

Washtenaw County
Agricultural Lands and Open Space
Preservation Program

Planning and Implementation Component
A Proposed Concept

Land use issues are very complex. One of the greatest challenges in trying to address land use issues is trying to balance the individual rights of private property owners with what is good for the community as a whole. A process which involves many stakeholders is needed to address the complexity of land use issues. That process begins with understanding the trade-offs and developing a community vision and then moving from that vision to creating and implementing a comprehensive plan to address land use issues both at the County and local levels.

Unfortunately there is a lack of a clear community vision based on an understanding of land use issues and trade-offs. There have been relatively few planning resources dedicated to land use issues in Washtenaw County. Rural communities have small budgets and often find themselves in a poor position to plan for development the future.

Federal and State policies, such as the Land Division Act, further exacerbate the problem. These policies contribute greatly to the inefficient use of land by creating large lot splits in rural areas. Additionally, agricultural zoning in Washtenaw County is designed to allow for both agricultural uses and large lot residential uses which are often incompatible. Many market forces also contribute to large lot development.

Addressing issues related to open space, parks, and fragile lands as well as areas for potential development are also important and add to the land use complexity in Washtenaw County. Many townships in Washtenaw County have not planned for and acquired open space and parks and local governments are just beginning to learn about ecological systems. In many instances environmental features, fragile lands, cultural and historic areas are not identified and included in local decision making. Natural systems are often seen as disconnected because of the numerous political jurisdictions in the County.

Acquisition tools alone do not change land use patterns that threaten agricultural land and open space. Planning and zoning tools along with acquisition programs and urban revitalization are important are important components of a comprehensive agricultural lands and open space preservation program. A comprehensive program is very important for the success of agricultural lands preservation. Tom Daniels

and Deborah Bowers point out in their book *Holding Our Ground* the importance of using several techniques:

"The most successful farmland protection programs employ several techniques in a coordinated package and enjoy long-term commitment from landowners, politicians, and the community. Any one technique alone cannot achieve protection for more than the short run. And some techniques, if used alone, can actually encourage development." (pg. 235)

The Washtenaw County Agricultural Lands and Open Space Task Force found that the successful implementation of the goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the Final Task Force Report can only occur with the support from local governments in order to successfully address the complexity of land use issues in Washtenaw County. While the diversity of Washtenaw County's urban, suburban, and rural landscapes as well as the local government policies are unique, a common and coordinated strategy is needed to guide growth as Washtenaw County enters the twenty-first century.

The Task Force recommended several strategies related to the involvement of the community, local units of government, and the County as a whole. These strategies include visioning at the local and County levels, providing planning assistance to local units of government, and overall coordination and implementation strategies.

This paper summarizes each of the planning and implementation strategies and provides a budget for each area. The planning and implementation strategies include overall implementation and advocacy, county and local visioning, local planning assistance, streamlining requirements, design guidelines, cost/benefit analysis, and geographic information systems.

These planning and implementation solutions are designed to point out the conflicts, problems and potential solutions by creating a necessary functional relationship with the acquisition tools to address these complex land use issues in Washtenaw County. The funds for the planning and implementation program will be used to implement the goals of the Agricultural Lands and Open Space Preservation Plan and will not supplement existing County and local programs that are currently funded.

Overall Implementation and Advocacy Strategies

These strategies include advocating changes in State and Federal Policies related to land preservation and urban revitalization, developing an annual evaluation report to review the accomplishments of all the recommended programs, and per diems and travel costs for the newly created committees. The Task Force

discovered during their deliberations that several tools that exist in other jurisdictions to effectively address agricultural land and open space preservation and urban revitalization issues are not available to Counties and local jurisdictions in the State of Michigan. They identified the need to advocate changes in federal and state policies, as identified in Objective 2 of Goal V. These policies include, among many, the need for a use-value tax system for assessing farmland, the need for agricultural security areas, and the need for enabling legislation for local governments to implement transfer of development rights programs. The Task Force identified that the tools that are not currently available are necessary for the success of an agricultural lands and open space preservation program in Washtenaw County.

