



THE RIDGE Proposed Project

April, 2024

Love the land. *Pass it on.* 

In East Bay Township, a striking, forested ridge rises prominently above the surrounding landscape, the centerpiece of a unique parcel that could soon become a valuable addition to the area's growing network of protected lands.

Referred to as The Ridge, this 220-acre property plays a significant role in maintaining water quality in East Grand Traverse Bay, the primary source of drinking water for over 40,000 residents in the Traverse City area. The property spans two sub-watersheds of the Grand Traverse Bay watershed, the East Bay Shoreline and Mitchell Creek watersheds, and boasts over 2,000 feet of shoreline along Bakers Creek, which ultimately flows into the bay. In addition, this largely forested property contains roughly 26 acres of rich wetlands, which are crucial for filtering and cleaning water before it enters the bay.

Among these wetlands is a unique perched rich conifer swamp, a habitat listed as vulnerable by the State of Michigan due to factors like its restricted range, relatively rare occurrence, and recent and widespread decline due to land use pressures and changes.

While GTRLC's staff plan to conduct detailed ecological assessments to document the flora and fauna on the property, the land has already been identified as an important ecological connection and wildlife corridor. It provides an important link for nearby protected lands like the Holiday Woodlands Natural Area, the Mnaadendan Shkaakimiikwe Nature Sanctuary, Mitchell Creek Meadows: The Don and Jerry Oleson Nature Preserve and the George and Ada Refitt Nature Preserve.

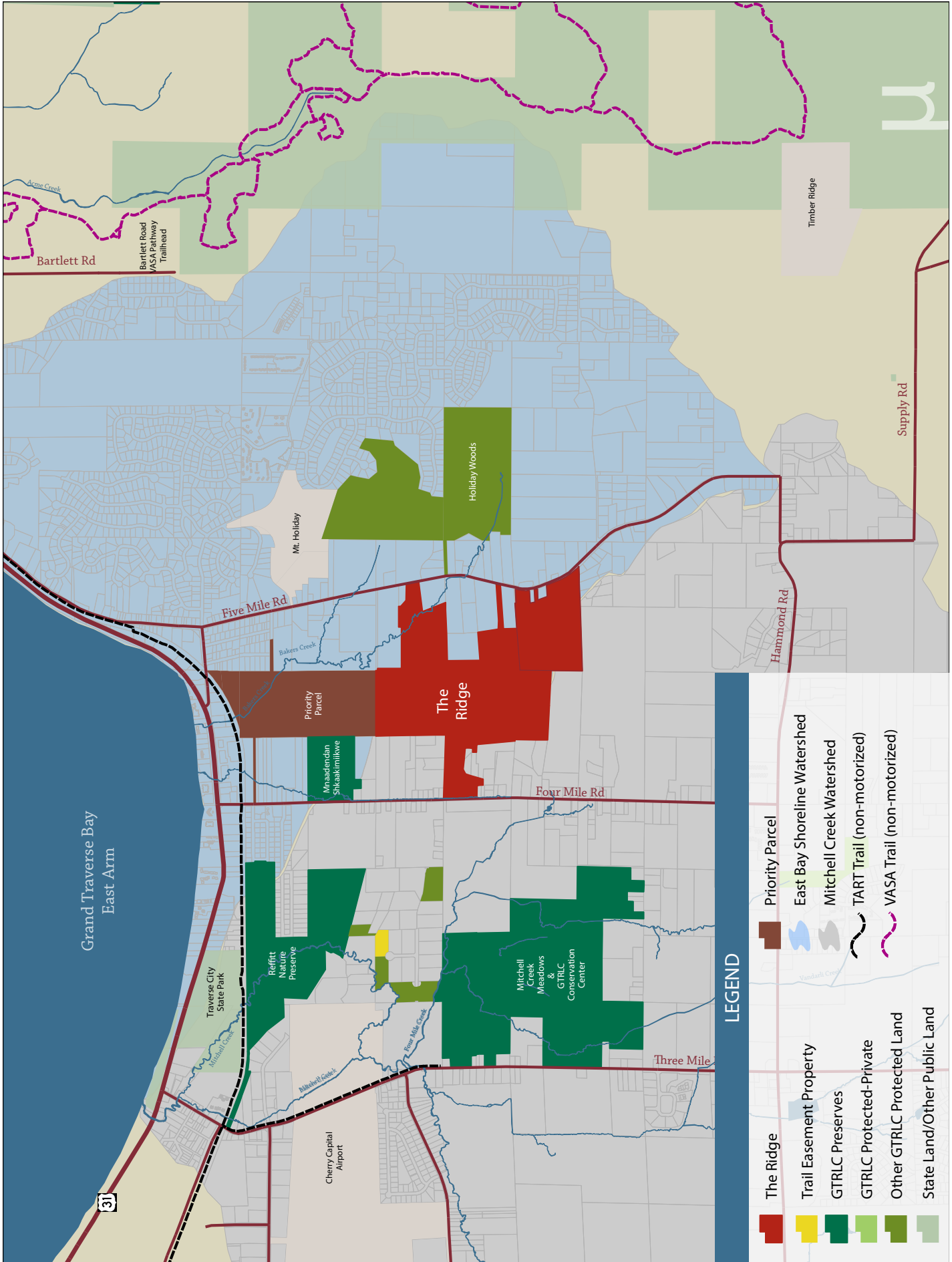
Apart from its ecological significance, the property offers breathtaking views from several points along the ridge.

