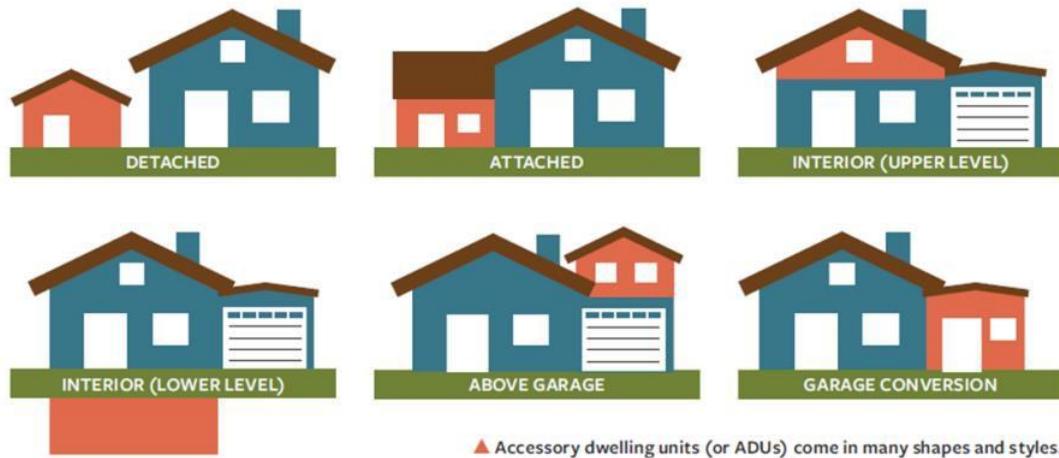
**Seasonal and Vacation Home Market Impact:** The presence of seasonal and vacation homes can drive up property values and limit the availability of year-round housing for residents.

### 6.3 Zoning Provisions to Improve Housing Availability

To ensure a broad range of housing options, Baraga Township can adopt zoning provisions that encourage responsible development:

**Allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):** These small, secondary units can provide affordable housing

for seniors, young professionals, or extended families. ADUs can be an effective strategy to increase housing supply without changing the character of existing neighborhoods. Examples of ADUs are provided in the graphic below.



**Flexible Lot Sizes:** Adjusting minimum lot sizes in certain zoning districts can accommodate a mix of housing types, allowing for smaller, more affordable homes while preserving open space and rural character.

**Mixed-Use Zoning:** Encouraging residential uses in commercial areas can enhance walkability, provide additional housing opportunities, and create vibrant, livable spaces. This can be particularly beneficial in village centers or areas with existing infrastructure.

**Incentivizing Affordable Housing Development:** Offering density bonuses, tax abatements, or fee reductions for developments that include affordable housing units can encourage private investment in workforce and low-income housing.

**Streamlining Permitting Processes:** Reducing barriers to housing construction by expediting review times for residential projects and reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens.

**Planned Unit Developments (PUDs):** Allowing for flexible development approaches that incorporate a variety of housing types, green spaces, and mixed-use elements.

#### 6.4 Potential Housing Funding Options

Several state and federal grant programs can assist Baraga Township in expanding and improving its housing options:

**Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) Programs:** Offers grants and low-interest loans for affordable housing initiatives and home rehabilitation projects. Programs such as the Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP) and the Housing Choice Voucher Program can support both

renters and homeowners.

**Community Development Block Grants (CDBG):** Federal funding available through the State of Michigan to support housing rehabilitation and infrastructure improvements. These funds can be used to update aging homes, improve energy efficiency, and support new affordable housing developments.

**United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Programs:** Provides loans and grants for affordable rural housing, including rental assistance, home repair programs, and financing for new housing developments. The Single-Family Housing Repair Loans & Grants program (Section 504) offers financial assistance to low-income homeowners for necessary repairs.

**Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC):** A federal program that incentivizes private investment in affordable rental housing. This program supports the development of multi-family housing for low- and moderate-income households.

**Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF):** A resource for homeowners needing financial assistance to prevent foreclosure and maintain stable housing.

**Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) Affordable Housing Program:** Provides funding to assist with the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing units.

**Michigan's Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act** Additionally, recent amendments to [Michigan's Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act](#) have introduced a [Housing Tax Increment Financing \(TIF\)](#) program, designed to stimulate the development and preservation of affordable housing across the state, including rural Peninsula townships.

**Understanding Housing TIF:** Traditionally, TIF has been used to revitalize blighted or underutilized properties by capturing the future increase in property tax revenues resulting from new development. These "tax increments" are then redirected to reimburse developers for eligible expenses, such as environmental remediation, infrastructure improvements, and site preparation. The new Housing TIF program extends this concept to include affordable housing projects, even on non-brownfield sites, provided they address an identified housing need.

**Potential Benefits for Baraga Township:** Developers in rural areas often face financial challenges due to higher per-unit costs and lower expected returns. Housing TIF allows these developers to recoup certain costs through the captured tax increments, improving the financial viability of projects that might otherwise be unfeasible.

**Addressing Specific Housing Needs:** Rural townships can utilize Housing TIF to target specific housing shortages, such as affordable rental units or workforce housing. By aligning TIF projects with local housing plans, communities ensure that developments meet the unique needs of their residents.

**Revitalizing Underutilized Properties:** Many rural areas have vacant or underused properties that can be transformed into housing. Housing TIF provides the necessary funding mechanism to convert these sites into livable spaces, enhancing community appeal and potentially attracting new residents.

**Economic and Community Development:** Increasing the availability of affordable housing supports local economies by attracting and retaining workers, thereby addressing labor shortages

and contributing to overall community sustainability.

**Implementation Considerations:** Successful Housing TIF projects require cooperation between developers, local governments, and housing authorities to identify suitable projects and navigate the approval process.

**Community Engagement:** Engaging local residents in planning ensures that developments align with community expectations and address genuine needs.

**Long-Term Planning:** Given that TIF arrangements can last up to 30 years, careful planning is essential to balance immediate housing needs with future community goals.

## 6.5 Summary

By implementing some, or all of the above housing tools and strategies, Baraga Township can develop a more resilient and inclusive housing landscape that meets the needs of all community members, both now and in the future. Housing policies that prioritize affordability, sustainability, and accessibility will contribute to a stronger local economy and enhanced quality of life for all residents.

## 7.0 COMMUNITY SERVICES, RECREATION & CULTURE

### 7.1 Community Services

#### **Baraga Township Hall & Office**

Baraga Township administrative functions are conducted at the newly constructed Township Hall located at 13919 State Hwy M-38, just outside of Baraga. The building serves the township with offices, restrooms, and a meeting room. The new hall is 3,000 square feet in size and was built by Moyle Construction.



#### **Water & Sanitary Sewer**

The Township water and sewage needs are serviced by only residential septic systems and independent private wells administered by [Western Upper Peninsula Health Department](#).

#### **Police Service**

Police and protection services are provided by the [Baraga County Sheriff's Department](#) and Michigan State Police and Tribal police departments. Mutual aid agreements are coordinated by the Baraga County Sheriff's Department. Any of these agencies, when available, will respond to an incident. After hours police dispatch is provided by the State Police Regional Barracks at Negaunee with an enhanced 911 system.

#### **Fire Service**

Fire protection for the community is provided by local fire departments. The [Baraga Fire Department](#) has proudly served area citizens since 1890, and provides several services including fire prevention

and extinguishing, vehicle extrication, and community outreach. In addition, the [Pelkie Fire Department](#) and the [Keweenaw Bay Fire Department](#), which are part of the [Copper Country Volunteer Fire Fighters Association](#), also serves the greater community.

### **EMT & Ambulance Service**

Baraga Township is served by EMTs as first responders. [Bay Ambulance](#) serves the needs of the local Baraga County area residents including the residents of Baraga Township. The service has been shared by the local communities since Bay Ambulance built its building in 1991. Services include Emergency medical service and transportation of the sick and injured; public service and injury prevention; CPR and First Aid training; stop the bleed training; and child car seat education.

### **Hospitals**

Hospital facilities are provided by:

- [Baraga County Memorial Hospital BCMH](#) in L'Anse is a level IV trauma center.
- [UP Health System](#) in Portage is a level III trauma center.
- [UP Health System Bell](#) in Ishpeming.
- [UP Health System](#) in Marquette is a level II trauma center.

UP Health System Bell in Ishpeming and UP Health System Marquette are both regional health care facilities.

### **Educational Opportunities**

Residents in Baraga will find a variety of educational opportunities catering to different age groups and interests. Below is an overview of opportunities in the area:

#### **Baraga Area Schools**

**Baraga Schools:** Serving approximately 317 students from kindergarten through 12th grade, Baraga Schools provide comprehensive education with a student-teacher ratio of 13:1. Baraga and L'Anse schools have implemented early college programs, allowing high school students to earn college credits while completing their high school education. This initiative provides students with a head start in higher education and potential career pathways.

**Alternative and Adult Education Program:** This program offers adult students opportunities to continue their education, including GED preparation. Recent enhancements include the addition of a GED Testing Center, which assisted over 20 adults in 2024, with 60% advancing their education.

**Great Explorations Program:** An afterschool and summer initiative that provides a safe, enriching environment where students can explore, grow, and build relationships. The summer program offers camp-style experiences with hands-on learning and outdoor activities.

**Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College (KBOCC):** KBOCC is a public tribal community college located in L'Anse. It offers Associate degrees in Arts, Science, and Applied Science, emphasizing the integration of Ojibwa language and culture into its programs. The college is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium.

**Baraga County 4-H Programs:** In collaboration with Michigan State University, Baraga County offers 4-H programs that provide youth with educational opportunities in areas ranging from science and

technology to clothing and textiles. These programs aim to empower young people with skills that lead to lifelong success.

**BHK Early Child Development:** BHK provides early childhood education and family support services to nearly 400 children and families annually throughout Baraga County. Their programs employ 108 dedicated staff members and bring approximately \$6.2 million dollars in federal funding to the area every year. BHK works with local schools, public health, mental health, and other human-service agencies to provide comprehensive, quality programs. Some programs give priority to low-income families and children with special needs, but all families are encouraged to register.

These educational institutions and programs collectively contribute to a diverse and supportive learning environment in Baraga Township, addressing the needs of both traditional students and adult learners.

## 7.2 Public Utilities & Transportation Infrastructure

### *Public Utility System*

**Electricity:** The Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO) supplies electricity to urban areas within Baraga Township. Rural regions are served by the Ontonagon County Rural Electric Association (OCREA), an electric power cooperative.

**Water and Sewer:** The Village of Baraga provides water services to its residents. Residents can manage their utility accounts, track usage, and pay bills online through the village's MyAccount tool. Baraga Township residents primarily rely on sanitary well and septic systems, as administered by Western Upper Peninsula Health Department's [Environmental Health Department](#).

**Solid Waste Management:** Baraga Township residents utilize drop-off trash services through the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) Solid Waste Facility.

### *Transportation System*

**Road Infrastructure:** The Baraga County Road Commission is responsible for constructing and maintaining various roadways, from single-lane gravel roads to multi-lane highways. Their duties include building and maintaining roads, bridges, and culverts; conducting winter maintenance such as snow removal and ice control; performing preventative and roadside maintenance; and ensuring safe traffic patterns.

**Highway Projects:** The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) recently invested in resurfacing projects within Baraga County. Notably, in 2022, a \$4.3 million project resurfaced 7.5 miles of US-41/M-28, including asphalt resurfacing, shoulder improvements, drainage enhancements, guardrail updates, new signage, and pavement markings.

As indicated in the public input session, residents desire more walkability and connectivity between residential neighborhoods and the commercial corridor. A newly designed, all-user streetscape along M-38 would provide curb appeal for businesses and recreational opportunities and serve both local residents and tourists.

## 7.3 Recreation

Recreational opportunities within a community often reflect the quality of life that is enjoyed by its

residents, and appeal to its visitors. When considering future land use issues and opportunities, the development of recreation facilities and programs should be considered in the discussion. The area is home to world-class, four-season recreation opportunities with its Lake Superior shoreline, rugged terrain and miles of trails. These natural resources are part of the community fabric. Recreational planning in Baraga Township should aim to develop and promote recreational opportunities that meet the needs of its residents and visitors — regardless of their age or ability.

Although Baraga Township does not own or operate any recreational facilities of its own, there are ample opportunities for recreation in the Village of Baraga and the surrounding area.

Per the Village of Baraga's Parks & Recreation Plan, the following properties and facilities are owned and operated by the Village:

**Baraga Marina and Boat Launch** – The Baraga Marina has facilities for mooring approximately 28 recreational boats, and a boat launching ramp with courtesy dock. Slips are provided with water, electricity, and pump-out services. Fuel is also available.

**Boardwalk and Fishing Pier** – Adjacent to the Village Marina is a Boardwalk and Fishing Pier providing views of the Bay and a shore fishing opportunity.

**Baraga Municipal Recreation Building Complex** – This facility provides indoor ice for public skating hockey on a regulation-size hockey rink. The facility also has changing rooms, concession rooms, and a Zamboni service room.

**Waterfront Trail** – The Village has partnered with the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) to construct a walking and biking pathway from Sand Point north of the Village to the Baraga State Park. It is part of an overall plan to connect Sand Point to Zeba on the L'Anse side of Keweenaw Bay. Phase 1 was constructed by the KBIC and connects Sand Point to the Marina, and runs through the recently acquired property.

**Baraga Waterfront Park** – Phase 2 is being developed by the Village and funding is in place for construction.

**Baraga's Children's Park** – The fenced playground and park has swings, teeter totters, slides, picnic tables, benches, swinging benches, and a rest room.