The following are the cost estimates for the overall implementation and advocacy programs:

Item	Annual Cost	10 Year Total Costs
Advocate Changes to State & Federal Policies	\$2,500 to \$5000	\$25,000 to \$50,000
Annual Evaluation Report of all 4 Programs	\$3,500 to \$5,000	\$25,000 to \$50,000
ALPAC Per Diems and Travel Costs	\$3,500 to \$5,000	\$50,000 to \$75,000
OSTAC Per Diems and Travel Costs	\$2,000 to \$3,000	\$50,000 to \$75,000
URTAC Per Diems and Travel Costs	\$3,500 to \$5,000	\$50,000 to \$75,000
Total Costs	\$15,000	\$150,000

Community Visioning

Community visioning is an open, public participation process whereby a community is involved with mapping out its future. It differs from a planning process in its broad sweep of community desires and needs. The visioning process provides a vehicle for people of diverse viewpoints to identify and agree upon the common dreams they have for their community, and encourages people to express with words a desired future.

Community visioning consists of a process with the following steps: first, (1) a community reviews its present development patterns, policies, and current situation; then, (2) plans and ordinances along with trend information are used to create a likely future for the community and participants are asked if that is the desired future; (3) trade-offs are discussed; (4) a vision for the community is created; and (5) action plans are created to ensure that follow-up occurs. This step also allows for issue development and some implementation. This vision can be used to change plans and policies for the community and act as a catalyst for change to implement the vision.

Tom Daniels and Deborah Powers describe the importance of community visioning in their book *Holding Our Ground: Protecting America's Farms and Farmland*:

"A vision helps to identify which physical, economic, and even social features of the community are worth retaining and which need to be changed...When the public participates in the visioning and comprehensive planning process, the results are likely to have popular support." (pg. 40)

The Task Force identified in its cover letter of its Final Report the importance of community visioning:

"We did not find an antidote for sprawl. We hope that it lies dormant in our recommendations for greater community involvement in identifying approaches and partnerships to create a future worthy of our dreams. We ask that individuals and groups should prepare to use their unique perspectives to promote ongoing dialogue and to deepen our understanding of the human values that drive us..."

A community-wide vision, like a kite raised to the wind, should catch imaginations and stimulate dreams. It should carry ideas and the will to act on them, far beyond what individuals could hope." (pg. i)

The Task Force further recommended three strategies regarding community visioning. They include the following:

Goal I, Objective 1:

Strategy a: Provide staff and/or funding to coordinate and assist the Townships and Private Sector Organizations that are interested in developing visions regarding the future character and appearance of their community.

Strategy b: Provide staff and/or funding to coordinate and assist an iterative and consensus-building process to develop a County-wide Vision regarding the future character and appearance of the County that will form the basis for a County Master Plan. (To be done simultaneously with Strategy a).

Strategy c: Develop a grant program for local units who are interested in assistance in moving from their Vision to adoption and implementation of land use policies that are consistent with that Vision and which are consistent with the County Plan and Vision. (See Local Planning Assistance)

The following is a cost estimate for both community visioning on the local level as well as the County-wide level which will be completed during the first three years of the program:

Item	Cost per Item	Total 3 Year Costs
County-wide Community Vision	\$80,000 to \$100,000	\$80,000 to \$100,000
Local Visions (Up to 28)	\$8,000 to \$18,000	\$205,000 to \$475,000
Total Cost Range	-	\$285,000 to \$575,000
Total Cost Estimate	-	\$380,000

Local Planning Assistance

The purpose of the local planning assistance is to address several issues related to development and land preservation. These issues include the inefficient use of land, land use conflicts in agricultural areas, large lot development which fragments a critical mass of agricultural land and open space, and the splitting of land due to the Land Division Act.

Local planning supports changes to the current system. The various planning and zoning tools that are most effective with assisting in the preservation of agricultural land and open space are:

- Comprehensive Planning
- Agricultural Zoning (minimum lot size of 20 acres or more)
- Planned Unit Developments (PUD)
- Cluster Zoning (Conservation Subdivision Design)
- Open Space Zoning
- Overlay Zoning
- Design Guidelines
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for identifying critical areas
- Community Participation/Local Involvement which is part of the planning process

Many of these planning and zoning tools have a strong relationship to the success of a agricultural land and open space preservation program. Tom Daniels and Deborah Bowers point out the importance of agricultural zoning, one of the tools listed above, in their book entitled *Holding Our Ground: Protecting America's Farms and Farmland*:

"Over the past 20 years, agricultural zoning has become a first line of defense in most communities with successful farmland protection programs." (pg. 106)

The Proposed Local Assistance Program

The local planning assistance component consists of providing technical assistance and outreach to local units of government within Washtenaw County. Two different types of local planning assistance will be offered to local units of government. These include the following:

1. Facilitate a County grant program that makes funding available to townships and sub-county communities who are interested in assistance to develop, update, and revise master plans and ordinances. This grant program could either fund one or more consultants for contracted services to complete the work or could provide direct service from the County planning department staff to complete the work.
2. Provide outreach and technical assistance to local units on an on-call basis.

