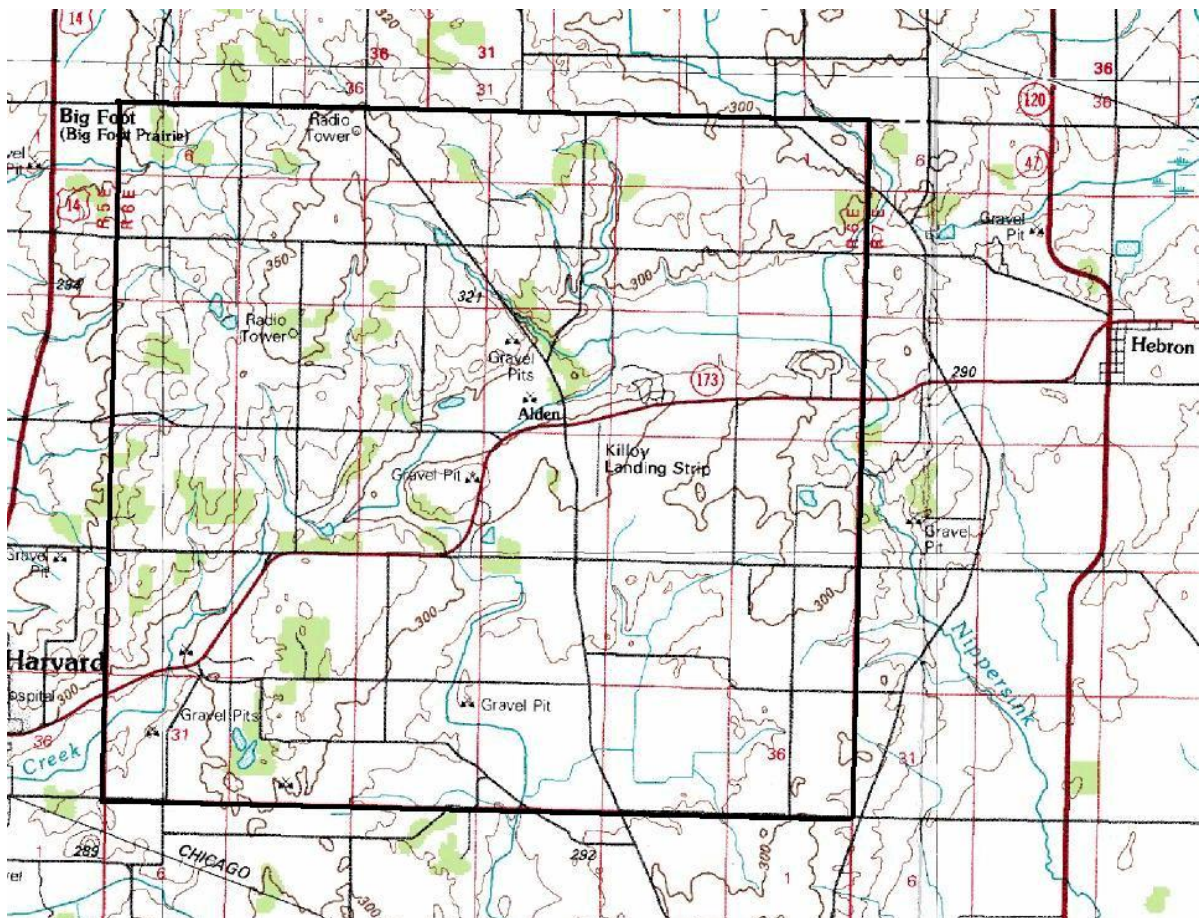


# Alden Township 2005 Land Use Plan

(McHenry County, Illinois)



**Adopted By:**

Alden Township Board of Trustees

January 8, 1997

Amended:

April 6th, 2005

**ALDEN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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## PREFACE

The rights of Township Government to exercise influence on County zoning actions is authorized both by the Illinois Compiled Statutes (Chapter 60), and the McHenry County Zoning Ordinance (Section 8), provided the Township has adopted a Land Use Plan. The Alden Township Board adopted the first Alden Township Land Use Plan on January 8, 1997, and amended it on April 6th, 2005.

The Alden Township Land Use Plan (ATLUP) is a general guide for development with significant impact in the land use decision-making process. While the ATLUP is a policy document and does not directly regulate the use of land in the Township, it is generally implemented through the enforcement of ordinances, such as the McHenry County Zoning and Subdivision ordinances, the McHenry County Stormwater Ordinance, and the decisions of the County Zoning Board of Appeals and County Board on zoning and planning matters.

***Persons interested in pursuing a zoning change or variance in Alden Township are encouraged to meet with the Alden Township Plan Commission as early in their parcel acquisition or site planning efforts as possible.*** The Alden Township Plan Commission will provide insight as to how a proposed zoning activity may, or may not, comply with the Alden Township Land Use Plan.

For zoning actions that the Plan Commission determines to be compatible with the ATLUP, the Plan Commission will send a letter to the petitioner, Township Board, and McHenry County indicating:

- that there is no Plan Commission objection to the proposed activity,
- or, in certain situations, that the Plan Commission actively supports the proposed activity.

If the Plan Commission determines and votes that a proposed zoning petition is incompatible with the ATLUP, the Plan Commission presents its findings to the Alden Township Board. If the Township Board supports the position of the Plan Commission, the Township will pass and file a resolution of formal objection to the proposed zoning. Copies of this resolution are sent to the petitioner, their attorney, and the appropriate parties at McHenry County. The filing of the Township formal objection resolution forces a super-majority (75%) vote of the County Board to approve the proposed zoning activity.

It should be noted that the legislation authorizing the Township Planning process does not give Townships the authority to officially act upon proposed Conditional Use Permits (CUP), or to file a formal objection with the County Board. However, due to the significant land use changes that are still possible under the CUP process, the Plan Commission conducts a review of all CUP requests, and submits a letter to the County expressing its opinion as to whether the proposed activity is compatible with the Township Land Use Plan. The petitioner requesting the CUP is invited to appear at the Plan Commission to discuss the proposed activity.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1993, McHenry County adopted the **McHenry County Land Use Plan: Year 2010 Update**. The purpose of the **2010 Plan** is to guide development activities and land conversion in the County. The McHenry County **2010 Plan** follows the criteria set forth in adopted goals and objectives resulting from County staff and public input.

The **2010 Plan** identifies the Alden area as a "Unique Area" and requires that **"new developments within or in proximity to [Alden] conform to the existing character and density."** (**2010 Plan**, p.30). It also identifies a number of "environmentally sensitive" corridors associated with Nippersink Creek, Lawrence Creek, Mokeler Creek, and the North Branch of the Kishwaukee River, all high quality waterways that have their headwaters in Alden Township.

Alden Township began its planning process in 1995 by appointing five township residents to the Alden Township Planning Commission. In 1996, Alden Township hosted a series of meetings with Township residents, to help gain input on creating an Alden Township Land Use Plan. At one meeting, over 200 residents attended, which is significant in a Township that at the time had a population of roughly 1,400 people. The Township resident's agreed with the County 2010 Plan assessment of Alden Township as a "unique area". They also recommended that environmental protection and sensible land use planning be incorporated to protect residents from incompatible and inconsistent development within the Township and in proximity to it.

As such, much of the text and framework of the Alden Township Land Use Plan was adapted directly from the McHenry County 2010 Land Use Plan. In general, the Alden Township Land Use Plan adopts the **2010 Plan** for use in Alden Township, but also expands upon it. For example, the ATLUP further identifies some of the specific features which make Alden unique and which define the character of the Township.

## **What Makes Alden Township Unique?**

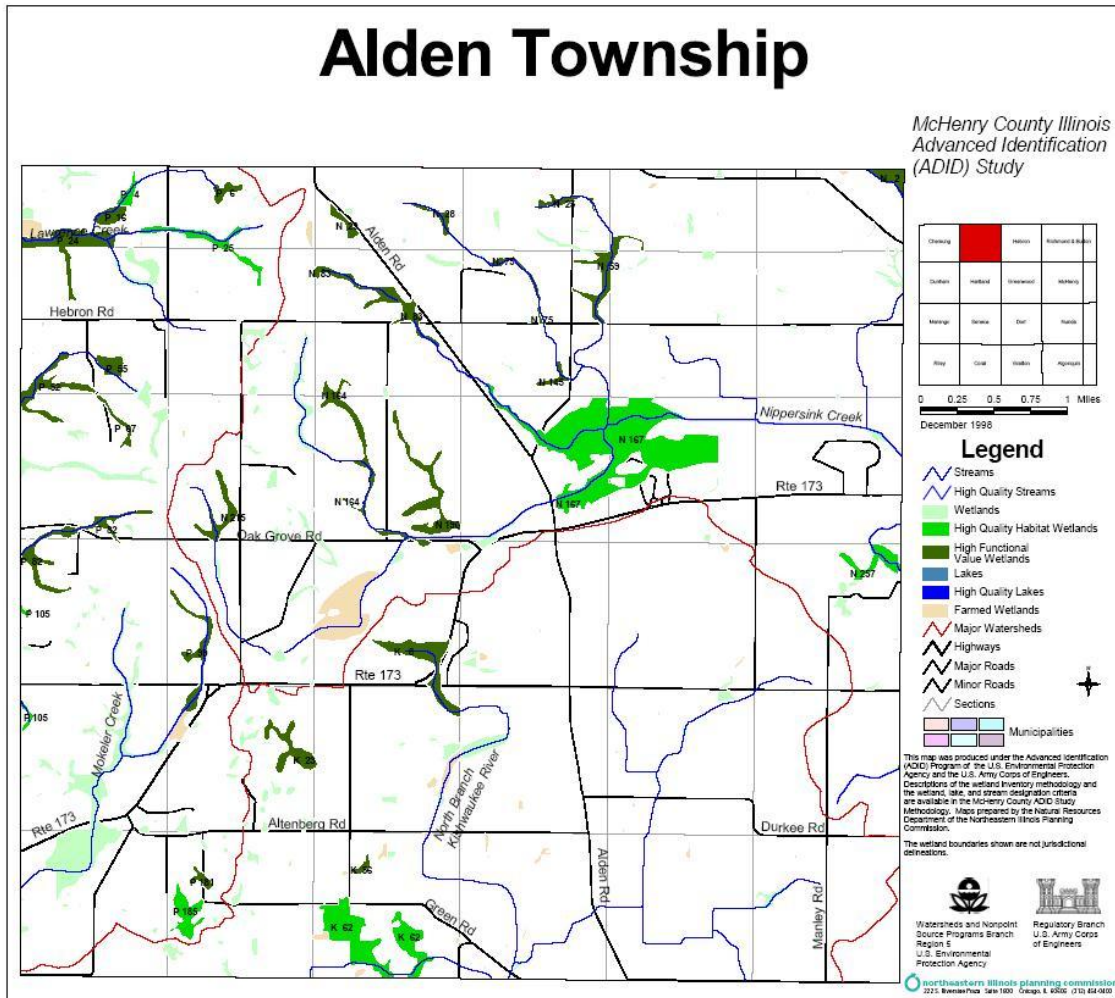
Due to its rural location, Alden is the only Township in McHenry County that does not have an incorporated municipality within its boundaries. Situated on the West Chicago and Marengo moraines, Alden Township also occupies the highest ground in McHenry County. The glacial moraines form a watershed divide between the Fox and Rock Rivers.