**Capul Recreational Park** – Capul Recreational Park is located on highway US 41 next to the Baraga Marina on the walking trail. Currently the park has new playground equipment along with corn hole boards, picnic tables, and pickle ball courts. There are future plans for a pavilion with handicap accessible bathrooms, ping pong tables, volleyball court, and shuffleboard.

**Marilyn Ross Memorial Basketball Court** – The Village DDA provided funds to construct a basketball court, including concrete surface, goals, lighting, and fencing, in honor of Marilyn Ross who served on the DDA for more than 20 years.

Other, regional recreation opportunities exist as well.

**Baraga State Park** – Baraga State Park, set along Lake Superior's scenic Keweenaw Bay, is popular for hiking, kayaking, camping, and ORV-friendly recreation. It's also a great basecamp for those touring western Upper Peninsula destinations. The park is one of just a few state parks that allow the operation of an ORV between the campground and nearby ORV trails. The park connects Twin Lakes and Bewabic

State Parks and Bond Falls Scenic Site via several motorized routes.

**Canyon Falls Roadside Park** – Canyon Falls is along US-41 near Alberta, about 10 miles south of L'Anse. The trailhead is located in a renovated roadside park. The trail to the falls is about 1 mile over level terrain. Beyond the falls the river has cut a gorge into the rocks, and an unmaintained trail continues along the rim of the gorge. The rock has broken along straight line faults, resulting in a boxy canyon. Numerous rapids and some smaller drops can be found downstream.

**Little Mountain** – Little Mountain located down the golf course road in L'Anse is another great tourist attraction. A few other places to check out include Slate Falls (Arvon township), East & West branch of the Huron River, Silver Falls, and many of the waterfalls on the Falls River.

**Mount Arvon** – Mount Arvon is the highest point in Michigan, standing 1,979 feet above sea level. Mt. Arvon is located 12 miles East of L'Anse. In the winter and spring, the road may be closed due to snow or mud, making it difficult for vehicles to get in and out. Recently installed wayfinding signage has aided in navigating the area.

**Sturgeon River Gorge** – The Sturgeon River Gorge features a 25-foot waterfall within the 14,139 acres of wilderness. A vast amount of wildlife can be viewed in the area including Whitetail deer, bald eagles, snowshoe hare, beavers, and otters.

There are also several motorized and non-motorized trails within the Township:

[DNR Snowmobile Trails](#) 159 and 15 traverse through the Baraga Plains in the southern part of Baraga Township. Trail 15 connects Baraga to Chassell. Also located in the southern portion of the township is the [Baraga Plains Trail \(BPT\)](#). The trailhead features plenty of parking spaces, a vault toilet, and an approximately 28-mile trail dedicated to ORV/ATV usage.

In addition to the above motorized trails, there are also non-motorized trails located within the Village of Baraga.

## 7.2           Culture

Cultural sites serve as the heart of a community by preserving its history, traditions, and identity. They foster a sense of belonging, educate people about their heritage, and promote cultural exchange. Additionally, these sites contribute to economic growth through tourism and provide spaces for artistic and social activities that strengthen community bonds. The following cultural sites exist in and around Baraga Township.

**Veteran Memorial Park** – The new Veteran Memorial Park is located at the Baraga Cemetery on highway US 41. It was constructed in 2024, and a flag stands for each section of the United States military.

**Bishop Baraga Shrine** – The commemorative shrine for Bishop Frederic Baraga, the legendary "Snowshoe Priest", was built after organizing efforts in 1969 by residents of Baraga County and county clerk, author, and historian Bernard Lambert. They formed a foundation to plan and create the religious/historical monument and chose L'Anse ("end of the bay" in French) as the site because it was an area often traveled by Baraga.

**Alberta Village Museum** – The community was founded in 1936 after Henry Ford declared the banks of

the Plumbago Creek to be an ideal spot for a sawmill. Ford named the town "Alberta." It was Ford's intention to have a model lumber and sawmill town. At the time Ford established Alberta, wood was used extensively in automobiles. The original Village of Alberta consisted of twelve houses, two schools, and a steam-driven mill built to the most modern standards of the day. Those who resided there were expected to divide their time lumbering, milling, and farming. Today, Alberta is the site of the Ford Center, managed by the Michigan Technological University College of Forest Resources and Environmental Science.

**Assinins** – Bishop Fredric Baraga, who founded the Ojibwa Indian Catholic Mission of Assinins in 1843, located just north of Baraga. Assinins, which means "Little Stone," is named after the first chief Bishop Baraga baptized.

**Hanka Homestead Museum** – Finnish settler, Herman Hanka, settled this homestead near Arnheim with his family after he was injured in a copper mining accident in 1896. The homestead sits on 40 acres of land with 8 standing buildings and demonstrated traditional Finnish farming. This indoor/outdoor museum allows visitors to learn about the life of immigrant families and their experience living in the area.

**Sand Point (Baraga) Lighthouse** – The Sand Point Lighthouse is located the Ojibwa Campground and Recreation Area. Owned by the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, the keeper's dwelling has been restored to its original design. The dwelling is not open for business, but visitors are welcome to tour the grounds. The Sand Point Light Station was first lit in 1878 and was replaced by a steel skeletal tower at the shoreline in 1922. The lighthouse is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In addition to these sites, there are also events that take place each year that add to the cultural diversity in Baraga Township.

### 7.3 Summary

The Community Services, Recreation & Culture section outlines Baraga Township's key facilities and assets supporting resident well-being and community identity. Essential services include a new Township Hall, police and fire protection through local and regional agencies, and access to hospitals and emergency medical services. Education is provided by Baraga Area Schools, Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College, and various early childhood and adult programs. Utility services are largely decentralized, with private wells and septic systems predominating. Road maintenance and recent MDOT improvements support mobility, with resident interest in enhancing walkability. Recreational offerings are extensive, featuring Lake Superior access, trails, parks, and partnerships with the Village of Baraga and KBIC. Cultural identity is preserved through landmarks like the Bishop Baraga Shrine, Alberta Village Museum, and Hanka Homestead, enriching the community's historical and social fabric while supporting tourism and civic pride.

## 8.0 TRANSPORTATION & TRAILS

### 8.1 Introduction

Baraga Township's transportation network is a critical component of community connectivity, economic development, emergency access, and quality of life. As a predominantly rural township in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, transportation options are limited primarily to motor vehicles, with minimal infrastructure for public transit or active transportation. This section identifies current conditions, needs, and strategies for enhancing transportation systems with an emphasis on sustainability, safety, and multi-modal access.

### 8.2 Existing Road Infrastructure

The Township is primarily served by the following road types:

- US-41/M-38: The major arterial route connecting Baraga Township to L'Anse, Houghton, and beyond.
- County Roads: Maintained by the Baraga County Road Commission; many of these are gravel or low-volume paved roads.
- Local Roads: Maintained by the Township or private owners, some of which are seasonally inaccessible or in poor condition.
- Residents frequently expressed concern over deteriorating roads, a lack of regular maintenance (especially in winter), and the need for a road millage or capital improvements plan to fix aging infrastructure.

Recommendations:

- Partner with the Baraga County Road Commission to identify high-priority improvements.
- Evaluate feasibility of a dedicated road improvement millage similar to Spurr Township.
- Conduct a local PASER rating inventory every three years and integrate results into the Township's capital improvement planning.

### 8.3 Non-Motorized Transportation

Survey results show significant community support for expanding non-motorized transportation options, including walking and biking trails. Respondents ranked "Improve non-motorized transportation network" among the most important goals for the Township to consider.

Opportunities Identified:

- Lack of sidewalks and bike lanes along US-41, especially between population centers.
- Desire for a north-south non-motorized trail connecting the Township to the Village of Baraga and

Ojibwa Campground.

- Safe pedestrian routes, particularly near schools and public facilities.

Recommendations:

- Develop a Township-wide Non-Motorized Transportation Plan to prioritize trail corridors.
- Seek MDOT and DNR funding for non-motorized paths and crossings along US-41 and M-38.
- Coordinate with regional trail systems and tribal partners, Baraga County, KBIC, etc., to create continuous pedestrian access between communities.

## 8.4 Motorized Trails (ORV/Snowmobile)

Baraga Township is part of a popular off-road vehicle and snowmobile region, with existing trails drawing tourism dollars and connecting to regional trail systems. Community input strongly supports the development of additional ORV pathways, citing economic benefits and recreational appeal.

Current Assets:

- Existing ORV trails on old railroad grades, including linkages to Houghton and L'Anse.
- Proximity to state-designated snowmobile trail systems managed by the DNR and local clubs.

Recommendations:

- Expand signed and mapped ORV routes, emphasizing safety and environmental sustainability.
- Pursue grant funding through the DNR ORV and Snowmobile Trail Programs.
- Work with trail clubs to improve maintenance and signage.
- Investigate potential multi-use trailheads with parking, restrooms, and kiosks.

## 8.5 Public and Alternative Transportation

Baraga Township, like many rural communities in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, faces significant challenges related to transportation access for residents who do not or cannot drive. These challenges are particularly pronounced among elderly residents, low-income individuals, and persons with disabilities, many of whom may experience social isolation, limited access to healthcare, and economic hardship due to a lack of mobility.

While the Township does not currently operate any form of public transit, the community survey and supplemental comments revealed several recurring themes:

- A need for transportation options for seniors and others who cannot drive.
- Desire for community-supported ride programs, especially for medical appointments, shopping, and social services.
- General recognition that mobility is essential to retaining an aging population and supporting quality of life in remote areas.

### Existing Resources and Gaps

- The Baraga-Houghton-Keweenaw (BHK) Community Action Agency provides limited transportation options primarily geared toward early childhood and family services but does not operate township-wide public transit.
- No fixed-route or dial-a-ride services are currently available for Baraga Township residents.
- The nearest limited transit offerings are located in the Village of Baraga and L'Anse, but these do not extend meaningfully into the rural township areas.

### Community-Identified Needs

Community survey write-in responses specifically called for:

- Basic transportation service options, such as dial-a-ride or flexible shuttles.
- Volunteer driver programs for elderly or disabled residents to access healthcare.
- Partnerships with regional agencies to bridge service gaps.

These findings align with regional rural transportation challenges identified by the Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR) and support the need for creative, low-cost, community-based solutions.

### Recommendations:

- Partner with Baraga County Transit or Western U.P. Planning & Development Region to explore demand-response transit service or rideshare solutions.
- Encourage community ride boards or local volunteer driver networks.

## 8.6 Summary

Baraga Township's transportation network is crucial in supporting rural mobility, public safety, recreation, and economic development. The Township currently relies on a limited road system, with no public transit and minimal infrastructure for non-motorized travel. Residents have expressed concerns over deteriorating roads, lack of pedestrian infrastructure, and a strong desire for expanded recreational trails. These concerns provide direction for Township officials to pursue as funding and opportunities arise.

## 9.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION & INPUT

### 9.1 Introduction

The success of any planning process is dependent upon resident and stakeholder involvement. This Master Plan update will be more successful if residents and stakeholders help to establish and support the plan's goals and objectives. The Planning Commission and Township Board should always make attempts to involve residents through the availability of information, regardless of whether a plan update is being discussed or not. This information can be made available for the public through the Baraga Township website, social media outlets, email correspondence, public meetings, local publications, and area news media. By allowing open access to important community development information, the Township will allow the public to acquire the necessary background to help communicate their desires for the present and future of the community.

### 9.2 Public Input

To that end, Baraga Township officials solicited community involvement to maximize the effectiveness of the Master Plan update process by hosting a public input session at the Baraga Township Hall on Tuesday, February 4, 2025. Approximately twenty (20) members of the community gathered to offer their input on the future of the community. A robust discussion was held, and those conversations are documented in the goals and objectives of this plan. An additional work session was held on Monday, March 10th and a Community Survey was administered during the months of March and April of 2025.

As stated in an earlier section of this plan, the sections presented in this document represent the conclusion of months of discussion and study by the Baraga Township Planning Commission, along with technical assistance provided by Northwoods Planning & Zoning Services, LLC.

A Community Survey was also administered in March and April of 2025. The survey was distributed by hard copy and was also made available digitally on the Baraga Township website. The survey was open for a period of 30-days and the results of can be found in the Appendix of this plan. Resident and stakeholder comments and desires were also translated into the body of this plan, as well as the Goals & Objectives section.

The final draft plan was posted on the Baraga Township website in July of 2025, and a hard copy was made available at the Baraga Township Hall. Residents also had the opportunity to provide additional comments at the Planning Commission's public hearing on September 17, 2025.

Following the public hearing, the Master Plan update was adopted by the Baraga Township Planning Commission on September 17, 2025. Finally, a Resolution of Concurrence was adopted by the Baraga Township Board of Trustees on October 9, 2025.

## 10.0 FUTURE ZONING PLAN

### 10.1 Introduction

Per the requirements of Michigan's Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008), the following is a detailed Future Zoning Plan for Baraga Township. This plan builds upon existing land use, public sentiment, natural features, and infrastructure conditions to guide future zoning districts and policy directions over the next 10–20 years.

### 10.2 Guiding Principles

The future zoning framework is grounded in the following principles derived from community input:

- Protect and preserve the natural shoreline, forests, and wetlands.
- Accommodate diverse, affordable, and aging-friendly housing options.
- Guide growth to areas with infrastructure potential and road access.
- Promote seasonal recreation, trail-based tourism, and public access.
- Manage short-term rentals and private recreation in balance with residential quality of life.
- Support clean energy, local food, and rural character.

