Helena Township – Board of Supervisors
Minutes – Scott County Township Planning Area Meeting #2
10/21/2026 | Belle Plaine Town Hall

CALL TO ORDER. Meeting was called to order by Brad Davis at 7 p.m.

PRESENT. Chairperson John Wermerskirchen, Supervisor Edward Nytes, Supervisor DeAnn Croatt, Clerk Heather Taylor DuCharme, representatives from Scott County, representatives from Belle Plaine Township, and Representatives from Blakeley Township.

MEETING DISCUSSION. Discussion of the items on the attached agenda as well as discussion of annexation issues, Helena Township/City of New Prague annexation update, and orderly annexation agreements. Meeting was adjourned by Scott County representatives at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted: Date: 11-5-2026 _____ Clerk

Approved: Date: 11-5-24 _____ Chairperson

AGENDA

Scott 2050

SCOTT COUNTY
TOWNSHIP PLANNING AREA MEETING #2
(Blakeley, Belle Plaine, Helena)

Belle Plaine Town Hall
25130 Hickory Blvd
Belle Plaine, Minnesota

Wednesday, October 21, 2026
7:00 PM

I. **Welcome**

II. **Recap April 15th Meeting**

III. **Maxfield Study Data**

IV. **Emerging Issues – Data Centers/Battery Storage/Solar**

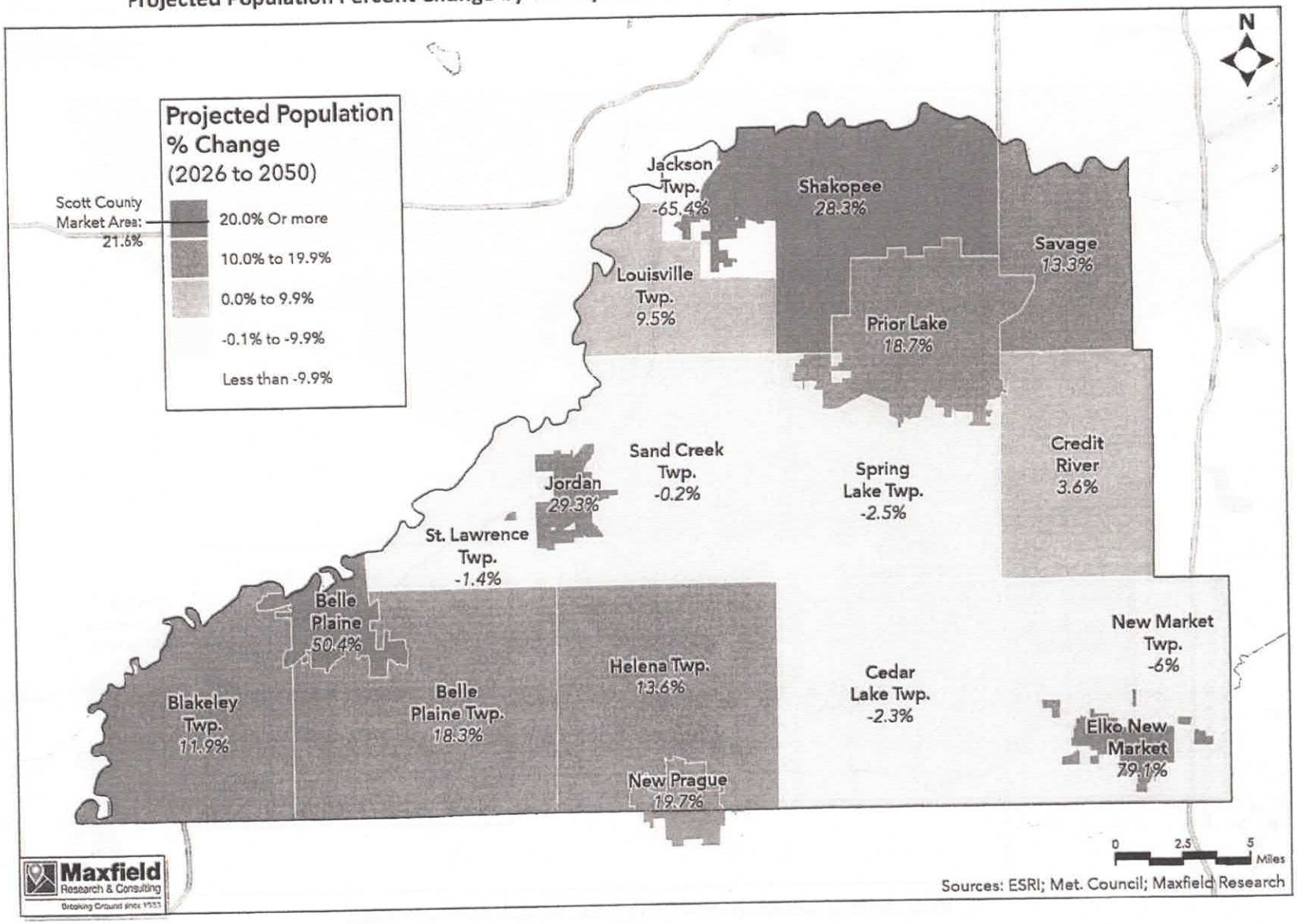
V. **Urban Expansion Growth in UER**

VI. **Land Use Comp Plan Exercise**

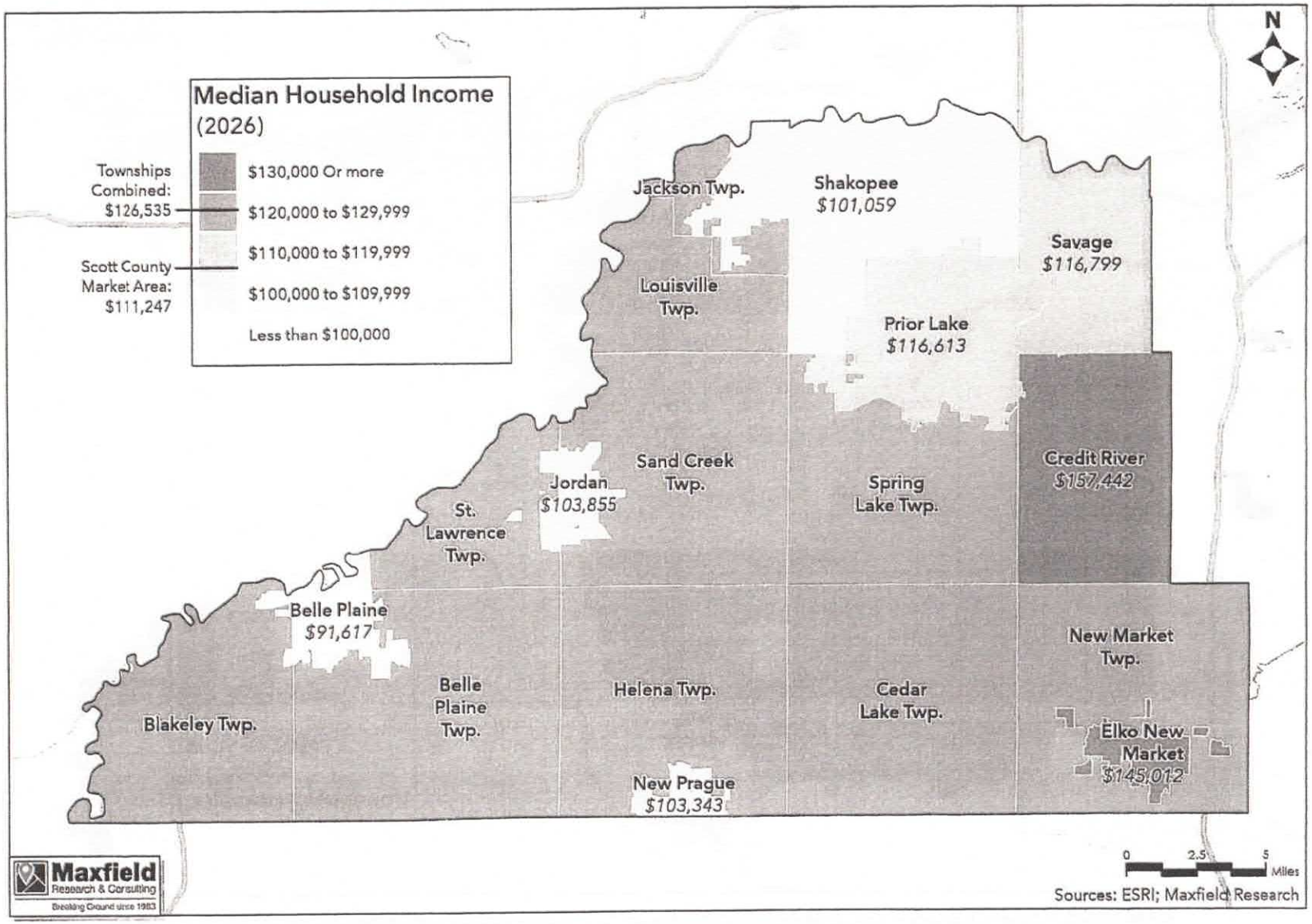
VII. **Next Steps & Adjourn**

NAME	TOWNSHIP
Brian Schmidt	Blakeley
David DeVoto	Belle Plaine
Peggy DeVoto	Belle Plaine
G Wennerstrom	Helena
Robert Wagner	Blakeley
Dottie Arnett	Helena
Tony Kovacs	Belle Plaine
Ed Myers	Helena
Heather Taylor DeShane	Helena