Nippersink Creek, which drains to the Fox River, has its headwaters in the Township, as well as Lawrence Creek, Mokeler Creek, and the North Branch of the Kishwaukee River, which drain to the Rock River. Maps of pre-settlement vegetation maps of Alden Township indicate that much of the Township was comprised of woodland, dominated by oak and hickory savannas, interspersed with wetlands and prairies.

## **Alden Township Contains:**

- Alden, a rural crossroad village-area, with one church, one tavern, one gas station, two craft / resale stores, and no heavy industry.
- The second highest glaciated point in the State of Illinois with an elevation of 1,189 feet, roughly 600 feet above the surface of Lake Michigan.
- The geology of Alden Township is made up of many sand and gravel, limestone, and sandstone formations. These aquifers serve as the source of all drinking water. As the population grows, the demand for water is rising, the potential for contaminating aquifers increases, and wastewater disposal becomes more difficult.
- 17,044 acres of prime farmland soils, comprising 78% of the entire area of the Township (See map on page XI of the Appendix).
- Two "Agricultural Protection Areas" comprised of 47 parcels, totaling 2,282 acres, or 10% of the Township (See map on page XIV of the Appendix).
- Numerous natural area remnants, including prairie, woodland, vernal wetlands, marshes, seeps, and fens, such that the McHenry County Conservation District has included much of the northwestern half of Alden Township on its Natural Areas Inventory.
- Numerous Native American archaeological areas, including burial sites, trade trails, and remnant artifacts.
- The Alden Sedge Meadow, one of the highest quality natural areas in the State of Illinois.
- At least 20 landowners who are collectively restoring 400+ acres of their privately owned lands to native wetland, prairie and woodland.

- Oak Grove Golf Course, one of only two Audubon Society Signature certified golf courses in the State of Illinois. Almost 48% of the 230 acre course has been protected as natural open space, with 68 acres restored to native prairie, and 41 acres to native wetland.
- 32 wetlands of sufficient enough quality to be classified as Advanced Identification (ADID) Wetlands, as shown below. (Also see wetland / hydric soils maps on pages IX & X of the Appendix).



### **Nippersink Creek:**

- The largest tributary to the Fox River, draining 137 square miles in Illinois and about 50 square miles in Wisconsin, has its headwaters in Alden Township.
- Among the finest of Illinois streams. Surveys for the presence of pollution-sensitive aquatic organisms found that the Mainstem rates as a 'B' quality stream and the North Branch received a 'Class A' ranking
- Home to at least 21 animals and 30 plants listed as Illinois endangered or threatened species.
- Contains 46 McHenry County Natural Area Inventory Sites quality upland, wetland and reaches of stream that are remnants of the region's original natural diversity.

### **North Branch Kishwaukee River**

- The Kishwaukee watershed is one of the three highest quality river systems in the state of Illinois. The 1,257 square mile Kishwaukee watershed drains to the Rock River, then the Mississippi River.
- The North Branch Kishwaukee is a 40.3 square mile sub-watershed area located in the rural area west of Woodstock, with its origins in Alden Township. This major tributary to the Kishwaukee River flows due south and joins the Kishwaukee River 2 miles upstream (east) of Marengo in west-central McHenry County. Over sixty-five miles of the Piscasaw, Rush Creek, and main branch of the Kishwaukee River are Class "A" streams. Piscasaw Creek is the only trout stream in Illinois.
- Twenty-eight endangered threatened, and watch-listed species live in the entire Kishwaukee watershed. Examples include: Iowa darter, sandhill crane, yellow-headed blackbird, black tern, speckled alder, mulberry wing butterfly, Blanding's turtle, and the spiked mussel.
- There are 18 threatened and endangered species of plants and animals known to inhabit the North Branch Kishwaukee Subwatershed. This is the highest number of T&E Species found in any of the 42 Kishwaukee River sub-watersheds.

### **Lawrence Creek**

- The Lawrence Creek sub-watershed is a medium-sized 21.5 square mile area in northwestern McHenry County. Lawrence Creek has its origins in the rural grasslands near Gasch Road and the Illinois-Wisconsin state line. Lawrence Creek is a tributary to Piscasaw Creek and flows southwest before discharging to Piscasaw Creek about two miles west of Harvard.
- There is only one recorded threatened and endangered (T&E) species documented in the sub-watershed. However, as additional surveys are implemented, the potential for finding new T&E species exists.



## Mokeler Creek

- The Mokeler Creek Subwatershed is a small, 9.5 square mile subwatershed in northwestern McHenry County. Mokeler Creek has its origins in the crop fields between Crowley and Oak Grove Road, in Alden Township. Mokeler Creek is a tributary to Piscasaw Creek, and flows southwest before discharging to Piscasaw Creek about 4.4 miles southwest of Harvard.
- There is only one recorded threatened and endangered (T&E) species documented in the sub-watershed. However, as additional surveys are implemented, a potential exists for finding new T&E species.

## TOWNSHIP PROFILE

Alden Township is approximately 34 square miles in area with a 1990 census of over 1,450 people, and a 2000 census of 1,534 people. In 1870, the Township had a population of a little under 1,000. The major north-south road is Alden Road (a county highway) and the major east-west road is Illinois Highway Route 173. The Township is predominantly rural, with one village area at the crossroads of Alden Road and Route 173. Traffic through the Township has been increasing, especially east-west traffic because of growth and significant development in Harvard.

Alden Township, as defined in the **2010 Plan** is a Unique Area. The 2010 Plan calls for the maintenance and enhancement of its existing character. Alden Township does not currently have a Primary Urban Center, Primary Rural Center, or a Secondary Node, as described in the **2010 Plan**. The 2010 Plan strongly discourages development of or encroachment by a Primary Urban, Primary or Rural Center or a Secondary Node in Alden Township.

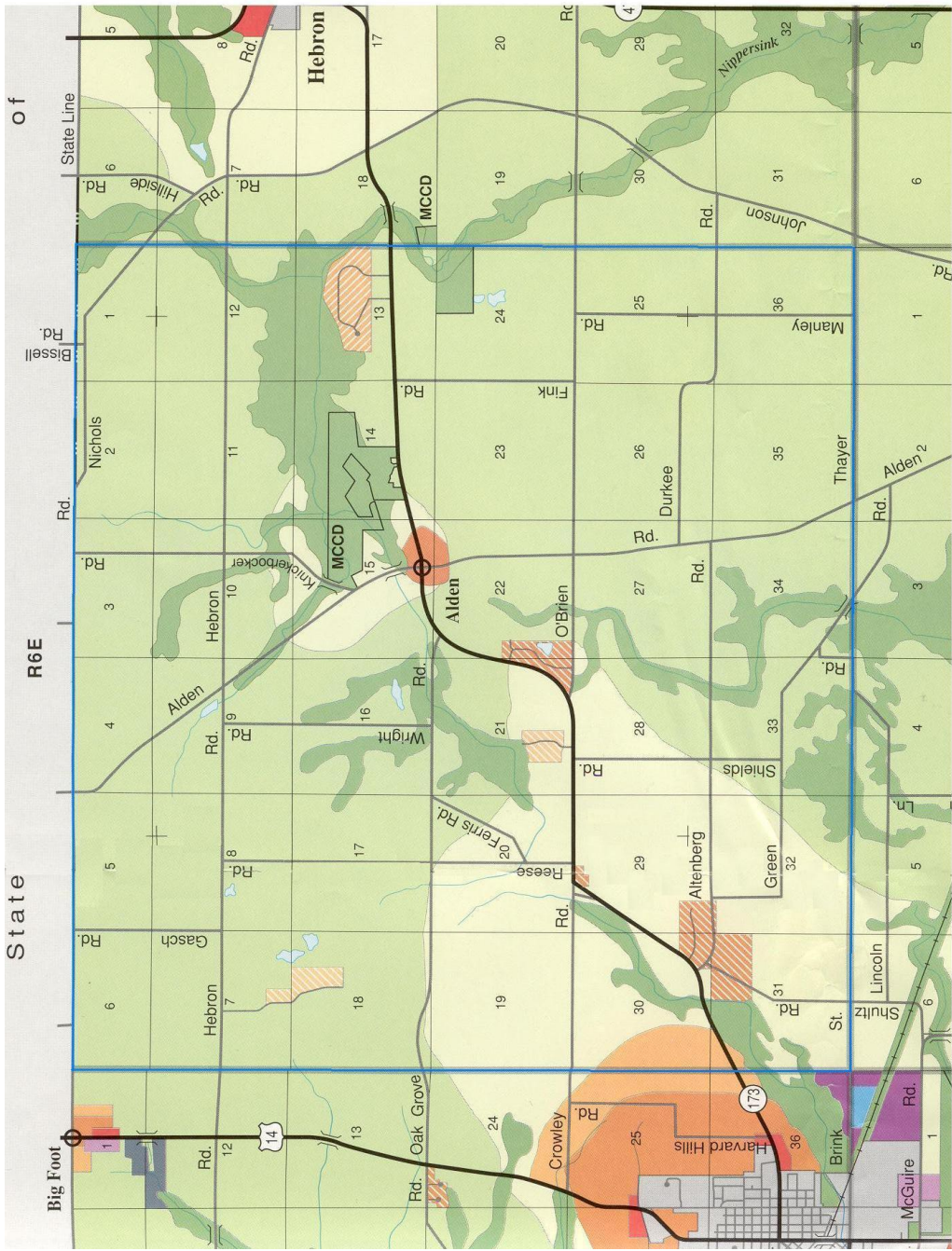
The **McHenry County 2010 Plan** identifies the seven Planned Land Uses in Alden Township, shown below, and defined in the Glossary.

- Agriculture
- Agriculture / Rural
- Environmentally Sensitive Area
- High Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential (Infilling Only)
- Medium Density Residential (Infilling Only)

Infilling refers to the process of building upon existing vacant lots within existing subdivisions in unincorporated areas and the municipalities, rather than creating new developments, a concept endorsed by Alden Township.