From the north end, which overlooks Grand Traverse Bay, it is possible to see as far as Charlevoix and Sugarloaf Mountain in Leelanau County on a clear day. Meanwhile, the central portion of the ridge offers views of East and West Bays and downtown Traverse City. The beautiful scenery and mixed terrain provide the potential for a high-quality trail system near the region's population center, which could become part of a significant recreational corridor from Traverse City to the Vasa Trail.

Recently, a large-scale housing complex had been planned to be constructed on the property, which could have resulted in over 1,700 housing units. Thanks to a short-term loan provided by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Conservancy was able to secure 210 acres of the property and is currently working on finalizing the purchase of the remaining 10 acres. GTRLC has a period of three years to raise the funding needed to repay the loan.

This provides the Conservancy time to identify the areas of the property that have significant conservation and recreational value and protect them from development. Meanwhile, as the Conservancy is keenly aware of the need for workforce housing in the region, an ad hoc committee of members from GTRLC's Board of Directors and staff has been formed to evaluate whether any portion of the property that lacks significant conservation values would be more appropriately suited for housing, carefully considering how to balance two important community needs: conservation of our most important natural resources and workforce housing development.





WATERSHED MAP

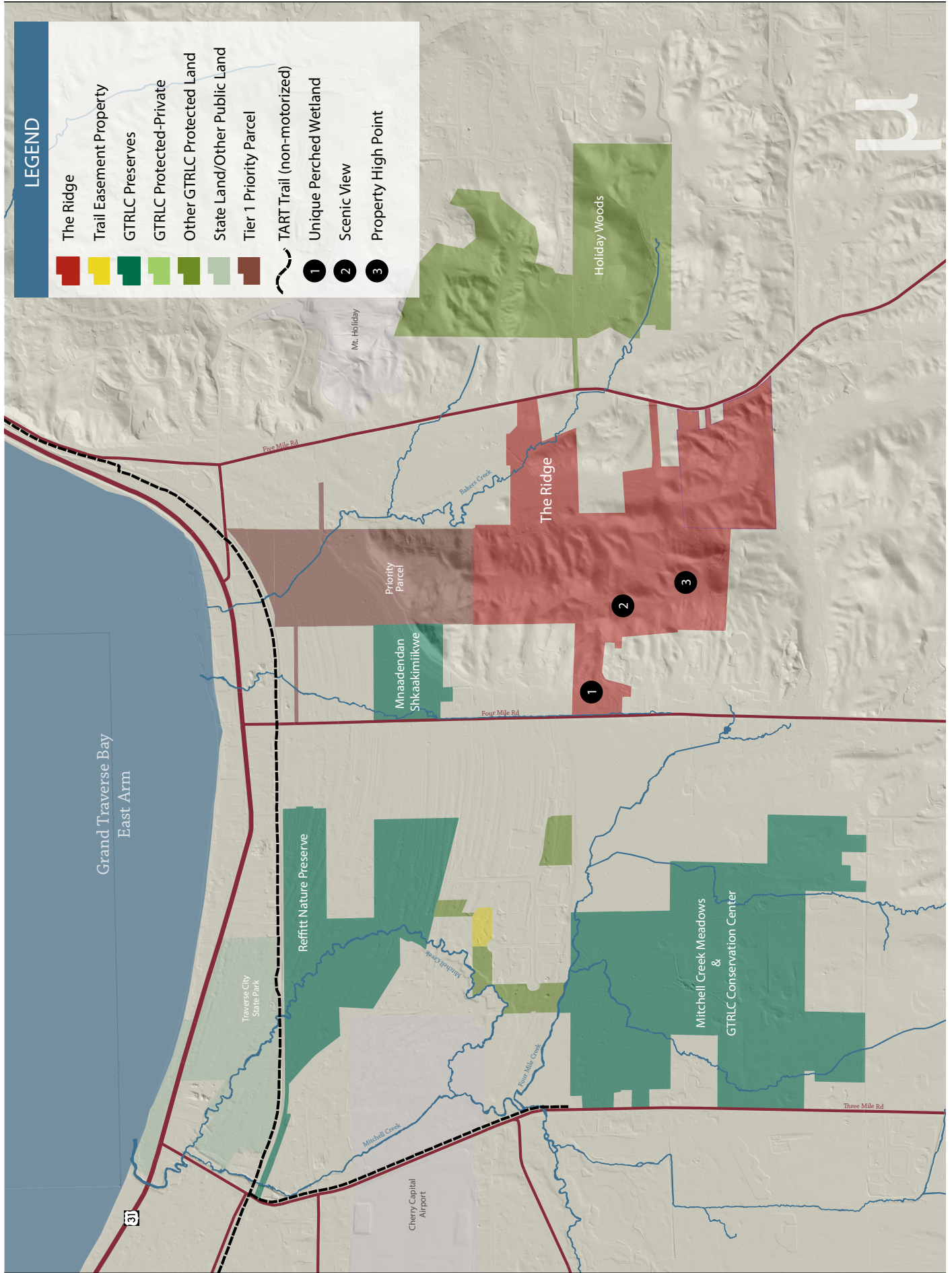
Grand Traverse Bay
East Arm

31

LEGEND

- The Ridge
- Trail Easement Property
