

Milton Township

Cass County, Michigan



**Master Plan
June, 2012**

MILTON TOWNSHIP

COUNTY OF CASS, MICHIGAN

Planning Commission Resolution to Approve Master Plan

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has prepared a proposed Master Plan (Milton Township Master Plan) and submitted the plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, the Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has held public hearings on the Master Plan on January 9, 2012, January 12, 2012 and March 12, 2012 to consider public comment on the proposed updated Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed updated Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that the proposed updated Master Plan is desirable and proper and furthers the use, preservation and development goals and strategies of the Township;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Planning Commission hereby approves the proposed Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, maps and tables contained therein.
2. Pursuant to MCL 125.3843, the Township Board has asserted by resolution its right to approve or reject the proposed Master Plan and therefore the Secretary or his designee is hereby directed to forward the proposed Master Plan to the Township Board for its consideration.
3. The Planning Commission has made the foregoing determinations based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, input received from the public hearings, and with the assistance of a professional Planning Consultant and finds that the proposed Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation and development of lands in Milton Township.

Ayes: Jeremy Clanton, Richard Hebard, Diane Shields and Kelly Sweeney

Nays: Ron Jureziz and Sharon Ward

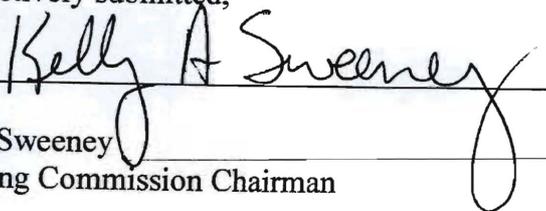
Absent: Sandra Redman

Abstain: None

Resolution R-1 declared adopted this fourth day of June, 2012.

Respectively submitted,

By:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly A Sweeney". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

Kelly Sweeney
Planning Commission Chairman

MILTON TOWNSHIP
RESOLUTION 2012-34

COUNTY OF CASS, MICHIGAN

Township Board Resolution to Approve Master Plan

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared a proposed Master Plan (Milton Township Master Plan) and submitted the plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, the Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group entities as provided in the MPEA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has held public hearings on the Master Plan on January 9, 2012, January 12, 2012 and March 12, 2012, to consider public comment on the proposed updated Master Plan, and to further review and comment on the proposed updated Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission after the public hearings, the Planning Commission voted to approve the Master Plan on June 4, 2012 and to recommend approval of the proposed Master Plan to the Township Board; and

WHEREAS. The Township Board finds that the proposed updated Master Plan is desirable and proper and furthers the use, preservation and development goals and strategies of the Township;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Township Board hereby approves the proposed Master Plan, including all of the chapters, figures, maps and tables contained therein.
2. The Township Board approves distribution of the Master Plan to the Notice Group Entities, per MCL 125.3843.
3. The Township Board has made the foregoing determinations based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, input received from the public hearings, and with the assistance of a professional Planning

Consultant and finds that the proposed Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's goals and strategies for the use, preservation and development of lands in Milton Township.

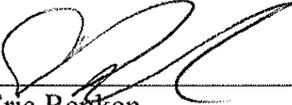
Ayes: Benjamin, Kronewitter, Renken

Nays: Ward, DeBroka

Absent:

Abstain:

Resolution 2012-34 declared adopted this 18th day of June, 2012.


Eric Renken
Milton Township Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true and complete copy of a resolution adopted by the Milton Township Board of Trustees, County of Cass, State of Michigan, at a regular meeting held on the 18th day of June, 2012 and that said meeting was conducted and public notice of said meeting was given pursuant to and in full compliance with Act No. 267 of 1976, as amended, and that the minutes of said meeting were kept and will be or have been made available as required by this Act.


Eric Renken
Milton Township Clerk

MILTON TOWNSHIP

MASTER PLAN

June, 2012

TOWNSHIP BOARD

Robert Benjamin, Supervisor

Eric Renken, Clerk	Linda Debroka, Treasurer
Sharon Ward, Trustee	Don Kronewitter, Trustee

PLANNING COMMISSION

Kelly Sweeney - Chairperson

Diane Shields, Vice Chair	Jeremy Clanton
Richard Hebard	Ron Jureziz
Sandra Redman	Sharon Ward

PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT

Paul J. Sniadecki, Zoning Administrator

Prepared with the assistance of the professional planners at

Williams & Works

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Chapter One. Introduction

Planning for the long-term should be carried at a general level that recognizes the potential for change and provides flexibility.

Producing a Master Plan, or Comprehensive Plan, requires a solid foundation of data from a variety of resources. Analysis of this data can reveal trends and conditions that may be obvious, or not so obvious, to the residents of Milton Township. The data that is gathered in the initial phase of preparing a Master Plan is vital to support future community goals.

The Milton Township Community Profile is one of several phases in completing an update of the Township Master Plan. The entire process will involve the following elements:

- ◆ A Community Profile
- ◆ A Preferred Future
- ◆ Goal Setting
- ◆ The Comprehensive Plan

In August 1999, Milton Township completed an update of the Township's Master Plan. Public Act 33 of 2008, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, requires a Master Plan be reviewed at five-year intervals; and the 1999 plan was reviewed in 2004 and no revisions were made. The 2004 plan still reflects many current conditions and trends, so the effort to update the Master Plan in 2011 enabled the community to focus on particular challenges rather than restrict the effort to a general overview.