**MC HENRY COUNTY,  
ILLINOIS**

Year 2010 Land Use Plan



- LEGEND**
- High Density Residential
  - High Density Residential, Infilling Only
  - Medium Density Residential
  - Medium Density Residential, Infilling Only
  - Low Density Residential
  - Low Density Residential, Infilling Only
  - Commercial
  - Industrial, Non-Manufacturing
  - Industrial, Manufacturing
  - Earth Extraction / Reclamation
  - Environmentally Sensitive Area
  - Agriculture
  - Agriculture / Rural
  - Transportation, Communication, Utilities
  - Institutional
  - Water
  - Incorporated
  - MCCD McHenry County Conservation District
  - IDOC Illinois Department of Conservation

Alden Township 2005 Land Use Plan

## A. Agricultural Land Use

Agriculture is a major factor in Alden Township's economy and its agricultural land is a valuable resource that needs to be protected and incorporated into future growth. Agricultural land and rural landscapes also define the environment and character of the Township. It has been estimated that approximately 13,175 acres of land are still in active agricultural production in 2005. This represents 60% of the total area in the Township. More importantly, Alden Township landowners have dedicated a total of 2,282 acres (17%) of this farmland as "Agricultural Protection" areas, a voluntary designation indicating a long-term commitment by the landowners to continued farming operations.

These same factors make the area desirable for development, especially for rural estates. In some areas, past residential development has broken the continuity of agricultural land uses. Often, landowners moving to rural / agricultural areas are not aware that in the course of normal agricultural operations, the following activities can occur:

- Tillage, planting, fertilizing, and harvesting activities can create noise, odors, and dust, and can occur 24 hours a day, particularly if farmers are trying to complete operations before adverse weather arrives.
- Farmers need to be able to safely move large machinery between parcels, which can result in slow moving traffic on area roads.

Proposed changes in land uses that cause an "entering wedge" of residential land use in an otherwise agricultural area, can set the stage for long-term conflict between landowners, and can also create a "domino effect" resulting in future land use change requests in the future. This is particularly true if the proposed residential use will not be situated on a large enough parcel to allow for adequate buffers / screening between the various land uses.

The American Farmland Trust has determined that for every property tax dollar paid on agricultural land, only 20 cents is consumed for public services. In contrast, for every property tax dollar paid on residential land use, \$1.20 is required to provide public services. If significant additional residential development is allowed in the Township, the costs of services (such as police protection, fire protection, road maintenance, school transportation, etc.) will increase. An increase in development of this type on or near the most productive farmland could also set a precedent which would, in time, diminish the resource value of the Township's agricultural lands.

## B. Residential Land Use

The vast majority of households in the Township are single-family units. The only high-density development (less than one acre/dwelling unit) occurs in the Alden village area. The only multi-family land use is found at Shagbark, a 16-unit condominium development, situated on 35 acres.

Higher density development contiguous to existing developed areas can minimize this conflict, particularly if buffers, greenways, or other permanently protected open space are provided. Such clustered development is also more conveniently located for the provision of services and is, therefore, more cost efficient.

According to the **2010 Plan**, as of 1991, Alden had the following quantity of parcels that were available for development.

<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Parcel Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
29	low-density	(3 acres or more / dwelling unit)
0	medium-density	(1.0 to 2.9 acres / dwelling unit).
23	high-density	(less than 1 acre of land / dwelling unit)
93	undeveloped	5 to 10 acres

Cumulatively, this represented a total of 145 parcels, of varying sizes that, in the opinion of County staff, were available for development in 1991. While it recognized that some of these 145 parcels have in fact been developed since 1991, it is believed that in 2005, a significant number of parcels remain available for development, without having to be rezoned.

## C. Industrial and Commercial Land Use

Alden Township has a small number of commercial land uses, few industrial land uses, and no earth extraction land uses.

## D. Recreational and Conservation Land Use

The McHenry County Conservation District owns approximately 750 acres in Alden Township and has indicated an interest in acquiring more land in the Township. The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) calls for contiguous "greenbelts" along the Nippersink and Kishwaukee waterways. The Township has no public land dedicated to active recreational use. Dedication of land to conservation, greenbelt and outdoor, non-motorized and primarily daytime recreational uses is encouraged, including through Township-owned facilities.

## THE ALDEN TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN

This Land Use Plan is a guide for development and preservation and will be periodically updated. The basic assumption of the Plan is that wise use of the land is in the public interest of Township residents and landowners.

### GOALS

The Land Use Plan goals are the foundation of the Plan from which policy directives are developed. The directives are then used to implement the goals through ordinances, regulations, laws, and education. The goals recognize the need to obtain a balance between accommodating a broad range of human activities and preserving the environment and natural resources. The main objective of the Land Use Plan is to encourage compact and orderly growth in appropriate areas, while at the same time preserving contiguous agricultural areas, environmentally sensitive areas, and large open spaces.

1. **Agricultural uses.** Agriculture has a long history as the dominant land use in the Township, and is expected to continue as such for the foreseeable future. Prime agricultural soils should be preserved for agricultural purposes, or restored to their pre-disturbance native plant community. It is desired to maintain a wide variety of agricultural uses within the Township. Any other land uses proposed for the Township shall not impede or conflict with the continuation of environmentally responsible agricultural practices. Any efforts at implementing farmland preservation through voluntary buy-outs, transfer / purchase of development rights (TDR/PDR), or through appropriate land use development should be strongly encouraged.
2. **Natural resources.** Protect and restore groundwater, wetlands, woodlands, natural areas, fish and wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species, and the water quality of the township's wetlands, ponds, rivers and streams. Prevent dramatic grade changes and draining or excavation of natural springs and potholes. Encourage renewal of oak and hickory woodlands.
3. **Historic and cultural features.** Protect historic, unique and cultural features in the township, including early settlements, cemeteries, farmsteads, buildings, bridges, native woodlands and other remnants of native vegetation. Encourage creative reuse of existing structures.

4. **Economic development.** Allow commercial, light industrial and recreational development within the Township in a way that maintains the rural character of the area, diversifies the property tax base, and does not put a burden on schools, township roads or services.
5. **Transportation systems.** Maintain the smooth flow of traffic on major arterials and township roads, prevent new highways that encourage premature development, and encourage development of alternative forms of transportation such as bicycle trails and equestrian trails.
6. **Drainage systems.** Maintain existing drainage systems and properly manage storm water to avoid damaging, overloading or clogging natural and artificial waterways.
7. **Residential development.** Protect the rural character of the Township and the country crossroad feature of the Village of Alden.
8. **Fiscal responsibility.** Assure that new developments do not place an undue burden on roads, public services, schools, and taxpayers in the Township.
9. **Intergovernmental cooperation.** Pursue intergovernmental coordination and communication with other public and private agencies and organizations involved with planning for the use of land in the Township, including the county, other townships, municipalities, regional planning commission, and the Illinois Department of Transportation.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Alden Township is a unique area in which little urban / suburban development is expected or desired. Development that does occur must conform to the character of the Township, including but not limited to its rural landscape and natural features.

New land uses should enhance or improve on the character of the Township by avoiding impacting environmentally sensitive areas, and preserving contiguous open space for agricultural and conservation uses. Intensive development for any use is discouraged. However, so-called neo-traditional, clustered developments, along with appropriate commercial uses, would not be inconsistent with the goals of this Plan.

Alden Township believes that the goals and objectives of the County Ordinances, as listed below, support and reinforce the efforts of the Township in providing a local voice in the land use process. More importantly, Alden Township believes that the implications of all applicable County, State, and Federal regulations should be considered and evaluated as early in the zoning process as possible.

**McHenry County Zoning Ordinance  
(Amended November 21, 2001)**

**Article One** 102 PURPOSES

*Pursuant to 55 ILCS 515-12001 et. seq., as amended, the McHenry County Zoning Ordinance is adopted. The purposes of this ordinance are listed as follows:*

- 1. To promote the public health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare;*
- 2. To conserve the values of property throughout the County;*
- 3. To lessen or avoid the congestion in the public streets and highways;*
- 4. To lessen or avoid the hazards to persons and damage to property resulting from the accumulation or runoff of storm or flood waters;*
- 5. To preserve and maintain the unique and irreplaceable natural resources within McHenry County;*
- 6. To promote the preservation of the environmental benefits of open space, clean air, groundwater recharge and wildlife preservation;*
- 7. To direct the timely and orderly development of McHenry County;*
- 8. To preserve and maintain the unique and irreplaceable historic resources of McHenry County; and*
- 9. To implement the policies and proposals of the McHenry County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.*

**McHenry County Stormwater Management Ordinance  
(Adopted January 20, 2004)**

*Article One B. PURPOSE*

*The purpose of this Ordinance is to establish reasonable rules and regulations for development of watershed integrity in order to:*

- 1. Protect and preserve the quality and environmental values of land and water resources in McHenry County;*
- 2. Encourage development in a manner that promotes the orderly, sustainable and cost-effective utilization of land and water resources;*
- 3. Assure that development does not increase flood and drainage hazards, create unstable conditions susceptible to erosion or reduce water quality at or downstream of the site;*
- 4. Minimize the need for additional expenditure of public funds for flood control projects, repairs to flood damaged public facilities and utilities, and flood related emergency operations;*
- 5. Prevent additional disruption of governmental services and the economy due to flooding and drainage problems;*
- 6. Maintain eligibility for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) by equaling or exceeding Federal Floodplain development regulations (NFIP codified as 44 CFR 59- 79, as amended) thereby making federally subsidized flood insurance available to residences in participating communities;*
- 7. Protect the hydrologic, hydraulic, water quality and other beneficial functions of streams, lakes, Wetlands, Floodplains and flood prone areas;*
- 8. Meet the requirements of The Rivers, Lakes and Streams Act, 615 ILCS 5/18g (1994 State Bar Edition) effective November 18, 1987;*
- 9. Prevent additional harm due to periodic flooding including loss of life and property and threats and inconveniences to public health, safety and welfare; and,*
- 10. Protect buildings and improvements to buildings from flood damage.*

One way that the implementation of the preceding Ordinances can and should protect environmental quality is by strictly adhering to their requirements to avoid impacts to environmentally sensitive areas, providing protective buffers, and protecting them by placing them into common open space or under the protection of a perpetual conservation easement. The provision of protective buffers and conservation easements is also a typical requirement of any project requiring regulatory approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.



The ATLUP should be used to guide requests for zoning changes, and should be used as a whole; no one part is meant to be used alone. The ATLUP provides for the orderly development of commercial, light industrial, and residential land uses while protecting the resources of Alden Township.

Without the ATLUP, unrestrained private development could result in a haphazard patchwork of incompatible uses and inappropriate development. Development consistent with the ATLUP will be in harmony with the character of Alden Township and enhance the beneficial aspects of its uniqueness.

**While the McHenry County Zoning Ordinance (2000) must be referenced to determine allowable uses and rezoning requirements for property in Alden Township, the ability to comply with all of the County zoning requirements in that document does not guarantee that the proposed zoning action will be deemed compatible with the Alden Township Land Use Plan.**

In its review process, Alden Township refers to, including (but not limited to) the following documents:

- McHenry County Zoning Ordinance (2000)
- McHenry County Stormwater Ordinance (2004)
- McHenry County 2010 Land Use Plan (1993)
- Natural Resource Inventory reports from the McHenry County Soil & Water Conservation District
- The McHenry County Conservation District Natural Areas Inventory
- The McHenry County Advanced Identification (ADID) Wetland Maps
- Technical information from regulatory / natural resource agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.
- Any relevant, verifiable information generated / submitted by potential zoning change petitioner, or any Township resident who wishes to provide input on a proposed zoning change.