Projected Population Percent Change by County Subdivision (2026 to 2050) – Scott County Market Area



Median Household Income (2026) – Scott County Market Area

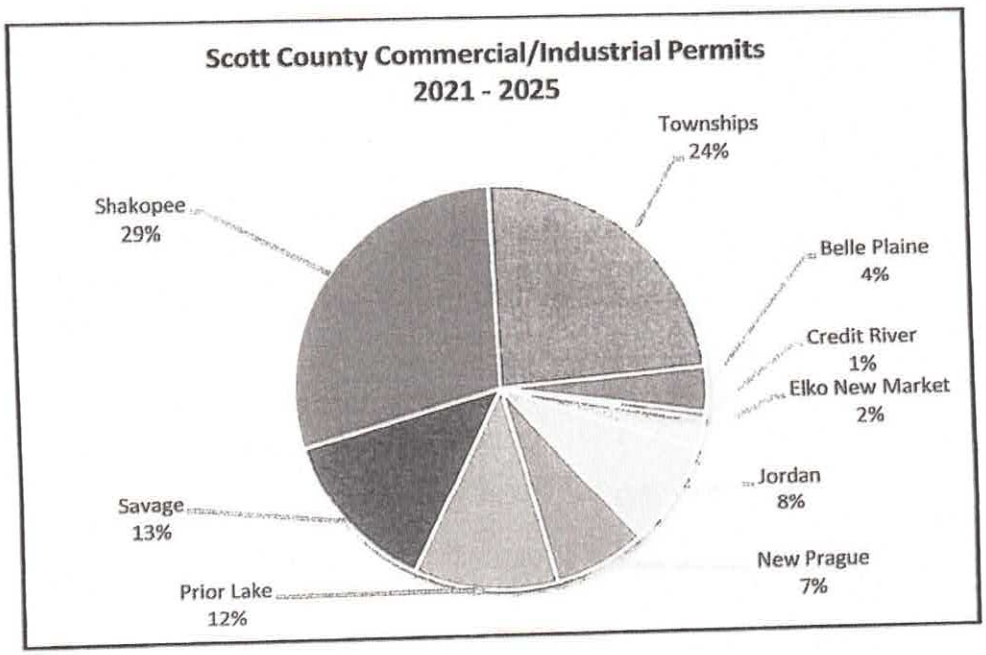


Commercial/Industrial Building Permit Trends

The following summarizes information on commercial, industrial, and public building permits issued in Scott County from 2021 through 2025. Data was obtained from the Metropolitan Council which collects data from communities in the seven-county Metro Area via an annual survey. Permit data includes new buildings and additions to buildings if the permit valuation is $100,000 or more. The value represents the estimated cost of construction as reported on the building permit. A detailed data table is located in the Appendix.

- A total of 166 new commercial/industrial building permits were issued in Scott County between 2021 and 2025, totaling roughly $414.5 million in value. There are 33 new construction commercial/industrial permits issued in Scott County annually.

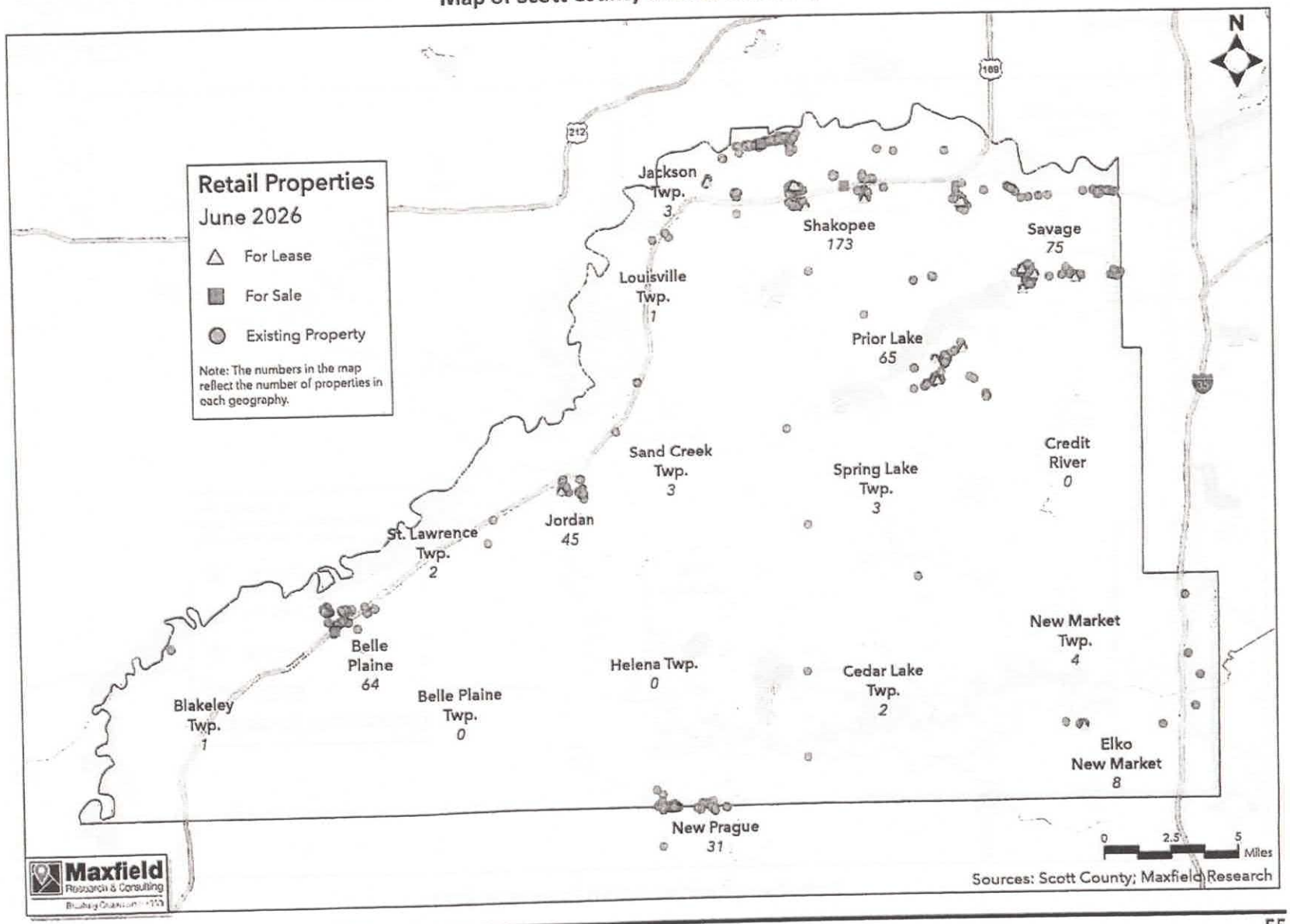
- As shown in the following graph, Shakopee was the most active community with 48 permits issued between 2021 and 2025 (29% of all Scott County commercial/industrial permits), followed by the Townships with 40 permits (24%) and Savage with 22 permits (13%).