Nevertheless, planning for the long-term should recognize the potential for change and provide flexibility. This results in a Master Plan that can be useful well into the future even if demographic and economic trends stray from those identified in the Community Profile, presented in chapters 2 through 8.

The Community Profile provides a "snapshot" of current conditions in the Township with respect to six key aspects of land use planning. The purpose is to generally define current trends and conditions, and more importantly, to draw some broad conclusions about the implications they will have on the future of the Township. The primary sources for this document are set forth in the bibliography, but the content of the initial eight chapters of this plan has been heavily drawn from the Township's 2004 plan and existing information.

The key areas of focus for this Community Profile are:

- ◆ Natural Resources and Regional Context (Chapter 2)
- ◆ Population (Chapter 3)
- ◆ Housing and Economic Development (Chapter 4)
- ◆ Land Use and Development Patterns (Chapter 5)
- ◆ Community Facilities and Services (Chapter 6)
- ◆ Utilities and Transportation (Chapter 7)

Each article includes an overview of its subject matter along with a brief discussion of the planning trends that are relevant along with implications for the future. Chapter 8 places the conclusions of this document in the context of the larger Master Plan development effort by outlining some of the key implications identified.

Community Input

The Township held a community visioning workshop to garner opinions of Township residents and business owners and to help inform the planning process. The event was conducted prior to preparation of the plan in one three-hour long session at the Community Center Building on Saturday, May 15, 2010 from 9:00 am to noon. About 40 people participated in the workshop. The results of the activity are presented under separate cover in the Community Visioning Report, dated May 2010. The highest-ranking opportunities identified at the meeting pertained to the preservation of farmland and natural open space in the Township. The highest-ranking threats, according to participants, dealt with uncontrolled growth; density; costs of land acquisition; and the planning processes. Issues of mining, protecting natural features and resources, and preserving a “small town” feel were also recognized. Citizen visions expressed at the meeting were used by the Planning Commission in forming the policies in this plan.

After a draft of the plan was prepared, the Township facilitated an Open House on May 14, 2011 at the Community Center Building to provide the public with an opportunity to review the plan. About 20 people participated in the informal event, which was designed and intended to enable people to observe informational display boards and ask questions. Display boards included mapping; future land use summaries; goals and objectives; and 2010 Census data that had been released since publication of the Community Profile Report, including a comparison of 2010 data to data from earlier Census figure. Generally, citizens gave positive

feedback on the draft plan, though there were some questions centering on the future land use map designation boundaries; the extent of likely residential growth along the southern area of the Township influenced by Indiana; and, possible plans for improvements to US-12. Participants in the Open House generally expressed approval in connection with the Plan's support for viable agriculture.

The draft Master Plan was approved for distribution by the Township Board in accord with Section 41 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. A tabular summary of comments received and reviewed is included in the Appendix.

On January 9, 2012 the Planning Commission held the required public hearing on the draft Plan following proper public notice. Following public comment, the Planning Commission worked to refine the draft and ultimately recommended the draft Plan to the Township Board. Based on public comment and input from Township Board members, on April 16, 2012, the Township Board sent the draft Master Plan to the Planning Commission for reconsideration in several areas. On May 7, 2012, the Planning Commission considered the comments of the Township Board and interested citizens and incorporated into this Master Plan several refinements and adjustments to better reflect community priorities. On June 4, 2012, the Planning Commission adopted their Resolution of Adoption and Recommendation to the Township Board, which subsequently adopted this Master Plan on June 18, 2012.

Summary

The following paragraphs outline some of the initial impressions that have emerged as the community profile was developed:

- ◆ The relationship with South Bend Indiana and the surrounding region plays an important role in defining the community's character, offering a rural lifestyle for residents in close proximity to the natural environment of the Township.
- ◆ From 2000 to 2010, the Township experienced extremely rapid population growth. Although recent regional trends suggest that the Township's rate of population growth has slowed since the first half of the decade, Milton Township is poised to experience significant additional growth in coming years. The Township's rural character, natural beauty and proximity to regional employment centers make it an ideal location for new families.
- ◆ Milton Township is zoned to limit growth and preserve agricultural land. However, overflow growth from Indiana is occurring along the southern border, primarily within the western half of the Township. Additionally, some areas formerly used for

agricultural or range land have been converted into large lot subdivisions within the central sections of the Township. These patterns tend to consume large areas at very low densities which may not be sustainable over the very long term.

- ◆ The Township contains an efficient transportation network that connects residents to employment opportunities throughout the region. Additionally, regional connections by major roads such as US-12 and close proximity to the Indiana Toll Road and US-31 make connections to other modes of transportation such as air service in South Bend convenient.
- ◆ Some of the objectives outlined in the 2004 Master Plan Update have been achieved and others have not. Regardless, all should be reevaluated in light of more current demographic and land use information and in accord with changing local policies. One objective may be strengthening regulations to preserve farmland, especially in the eastern portion of the Township along the Michigan - Indiana border.
- ◆ Most of the Township's population lives in the western and southern portions of the Township. However, increasing development across the Township can be seen with the addition of new subdivisions. As growth and development continues to alter the community's character, the Township may look to work cooperatively with other surrounding townships to address challenges that may arise.
- ◆ Mining operations are primarily within the north eastern quadrant of the Township. These will continue to impact the character of the community for the foreseeable future and local leaders will continue to be challenged with balancing the needs of local residents with the rights and expectations of operators.
- ◆ Public water and sewer services are currently not available within the Township. Areas of higher density residential such as the southwest section may be logical, however regulations to require developer installation may prevent smaller lot, high density development.