Alden Township will attempt to provide internet links to available planning documents and maps on its website at [www.aldenplan.org](http://www.aldenplan.org).

## SPECIFIC ALDEN TOWNSHIP LAND USE DIRECTIVES

### A. General Planning Directives

Any Land Use Change proposed for Alden Township **shall not:**

- impair or conflict with existing agricultural uses
- create entering wedges of conflicting land uses
- impact or fragment environmentally sensitive areas
- impact archaeologically significant areas
- cause a nuisance to existing local land use practices in the Township, whether by noise, dust, odor, excessive lighting, drainage impacts, a potential for surface or groundwater pollution, or other environmental degradation.

Any Land Use Change proposed for Alden Township **shall:**

- minimize development in prime farmland soils
- avoid impacts to agricultural preservation areas
- avoid impacting existing agricultural drainage improvements
- avoid structural development in floodplain areas
- avoid structural development in hydric soil areas
- minimize / phase mass grading of soils, particularly in sloped areas
- minimize visual impacts to the rural viewsheds of Alden Township
- utilize recommendations provided by the McHenry County Soil & Water Conservation District in any Natural Resource Inventory Report prepared for the subject property.
- adhere to the maximum extent possible with any watershed protection recommendations in Nippersink Creek or Kishwaukee River Watershed Plans.
- avoid development proposals that will result in impacts to stream corridors, wetlands, ponds, oak/hickory woodlands, or prairie remnants that do not result in a demonstrable environmental enhancement of the resource(s).
- provide an ecologically appropriate buffer between any portions of a given parcel to be developed and any existing streams, wetlands and ponds, and provide long-term protection and restoration / enhancement opportunities for existing natural areas
- incorporate any and all "Best Management Practices" related to storm water management, surface and groundwater protection, soil erosion and sediment control, and non-point pollution control.
- minimize the use of exterior lighting to preserve the dark night skies.

## **B. Historic Preservation**

### **The Alden Township Land Use Plan promotes and encourages:**

1. the preservation of historic buildings, sites and vistas.
2. the creative reuse of existing structures while preserving their historic integrity.
3. increasing public knowledge of the significance of historic preservation and its impact on the quality of life in the township.
4. the maintenance and rehabilitation projects of historic areas and buildings.

## **C. Open Space, Environmental and Natural Resource Land Use**

### **The Alden Township Land Use Plan promotes and encourages:**

1. that any area identified on the **2010 Land Use Plan Map** as an environmentally sensitive area, or on the McHenry County ADID map, be protected by creation of a permanent conservation easement held by a not-for profit land trust or unit of government. Deed restrictions or covenants are not considered an acceptable alternative unless a homeowner's association is formed and maintained to enforce the deed restrictions in perpetuity, and to fund any legal action required to enforce the deed restrictions.
2. that any other natural areas be protected and managed.
3. the continued acquisition, development, and management of areas for passive and active recreation throughout the Township.
4. that a system of environmental corridors should be established and managed to connect sensitive environmental areas and to allow for the movement of wildlife populations.
5. the creation and management of open space areas within the design of any type of development.
6. that greenway areas should be established as permanent buffers between developments. Passive open space, environmentally sensitive areas, and agriculture are the preferred land uses within the greenway areas.
7. that investigation of the quantity and quality of groundwater resources in the Township be conducted. Such investigations should include an examination of the adequacy of the **2010 Plan**, subsequent County Land Use Plans, and County ordinances for the protection of groundwater.
8. the provision of functional passive open space within golf courses and parks to protect existing / restored natural areas, and to minimize water quality impacts.

### **C. Agriculture Land Use**

#### **The Alden Township Land Use Plan promotes and encourages that:**

1. existing farm operations should be protected from conflicts with proposed non-farm land use activities in areas designated as "Agriculture" in the **2010 Plan**.
2. efforts to create residential parcels within agriculture areas should only be on large enough parcels to avoid conflict with existing local agricultural uses to the greatest extent possible, and to ensure compatibility with surrounding area.
3. prime farmland soils beyond potential municipal service areas is to be maintained as farmland.
4. the expansion of agricultural production should be through sustainable methods, and uncropped areas within be managed to increase plant and animal species diversity, and wildlife habitat.

### **D. Residential Land Use & Agriculture/ Rural Land Use**

#### **The Alden Township Land Use Plan promotes and encourages that:**

1. timely development of Alden Township occur by the infilling of existing vacant buildable platted lots within existing subdivisions, or on parcels already approved / eligible for single family residences under current County zoning requirements.
2. any residential development proposed within the existing village area of Alden (loosely defined as a 1/4 mile radius extending outward from the intersection of State Rite 173 and Alden Road) be compatible with, and complement, the rural crossroads architectural and visual character of Alden.
3. any low-, medium-, or high density subdivisions proposed for areas outside of the existing village area of Alden (loosely defined as a 1/4 mile radius extending outward from the intersection of State Rite 173 and Alden Road) shall be developed in a manner that promotes clustering of residential units, common greenways and open space between residential clusters, and Best Management Practices to reduce and mitigate environmental impacts. These types of developments are often referred to as "Conservation Design", "Neo-Traditional", or "Planned Unit Developments".

4. residential zoning changes through the current McHenry County “A-2” zoning process in the Township be avoided, for the following reasons:
  - the only way for a proposed A-2 parcel to achieve a low enough Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) score to be eligible for A-2 zoning is for it to be unsuitable for, or contain barriers for agricultural purposes. This process does not recognize that these unsuitable / barrier areas often contain stream corridors, wetlands, woodlands, or other natural areas of high or restorable environmental quality, and unless properly protected, can result in their fragmentation and degradation.
  - the A-2 zoning category can create “opening wedges” of incompatible zoning in agricultural / rural areas.
5. A-2 zoning requests within Alden Township:
  - should only be approved sparingly within the Township.
  - should be allowed as a way for existing landowners whose legally constructed residence was destroyed by fire or natural causes, and need to rezone the parcel to re-build because it is now non-conforming (< 40 acres).
  - should only be allowed where the barriers / unsuitable areas for agriculture on the subject parcel are comprised of highly disturbed areas (ex. dominated by weedy / non-native trees), with little potential of environmental quality / restoration.
  - where they will not bisect or disturb stream corridors, wetlands, or remnant native plant communities that could be restored to a higher environmental quality.
  - should only be approved if environmentally sensitive areas are identified, avoided, and protected by permanent conservation easements
  - should only be allowed to create a maximum of two (2) A-2 parcels from any given parcel of land, and,
  - should not be used as a way of subdividing land into more than two (2) parcels without going through the more stringent County subdivision zoning process, and

If allowed in Alden Township, A-2 parcels must be carefully configured to remain compatible with the surrounding area, and to protect and enhance the natural resources of the surrounding area.

6. "Feathering," and "Compact Development" as described in the **2010 Plan**, is not planned for Alden Township, as these concepts promote and perpetuate urban sprawl.
7. any proposed subdivision create a homeowners association as a means of generating perpetual funding for the management of open spaces areas and other infrastructure within their development.
8. the development of a range of high-quality, locally appropriate housing is encouraged, provided that adequate acreage, open space, and other quality of life conditions are met to minimize the impact on the unique features of Alden Township.
9. residential developments should have safe and convenient access by foot or bicycle to shopping and commercial facilities.
10. municipalities are discouraged from annexing any portion of Alden Township into their boundaries. Intergovernmental discussions and agreements are encouraged.

#### **E. Industrial and Commercial Land Use**

##### **The Alden Township Land Use Plan promotes and encourages that:**

1. heavy industry, landfills, and mineral extraction uses, or any other land uses that would create a nuisance to local existing land uses, are inappropriate in Alden Township, unless the proposed use strictly conforms to this Plan, including the General Planning Directives.
2. clustering of light industrial and commercial activities in or adjacent to developed areas.
3. light industrial and commercial activities should be accessible to transportation facilities (rail, road or sidewalk, depending on type and needs of activity).
4. proposed industrial or commercial land uses shall provide adequate setbacks, buffers, and/or screening to shield adjoining land uses from noise, light, and visual impacts.

#### **F. Transportation**

##### **The Alden Township Land Use Plan promotes and encourages that:**

1. transportation planning should minimize the impact of transportation improvements on the character of the Township.
2. a bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian trail system is encouraged in conjunction with new transportation facilities and existing utility and railroad right-of-ways in accordance with the Countywide Trail Plan and to facilitate a trail linkup between Harvard and Hebron.

# **APPENDIX**

## CHECKLIST ANALYSIS FOR PROPOSED LAND USE CHANGES

The following example includes, but is not limited to, a point-by-point analysis that should be used to ensure a consistent evaluation of land use changes and an ongoing review of the basic criteria in the Plan.

	YES	NO
Does the land use change fulfill a significant need in the Township?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change be beneficial to the general welfare, safety, and health of the residents of the immediate area and the general population of the Township?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change constitute an "entering wedge" of incompatible use and be a detriment to adjacent property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change create an isolation of the specific land use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change adversely influence living conditions due to a type of pollution?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change adversely influence adjacent property values?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change contribute to unsafe traffic patterns or undue congestion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change alter the population density pattern and increase the load on public facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change adversely affect a valuable natural resource of the Township?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change conflict with existing commitments or planned public improvements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change create additional environmental problems due to impacting soils, vegetation, slope, or floodplain?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use change result in private investment that would be beneficial to the redevelopment of a deteriorated area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the land use change located where the needed services and commercial establishments are available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the subject property physically suitable for the purpose of the land use change?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the relief of a hardship for an individual property owner create a detriment to public welfare?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the land use diminish the rural and wooded vistas in the Township?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Agriculture** - is a land use category designated in the Land Use Plan as determined by LESA quarter section analysis and characterized by a large contiguous area of farmland composed of predominantly prime farmland soil types. It is recognized that within this designation, individual sites may contain impediments to farming such as slope, poor soils, or weedy tree cover on a majority of the site that may warrant conversion to rural - residential uses if no other adverse environmental impacts result.

**Agricultural Protection Areas** - as allowed by Chapter 505 ILCS 5/1 et. seq. and consisting of a minimum of 350 acres of farmland which are contiguous and as compact as possible. Landowners petition for the designation which protects the area initially for 10 years and is reviewed every 8 years after that.

**Agricultural\Rural** - is a land use category identified in the Land Use Plan which includes agricultural land, agricultural related activities, rural residences (individual parcels) and privately owned natural areas that do not meet the criteria of environmental corridors.

**Centralized Node Concept** - a classification of growth areas where adjacent growth should occur based upon various planning principals which identify three basic classifications: Primary Centers, Secondary Nodes, and Unique Areas.

**Cluster\Clustering** - grouping of buildings and uses to allow more efficient provision of services and the preservation of environmentally sensitive, open spaces and other areas.