- GTRLC Preserves
- GTRLC Protected-Private
- Other GTRLC Protected Land
- State Land/Other Public Land
- Priority Parcel
- East Bay Shoreline Watershed
- Mitchell Creek Watershed
- TART Trail (non-motorized)
- VASA Trail (non-motorized)

TOPOGRAPHY MAP



YOUR GIFT WILL:

- **Safeguard areas of the property with significant ecological and recreational value while considering creative approaches for managing other portions with less conservation value**
- **Provide the opportunity for a high-quality trail system in East Bay Township, which could become part of a significant recreational corridor from Traverse City to the Vasa Trail**
- **Protect critical habitat in an area facing increasing development pressure, including a rare perched rich conifer swamp**
- **Permanently preserve scenic views of Grand Traverse Bay and the surrounding landscape**
- **Safeguard water quality in East Grand Traverse Bay, a major source of the region's drinking water**

SUPPORT THIS PROJECT

The current fundraising goal for this project may be impacted by several factors that are yet to be determined, such as the size of the property, its ownership, and stewardship needs. As these details are finalized, the total funding needed may change.

The total project cost and fundraising need: **\$7,831,736***

Contact:

Kate Pearson, Senior Charitable Giving Specialist
p: 231.922.1224
e: kpearson@gtrlc.org

**In the event that fundraising support for a project exceeds the original project fundraising goal, the Conservancy will allocate the overage to purposes that the Conservancy determines further its mission, such as organizational costs, to protect additional land, or to care for the long-term stewardship of protected land.*