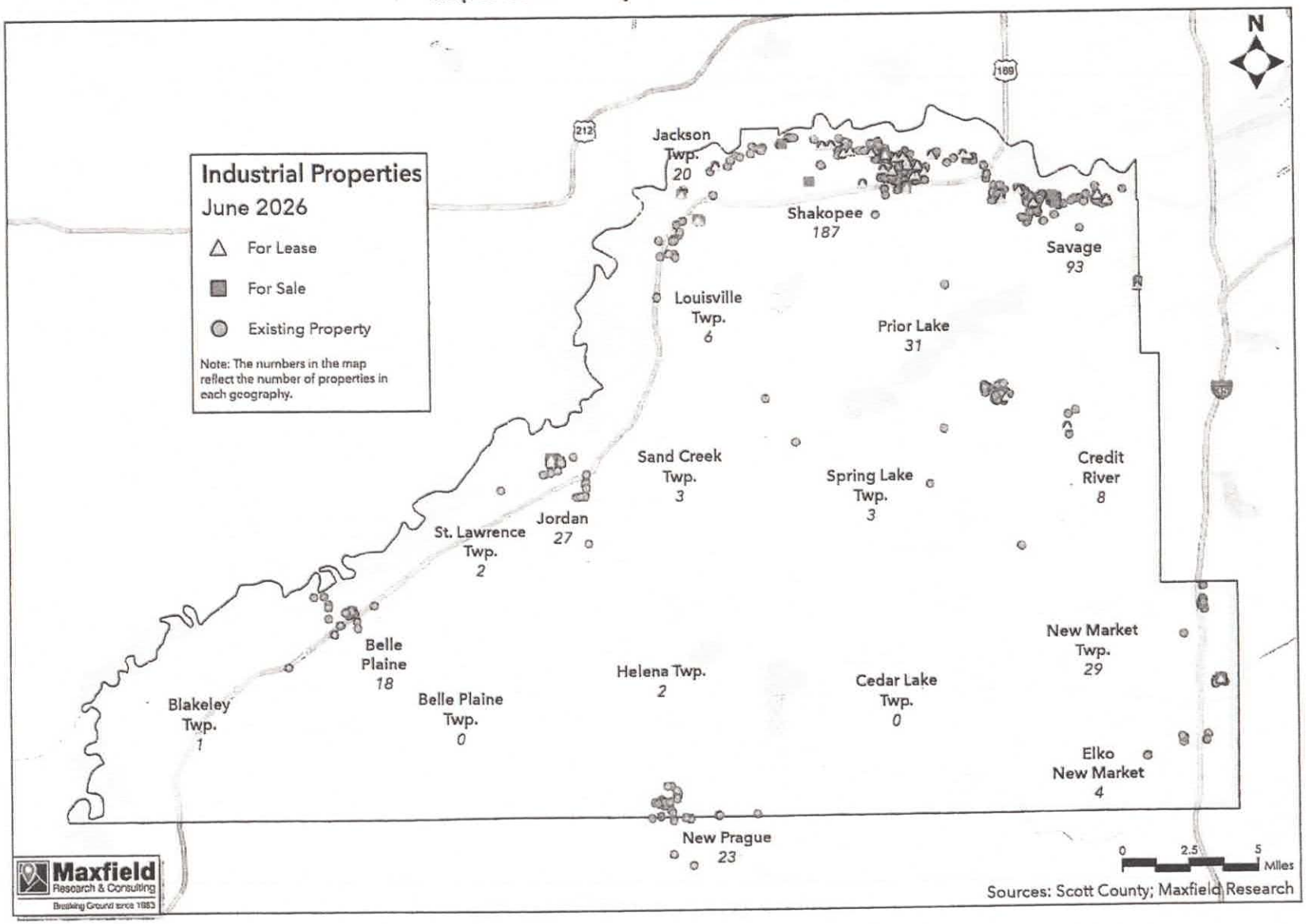
- Total permit values were highest in Shakopee ($198.4 million in total permit value) between 2021 and 2025, followed by Elko New Market ($43.3 million) and Savage ($38.4 million).

- On average, new commercial/industrial projects have a construction value of $2.5 million per project. Average permit values were highest in Elko New Market ($10.8 million), Shakopee ($4.1 million), Sand Creek Township ($4.0 million), and Belle Plaine ($2.2 million). The high average permit value in Elko New Market is due, in large part, to one permit issued in 2024 at a $40.7 million value.

Map of Scott County's Retail Inventory



Map of Scott County's Industrial Inventory



Association *of* Minnesota Counties

DATA CENTERS

Overview for Minnesota County Commissioners

What is a Data Center?

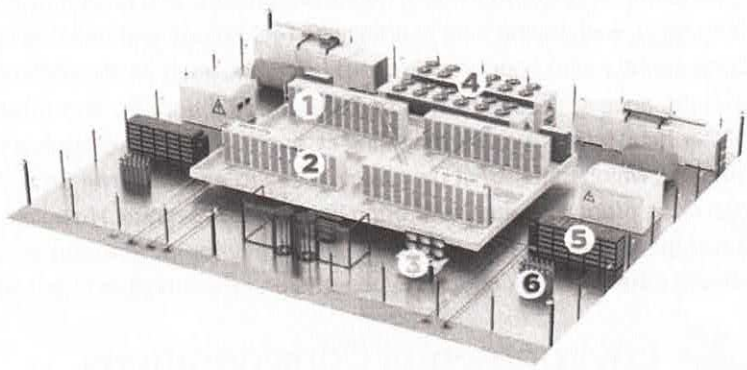
Data centers are secure facilities that store, process, and distribute digital information through large networks of servers. They provide the physical backbone for internet connectivity and power essential technologies such as cloud computing, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, and government data platforms. As generative AI expands and digital services become increasingly central to daily life, the demand for the infrastructure that supports these systems continues to grow.

Data centers can deliver significant economic benefits to local communities, including increased tax revenue, job creation, and improved digital connectivity. However, they also pose challenges—most notably high energy consumption, substantial water use, and land-use impacts. These trade-offs make it critical for counties to carefully evaluate proposed data center developments and plan for sustainable growth.

Globally, the average data center occupies about 100,000 square meters. The largest facility, located in China, spans approximately 10.7 million square feet. Nevada is home to the world's largest colocation data center, covering 7.2 million square feet across multiple buildings. Colocation facilities rent space to businesses to house their servers and IT equipment, and many companies choose to distribute their infrastructure across multiple such centers. The global data center market is projected to reach $1 trillion by 2027.

Components of Data Centers

Data centers consist of several critical components that ensure efficient operation and reliability.



Source: [illegible] To view this interactive graphic visit the Data Center University website.

1 **Servers**
The backbone of data processing and storage, servers are computers connected together to run applications and computing tasks.

2 **Storage Systems**
Data centers house vast amounts of digital information, stored on solid-state drives or hard disk drives.

3 **Networking Equipment**
Includes routers, switches and firewalls that manage data traffic and security.

4 **Cooling Systems**
Prevent overheating by using air or liquid cooling methods to maintain optimal operating temperatures for computers.

5 **Power Infrastructure**
Includes backup generators and uninterruptible power supplies to ensure continuous operation.

6 **Security Systems**
Physical and cyber security measures such as biometric access controls, surveillance cameras and fire suppression systems.

Source: "A Primer for Local Governments: Understanding Data Centers," National League of Cities. [illegible]

Why Minnesota?

As of March 2025, there were 5,426 data centers located in the United States. This compares to 529 in Germany and 523 in the U.K. during the same period. Currently, the largest data center markets by total power are Northern Virginia, Beijing, London, and Singapore. It is estimated that Minnesota has between 60-81 data centers operated by 38 providers, with more being planned. Minnesota attracts data center developers with its low disaster risk, water resources, cooler climate (which reduces electricity use to cool the facilities), strong energy and fiber infrastructure, tax incentives (such as sales tax exemptions on equipment and energy and a permanent property tax exemption on equipment), skilled workforce, and stable regulatory environment, making it a reliable and efficient location for long-term operations.



Key Questions for Counties to Consider

- **Who pays for utility and road upgrades—developer, utility ratepayers, or taxpayers?**
- **What are projected water and power demands, and are they sustainable long-term?**
- **Are land use impacts consistent with county comprehensive plans?**
- **What community transparency and data reporting requirements apply?**
- **What economic incentives will the county make? What will be the positive economic impact on jobs and tax base to the county?**

$ Economic Impacts

Data centers can bring important economic benefits to a community. Building a data center creates short-term construction jobs, and once it opens, it provides long-term, well-paying jobs in areas like technology and building operations. Data centers also support other local workers, such as electricians, maintenance staff, and nearby businesses. Additionally, they often lead to better local infrastructure, including stronger power systems and faster internet, which can attract new businesses to an area. Over time, data centers can raise property values and bring in more tax revenue. However, because developers may ask for tax breaks or help pay for infrastructure, counties should carefully think about the benefits and the possible financial impact.