**Compact Development** - generally contiguous development radiating out from a node, including feathered residential development beyond municipal boundaries. This concept is not endorsed by Alden Township as it promotes urban sprawl.

**Compatibility Overlay Process** - a process which attempts to minimize future conflicts in land use through examination of planning factors such as current municipal plans, zoning and existing land use in plan formation. The process utilizes data recorded on maps that are then physically overlaid to compile data for specific areas.

**Conservation Design** - see definitions for cluster, NeoTraditional, and Planned Unit Development.

**Conservation Easement** – a legal agreement between a landowner and conservation organization or government agency that permanently limits the type of land use that can occur within a specific area, in order to protect its conservation, agricultural, historic, environmental, or scenic values. A conservation easement does not allow anyone but the landowner to utilize the conservation easement area (no public access allowed / required unless granted by the landowner), and can be specifically negotiated to allow the landowner to continue to use the area for activities that would not impact the values being protected. Conservation Easements or Deed Restrictions are typically required by existing government regulations dealing with land development, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the McHenry County Stormwater Ordinance.

**Economically Viable Farmland** - lands regardless of soil quality which have the location, productive capacity and which contribute to the local economy of the County .

**Environmental Corridors** - linear areas in the landscape that contain concentrations of natural resources, cultural features, and open space, and allow for movement of wildlife populations.

**Environmentally Sensitive Areas** - a land use category identified in the Alden Township Land Use Plan including, but not necessarily limited, to:

- groundwater recharge areas
- flood hazard areas
- wetlands
- natural areas
- stream corridors
- mature oak / hickory woodlands
- outstanding geologic features
- habitat for Threatened & Endangered species
- soils rated severe or very severe for septic installation
- McHenry County Conservation District existing and priority acquisition sites.

**Feathering** - a fundamental planning principal built into the McHenry County 2010 Plan which encourages the location of more intense land uses in close proximity to centers and nodes with generally decreasing densities radiating outward from the center or node. This concept is not endorsed by Alden Township as it promotes urban sprawl.

**Greenway Areas** - containing minimal development designed to buffer and delineate municipalities or developments within the County. Open space, agriculture, and environmentally sensitive areas are preferred land uses in greenway areas.

**High Density Residential Development** - less than one acre of land area per dwelling unit.

**Infilling** - the process of building upon existing vacant lots within existing subdivisions in unincorporated areas and the municipalities.

**Land Use Plan** - a generalized policy document and plan map which identify goals and objectives with regard to future growth, development and land use.

**LESA** - an acronym for the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Quarter Section analysis which is used to determine areas to be protected from non-farm uses. The LESA quarter section analysis was the primary consideration in determining agricultural areas on the land use map and is used in determining agriculturally significant areas.

**Lots** - a lot of record that is part of a subdivision, the plat of which has been duly authorized and recorded in the office of the recorder of deeds of McHenry County, Illinois and are in conformance with the McHenry County Subdivision Ordinance and/or the State Plat Act.

**Low Density Residential Development** - 3 or more acres of land area per dwelling unit.

**Medium Density Residential Development** - 1.0 to 2.9 acres of land area per dwelling unit.

**Neighborhood Conservation Districts** - created by 70 ILCS 410/1. et. seq. and used to preserve existing local character and ensure new developments are compatible with the established character of an area.

**NeoTraditional Planning** - an alternative to conventional patterns of suburban development, which utilizes the principals of mixed uses, reduced street widths and increased densities in the design of new developments. This promotes compact development, efficient provision of infrastructure and preservation of open space.

**NIPC** - an acronym for the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.

**Non-Prime Soils** - land which contains soils other than those considered prime by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**Open Space** - land or water in either public or private ownership that is free from buildings and structures where the landowner has typically made some type of commitment to maintain this open condition. Open spaces include but are not necessarily limited to municipal parks, Conservation District sites, lakes & waterways, hunt clubs, golf courses, private parks, etc.

**Parcels** - an area of land described by measures (metes) and direction (bounds) which is not part of a recorded subdivision and which may make reference to the original government survey and/or may be exempted from platting requirements via the State Plats Act.

**Planned Unit Development (PUD)**– a form of development typically characterized by a mix of building types and land uses, unified site design, clustering of buildings and preservation of natural features and open space.

**Prime Farmland** - The United States Department of Agriculture - Soil Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) describes Prime Farmland as "land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is also available for these uses (the land could be cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land or other land, but not urban built-up land or water). It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically, sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to acceptable farming methods. In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. They are permeable to water and air. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding."

Currently, the USDA-SCS identifies Prime Farmland in Illinois with the following criteria:

- A. The soils have sufficient available water capacity within the depth of 40 inches, or in the root zone if it is less than 40 inches deep, (a minimum of 4 inches of available water in the upper 40 inches), to produce the commonly grown crops 7 or more years out of 10.
- B. The soils have a mean annual soil temperature at a depth of 20 inches higher than 32 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition, the mean summer temperature at 20 inches is higher than 59 degrees.
- C. The soils have a pH between 4.5 and 8.4 in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches or in the root zone if the root zone is less than 40 inches deep.
- D. The soils have no water table or a water table that is maintained at a sufficient depth to allow crops common to the area be grown.
- E. The soils have in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches or in the root zone if the root zone is less than 40 inches deep, an exchangeable sodium percentage of less than 15.
- F. The soils flood less often than once in two years during the growing season.
- G. The soils have a product K (erodibility factor) X percent slope of less than 2.0.
- H. The soils have a permeability rate of at least 0.06 inches per hour in the upper 20 inches.
- I. Less than ten percent of the surface layer in these soils consists of rock fragments coarser than three inches.

**Primary Centers** - growth areas identified by the centralized node concept and having diverse land uses, dense residential population, significant influence on surrounding growth, access to multiple transportation modes, complete municipal services and utilities, diverse employment opportunities and an established commercial district.

**Primary Rural Centers** - a sub-category of the primary center classification that may offer fewer services and a less diverse employment base.

**Primary Urban Centers** - a sub-category of the primary center classification having greater population densities, spillovers on outlying areas, larger service areas and more employment opportunities than Primary Rural Centers.

**Rural Character** - those unique attributes found in the County including historic, environmental and aesthetic characteristics and containing features such as agriculture, open spaces and natural areas usually associated with the country as opposed to the city.

**Rural Residences** - residences located on individual parcels but not within subdivisions. Such development generally occurs under the requirements of the "A-1" or "A-2" zoning districts.

**Secondary Nodes** - identified growth areas of the County composed primarily of residential land use centered around a municipality but with limited services and utilities and few or non-diverse employment opportunities. Such areas may be reclassified with significant improvements to municipal services, infrastructure, transportation and employment opportunities.

**Sustainable Agriculture** - an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term:

- satisfy human food and fiber needs
- enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends
- make the most efficient use of non-renewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls
- sustain the economic viability of farm operations
- enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

**TDR\PDR** - acronyms for transfer of development rights and purchase of development rights. Both techniques serve to separate development rights from the land in an area targeted for limited development and permits them to be sold for use in an area where development is desirable.

**Unique Areas** - an identified area per the centralized node concept, describing existing areas of the County which are residential in nature, have generally poor access, may be a rural crossroads or an area with a specific homogeneous character, have few or no employment opportunities and are unique by site or situation.

**Urban Sprawl** - a land use pattern characterized by low density and/or uneven physical development occurring at the fringe of the urbanized area, as well as disinvestments and abandonment of older urbanized areas.

## RESOURCE MAPPING

To help those interested in the resources of Alden Township, the following maps have been prepared through the courtesy of the McHenry County Soil and Water Conservation District.

These maps, and other similar resources, should be reviewed by anyone looking to purchase or develop property in Alden Township. **However, these maps should not be used as the final determination on the land development concerns on any given parcel of land.** Other investigations by soil scientists, professional engineers, surveyors, wetland scientists, attorneys, or other professionals may be needed to properly identify the existing characteristics of the parcel, as well as its potential uses.

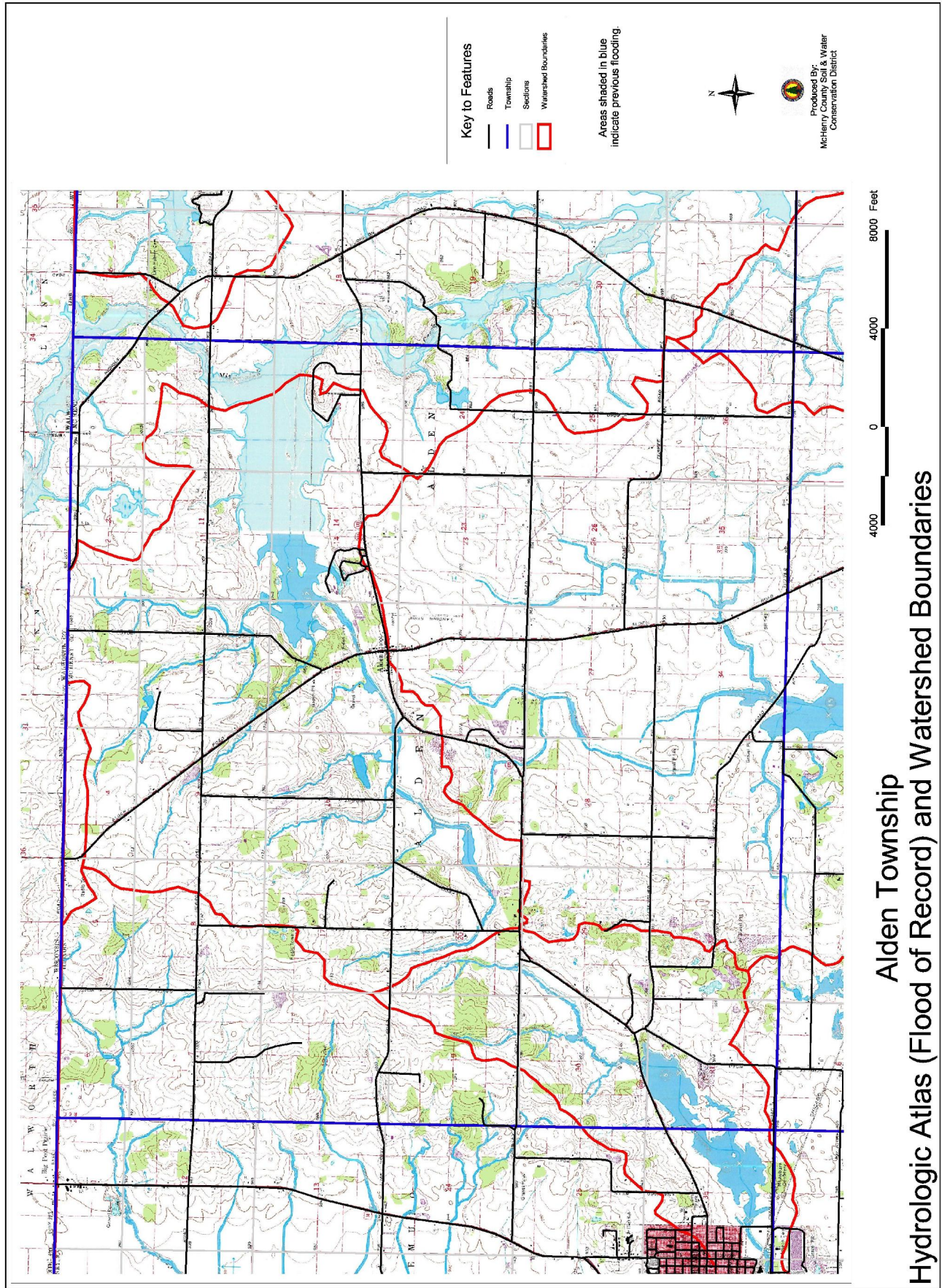
Prospective landowners should exhaustively investigate all of the potential issues of a given parcel of land **prior to purchasing it.** Existing landowners seeking a zoning change to develop their property should also investigate these issues as early in their planning process as possible.