Chapter Two. Natural and Regional Resources



Milton Township is situated in the southwestern lower peninsula of Michigan in the south west corner of Cass County, on the State’s border approximately 12 miles north of South Bend, Indiana. The Township has an area of slightly more than 21 square miles and is characterized by abundant agricultural land, wooded habitats, streams and creeks mixed with new and old human development. This Chapter presents the natural and environmental conditions that characterize the community.

The Township is bounded by Howard Township to the north, Clay and Harris Townships in Indiana to the south, Niles Township to the west and Ontwa Township to the east.

Regional Influences

Southwestern Michigan Commission

The Southwestern Michigan Commission (SWMC) is one of 14 Planning and Development Regions in the State of Michigan and one of 500 in the United States. In Michigan, regions were created under a 1968 Governor's Executive Order. The SWMC was officially organized in late 1973 by resolutions of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren County Boards of commissioners. The agency has been staffed since the Spring of 1974. The agency's primary function is to assist public and private entities within Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties by providing technical assistance for a variety of federal, state, and local programs and projects. The SWMC also acts as an intergovernmental forum to address regional issues.

Niles/Buchanan/Cass Area Transportation Study

The purpose of the Niles/Buchanan/Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS) is to implement the federal transportation legislation (TEA-21) at a level which benefits the local community and business community by constantly seeking to improve the area's transportation decision making process. NATS strives to improve the area's transportation system via data collection, short and long range planning, transit planning, and other specialized projects and issues. Geographically, the NATS area covers communities in both Berrien and Cass counties: Howard and Milton Townships in Cass County; Bertrand and Niles Townships and the Cities of Buchanan and Niles in Berrien County. The study is staffed by the Southwestern Michigan Commission.

Cass County Planning Commission

The Cass County Planning Commission (CCPC) reviews all rezoning applications, master plan amendments, PA 116 Agreements, and petitions for road abandonment within the unincorporated portions of the County. The Milton Township Master Plan will be reviewed by the CCPC for consistency with County goals and plans.

Local Government Influences

Niles Township

Niles Township in Berrien County is located west of Milton Township. The Township has a high level of urban development due to its proximity to the City of Niles, South Bend, and US-31. The Niles Township Planning Commission adopted a Master Plan in 2003. The community also revised its Zoning Ordinance in 2005. Niles Township has planned and zoned medium density residential development (between 7,500 to 12,000 sq. ft. lots) along most of its border with Milton Township.

Howard Township

Howard Township is located directly north of Milton Township. In June 2003, the Township established its Planning Commission, shifting planning responsibilities from the Zoning Board. The current Township Master Plan was adopted in March of 2001. The Howard Township Zoning Map indicates agricultural residential (43,560 sq. ft. lots) along the majority of its border with Milton Township.

Ontwa Township

Ontwa Township is located directly east of Milton Township. The Township's development has been greatly influenced by its location (e.g., near beautiful lakes and the Village of Edwardsburg). Ontwa Township has zoned land along the 3.5-mile shared border between Milton Township and Ontwa Township in an Agricultural/ Residential category

The west and south borders are zoned to reflect suburban type of development, while the north and east borders reflect a rural life style.

with a minimum lot size of 60,000 square feet. Ontwa Township updated its master plan in 2011, also.

Clay and Harris Townships

Both Clay and Harris Townships are located south of Milton Township in Indiana. Land use and zoning for both communities are governed by the Area Plan Commission of St. Joseph County. The areas along Milton Township's southern border in both Clay and Harris Townships are zoned for residential (15,000 sq. ft. lots) development.

The Area Plan Commission is currently updating St. Joseph County's master plan, which will affect these two Townships. The most recent master plan was completed in April 2003 to unite the efforts of most of the communities within St. Joseph County in a coordinated, broad-based approach to planning.

Soils and Water

Soil Capabilities and Limitations

The Soil Survey of Cass County, Michigan, created by the U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service in 1991, provides a good picture of the capabilities and limitations of Milton Township's soils. General soil characteristics can be used to compare the suitability of large areas for general land uses. The soil types within the Township range from well drained loamy soils to very poorly drained mucky soils. Map 3 illustrates areas unsuitable for development are often Prime farmland soils delineated by the U.S.D.A. based on their major importance in meeting the Nation's short and long-range needs for food and fiber.