### 10.3 Proposed Zoning District Updates

Below is a summary of recommended future zoning districts, how they differ from current zoning, and their intended purpose:

#### **R-1 – Single Family Residential**

Future Direction:

- Maintain R-1 in existing areas near roads and services, such as Lyons Street, Niemi Road, and the Village border.
- Consider the allowance of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to support housing flexibility for seniors and families.
- Plan for infill and clustering development in R-1 areas close to the Village to preserve surrounding open space.

#### **LR – Lakeshore Residential/Recreational**

Future Direction:

- Maintain low-density residential character along Keweenaw Bay, Big Lake, and Prickett Lake.
- Consider the addition of overlay regulations to protect natural shorelines: enforce setbacks, limit impervious surface, require vegetative buffers.
- Contemplate new commercial development; allow low-impact public access points and trails.
- Consider limited seasonal rentals (via ordinance) with performance standards.

#### **A/R – Agricultural/Residential**

**Future Direction:**

- Preserve rural character and agricultural uses while allowing low-density rural housing.
- Maintain small-scale farm enterprises (e.g., roadside stands, farm stays).
- Consider clustered housing developments that conserve farmland and forest cover.
- Consider the allowance of ADUs and duplexes with appropriate lot size and frontage.

**F – Forest Resource****Future Direction:**

- Retain large-lot for forest management, timber harvesting, conservation, and hunting cabins.
- Protect contiguous forest tracts from fragmentation.
- Consider integrating wildfire resilience standards and supporting long-term forestry planning.
- Prohibit major subdivisions or intensive residential development.

**MU – Mixed Use****Future Direction:**

- Consider focusing future MU development at key road junctions (e.g., Pelkie, Assinins, M-38 intersections).
- Encourage live/work units, rural service businesses, and compact housing.
- Incentivize redevelopment of underutilized buildings, where and when feasible.

**C – Commercial****Future Direction:**

- Aim to concentrate commercial growth along the US-41 corridor, especially near Baraga Village, Ojibwa Industrial Park, and Pelkie.
- Contemplate commercial encroachment into residential or lakeshore areas.
- Encourage highway-adjacent services such as fuel stations, contractor shops, and seasonal markets.
- Encourage small-scale, locally owned businesses.

**I – Industrial****Future Direction:**

- Encourage industrial development to be located within existing industrial zones near Ojibwa Industrial Park and M-38.
- Prohibit heavy industrial uses near residential or lakeshore areas.
- Consider requiring buffering, access controls, and environmental impact review for new sites.
- Consider exploring green industry attraction (e.g., biomass, solar equipment, recycling).

**FED – Federal/State Forest/Tribal Lands****Future Direction:**

- Maintain existing classification.

- Support intergovernmental cooperation with the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC), State of Michigan, and U.S. Forest Service for trail access, forest management, and cultural resource protection.

### **Special Zoning Policy Priorities**

#### Vacation Rentals

- Consider developing zoning regulations for short-term rentals.
- Consider requiring registration, occupancy caps, parking standards, and enforcement.

#### Campgrounds and Recreation

- Consider the allowance of campgrounds and RV parks by special use permit only.
- Contemplate requiring performance standards: noise buffering, septic controls, screening, and seasonal limits.
- Consider design standards, minimum parcel size, and proximity requirements for campground regarding locations adjacent to waterfronts or residential land uses.

#### ORV/Snowmobile Access

- Designate seasonal recreation corridors in MU, A/R, and F zones.
- Encourage trail-based economic development near US-41, Pelkie, and Assinins.

#### Renewable Energy

- Consider residential solar energy systems in all districts.
- Consider small-scale wind and community solar gardens in A/R and F districts by special use.
- Consider developing zoning standards for height, setbacks, and visual screening.

## **10.4 Proposed Zoning District Updates**

This revised Future Zoning Plan balances preservation of Baraga Township's natural resources and rural character with support for housing choice, tourism development, and infrastructure readiness. By working within the existing zoning district framework and applying strategic refinements, the Township can advance its community vision while complying with state planning laws and honoring resident input.

## 11.0 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### 11.1 Introduction

The Goals & Objectives chapter provides a roadmap for achieving the Township's long-term vision. Developed in accordance with community values, survey responses, and statutory planning principles, these goals articulate what Baraga Township aspires to be, while the objectives define how those aspirations will be accomplished through policy, planning, and implementation efforts.

### 11.2 Community-Driven Planning Framework

The following goals are organized into thematic categories derived from:

- Community survey results (2025 written, online, and open-ended comments).
- Input from township officials and residents.
- Key issues identified in land use, transportation, utilities, and housing analyses

#### **Land Use and Development**

***Goal A1: Maintain Baraga Township's rural character while guiding growth to appropriate areas.***

Objectives:

- Aim new residential development toward areas with existing road and utility infrastructure.
- Preserve agricultural and forest lands by encouraging clustered rural development.
- Preserve the rural character and quiet environment while supporting targeted growth near Pelkie, Assinins, and the US-41 corridor.

***Goal A2: Promote land use compatibility and protect environmentally sensitive areas.***

Objectives:

- Consider the establishment of overlay zones to protect the Lake Superior shoreline, wetlands, and steep slopes.
- Contemplate zoning ordinance updates to reduce incompatibilities near residential districts and the lakeshore.
- Consider low-impact development patterns in scenic and environmentally valuable areas.

#### **Housing**

***Goal B1: Provide a variety of housing options to meet the needs of residents of all ages and incomes.***

Objectives:

- Consider allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs), duplexes, and senior housing in appropriate

zoning districts.

- Encourage housing designs suitable for aging in place.
- Explore zoning tools such as density bonuses or overlays for attainable housing in transitional areas.

***Goal B2: Support the rehabilitation and maintenance of existing housing stock.***

Objectives:

- Promote housing assistance programs in partnership with county and regional agencies.
- Provide educational resources on home repair grants and energy efficiency programs.

**Natural Resources and Environment**

***Goal C1: Protect the Township's lakes, streams, forests, and wildlife habitat.***

Objectives:

- Consider the adoption of a Lakeshore Protection Overlay District to preserve natural shorelines and water quality.
- Encourage sustainable forest management practices and limit fragmentation of large tracts.
- Consider vegetative buffers and erosion control measures for new development.

***Goal C2: Promote environmental resilience and sustainability.***

Objectives:

- Consider solar energy, battery storage, and other clean technologies.
- Reduce risk of wildfire and flooding through land management and zoning tools.
- Support conservation easements and land trusts.

**Transportation and Trails**

***Goal D1: Improve road conditions and long-term maintenance.***

Objectives:

- Partner with the Baraga County Road Commission to prioritize repair and resurfacing.
- Evaluate the feasibility of a road millage or capital improvements plan.
- Maintain a PASER road rating inventory and schedule regular assessments.

***Goal D2: Expand non-motorized transportation options and safe pedestrian access.***

Objectives:

- Develop a Township-wide Non-Motorized Transportation Plan.

- Create safe walking and biking connections between population centers and recreational areas.
- Work with MDOT and DNR for trail funding and technical support.

***Goal D3: Support motorized trail access and recreation-based tourism.***

Objectives:

- Expand designated ORV and snowmobile routes in coordination with local clubs and DNR.
- Create trailhead infrastructure (signage, parking, restrooms) where appropriate.
- Buffer motorized trails from residential neighborhoods using zoning and design tools.

***Goal D4: Address mobility needs for seniors and non-drivers.***

Objectives:

- Explore demand-response transit or volunteer driver programs for essential trips.
- Coordinate with WUPPDR and Baraga County Transit on mobility studies and grants.

**Public Utilities and Infrastructure**

***Goal E1: Ensure reliable, sustainable access to water, sewer, electricity, and broadband.***

Objectives:

- Conduct a feasibility study for public or regional wastewater systems in key shoreline areas.
- Expand broadband access through public-private partnerships and state/federal grant programs.
- Advocate for natural gas expansion to currently unserved areas.

***Goal E2: Modernize utility infrastructure to support future growth.***

Objectives:

- Integrate utility planning with zoning and development reviews.
- Consider renewable and backup energy systems in homes and public facilities.
- Encourage utility coordination in capital improvement programming.

**Economic Development and Tourism**

***Goal F1: Promote rural tourism, local entrepreneurship, and value-added businesses.***

Objectives:

- Consider campgrounds, outdoor recreation services, and seasonal businesses.
- Streamline zoning for small-scale commercial uses near Pelkie, Assinins, and the US-41 corridor.
- Partner with local and tribal tourism initiatives to market the Township's natural assets.

***Goal F2: Protect and promote working lands (agriculture, forestry).*****Objectives:**

- Encourage agritourism and sustainable farming practices.
- Avoid subdivision of large tracts into low-density sprawl that undermines working land uses.
- Support zoning that allows value-added agricultural enterprises (e.g., maple syrup, meat processing).

**Community Services and Governance****Goal G1: Maintain and improve access to essential services and facilities.****Objectives:**

- Coordinate with law enforcement, fire departments, and EMS to ensure adequate coverage.
- Support long-term planning for Township Hall, maintenance facilities, and public spaces.
- Explore grant funding for equipment and facility upgrades.

***Goal G2: Promote public engagement and intergovernmental collaboration.*****Objectives:**

- Maintain the Baraga Township website and newsletter for public updates and transparency.
- Collaborate with Baraga County, KBIC, WUPPDR, and neighboring jurisdictions on planning initiatives.
- Engage residents through community forums, surveys, and volunteer opportunities.

**11.3 Summary**

Baraga Township's future will be shaped by how well it balances its rural identity with forward-looking improvements in housing, infrastructure, trails, and environmental protection. These goals and objectives reflect the desires of its residents and provide a clear, actionable framework for decision-makers over the next 10 to 20 years.

## 12.0 PLAN ADOPTION & IMPLEMENTATION

### 12.1 Implementation

The Township aims to carry out the goals and objectives of this Master Plan. The Township Board, Planning Commission and staff will continue to monitor the outcomes of the plan and will propose changes as they are needed and/or warranted.

This Master Plan is not a permanent document. It can be amended over time. Because communities are always facing new issues and opportunities, it may be necessary to revise and/or update the Master Plan more regularly than every five (5) years. In order for the Master Plan to be relevant to the community, it must remain current and relevant to issues and opportunities that may arise.

### 12.2 Plan Review

As required by the [Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008](#), the draft plan was distributed to neighboring communities, The Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region, area utilities, and railroads in July of 2025, with instructions for review and comment.

### 12.3 Public Hearing & Adoption

The Public Hearing notice for adoption was published in the L'Anse Sentinel on September 3, 2025. The Township Planning Commission held a duly called Public Hearing on September 17, 2025. Following the Public Hearing, the Planning Commission adopted the plan by resolution on September 17, 2025. The Baraga Township Board of Trustees passed a Resolution of Concurrence at their meeting on October 9, 2025; a copy of those resolutions can be found in the appendix of this document.

## APPENDIX A - 2025 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS



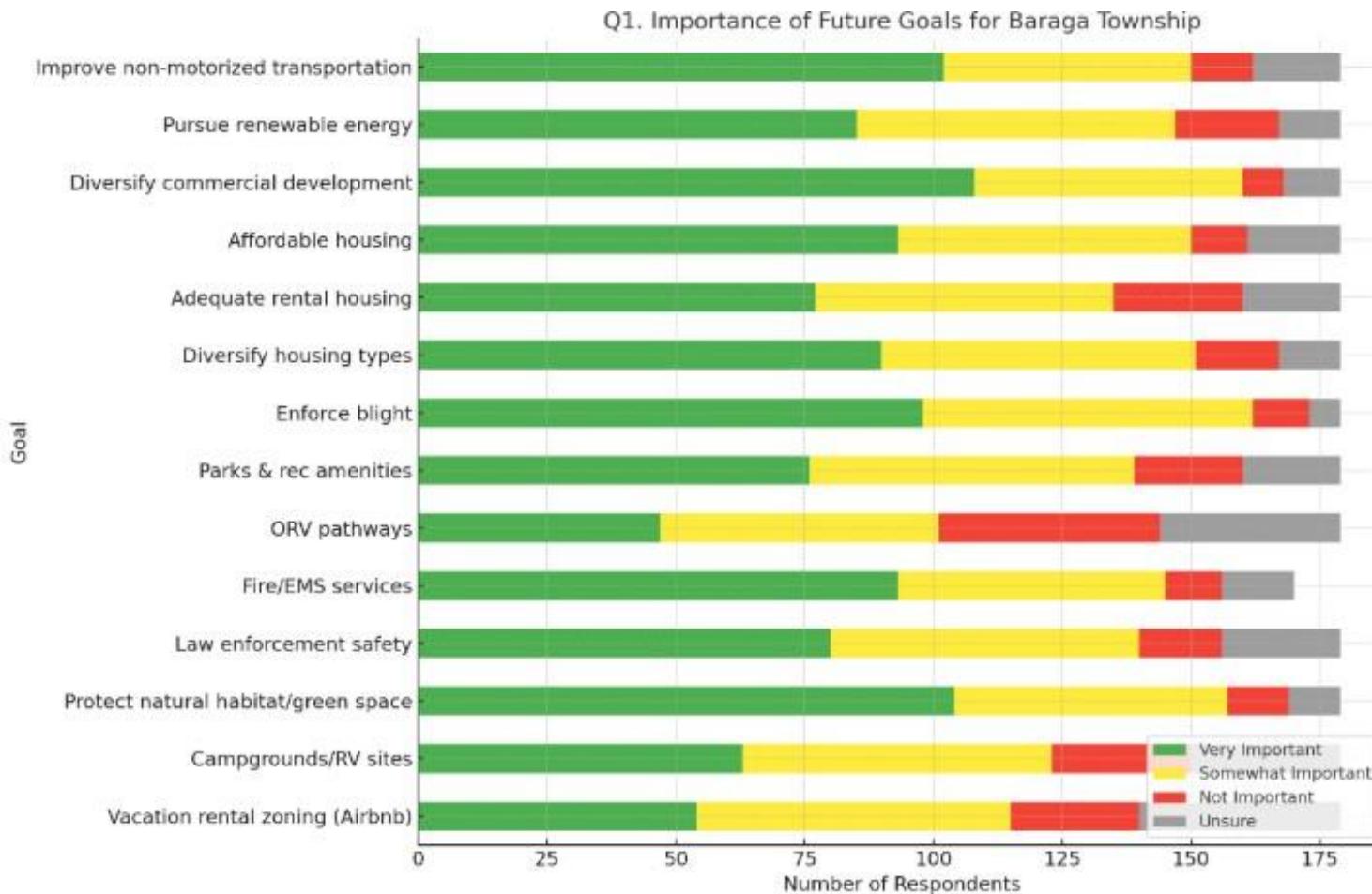
### 2025 Baraga Township Community Survey Results

As part of the community's Master Plan update process, Baraga Township requested public input in the form a community survey. The Mater Plan's objectives and vision will be based on input gathered from community residents and stakeholders. The Master Plan will serve as a roadmap to community growth and management, will represent priorities of community members, and aid local policy and decision-making.