These issues can include, but are not limited to:

- The existing zoning of the subject parcel
- The zoning and existing land uses on adjoining or nearby parcels
- The septic system suitability of the subject parcel
- The potential presence of wetlands subject to the jurisdictional authority of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and/or McHenry County, and their regulatory implications
- The presence of depressional floodprone areas, regulatory flood plain and floodway areas subject to the jurisdictional authority of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources – Office of Water Resources and/or McHenry County, and their regulatory implications
- The requirement for permanently protected buffer areas to be established along the edge of wetlands and stream channels.

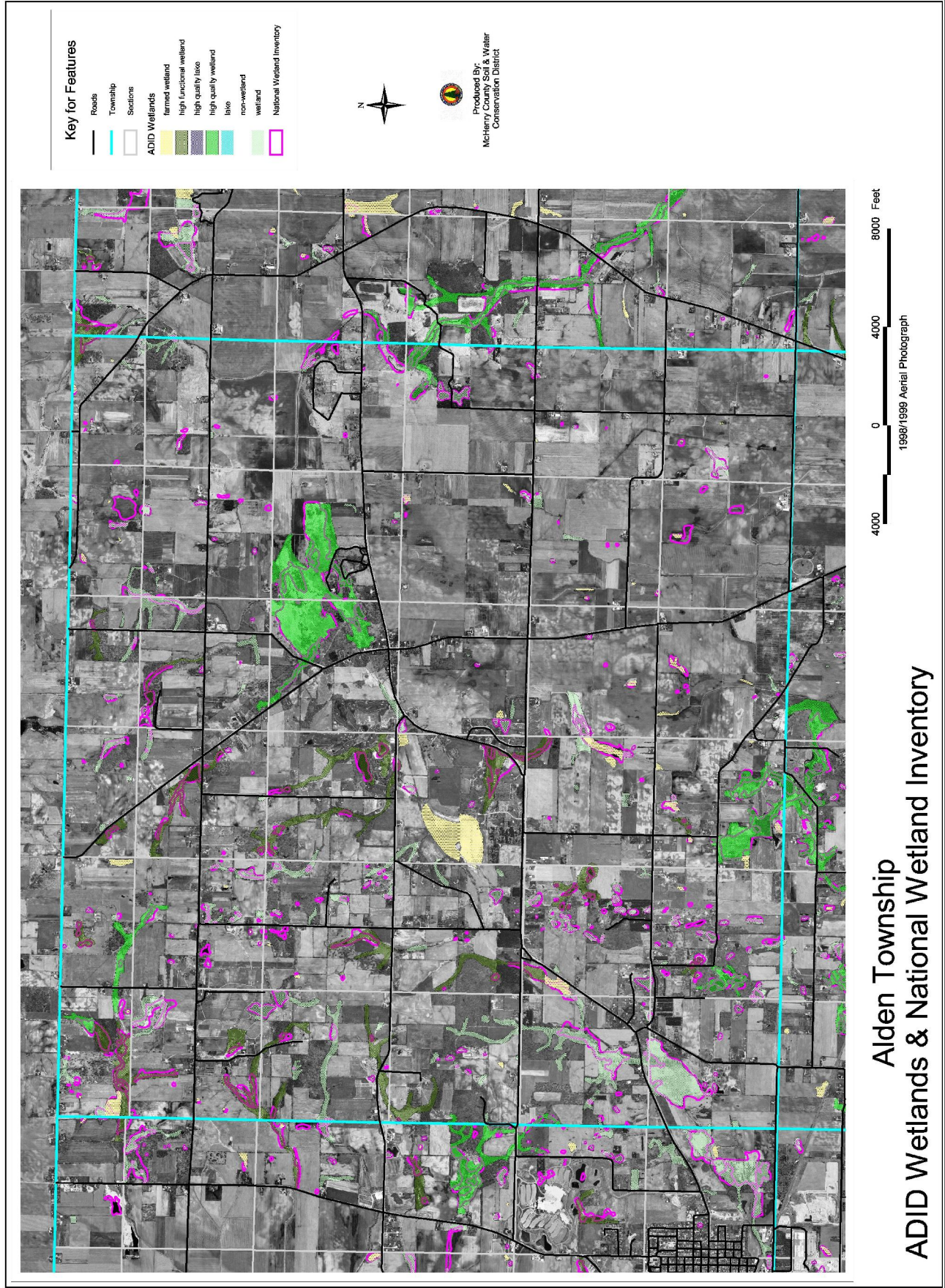
These, and other resources maps, will be made available on the Alden Township Planning Commission website at: [www.aldenplan.org](http://www.aldenplan.org).

The McHenry County Soil & Water Conservation District can also create these types of maps for specific parcels or areas. Information on this service, and other land planning information, can be obtained at [www.mchenryswcd.org](http://www.mchenryswcd.org).