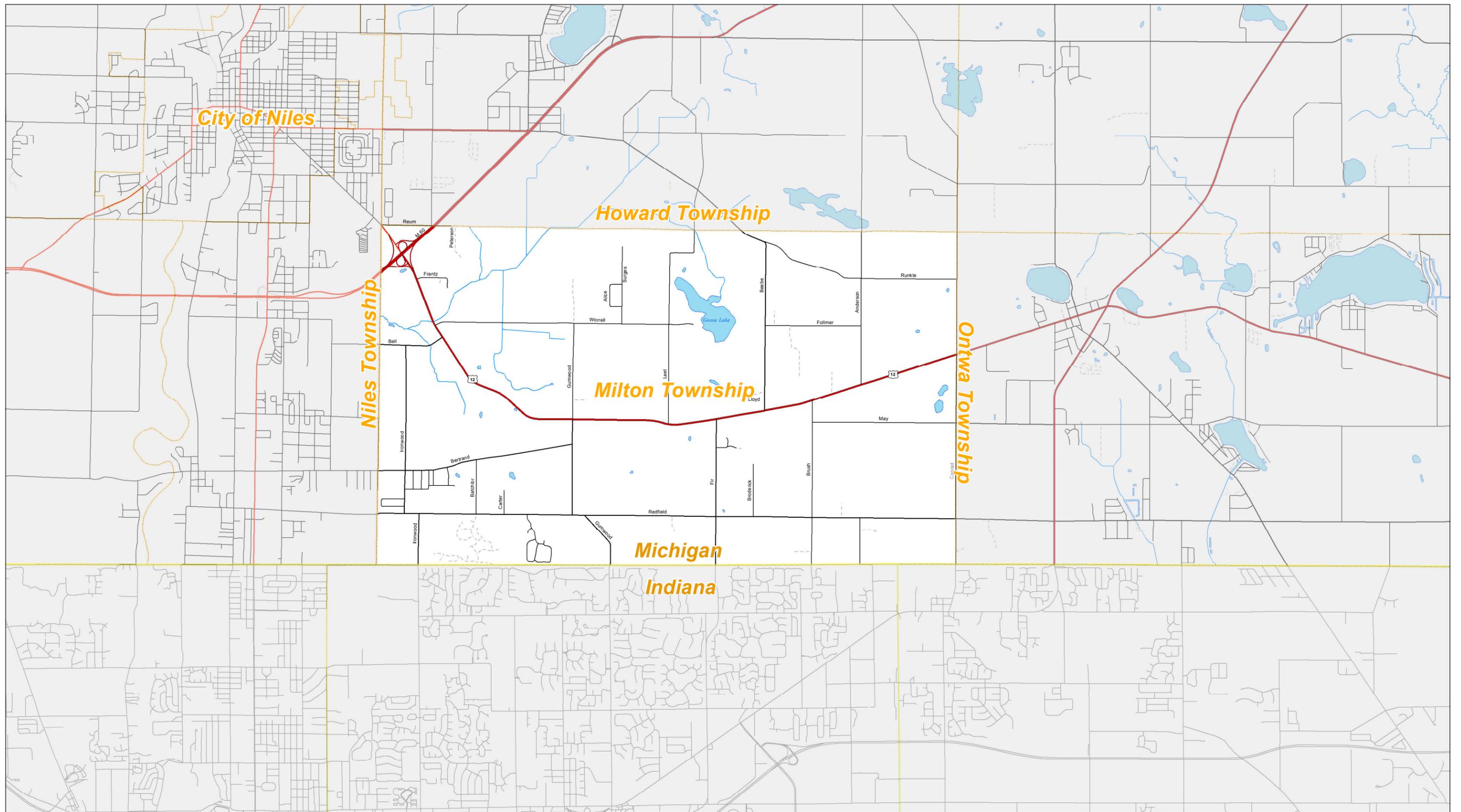
Prime farmland soils, as defined by the U.S.D.A., comprise 8.26 square miles or 38.7% percent of Milton Township.

The U.S.D.A recommends that municipalities, as well as individuals, encourage and facilitate the wise use of these lands because of the limited supply of high quality farmland. Map 2 shows that prime farmland soils, as defined by the U.S.D.A., comprise 8.26 square miles or 38.7% percent of Milton Township. Seven percent of the prime farmland has a seasonal high water table, which has the potential to be overcome by drainage measures or flood control.

The Cass County Soil Survey indicates four types of limitations, severe surface slope, septic tank absorption, dwelling limitations, and high water table. Descriptions of their limitations are as follows:

1. Severe Surface Slopes

The slope of the ground surface is 12% or greater requires special site planning and should be avoided whenever possible. Map 5 illustrates where severe surface slopes are located within the Township.



Milton Township Master Plan

Cass County, Michigan

Map 1. Location & Base Map



1 inch = 5,000 feet



Data Source:
 State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information
 Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)

2. Septic Tank Absorption

Septic tank absorption field limitations are considered "severe" or "unsuitable" if soil properties or site features prevent the reasonable installation of a septic tank. These conditions are often so difficult or so unfavorable that special design, significant increases in construction costs, and possibly increased maintenance are required.

3. Dwelling Limitations

Ratings are created by the U.S.D.A for the soil's ability to support the load of a three-story single-family home. Ratings are based on soil properties, site features, and observed performance of the soil. A high water table, flooding, hilly or steep slopes, shrink-swell potential, and organic layers can cause movement of footings and affect the ease of excavation and construction. This information is of particular importance because it identifies areas of "severe" building limitations because soil properties and site features that are so unfavorable or so difficult to overcome and possibly increases in construction costs are required. These areas are illustrated on Map 3.

4. High Water Table

Soil where the water table is "apparent" or "high" usually has water within one to three feet of the surface during a portion of the year is shown on Map 4 under the classification of areas of potentially high groundwater. These soils do not "perc" well and should generally be avoided for construction if other more suitable places are available on the property for development.