A prerequisite for Townships and sub-county communities to qualify for this grant assistance is that they must execute a memorandum-of-understanding with the County would state that the local unit of government endorses the current *Washtenaw County Land Use Plan*, as well as County-wide and local community visions, once they are adopted. The goals, objectives and strategies of the following County plans should also be endorsed and the local unit should also agree to work towards their implementation:

- *Washtenaw County Agricultural Lands and Open Space Preservation Plan*
- *The Washtenaw County Housing Plan, and*
- *The Economic Development Strategic Plan for Eastern Washtenaw County.*

The Washtenaw County Planning Department would provide services to four (4) to five (5) local units per year for master plan revisions and four (4) to five (5) local units per year for ordinance revisions. The local planning assistance also includes assisting Townships with local land and land rights acquisition programs and transfer of development rights programs.

Additionally, local planning assistance includes educational workshops for local governments and the public, to promote communication and cooperation across jurisdictional lines, provide technical assistance to local governments including community surveys, facilitation, establishing planning processes, providing demographics, analysis, assisting in the development of impacts studies, and providing technical support for the establishment of growth management techniques.

The Local Planning Assistance is supported by two strategies from the Task Force Plan. They include the following:

Goal V, Objective 3:

Strategy a: Provide County Planning Commission staff resources, GIS resources, and other necessary resources to townships and sub-county communities who are interested in assistance for developing master plans, developing ordinances, and identifying park and recreational needs.

Strategy b: Develop a grant program that makes funding available to townships and sub-county communities who are interested in assistance for developing master plans and ordinances that include land preservation efforts, and for identifying park and recreational needs.

The following are some cost estimates for local planning assistance:

Item	Annual Costs	10 Year Total Costs
Update/Revise Township Master Plans	\$100,000 to \$125,000	\$1,000,000 to \$1,250,000
Update/Revise Township Ordinances	\$60,000 to \$75,000	\$600,000 to \$750,000
On-Call Technical Assistance	\$6,000 to \$10,000	\$60,000 to \$100,000
Total Costs	\$166,000 to \$210,000	\$1,660,000 to \$2,100,000

This local planning assistance program is similar to the *Vision Partnership Program* developed by the Chester County, Pennsylvania Planning Department and the local assistance program developed by the York County, Pennsylvania Planning Department (See Appendix A)

Streamlining Requirements

The Task Force also recognized the need to make permit and code requirements more efficient. This efficiency would make developing in urban and suburban areas more attractive. The following identifies the specific recommended strategy in the Task Force Plan:

Goal IV, Objective 1:

Strategy k: Encourage townships, cities, and villages to streamline requirements to facilitate urban development and re-development projects.

The streamlining of requirements is a collaborative process involving the participation of township staff, the development community, the environmental community, and county departments and agencies. The process is designed to take place during a two-year period. The following is a two year cost estimate for the process:

Item	Total Costs
Review Codes/Ordinances, and get Input from Stakeholders	\$4,000
Revise Codes	\$34,000

Hold Public Hearings	\$2,000
Total Costs	\$40,000

Design Guidelines

The purpose of design guidelines is to assist local communities, homeowners, landowners, and developers by providing visual design options based on issues, needs, and desires of the community. Design guidelines would be developed at the regional and local levels for the purposes of maintaining or enhancing the aesthetics of building design, ensuring efficient land use, and protecting natural resources. In order to establish cluster zoning (conservation subdivision design), planned unit developments (PUD), overlay districts, and open space zoning districts in local units of government, the development of design guidelines are essential. Community participation will be included in the process of designing the guidelines. The following is a cost estimate to complete the design guidelines during a two year period:

Item	2 Year Total Cost
Conduct Visual Preference Surveys with Local Units and Citizens	\$20,000
Develop County-wide Guidelines	\$60,000
Total Costs	\$80,000

This design guidelines component is similar to the *Grand Traverse Bay Region Development Guidebook*.