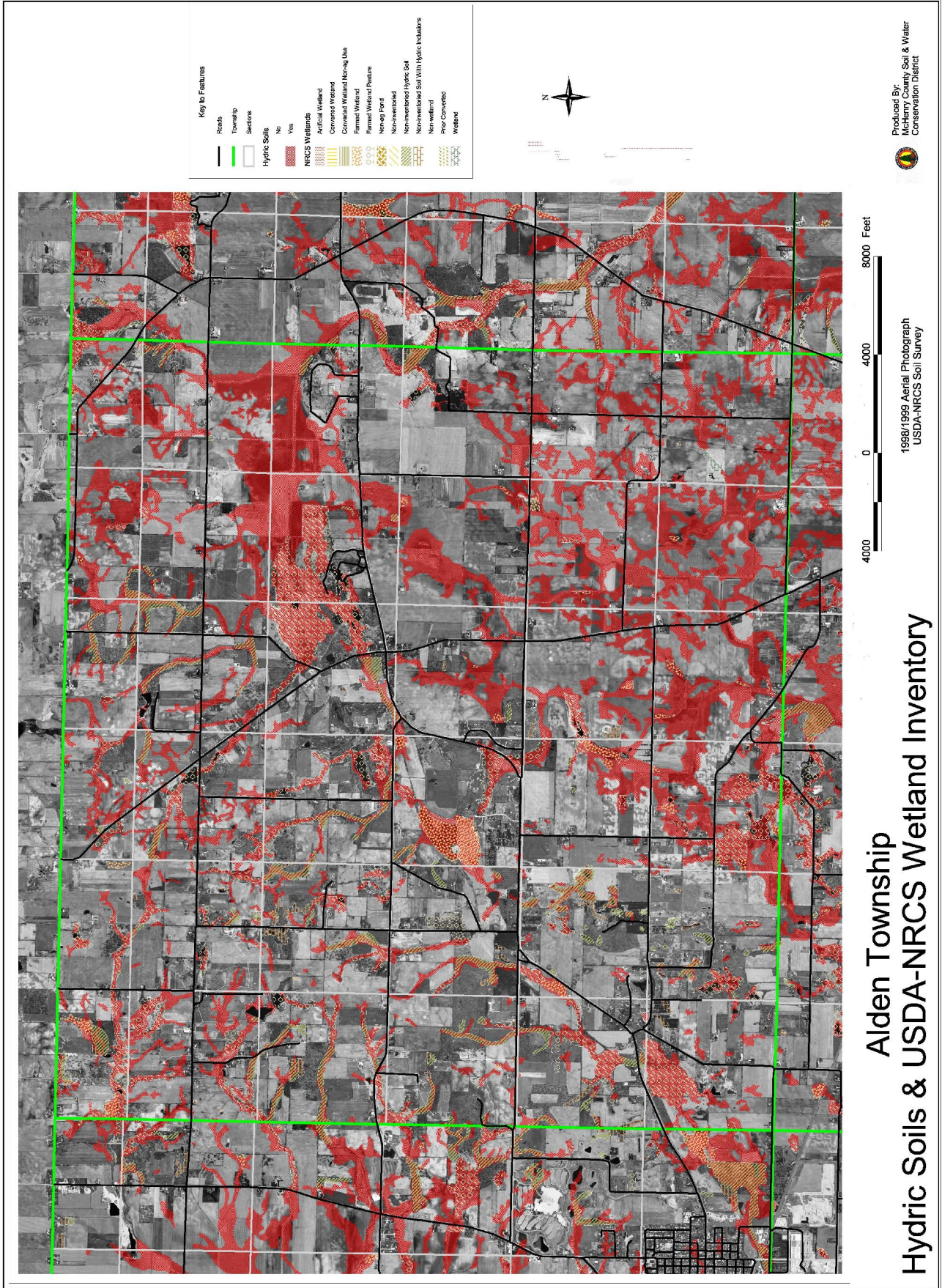


Alden Township 2000 Land Use Plan

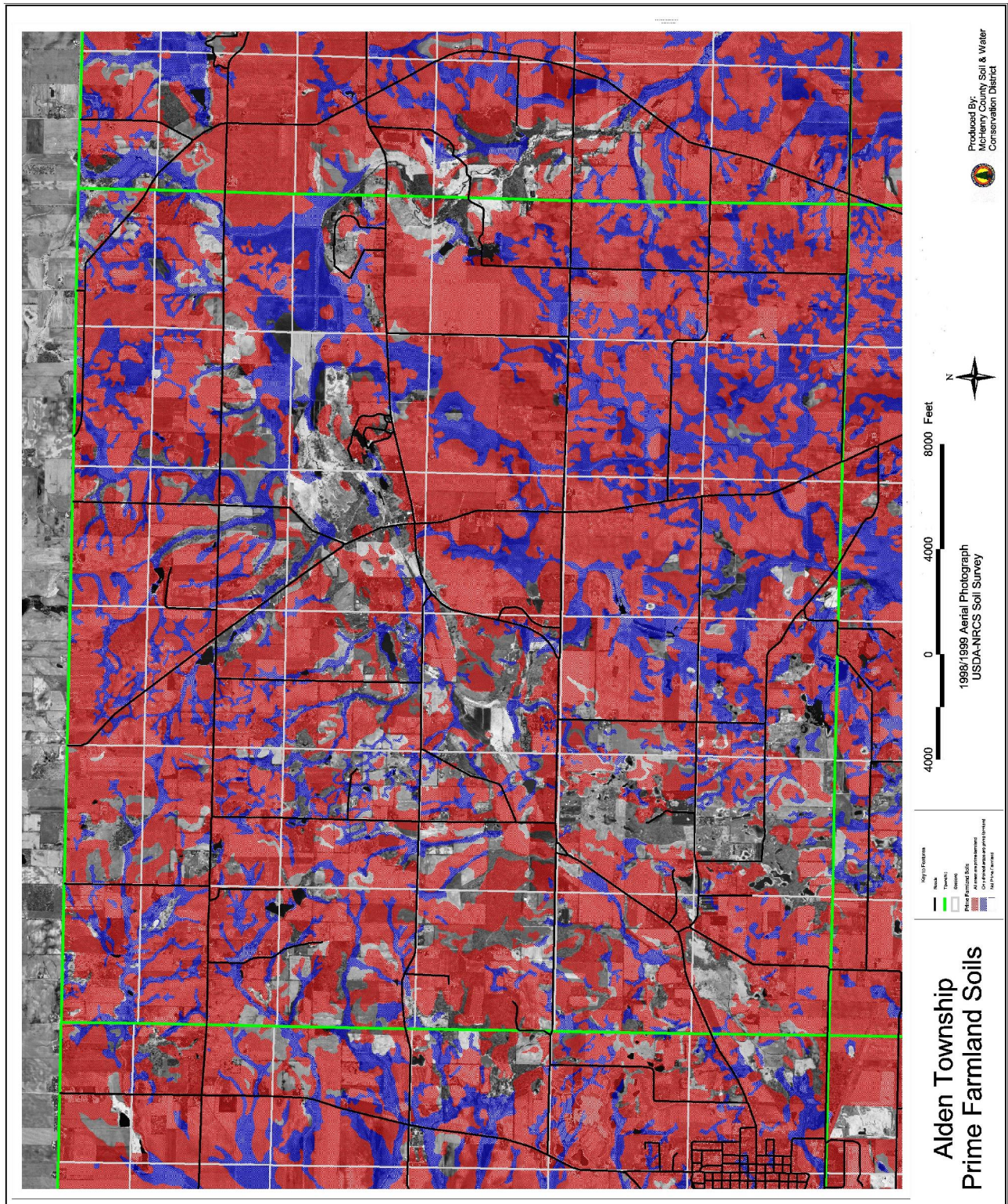
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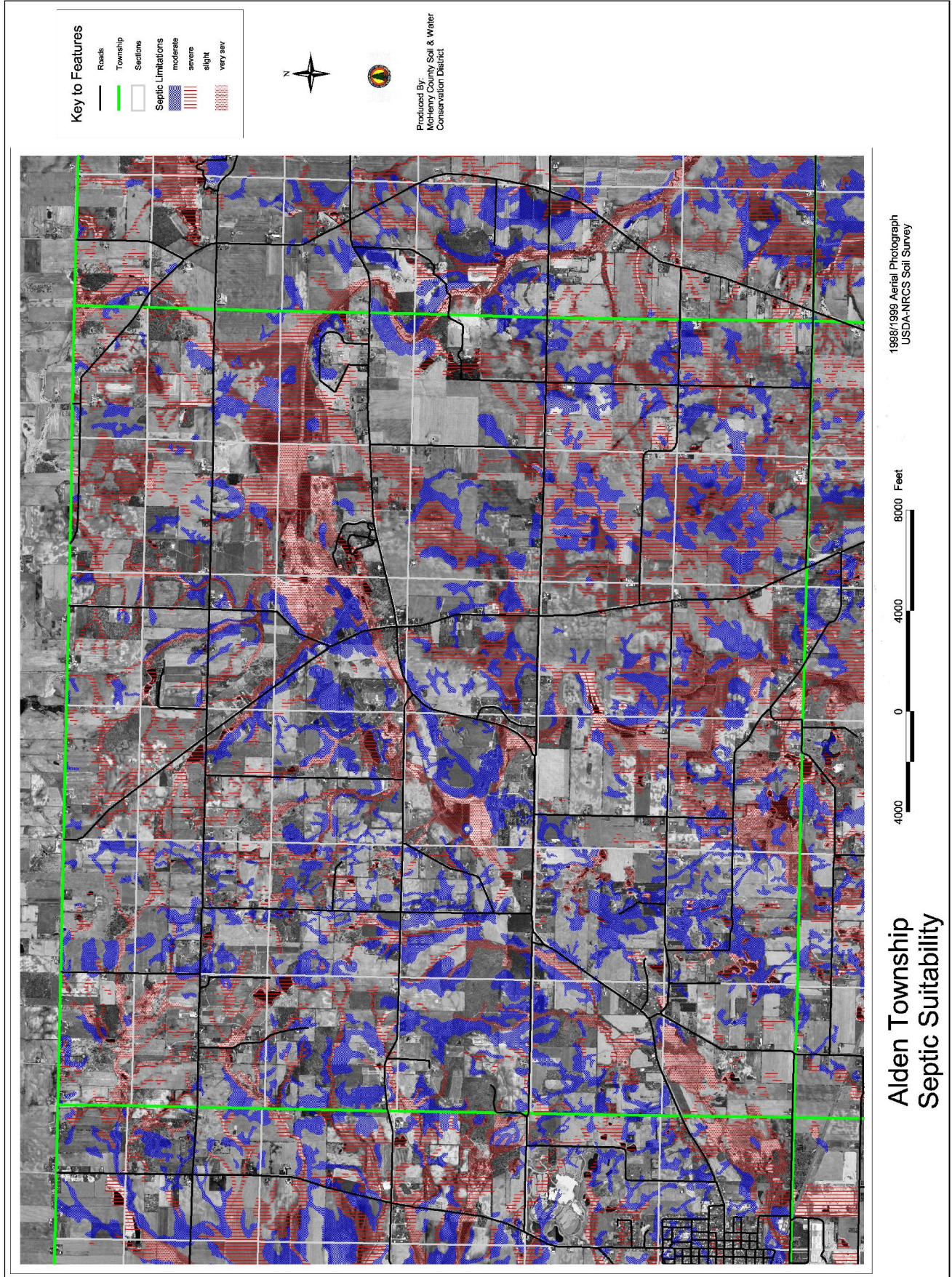