Creeks

The state only recognizes one named stream in the Township, Brandywine Creek; however, several other smaller, unnamed streams meander across much of the northeast corner of the Township. This area also has the highest water table.

Ponds and Lake

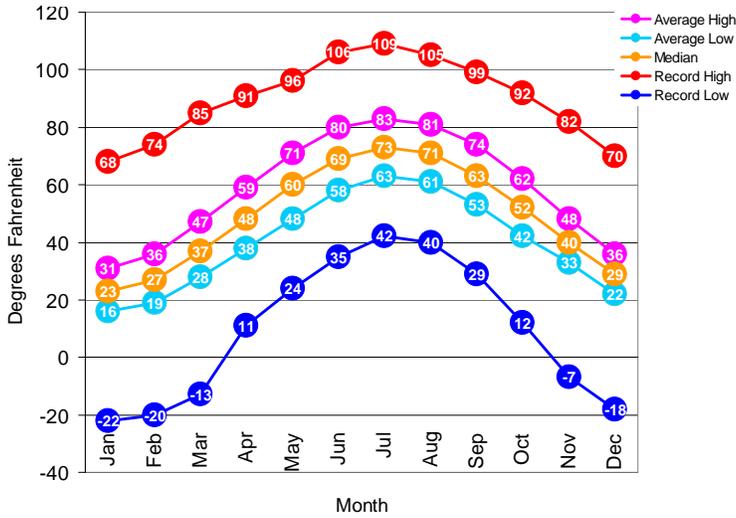
Goose Lake, located east of Leet, is a shallow lake and wetland area comprising of 0.15 square miles. Several areas in section 5 also have low land wet areas which stretch north into Howard Township.

Climate

Milton Township is located in a climate band known as "Dfa, Humid Continental, Warm Summer." This band runs from the central great planes, through the Ohio River Valley, to the upper-middle east coast and often does not result in unusually violent weather such as hurricanes, tornados, blizzards, or severe droughts. However, heavy snowstorms in

the winter and strong thunder storms in the summer are likely to occur. This climate typically has a wide range of temperatures with the highest