Below are the results of the 2025 Baraga Township Community Survey.

Online responses: 86, Written responses: 93. Total: 179

Question #1. For each of the following future goals for Baraga Township, please rate them based on your opinion of importance.

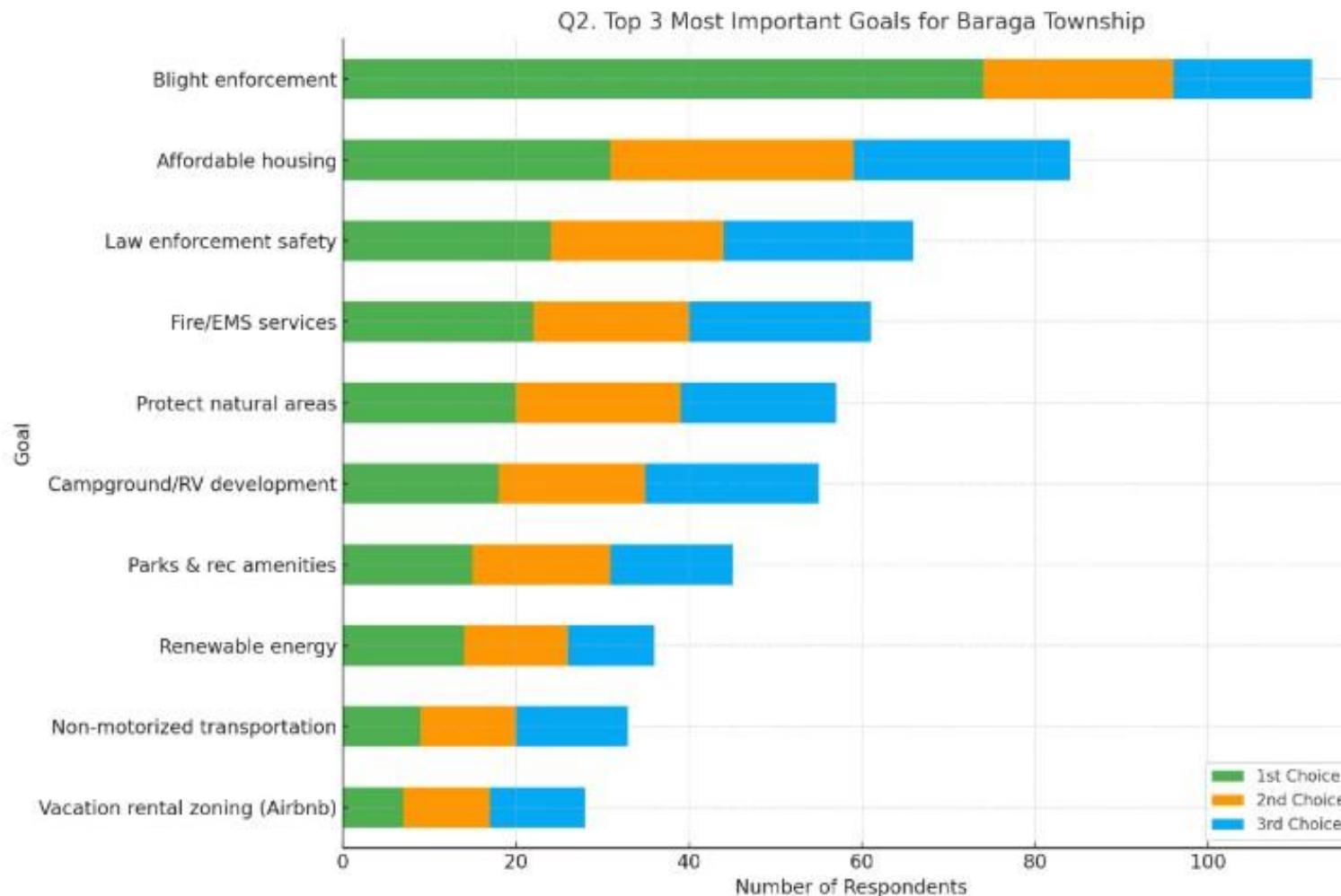


**Top priorities:** Renewable energy, blight enforcement, commercial diversification, fire/EMS services, and housing concerns (affordable and rental).

**Divisive topics:** ORV trail expansion and additional campground/RV sites received more polarized responses.

**Uncertainty:** Vacation rental zoning had the highest “Unsure” rate (22%), indicating a need for more public education.

Question #2. Which three of the statements regarding Baraga Township's future found in question #1 do you feel are the most important? Please choose three.

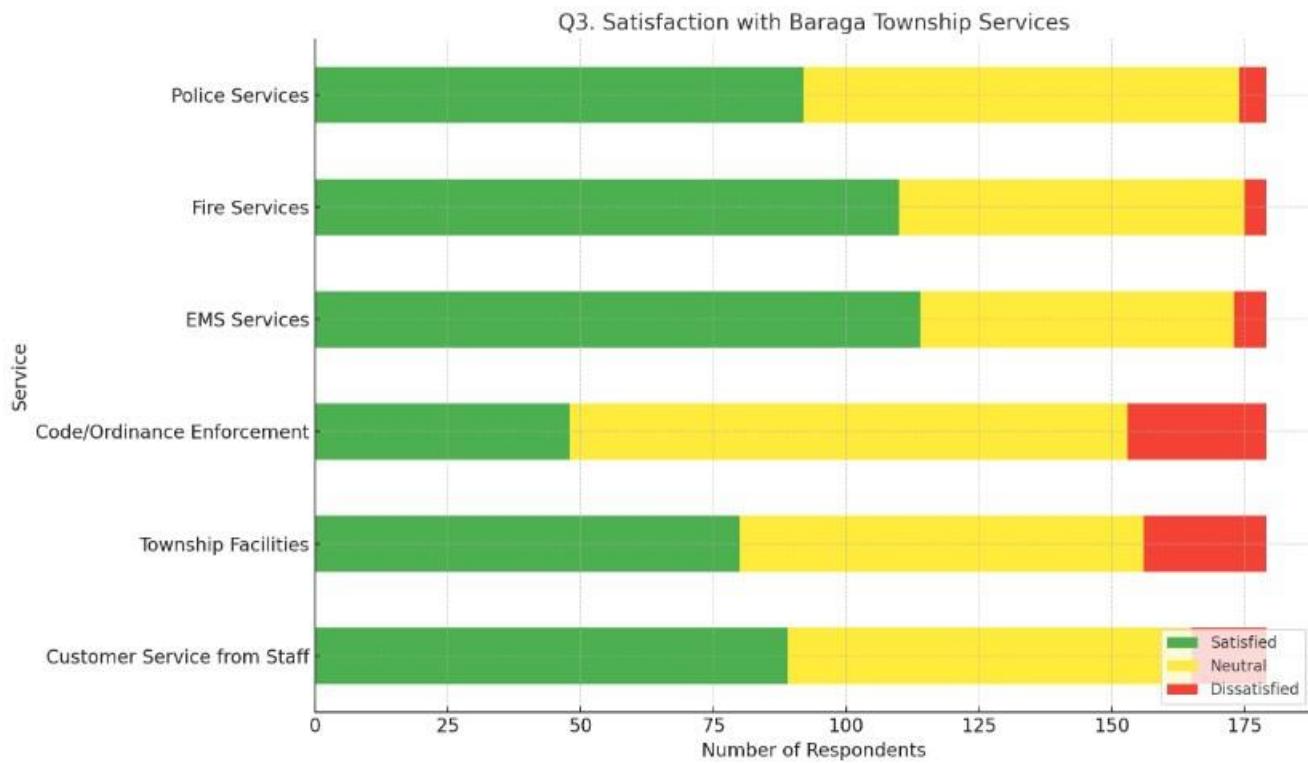


Blight enforcement stands out as the overwhelming priority.

Housing (affordable + rental) and public safety services (police, fire, EMS) dominate the top tier.

Trails and Airbnb zoning remain on the radar but with fewer top-three selections.

Question #3. Please indicate your level of satisfaction of the following Baraga Township Services by checking the appropriate box.

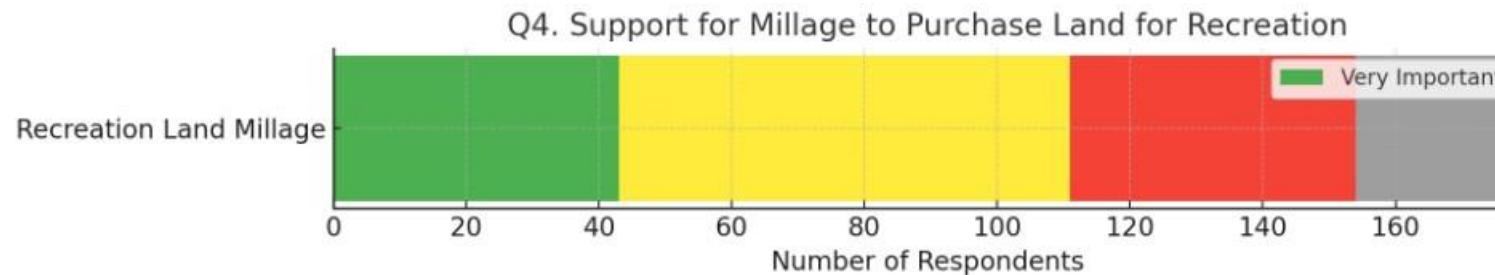


**Highest satisfaction:** EMS and Fire services are strongly supported by the public.

**Most dissatisfaction:** Code and ordinance enforcement — consistent with priority concerns about blight.

Customer service and facilities are rated positively, but not strongly — potentially an area for visibility or communication improvement.

Question #4. How supportive would you be of Baraga Township levying a millage to purchase land for the purpose of developing new recreational opportunities for the community?

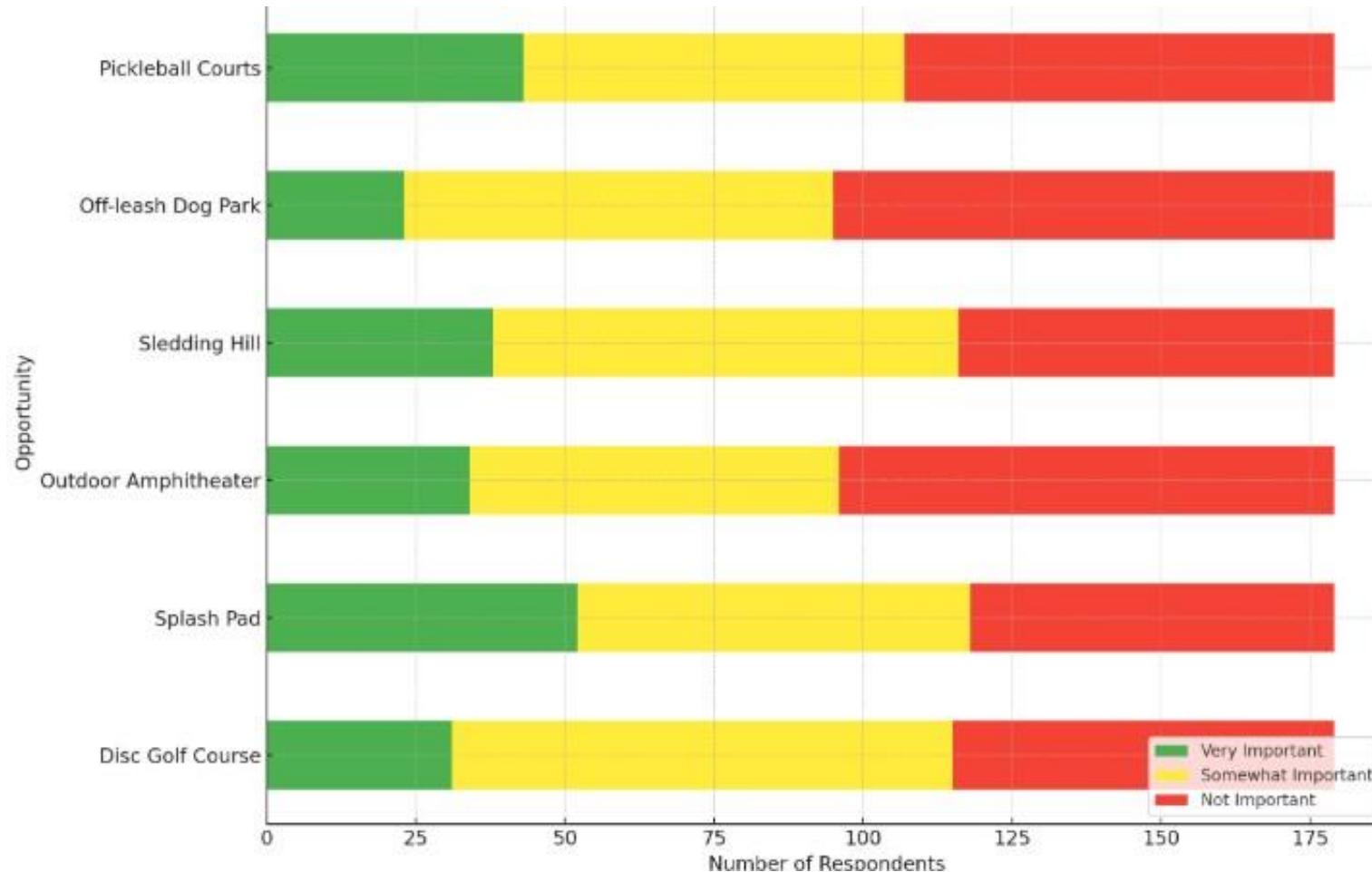


### **Key Takeaways:**

A majority (62%) are supportive (very or somewhat) of the millage idea.