Environmental Considerations

Data centers use large amounts of electricity and water to operate, which can place pressure on local resources and infrastructure. Depending on its size, a facility may require anywhere from tens to hundreds of megawatts of electricity – including power for backup systems – and between 100,000 to 1 million gallons of water per day for cooling. According to the *2024 United States Data Center Energy Usage Report* from Berkeley Lab, data centers consumed 176 terawatt hours of electricity in 2023, accounting for 4.4% of total U.S. electricity use. Nationally, data centers also consume an estimated 7.41.7 billion liters of water per day. This level of consumption has raised concerns about taxing Minnesota's groundwater resources as well as meeting the state's goal of a carbon-free electrical grid by 2040. In response, new technologies are emerging to reduce energy and water use, including sources of renewable power sources and more efficient cooling systems. Additional environmental considerations include light and noise pollution, waste management, and compliance with sustainable building standards.

Minnesota Laws and Statutes Affecting Data Centers

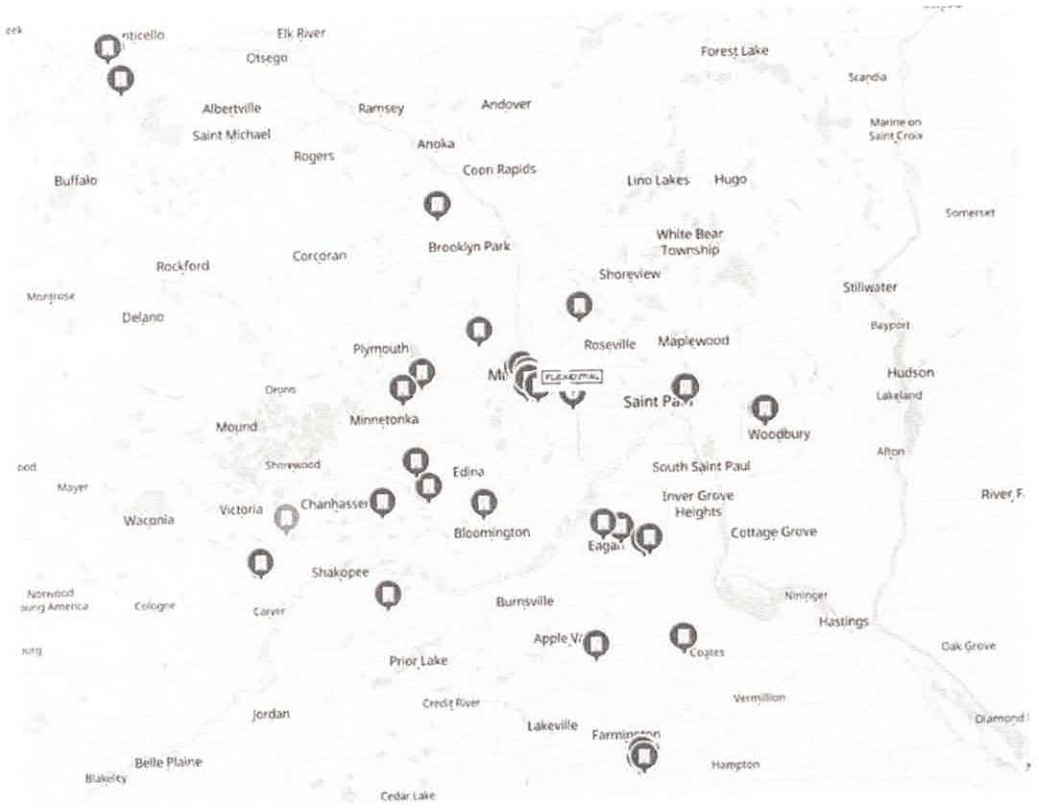
Recent state legislation now directly affects data center permitting, and among its provisions are the following:

- **2025 HF16** allows the DNR to engage early with proposed data center projects using more than 100 million gallons of water per year and requires that any new or existing water appropriation permits for such projects include conditions ensuring sustainability, water conservation, and protection of public health, safety, and welfare.
- Data center developments are required to route permitting inquiries through **Minnesota Business First Stop** to improve state coordination.
- Under **Minn. Stat. §297A.68, subd. 42**, qualified data centers may receive sales tax exemptions on equipment purchases, but **electricity is no longer exempt as of July 1, 2025**.
- Large-scale projects (over $250 million investment) must follow **prevailing wage** and **clean energy design standards**.
- Several major projects in Minnesota have recently been cancelled, raising concerns that the state's regulations, specifically the permitting process, are slowing development of the industry.

November 2025

County Moratoriums

- Carlton County
- Pine County
- Wright County
- LeSueur County
- Nicollet County
- Big Stone County
- Freeborn County

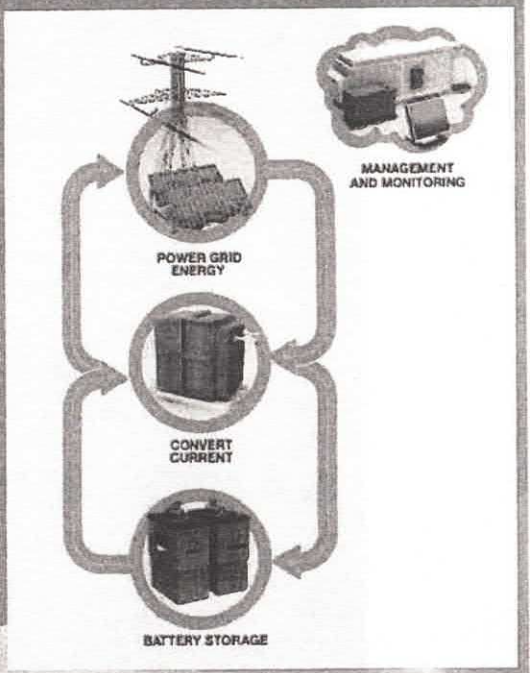


Other County Actions

- Nobles Conty Rejected Proposed Zoning Chage, no moratorium
- Washington County – discussed
- Houston County – discussed

What are the benefits of battery storage?

- **Provides power when its needed**
  - Stores energy during low-demand periods and discharges during high-demand periods
- **Grid support**
  - Relives congestion, provides system stability, and supports voltage and frequency
  - Eliminates need for additional transmission infrastructure to meet increases in energy demands
- **Scalable with a relatively small footprint**
  - Built with transportable containers
  - Typically 4-hour battery facility will require 1 acres or less per 10MW
- **Long term investment**
  - Most batteries are expected to reach end of life ~30 years from COD



Community Solar Ordinance Updates

Chapter 12 proposed text amendments • Township discussion reference • October 21, 2026

Recommendation: Allow up to 5 MW AC of community solar capacity while retaining a maximum 10-acre solar-array footprint and all existing land-use safeguards.

Why this limited amendment works:

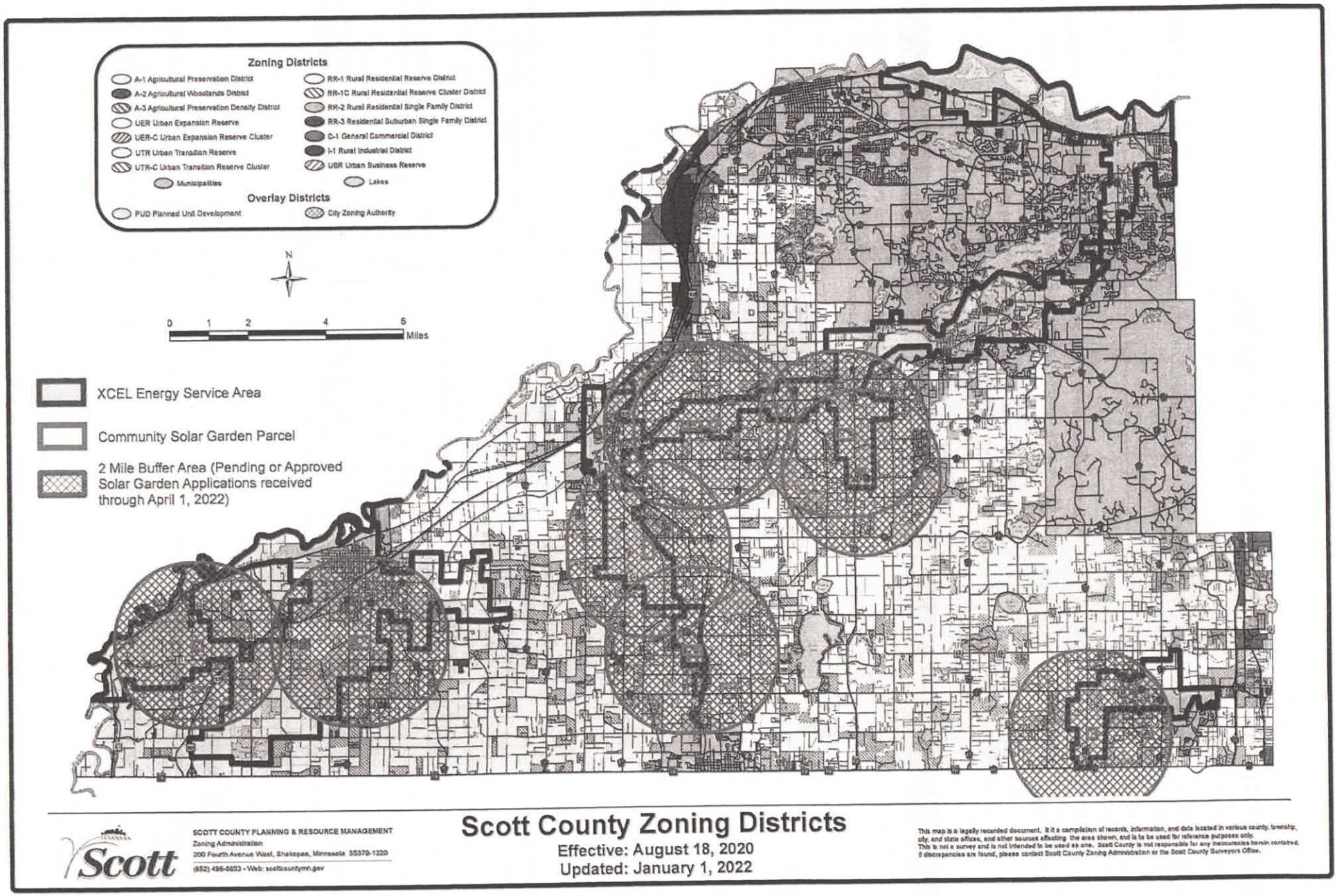
- **Technology has outgrown the 1 MW cap.** Higher-efficiency modules can deliver more output from a comparable 10-acre array area.
- **State law has changed.** Minn. Stat. §216B.1641, subd. 6(a)(2), allows eligible community solar gardens up to 5 MW, as defined at §216B.164, subd. 2a(c).
- **A future-ready ceiling is not a larger land allowance.** The County can keep 10 acres as the controlling physical limit.
- **Enable production tax revenue for both County and Township/City.** Minn. Stat. §272.0295, subds. 3 & 7 requires solar systems over 1 MW AC to pay $1.20 per MWh generated; revenue is shared 80% to the county / 20% to the host township or city.

AFFECTED SECTION	RECOMMENDED CHANGE	PURPOSE / LEGAL CONTEXT
§12-9-2(3) Capacity & size	Replace "one (1) megawatt AC" with "five (5) megawatts AC." Keep the 10-acre limit and one garden per parcel.	Aligns the local ceiling with Minn. Stat. §216B.1641, subd. 6(a). Actual output remains site-dependent.
§12-2; §12-9-2(3) Array footprint	Specify: "The 10-acre limit applies to the area occupied by the solar array (panel layout), excluding perimeter fencing, setbacks and screening areas." Require this area to be shown on the site plan.	Uses the existing "Solar Array" definition in §12-2 and avoids inconsistent acreage measurements.
§12-9-2 Land-use standards	**No proposed changes** to setbacks (16), fencing (17), screening (18), height (14), glare (15), decommissioning (10), or other applicable standards. *FLAG: 12-9-2(9) states "no more than… three (3) utility poles total" Does this include project exclusive poles (recloser & GOAB)?*	Retains surrounding-property protections and CUP/IUP review.
§12-9-2(9); §12-11(11) Interconnection	**At CUP/IUP application**: show acceptance into utility queue and active study. **Before building permit**: provide executed interconnection agreement.	Reconciles application requirements in §12-11(11), with §12-9-2(9), which calls for the final agreement before building permits.
§12-9-2(8); §12-11(9) Stormwater / erosion	**At CUP/IUP application**: site plan showing drainage and preliminary controls. **Before construction permits**: final applicable erosion, stormwater and Resource Management Plans.	Preserves Chapter 6 standards; final engineering arrives before construction.
Minn. Stat. §216B.1641 State program	Reference subd. 6(a): eligible community solar gardens may have capacity of no more than 5 MW AC, measured under §216B.164, subd. 2a(c).	The 2023 legislation established the newer program for 2024 onward; 5 MW program ceiling.

HOW DOES THE COUNTY/TOWNSHIP BENEFIT?

Minn. Stat. §272.0295, subds. 3 & 7: solar systems over 1 MW AC pay $1.20 per MWh generated; revenue is shared 80% to the county / 20% to the host township or city.

- Example for a single project: 2 MW AC × 8,760 hours × 22% capacity factor × $1.20 = approximately $4,626/year, or $115,632 over 25 years.



SCOTT COUNTY PLANNING & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Zoning Administration
200 Fourth Avenue West, Shakopee, Minnesota 55379-1220
(952) 496-8653 - Web: scottcountymn.gov

Scott County Zoning Districts

Effective: August 18, 2020
Updated: January 1, 2022

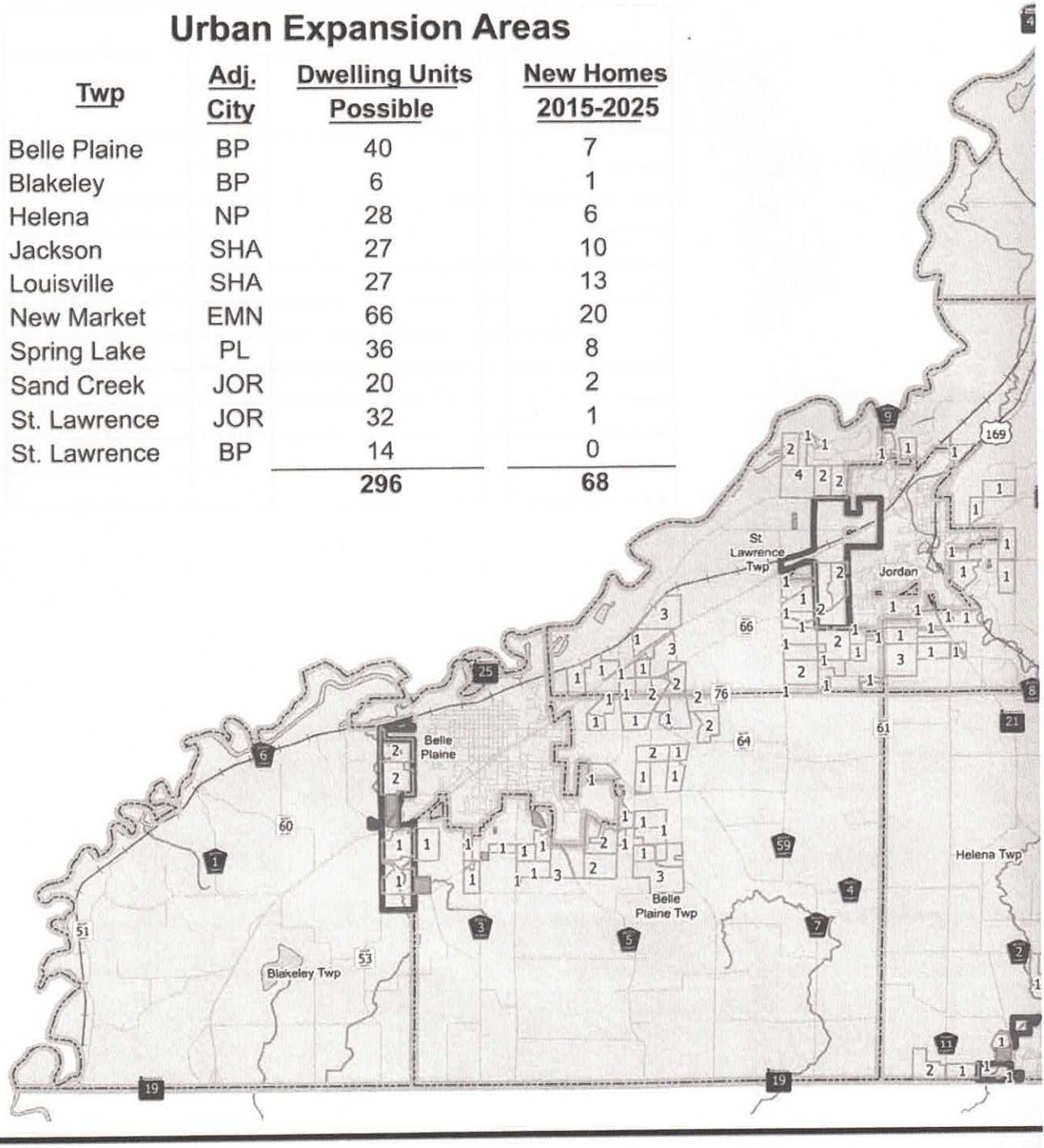
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2040 Urban Expansion Growth Analysis