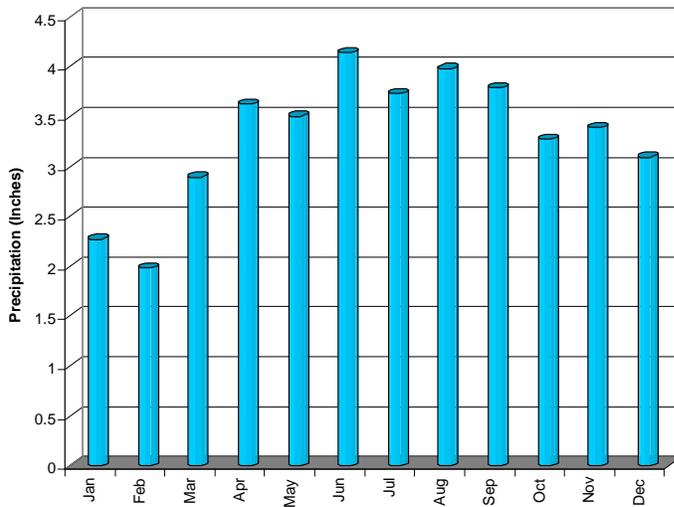
**Graph 3.1
Temperature**

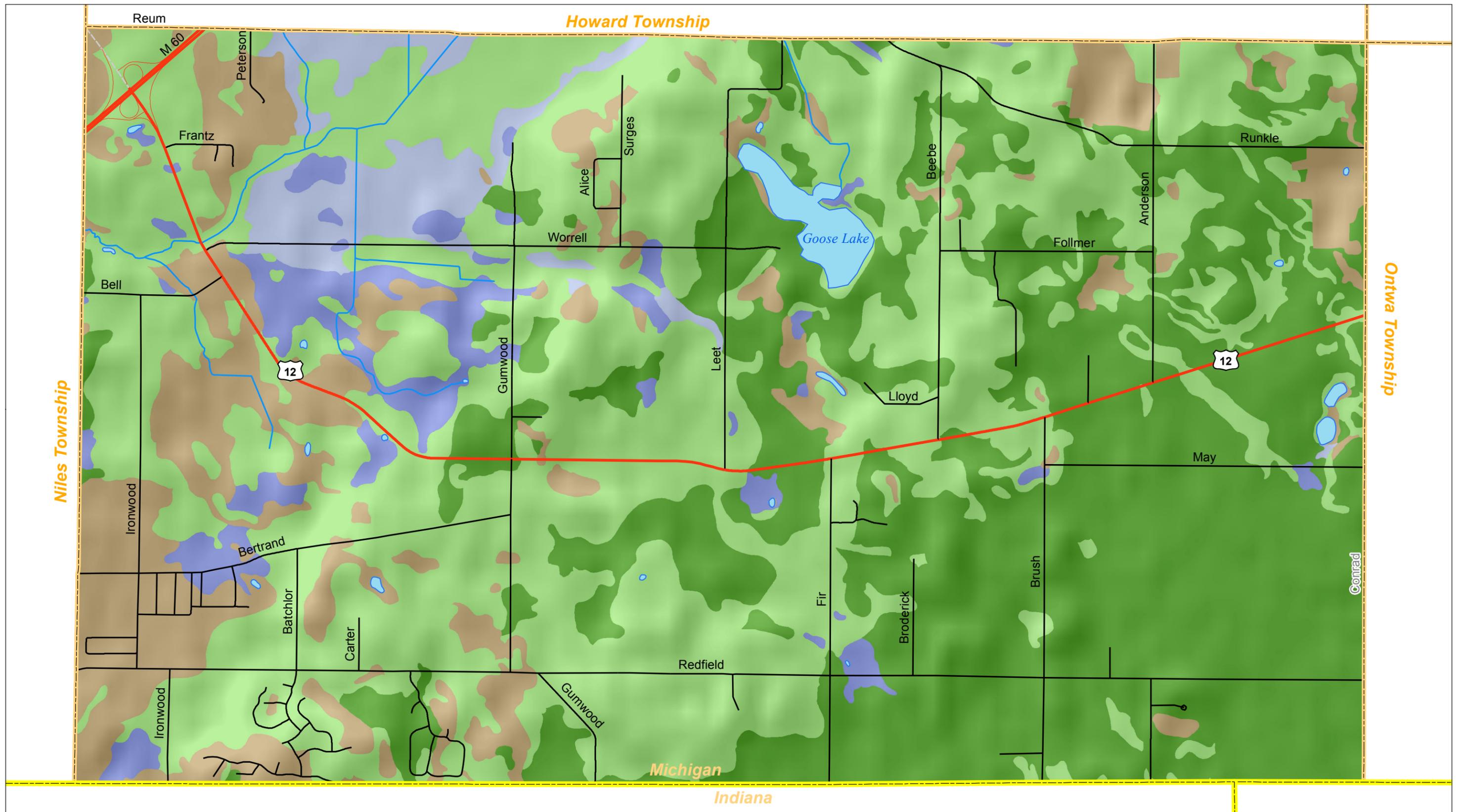


temperature in July and the lowest in January. As noted in Graph 2.1, Milton Township has a record high temperature of 109 degrees Fahrenheit (July 24, 1934) with a median July temperature of 73 degrees Fahrenheit. The Township has a record low of 22 degrees Fahrenheit below zero, (January 20, 1943 and January 25, 1987) whereas the median January temperature is 23 degrees Fahrenheit. The median year round temperature is 49 degrees Fahrenheit.

The average yearly rainfall is almost 40 inches per year with the peak months in June and August, both around 4 inches. The Township experiences the least in February with less than two inches. Like other locations within the Dfa climate, precipitation is often in the form of snow during December, January and February and rain the remaining months.

**Graph 3.2
Precipitation**





Milton Township Master Plan

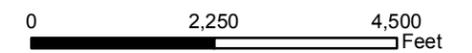
Cass County, Michigan

Map 2. Prime Farmland Soils

Legend

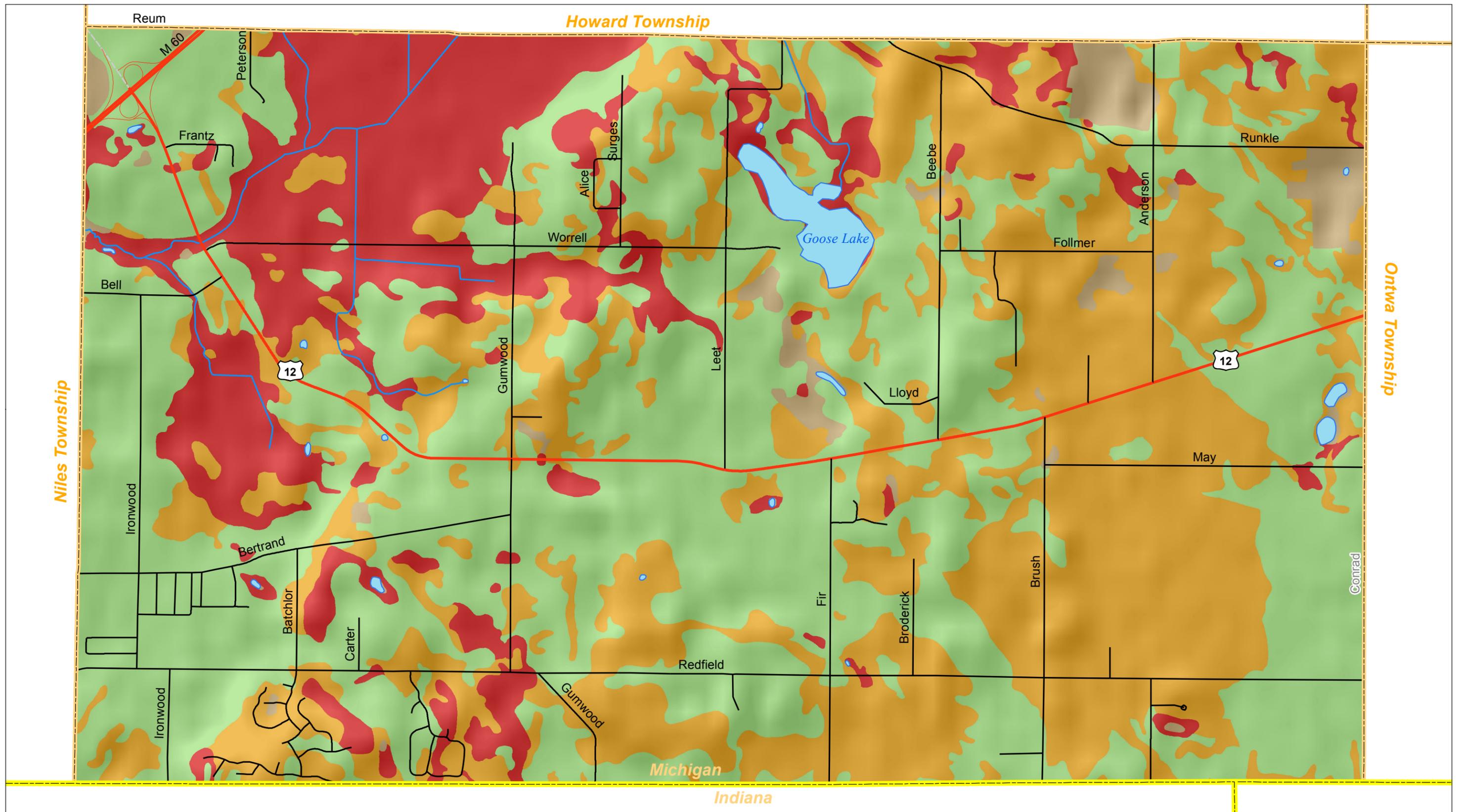
- All areas are prime farmland
- Farmland of local importance
- Prime farmland if drained
- Prime farmland if drained and either protected from flooding
- Not prime farmland