A notable minority (24%) oppose it, while 14% remain unsure — potentially open to persuasion through more detailed proposals.

Question #5. For each of the following recreation opportunities that Baraga Township could potentially develop, please rate them based on your opinion of importance.



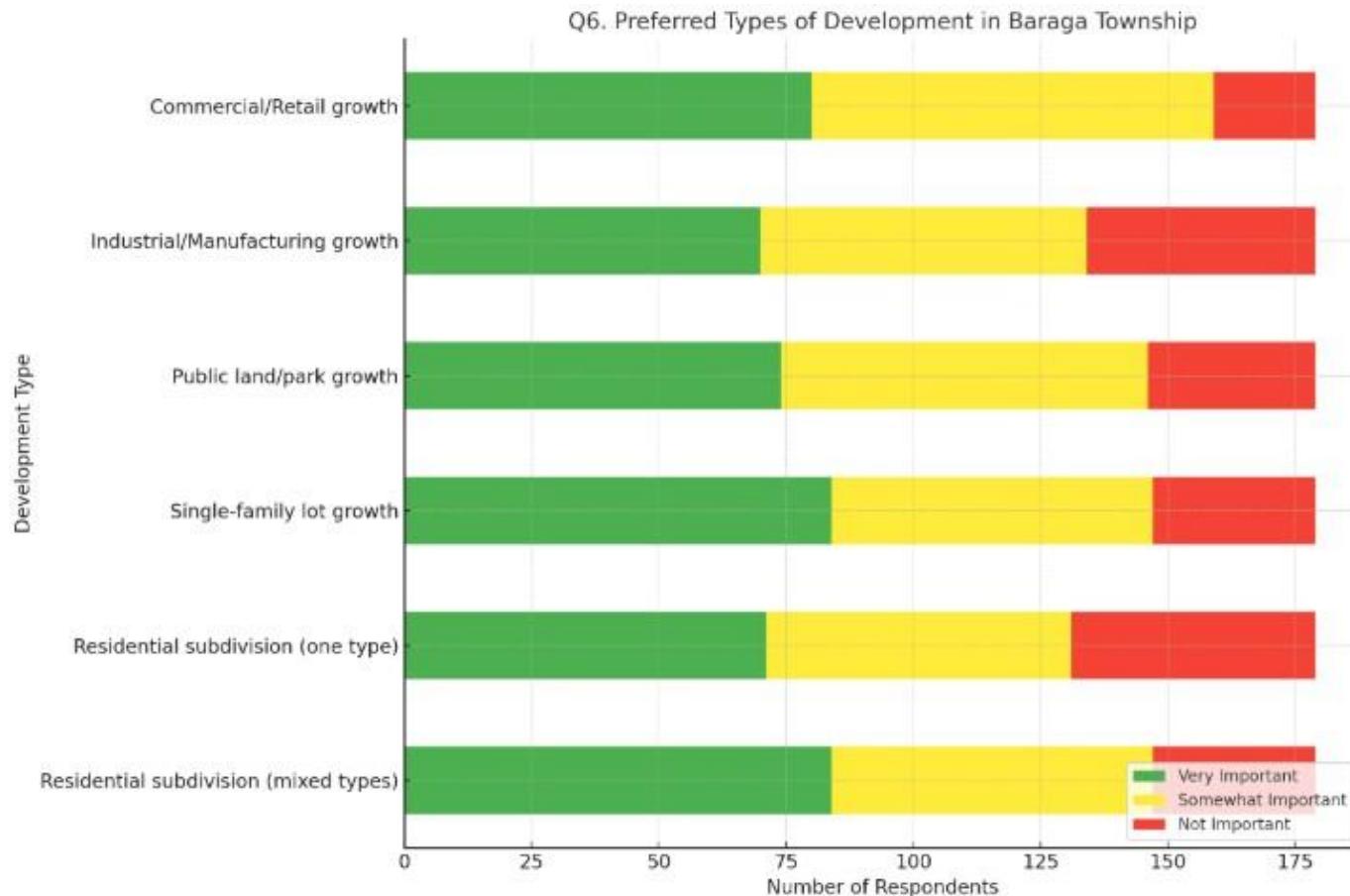
Key Takeaways:

**Most favored:** Splash pad and sledding hill show the highest proportion of "Very Important" and "Somewhat Important" responses.

**Most polarizing:** Dog park and amphitheater are less popular, with nearly half rating them as "Not Important."

Disc golf holds broad mid-range interest with the highest "Somewhat Important" count.

## Question #6. What type of development do you most support regarding future growth of Baraga Township?



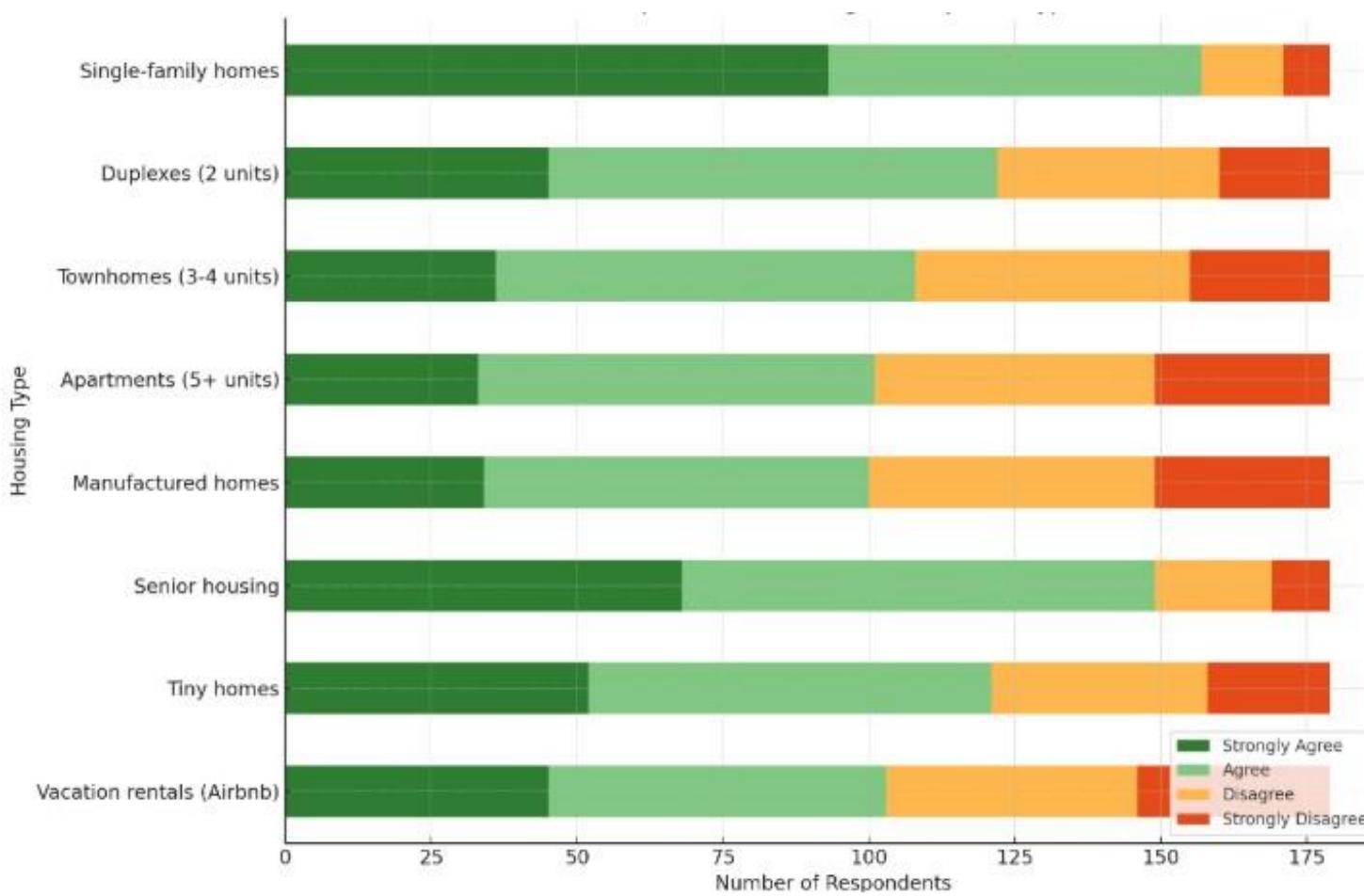
### Key Takeaways:

Strongest overall support: Single-family lot development and mixed-type subdivisions — each with 47% saying “Very Important.”

Commercial growth also ranks highly, with 89% support (combined “Very” and “Somewhat”).

Less consensus on industrial growth and single-type subdivisions, suggesting these should be carefully planned or more fully explained.

Question #7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about housing development in Baraga Township?



**Highest consensus:** Senior housing (83% support) and single-family homes (88% support) are clearly favored.

**Emerging interest:** Tiny homes show strong support despite being a newer concept.

**Most divisive:** Short-term rentals and apartments — nearly split between support and opposition.

**Opportunity areas:** Townhomes and duplexes have more moderate support and could be considered in mixed-use strategies.

Question #8. If you could change one thing in Baraga Township, what would it be and why?

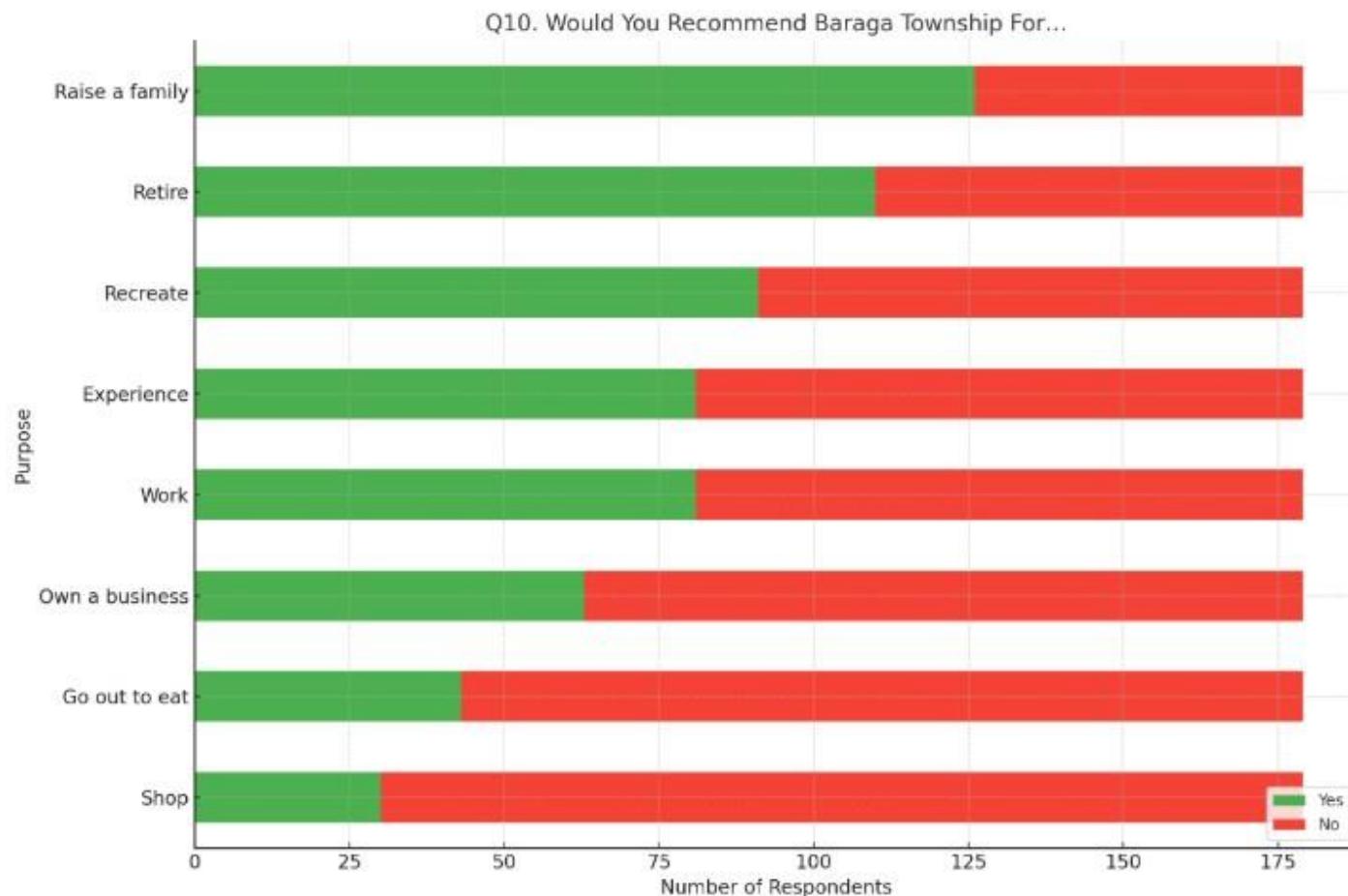
| Theme  | Mentions | Sample Responses  |
|--|----------|---|
| <b>Natural beauty / Lakeshore protection</b> | 10       | "Our natural beauty: Keweenaw Bay, shoreline, mountains, beaches, forest."                      |
| <b>Zoning character (Rural/Residential)</b>  | 5        | "Do not change zoning to allow public campgrounds in residential Lake Superior frontage areas." |
| <b>ORV trails</b>                            | 3        | "ORV trails. They are some of the best I've been on."   |
| <b>Community charm / village identity</b>    | 2        | "Maintain the rural/residential characteristic of the township."                                |
| <b>Township workers &amp; volunteers</b>     | 2        | "The village workers — they're very good."  |
| <b>Support for local industry</b>            | 3        | "Encouragement of industry — Pettibone, Laser North, etc."                                      |