2040 Developable UER Parcel New Home 2015-2025

Urban Expansion Areas

Twp	Adj. City	Dwelling Units Possible	New Homes 2015-2025
Belle Plaine	BP	40	7
Blakeley	BP	6	1
Helena	NP	28	6
Jackson	SHA	27	10
Louisville	SHA	27	13
New Market	EMN	66	20
Spring Lake	PL	36	8
Sand Creek	JOR	20	2
St. Lawrence	JOR	32	1
St. Lawrence	BP	14	0
		296	**68**



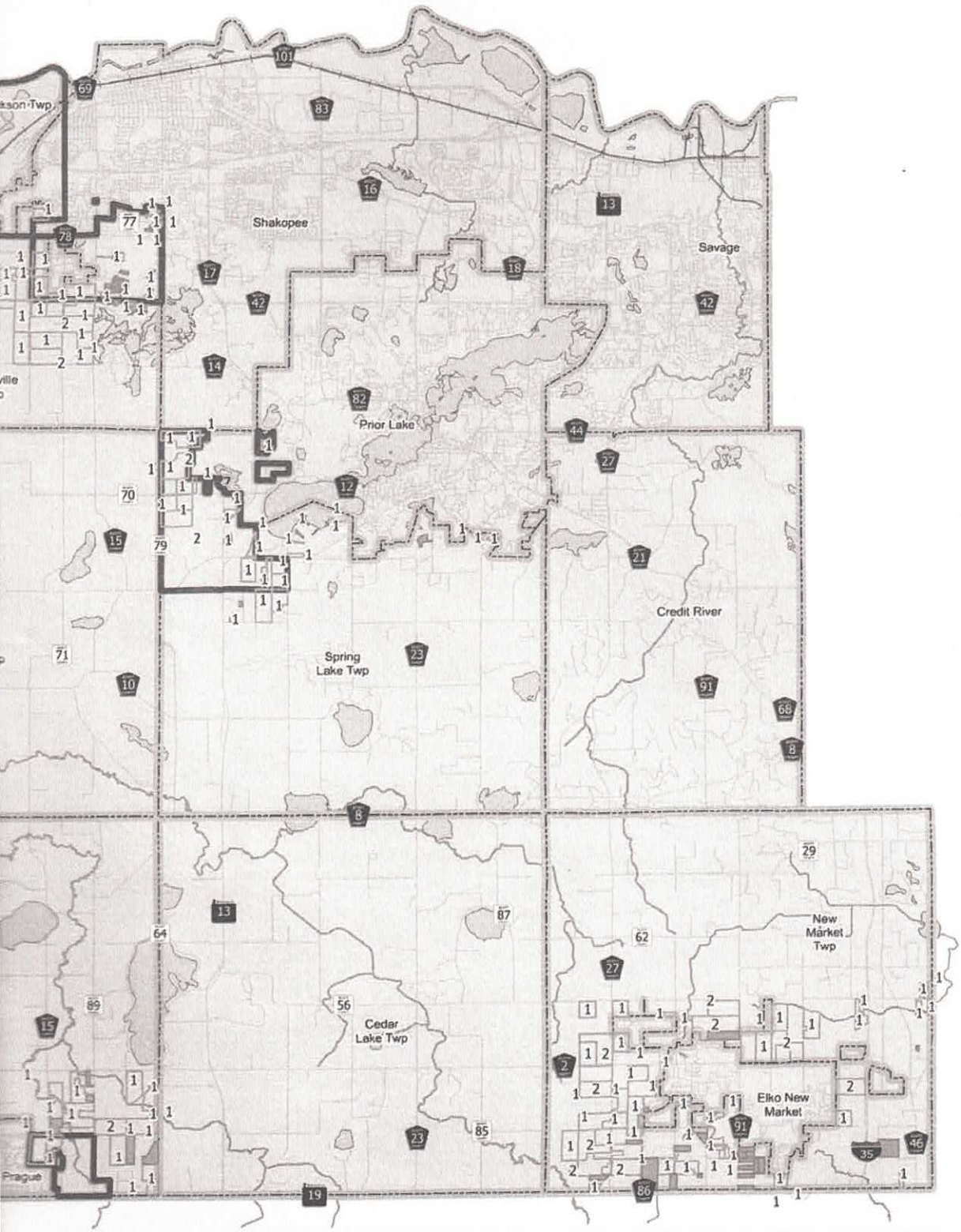
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Update



Comprehensive Plan

June 18, 2019

April 2, 2024

0 1 2 4 6 Miles

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Scott County 2040 Comprehen

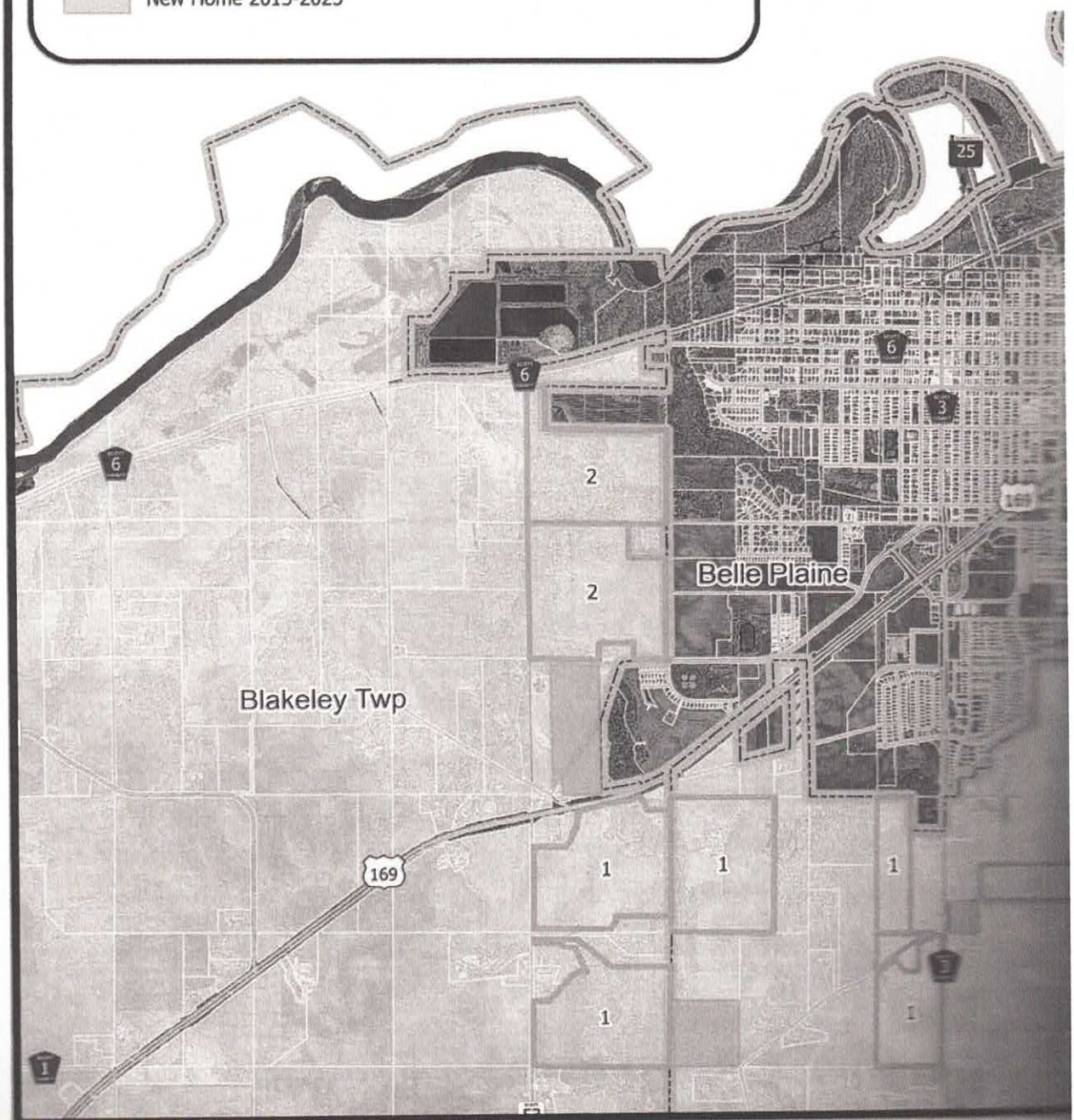
Urban Expansion Area Analysis 2015-2025

2040 Developable Urban Expansion Reserve Parcel

New Home 2015-2025

Urban Ex

Twp	Adjace
Belle Plaine	Belle Plair
Blakeley	Belle Plair
St. Lawrence	Belle Plair