1 inch = 2,250 feet



Williams & Works

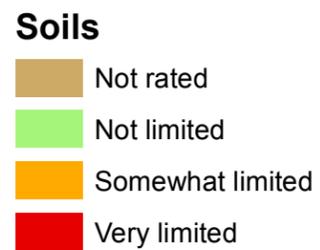
Source Data:
State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information
Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)



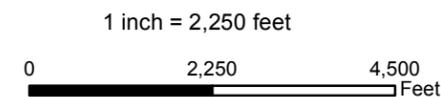
Milton Township Master Plan

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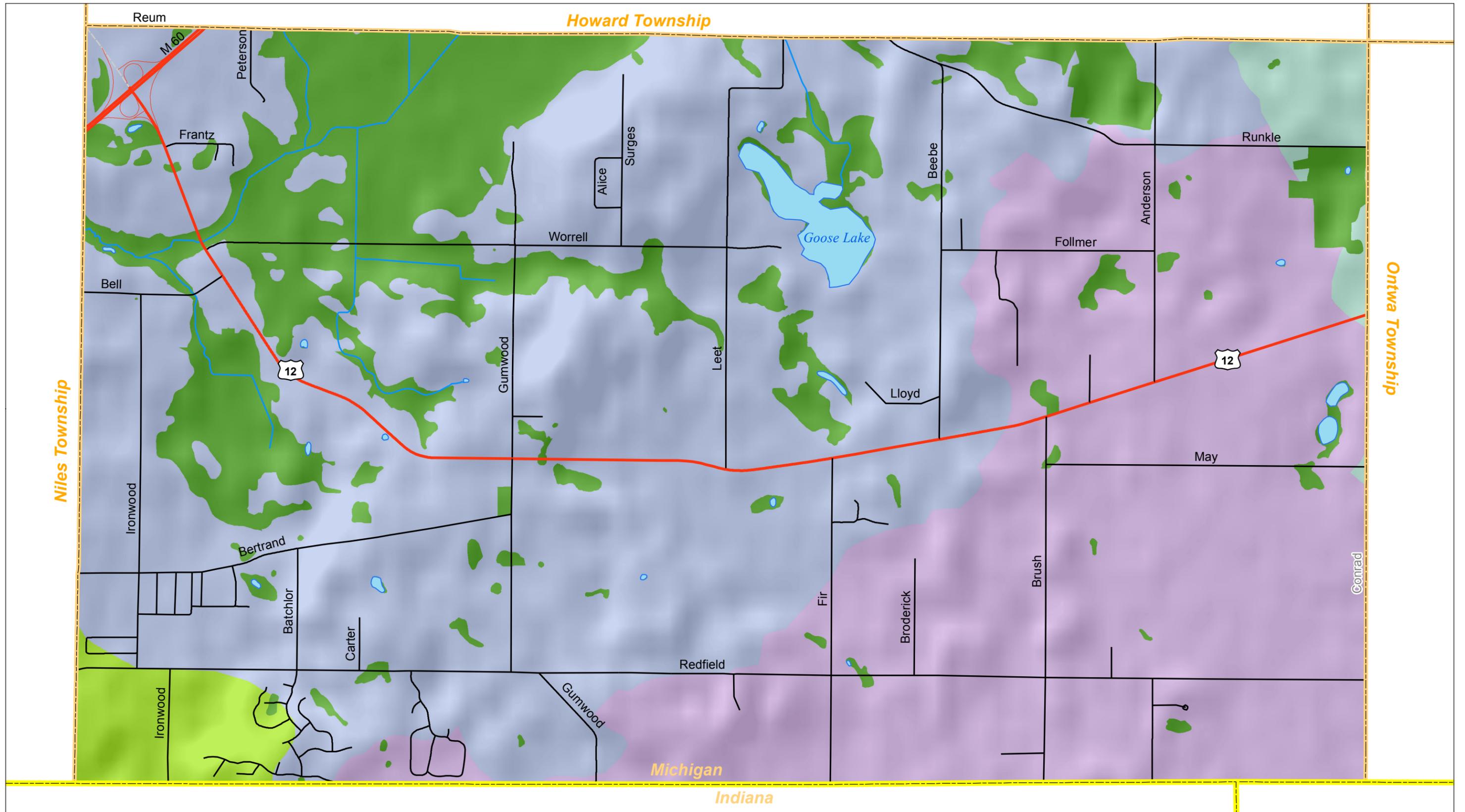
Map 3. Development Suitability