Question #9. What is the one thing about Baraga Township that should not change and why?

From the 29 residents who responded to this question, several clear themes emerged:

1. **Natural Beauty:** Many people want to protect the lakeshore, forests, and scenic views. They see Baraga's natural environment as a key part of what makes the township special.
2. **Zoning & Rural Feel:** Respondents strongly supported keeping residential areas quiet and low-density, especially near Lake Superior. There's concern about campgrounds or commercial uses entering residential neighborhoods.
3. **Outdoor Recreation:** Some residents noted that existing parks and ORV trails are great just as they are — and shouldn't be changed or overdeveloped.
4. **Local Jobs & Industry:** A few highlighted the importance of supporting local businesses and manufacturers like Pettibone and Laser North, which offer jobs to residents.
5. **Township Workers:** One respondent praised the hard work of township employees, suggesting a strong sense of local pride.

Question #10. Would you recommend Baraga Township as a place to: (Please place a check in the box for all that apply)



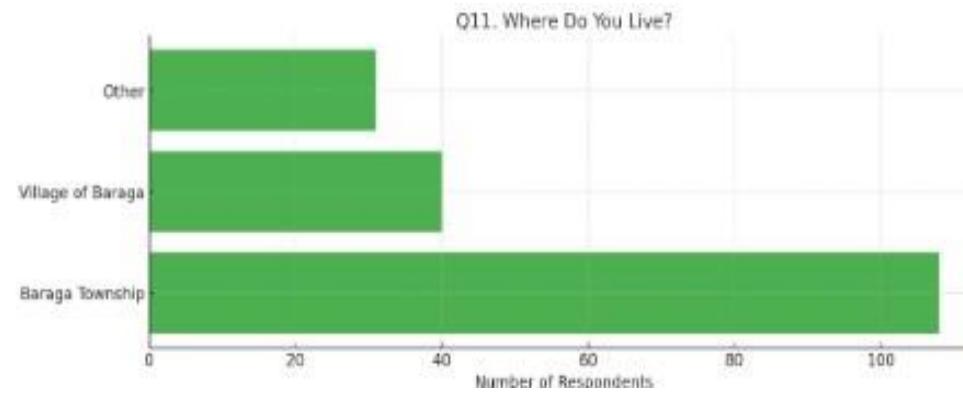
### Key Takeaways:

Baraga Township is widely seen as a great place to raise a family or retire, with solid support.

Recreation and tourism potential is recognized but has mixed sentiment — nearly even support/opposition.

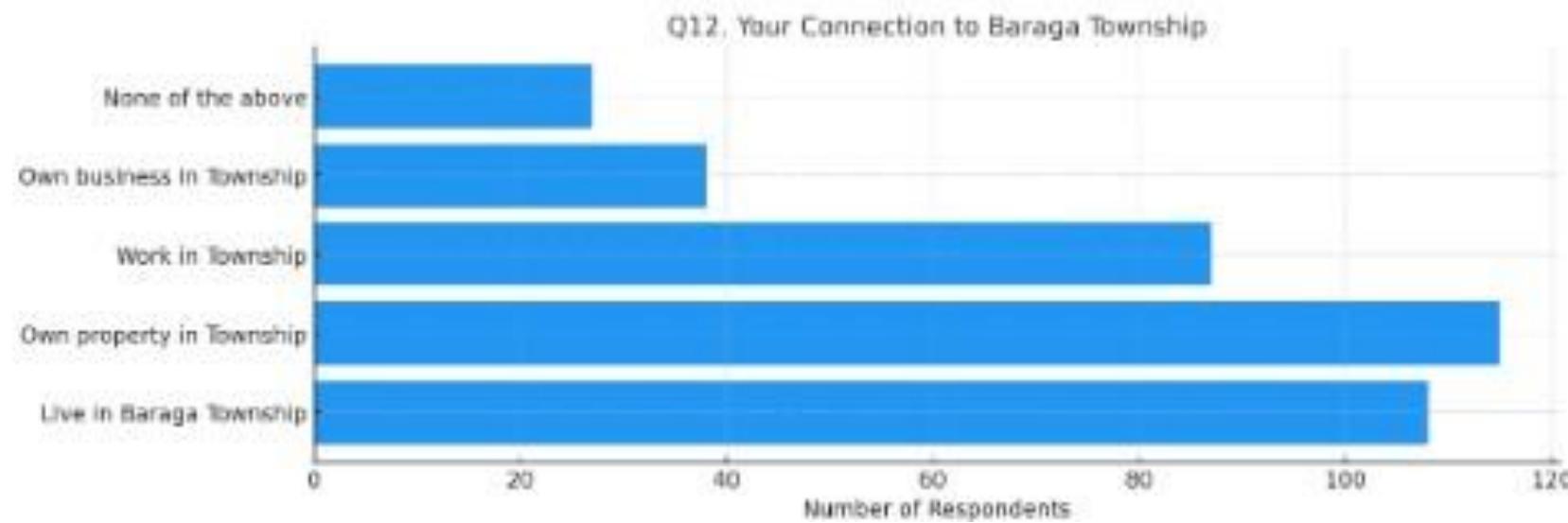
Weaknesses include dining, shopping, and business opportunities — highlighting critical areas for economic development.

## Question #11. Where do you live?



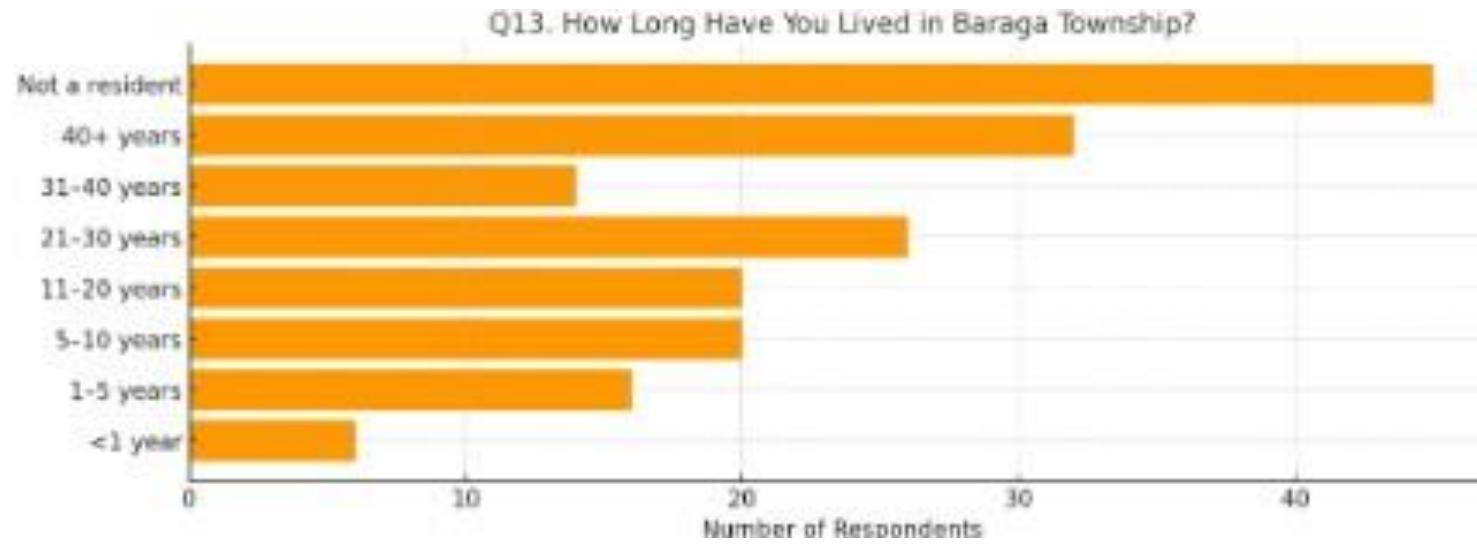
Most respondents are Township residents (not within the village limits), providing a well-distributed sample.

Question #12. Please check all that apply.



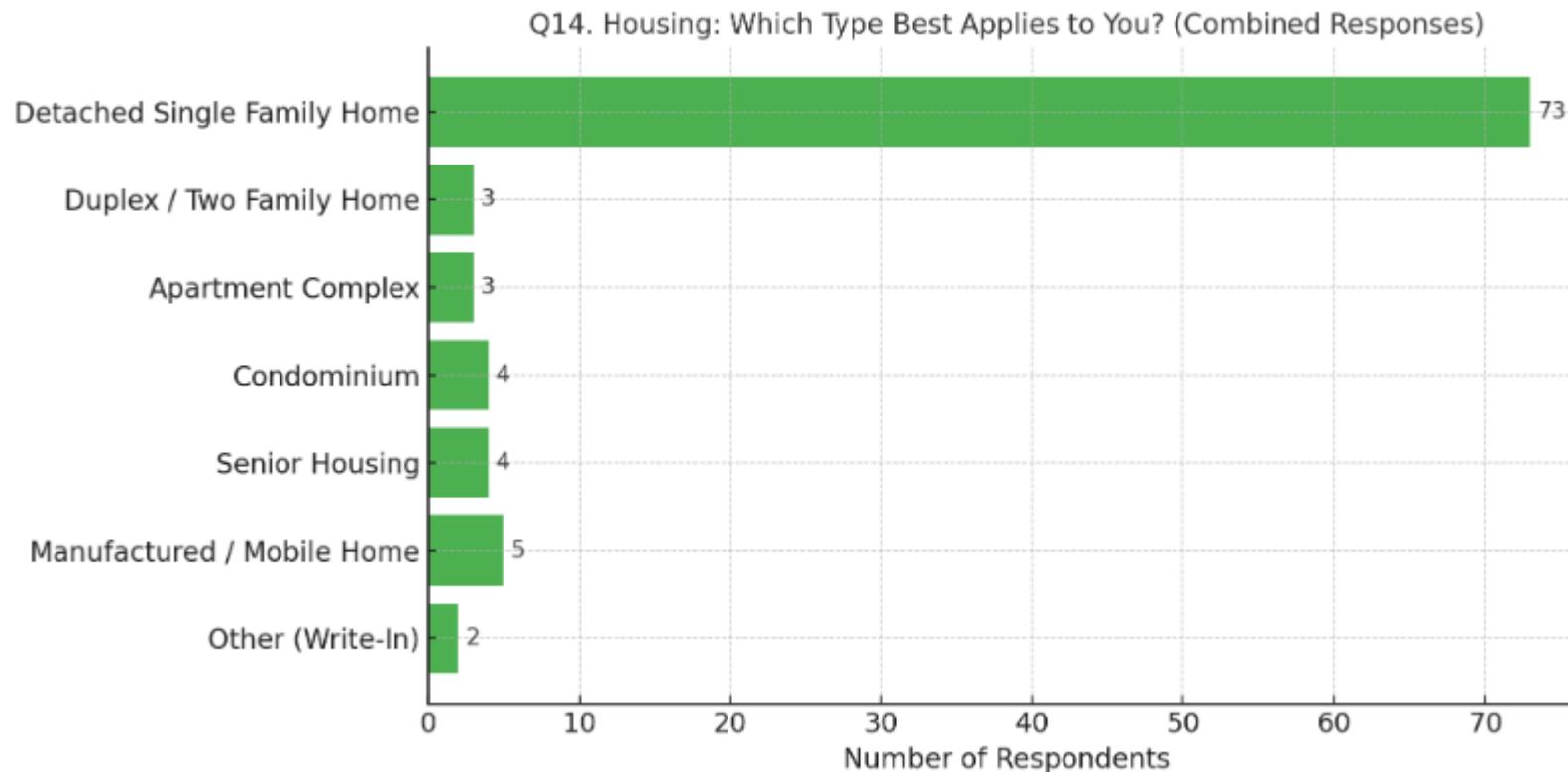
High levels of investment in the community through property ownership and employment, including 38 business owners.