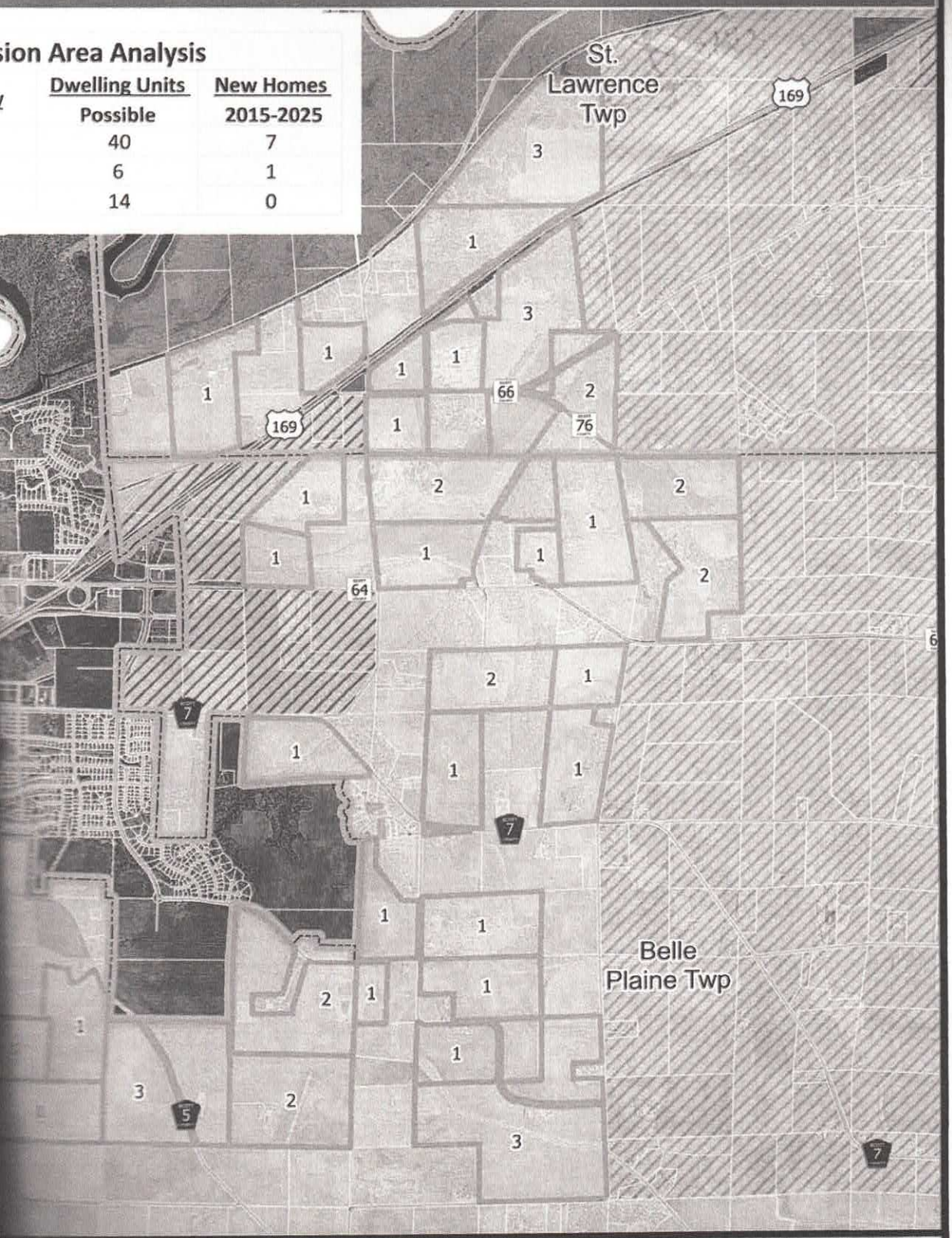
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Dwelling Units Possible	New Homes 2015-2025
40	7
6	1
14	0