Williams & Works



Source Data:
State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information
Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)



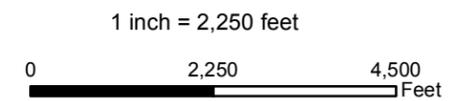
Milton Township Master Plan

Cass County, Michigan

Map 4. Watersheds

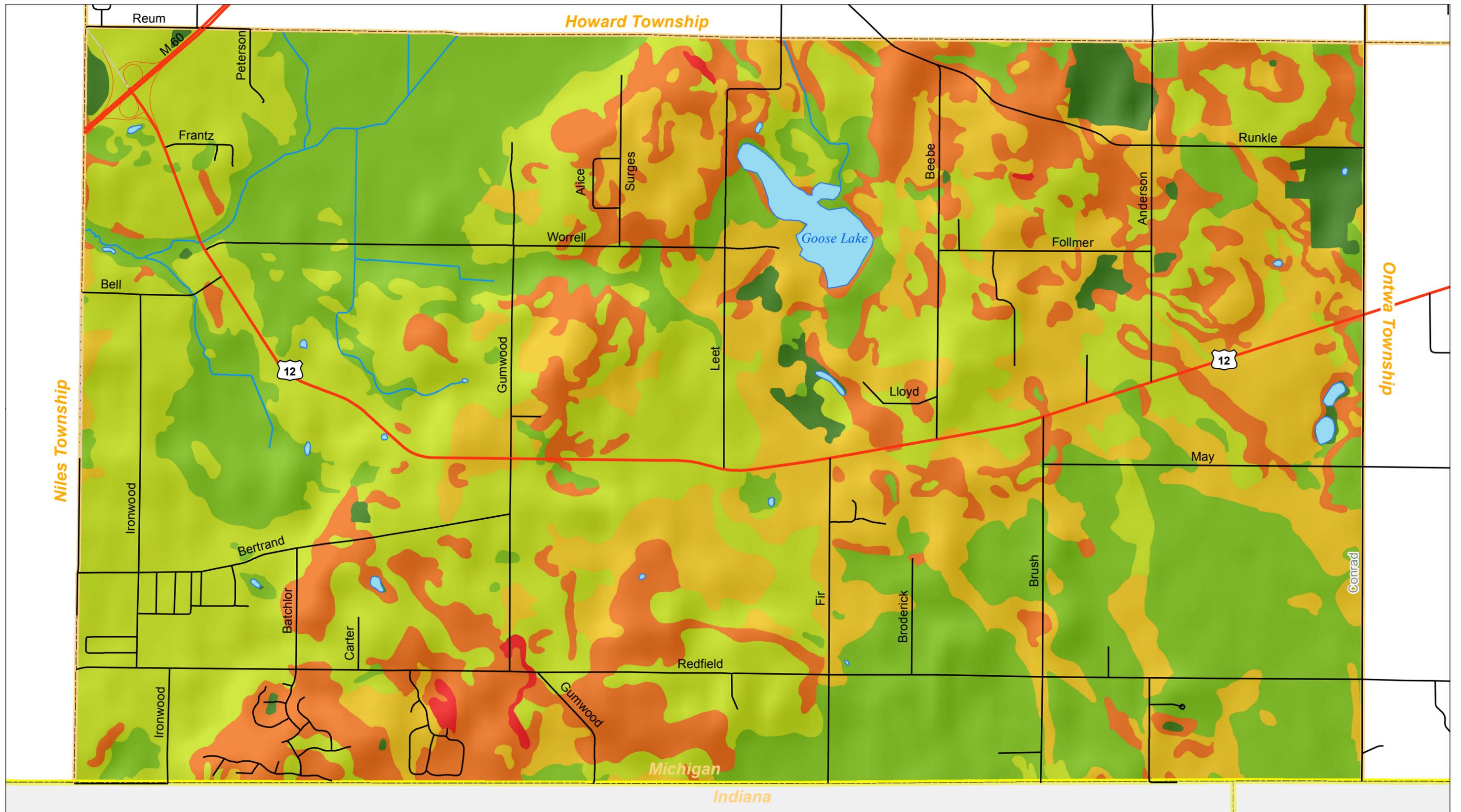
Legend

- St. Joseph River Watershed**
 - Brandywine Creek
 - Cobus Creek
 - Juday Creek
 - St. Joseph River
- Areas of High Watertable



Williams & Works

Source Data:
State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information
Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)



Milton Township Master Plan

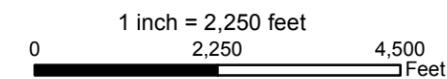
Cass County, Michigan

Map 5. Topography & Slopes

Legend



Williams & Works



Source Data:
 State of Michigan Center for Geographic Information
 Indiana Map (Indiana Geographic Information System Data Directory)