## Question #13. How long have you lived in Baraga Township?



A strong core of long-term residents, but 45 non-residents also participated, reflecting regional interest in township planning.

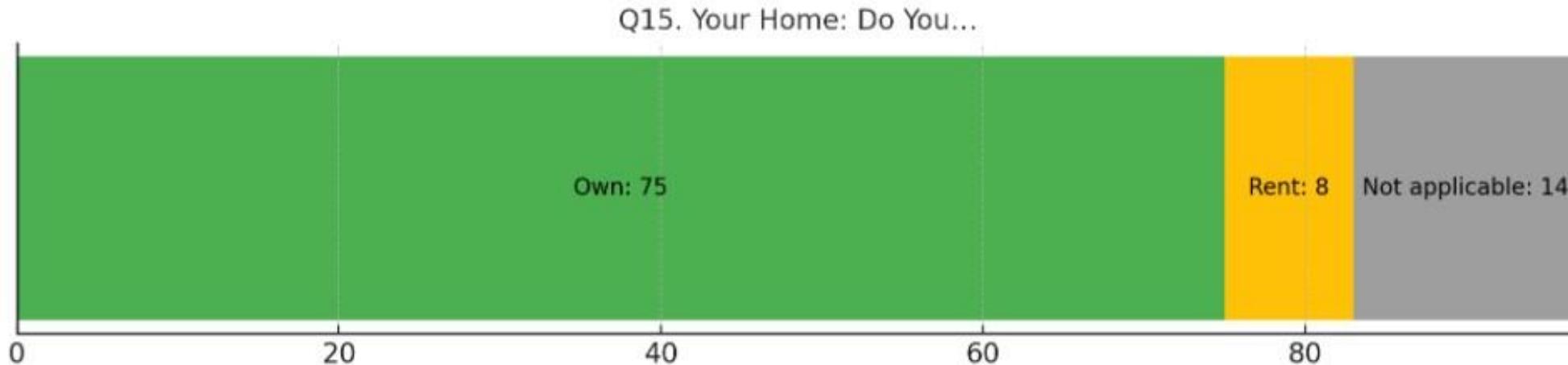
## Question #14. Housing: Which type best applies to you?



Most respondents live in a detached single-family home, confirming the dominant rural residential character of Baraga Township.

Very few residents live in multifamily or rental-style housing, reinforcing the limited local inventory of alternatives like apartments, condos, or senior living units.

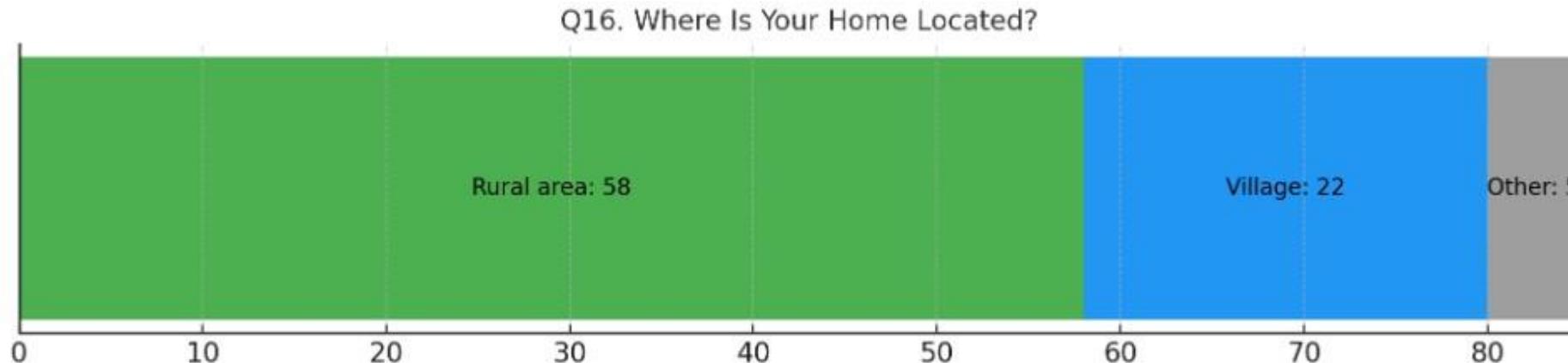
## Question #15. Your home: Do you?



A very high homeownership rate (87%) reflects a strong sense of rootedness in the community.

Relatively few renters or non-resident responses.

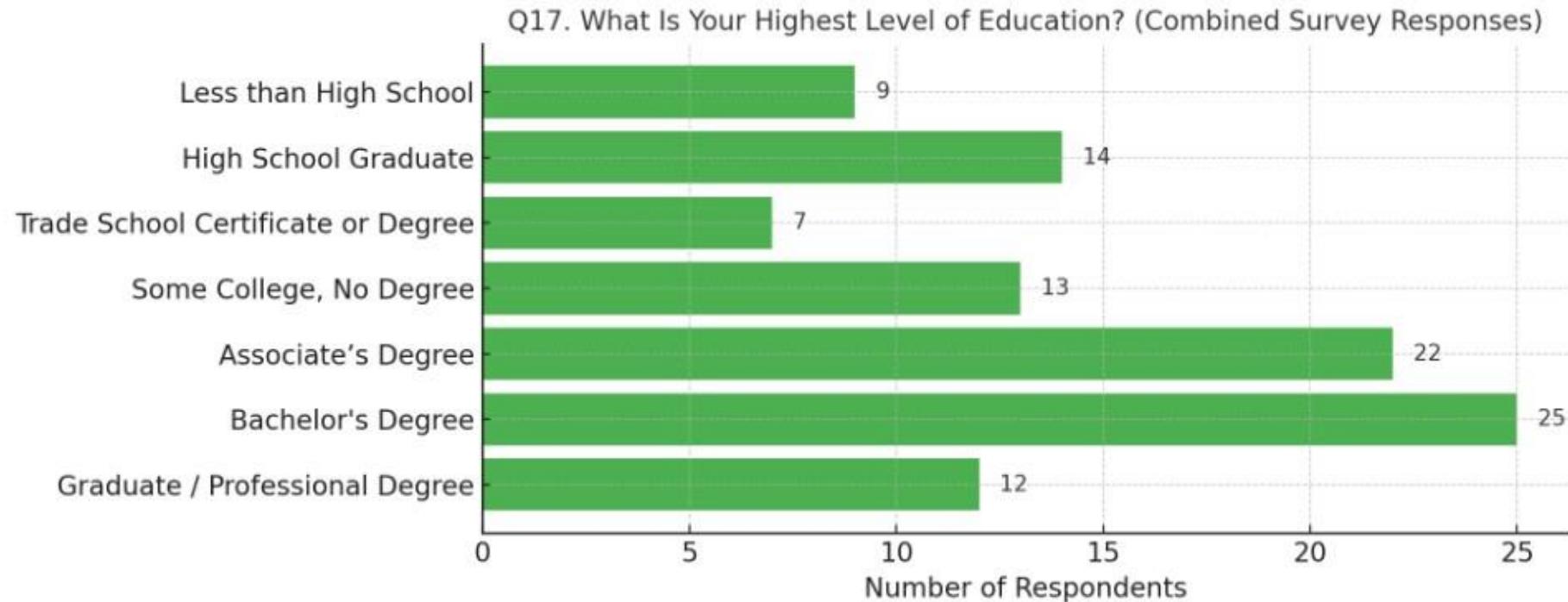
Question #16. Which of the following best describes the location of your home?



The majority of respondents live in rural parts of Baraga Township.

Around a quarter are located in the Village, and a small number selected “Other.”

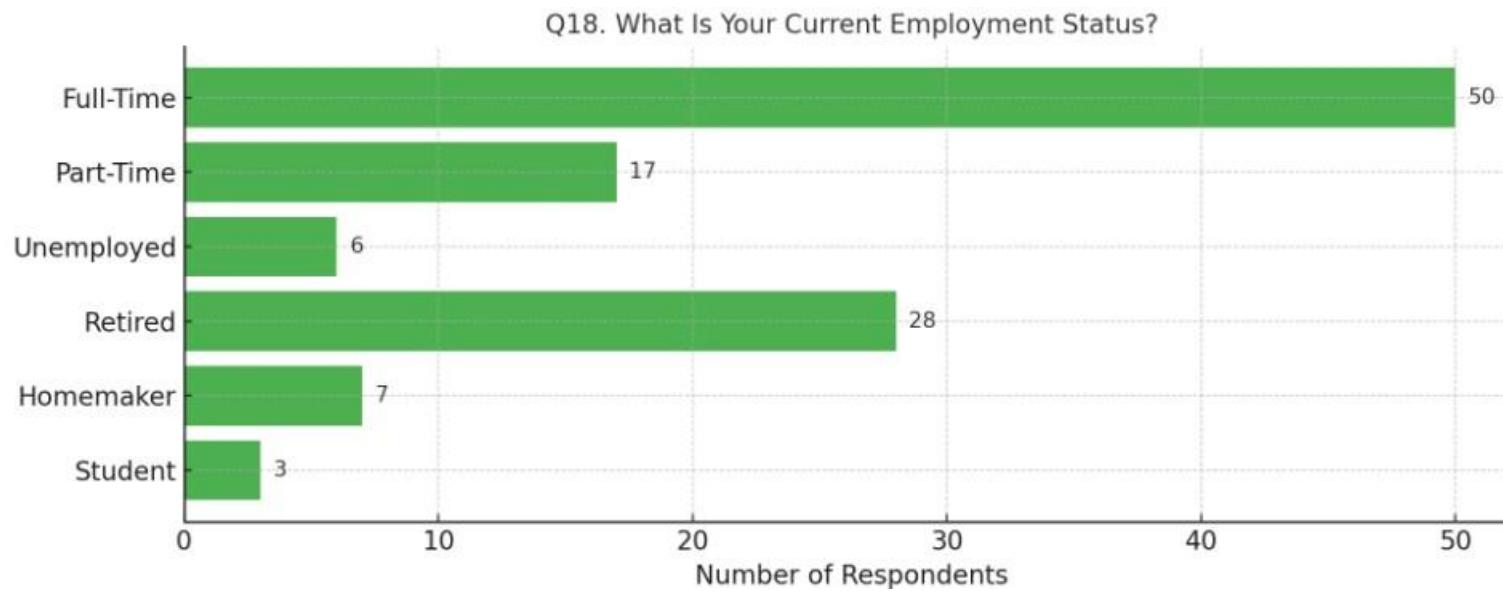
## Question #17. Level of Education: Which best applies to you?



The largest group of respondents is age 65–74, followed by 55–64 and 45–54.

Participation from younger age groups (under 35) was minimal — an important consideration for future outreach and engagement.

## Question #18. Employment status.

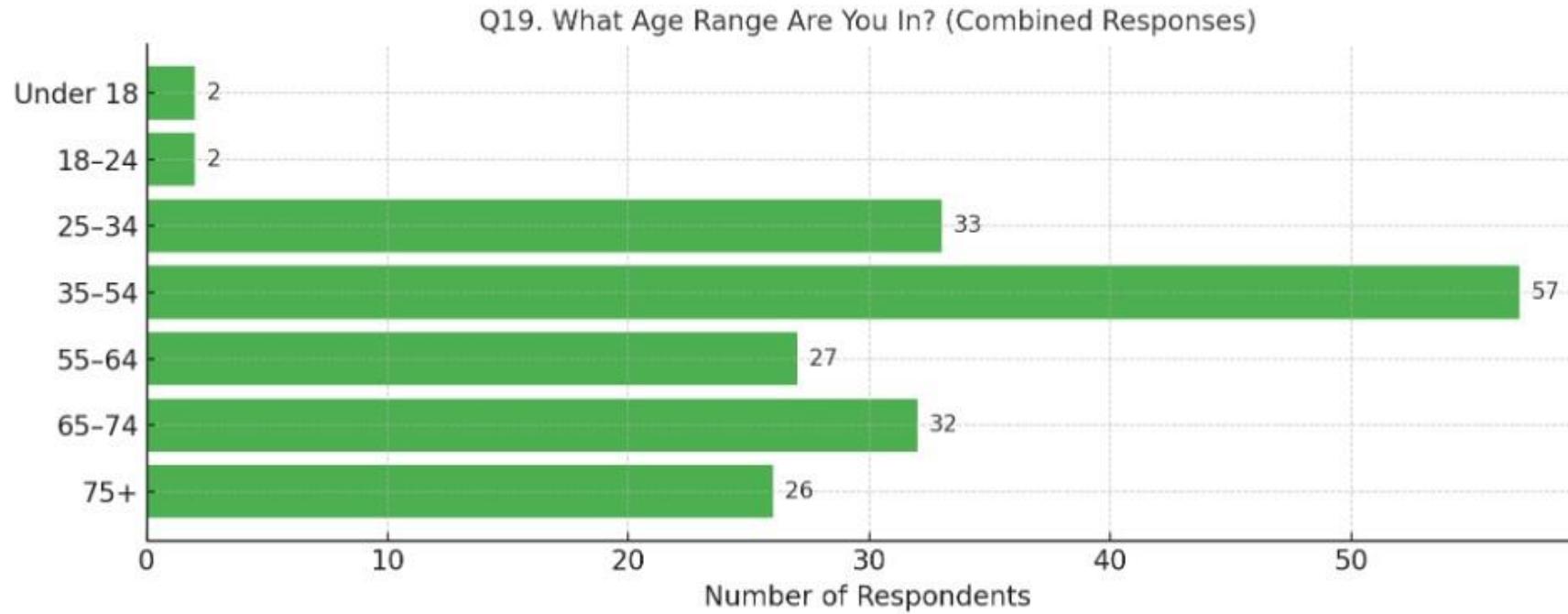


Nearly half of respondents work full-time, while one-quarter are retired.