Comprehensive Plan

June 18, 2019

April 2, 2024

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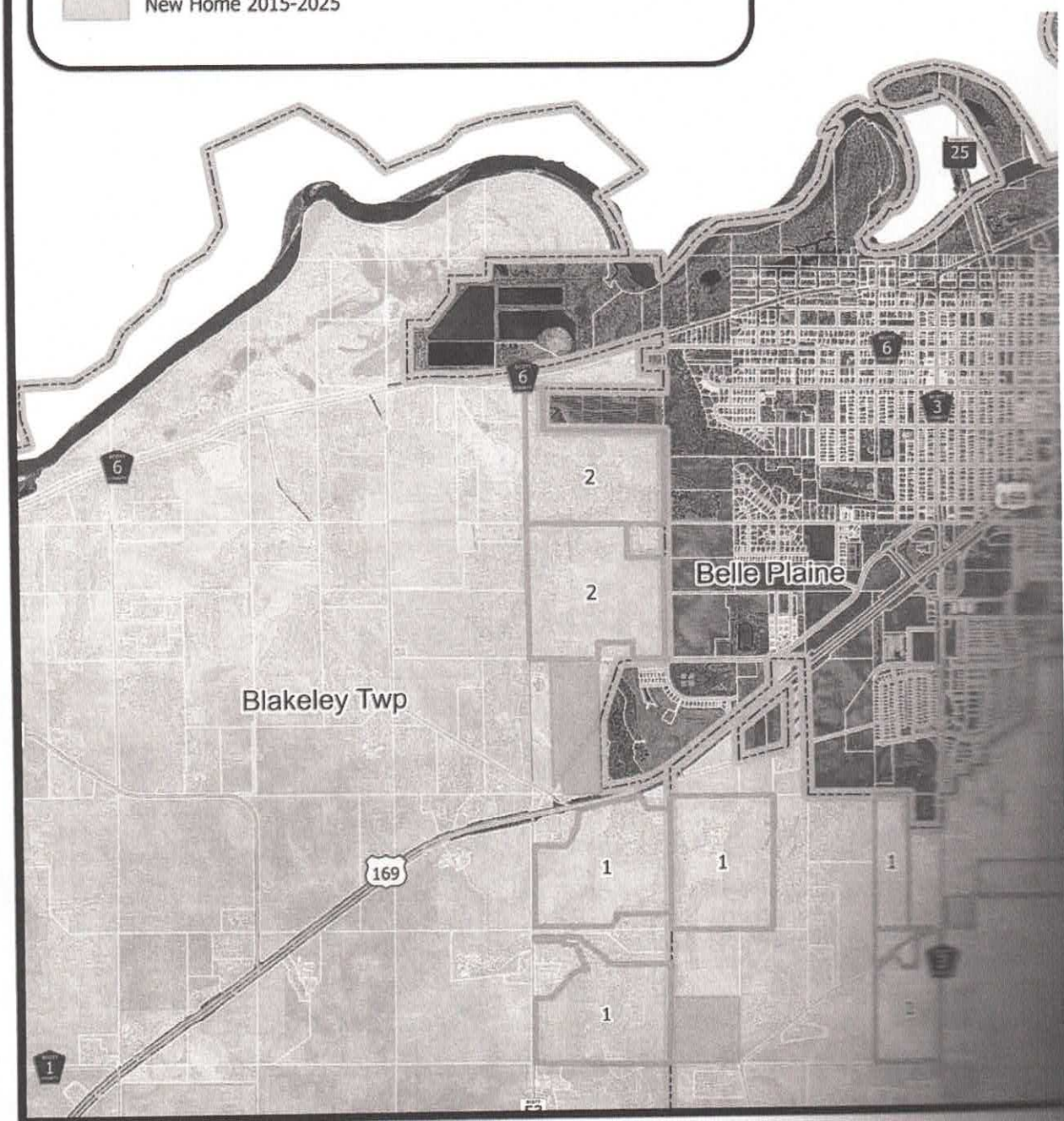
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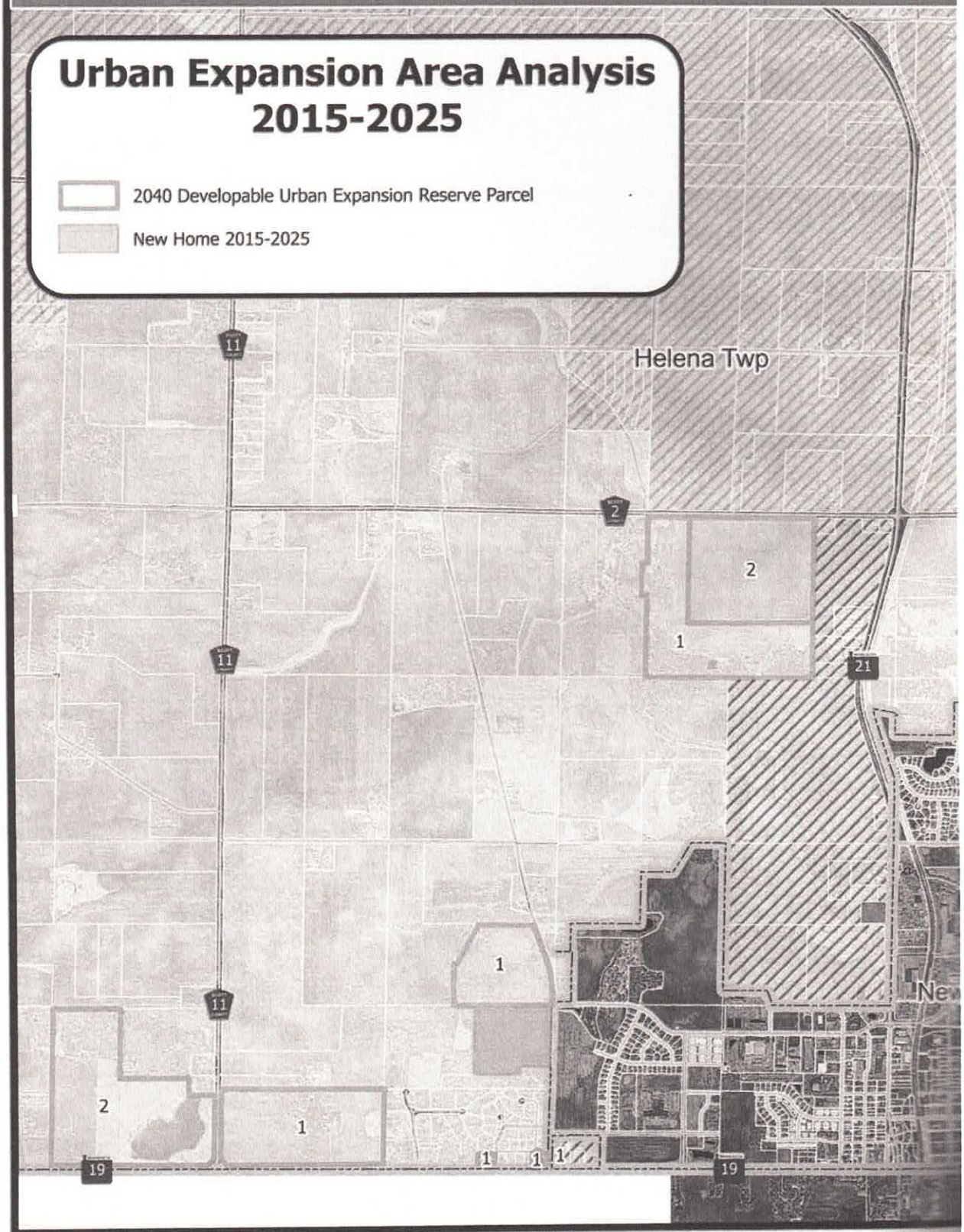
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Scott County 2040 Comprehen



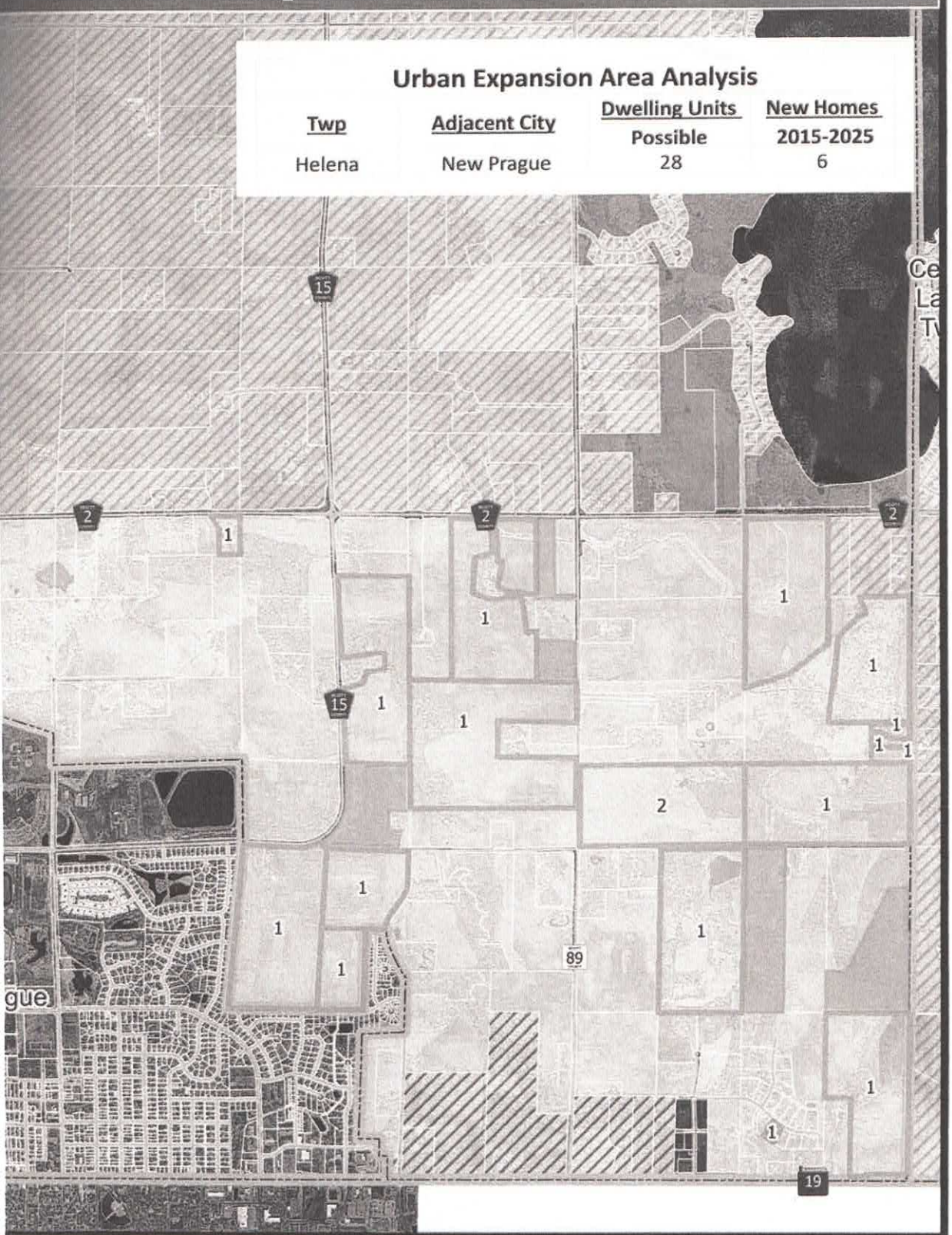
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Urban Expansion Area Analysis

Twp	Adjacent City	Dwelling Units Possible	New Homes 2015-2025
Helena	New Prague	28	6



Comprehensive Plan

: June 18, 2019

d: April 2, 2024

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