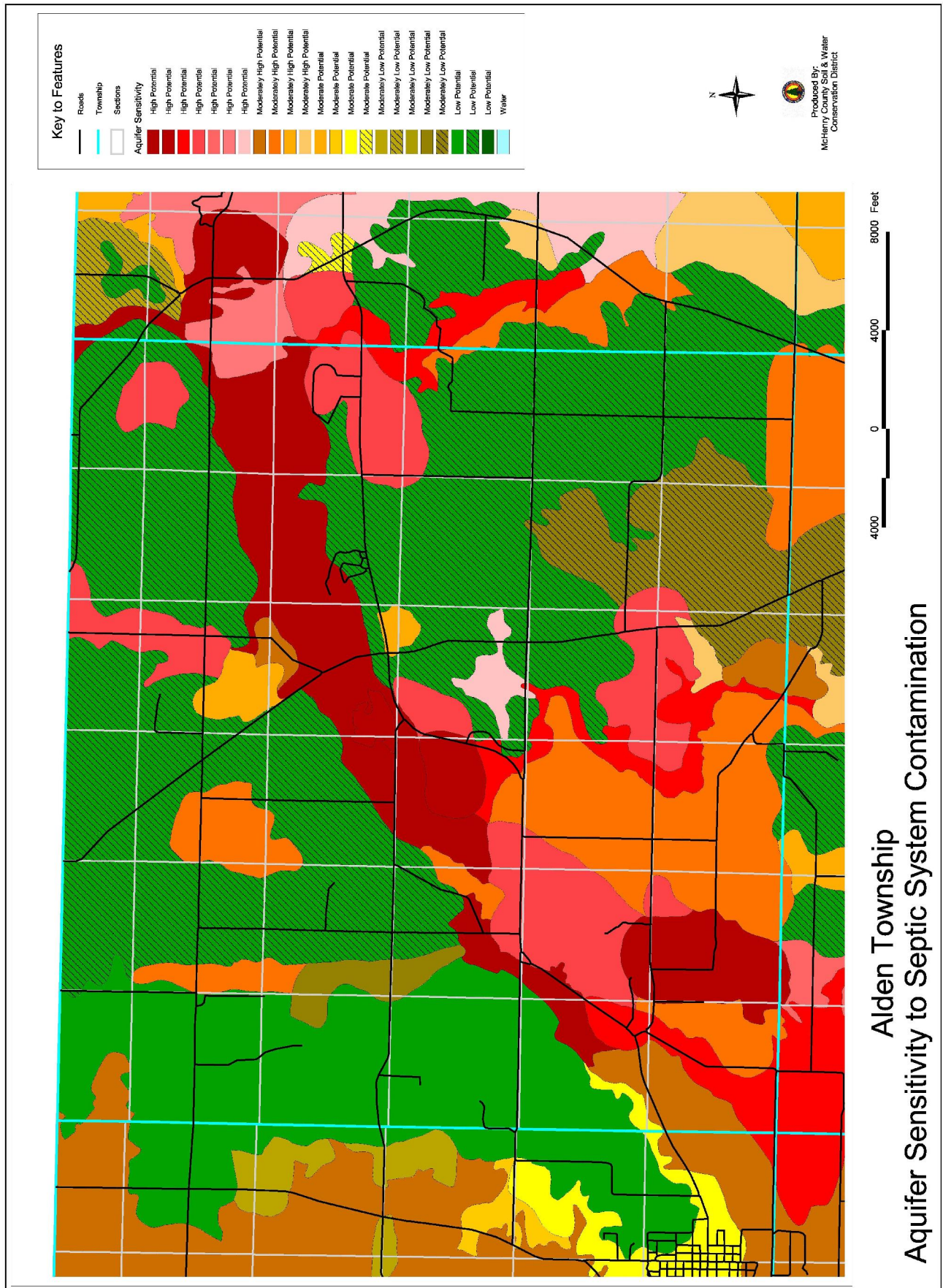


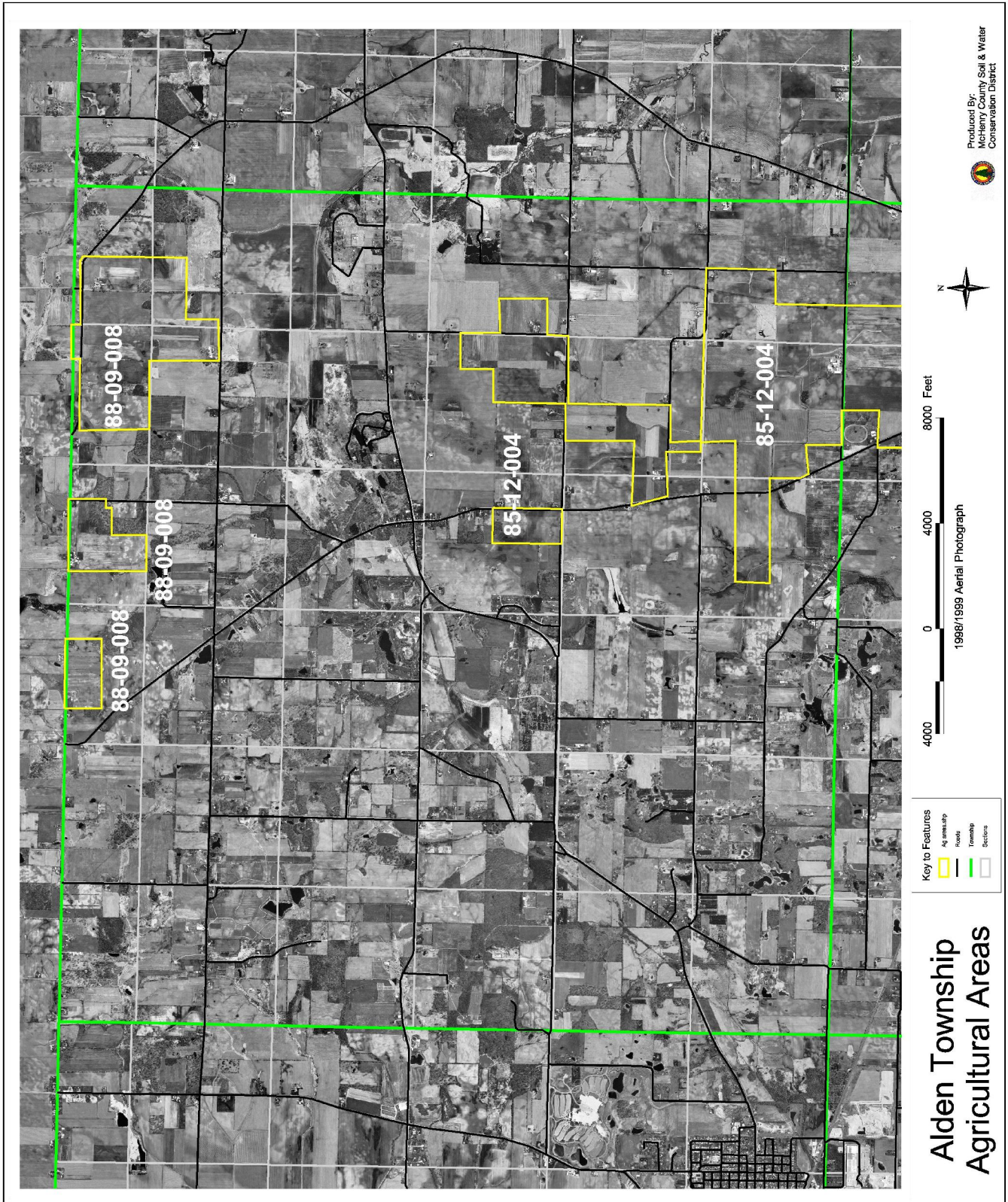


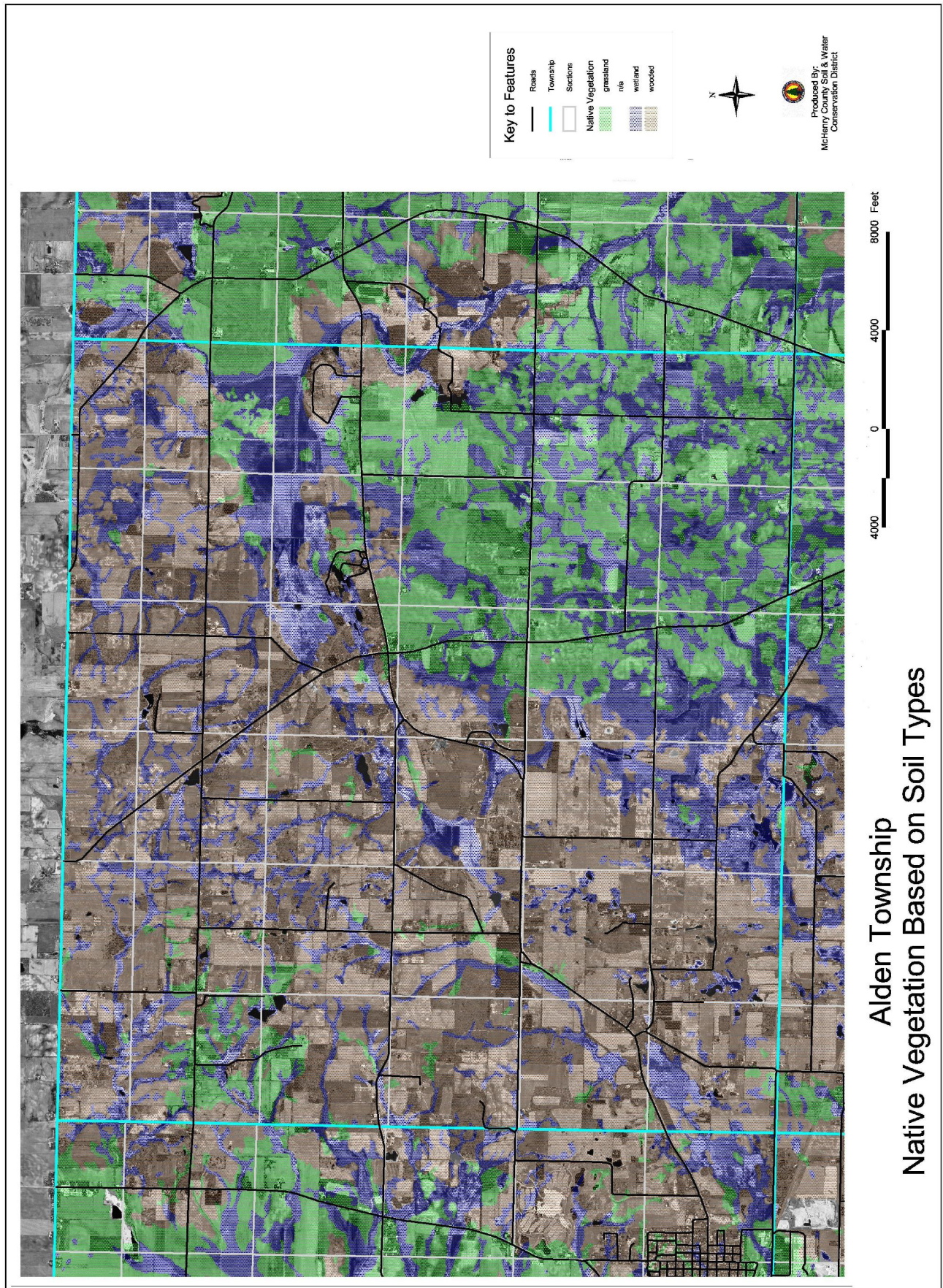
**Alden Township  
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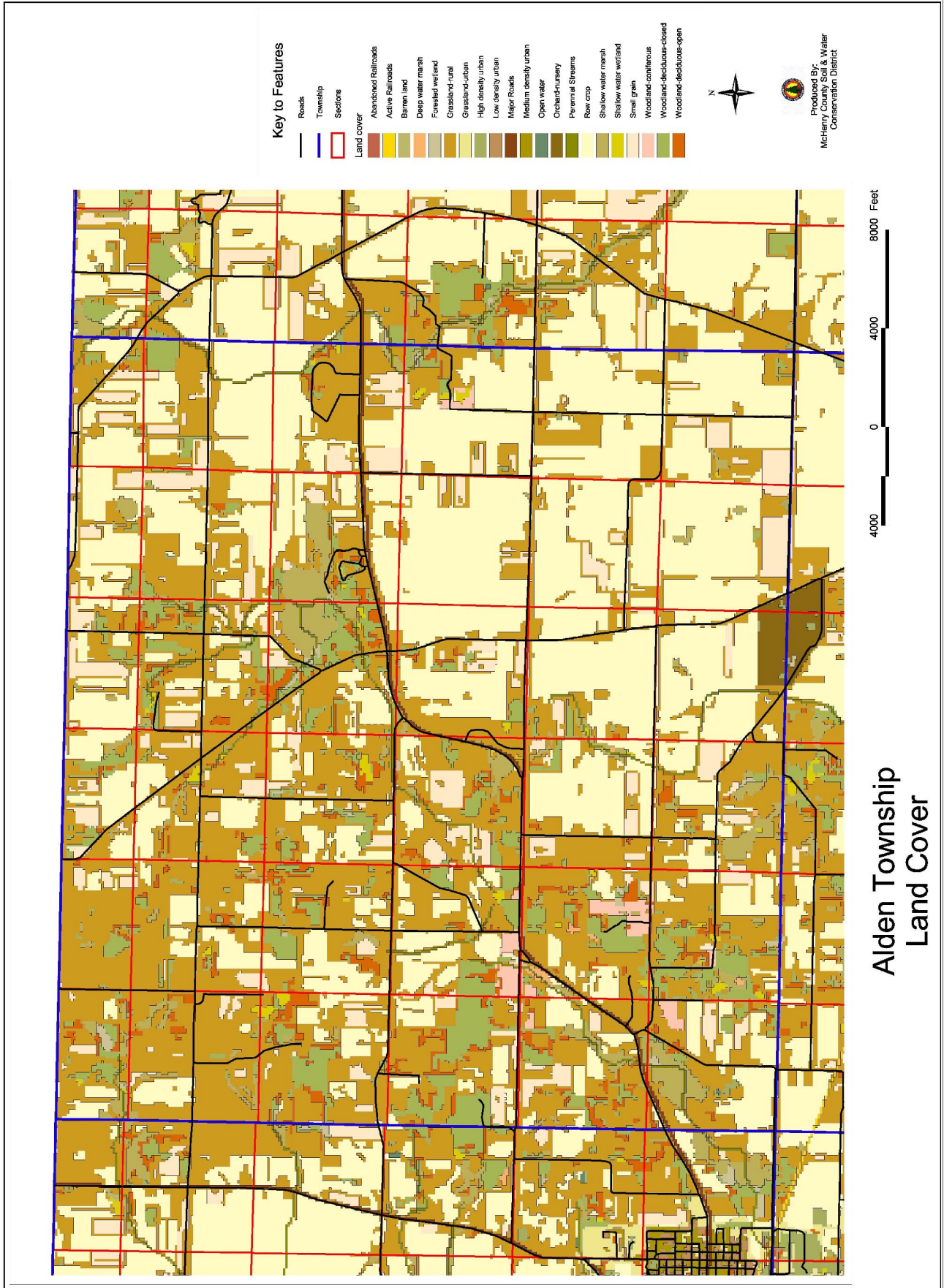












# Alden Township Land Cover