Participation among part-timers, homemakers, and students is smaller, though still notable.

Very low unemployment rate among respondents.

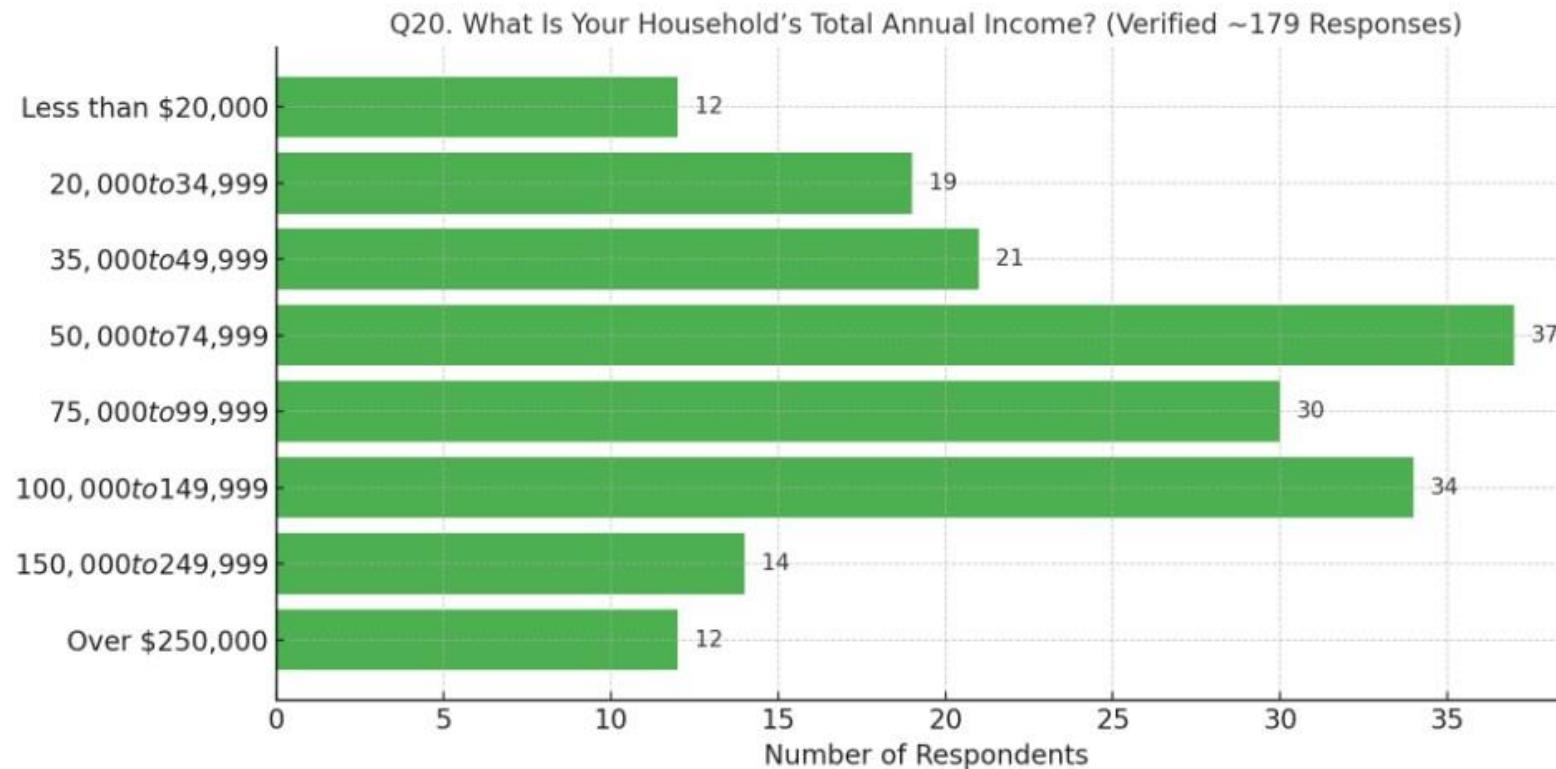
## Question #19. What age range are you in?



The largest group of respondents are ages 35–54, making up over 40% of responses.

Young adults (under 25) are underrepresented, indicating a potential gap in outreach to that age demographic.

## Question #20. What is your household income range? (Optional)



Income levels are relatively evenly distributed, with the largest groups in the middle-to-upper brackets (\$50,000+).

About 25% of respondents report annual incomes under \$35,000, highlighting a meaningful portion of lower-income households to consider in housing and service planning.

# 2025 Baraga Township Community Survey Summary

## Survey Participation:

- 179 people responded to the survey.
- Baraga Township has about 3,478 residents.
- This means around 5% of the population participated.

## Is That a Good Sample Size?

Yes — while more responses are always better, 179 responses is enough to give us a good picture of what residents think. Based on standard statistical guidelines, this gives us:

- A margin of error of about  $\pm 7\%$
- 95% confidence that the results represent the wider community

That means if 60% of people in the survey say they support something, we can be confident that between 53% and 67% of all residents likely feel the same way.

## Who Responded?

Most survey participants were homeowners, older adults (ages 35–74), long-term residents. This gives a strong sense of what core, year-round residents think.

However, it may not fully reflect the opinions of young adults, renters, seasonal or part-time residents.

Baraga Township Planning Commission  
ATTENDANCE SHEET

MEETING TITLE: Special Meeting and Public Hearing  
DATE: 9/17/25  
TIME: 6 PM

Baraga Township Hall, Baraga, MI 49908

Dale Parkila Absent

Nick Lozier Nick Lozier

Amy Tikkonen Amy Tikkonen

Jerry Dompier Jerry Dompier

Dianne Koskinen Dianne Koskinen

Public & Guests Sign In:

Ellen Lits

David LaCourt

Mary LaCourt

Phil Acciaccia

Bill Clark

Verna Ross

Jason McCarthy

# Baraga Township Planning Commission

Approved  
10/8/25

## **SPECIAL MEETING and PUBLIC HEARING MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, September 17, 2025, 6:00 PM

**Baraga Township Hall, 13919 State HWY M38, Baraga, MI 49908**

**B. Baraga Township Master Plan Update 2025 Adoption Resolution #091725-1**

A motion was made by Koskinen, supported by Tikkanen, to adopt the Baraga Township Master Plan Update 2025 and present it to the Baraga Township Board for resolution of concurrence with minor edits #091725-1.

Ayes: All in favor

Nays: none

**C. Accessory housing unit** – Bill Olsen informed the Planning Commission about a proposed mother-in-law suite at 13043 Bayshore Drive, pending permits.

**D. Acciacca boat ramp** – tabled for October meeting.

**E. Permit payments** - tabled for October meeting.

**10. Public Comment (all other items)** – none

**11. General Planning Commission Discussion – Community Knowledge Mapping Session**  
Ojibwa Casinos Conference Room, Wednesday, October 15, 3:30–5:30 pm.

**12. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Tikkanen, supported by Dompier, to adjourn at 6:42 PM.

Ayes: All in favor

Nays: none

The next regular meeting of the Baraga Township Planning Commission will be held on Wednesday, October 8, 2025, at 6:00 PM.

# Baraga Township Planning Commission

## ATTENDANCE SHEET

MEETING TITLE: Special Meeting and Public Hearing

DATE: 9/17/25

TIME: 6 PM

Baraga Township Hall, Baraga, MI 49908

Dale Parkila Absent

Nick Lozier Nick Lozier

Amy Tikkonen Amy Tikkonen

Jerry Dompier Jerry Dompier

Dianne Koskinen Dianne Koskinen

Public & Guests Sign In:

Ellen Lutz

Darrio Le Court

Mary Le Court

Phil Acciaccia

Bill Cln

Verna Ross

Jason McCarthy

# Baraga Township Planning Commission

## RESOLUTION #091725-1

**September 17, 2025**

Baraga Township Master Plan Update 2025 Adoption Resolution #091725-1

The Baraga Township Planning Commission reviewed and approved  
the Baraga Township Master Plan Update 2025  
at a special meeting and public hearing held on September 17, 2025  
at the Baraga Township Hall, 13919 State HWY M38, Baraga, MI 49908.

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Dale Parkila, Chairperson



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Nick Lozier, Vice Chairperson



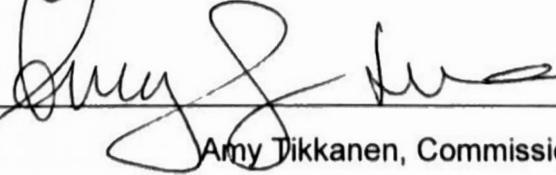
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Dianne Koskinen, Secretary



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Jerry Dompier, Commissioner



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Amy Tikkainen, Commissioner

**Baraga Township Board of Trustees**  
**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**  
**October 9, 2025**

The meeting was called to order by Supervisor, Danielson at 6:00 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Present were board members: Danielson, Dompier, Fish, Manson, and Wadaga.

Also Present: Garrick Lamb (Keweenaw Bay Fire Chief), Baraga Co. Under Sheriff Miller, Phil & Mary LaCourt, Phil Acciacca, Ellen Lutz, Doug Mills Baraga Co. Rd. Commission, Karen & Richard Brooks.

Danielson declared a quorum was present.

A motion was made by Wadaga, supported by Manson to approve the presented minutes of the regular meeting of September 11, 2025. Ayes, All. Nays, None. Motion Carried.

Public Comment: Richard Brooks would like to see the Township Board put in a sound system in the meeting hall so the public that's in attendance of the meetings can hear the board speak clearer and louder.

Keweenaw Bay Fire Chief, Lamb, reported no fire calls, and NIFERS is changing over to NERIS on October 15, 2025. Lamb & Haagsma attended a U.P. Chiefs meeting in L'Anse, discussion on lack of funds for the U.P. for trainings vs. downstate and it definitely limits training use. Both departments have been sampling Turn-Out Gear from many different vendors to see who they would like to order through. Lamb gave quotes on Gas Monitors for Kbay and Pelkie Fire Departments. \$675 per department from Conway Shield was selected to be the best one.

A motion was made by Wadaga, supported by Dompier to purchase a Gas Monitor for each Keweenaw Bay Fire Dept. and Pelkie Fire Department from Conway Sheild \$675.00 per gas monitor. Ayes, All. Nays, None. Motion carried.

Baraga County Under - Sheriff, Miller, gave a report for the month of September in Baraga Township. Miller reported 106 hours of patrol, 44 calls for service, 1 arrest, and 3 traffic crashes. Miller is also the new Emergency Manager for Baraga County.

Resolution #2025-07 Resolution to Establish Baraga Township Updated Master Plan  
On September 17, 2025 the Baraga Township Planning Commission passed an Updated Master Plan. The Baraga Township Board reviewed and approved the Baraga Township Master Plan Update.

A motion was made by Wadaga, supported by Fish to adopt Resolution #2025-07 Baraga Township Updated Master Plan.

Roll Call Vote:      Dompier      AYE      Manson      AYE      Wadaga      AYE  
                         Danielson      AYE      Fish      AYE

Supervisor, Danielslon declared Resolution #2025-07 adopted.

The Township Board will be putting out on bids the following for November 13, 2025 meeting. Request for Proposal on Planning & Zoning Code & Zoning Map Update, Snow Plowing 2025/2026 Season, and Town Hall Septic Annual Maintenance.

UMERC Settlement Offer, still waiting on the final numbers.

Township Audit was discussed in length by Wadaga, and the board agreed to continue with the audit being every two years.

Dompier discussed he would like to be in contact with Moyle about warranties on the township building since it was built.

Dompier discussed that there were a few complaints at the previous Planning Commission meeting about cash payments for permits, and others complain the Township doesn't have credit/debit card machine for payments also. This matter will be discussed with the Zoning Admin and see how he would like proceed with accepting payments for the future.

Danielson discussed that Olsen sent a letter to EGLE for the Acciacca ramp/dock and they are asking for a resolution from the Township. Danielson will get in touch with whom he should and see exactly what is needed from the Township.

A motion was made by Danielson, supported by Wadaga to pay the bills as funds become available. Ayes, All. Nays, None. Motion Carried.

A motion was made by Fish, supported by Dompier to adjourn @ 6:38 p.m.

Submitted by the Clerk  
  
Michelle Fish

# Resolution #2025-07

## Resolution To Establish Baraga Township Updated Master Plan

On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025 the Baraga Township Planning Commission passed an updated master plan. The Baraga Township Board Reviewed and approved the Baraga Township Master Plan Update.

A motion was made by Wadaga, supported by Fish, to adopt Resolution #2025-07 Baraga Township Updated Master Plan.

Roll Call vote: Dompier\_AYE\_ Manson\_AYE\_ Wadaga\_AYE\_

Danielson\_AYE\_ Fish\_AYE\_

Supervisor Danielson declared Resolution #2025-07 adopted.



Michelle Fish, Township Clerk

Dated October 9<sup>th</sup> 2025