Cost/Benefit Analysis

A cost-benefit analysis assesses of the impact of land preservation on the local economy versus the benefits of land preservation to the local economy and the community as a whole. A cost-benefit analysis is important to the land preservation programs because it monitors and evaluates the costs and benefits of the program and it evaluates whether the funds are being used wisely. It helps to identify what courses of action should be taken to adjust the program to minimize any unforeseen negative impacts of the program upon the local economy and the community as whole.

A cost-benefit analysis includes the completion of a county-wide cost of community services study or a fiscal impact study of development trends and the assessment of the impact of land preservation on the County economy. After these two assessments are completed, they are both evaluated together to determine the costs and benefits of the land preservation programs.

The following identifies the specific recommended strategy in the Task Force Plan:

Goal V, Objective 1:

Strategy c: Develop a cost-benefit analysis to ensure the best use of public funds for land acquisition, planning and zoning tools, and other recommended strategies in this plan.

The following is a cost estimate for the Cost-Benefit Analysis:

Item	Total 2 Year Cost
Cost of Community Services Study/ Fiscal Impact Study	\$15,000 to \$20,000
Assessment of the Impact of Land Preservation on the County Economy	\$25,000 to \$30,000
Total Costs	\$40,000

Geographic Information Systems

The purpose of a geographic information system is to support both the agricultural lands and open space preservation programs by targeting and tracking land for acquisition as well as identifying different land uses related to urban and suburban revitalization and planning and visioning programs. It is a necessary support service for implementing a land preservation, urban revitalization, and planning assistance program.

The importance of a geographic information system to agricultural land and open space preservation is best summarized from a presentation made by Tom Daniels, Jay Parrish, and Jordan Henk at the *1997 American Planning Association's National Planning Conference* held in San Diego, California. The title of their presentation was *GIS and Farmland Protection: The Case of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania*:

"Lancaster County has employed GIS to perform three important functions to support its farmland protection effort: 1) identification of high quality agricultural land; 2) the annual ranking of easement sale applications; and 3) maintenance of a dynamic data base over time on farmland protection parcel status, including agricultural zoning, agricultural security areas, farms under easement, farms with easement sale applications...GIS has been a helpful tool in identifying high quality farmland, ranking easement sale applications, and maintaining a dynamic data base." (pg. 5)

Currently, the implementation of a geographic information system in Washtenaw County is just underway. Current funding levels within the County do not include the necessary GIS resources that are needed for the agricultural lands preservation program, the open space preservation program, the urban revitalization program, and the planning and implementation programs.

The geographic information system will be used to measure agricultural land and open space resources and urban and suburban land uses. It will be used to identify fragile lands by improving the accuracy of the fragile lands data base. The GIS will be as a tool to work with local units of government and community groups to further identify these resources and make the information available to local planning commissions.

Appendix B list the Goals, Objectives and Strategies from the Task Force Plan that support further development and enhancement of the County's GIS system to support the land preservation, urban revitalization and planning and implementation programs.

The following is a cost estimate of the GIS component:

Item	Annual Costs	Total 10 Year Costs
Staff and Training (1 additional Full-time position and 3 interns)	\$63,000 to \$75,000	\$630,000 to \$750,000
Equipment, Software and License	\$20,000 to \$25,000	\$200,000 to \$250,000
Total Costs	\$83,000	\$830,000

See Appendix A for a description of GIS programs in Lancaster and Adams Counties in Pennsylvania.

Appendix A: Comparison of Planning and GIS Programs

Local Planning Assistance Programs

● **Chester County, Pennsylvania - Vision Partnership Program**

The Chester County Board of Commissioners established the *Vision Partnership Program* approximately two years ago after the completion of *Landscapes*, the County Comprehensive Policy Plan. The purpose of the program is to promote cooperation between local and County governments to implement *Landscapes*.

The Vision Partnership Program is a planning assistance program which provides grants and County staff resources to the County's 73 local units of government for updating local master plans and ordinances. Before the County works with the local unit of government to update plans and ordinances it must first sign a Memorandum of Understanding which indicates the local government's endorsement of the County Plan and agreement to work with the County towards its implementation.

The Board of Commissioners have earmarked up to \$70,000 for each of the 73 local governments to participate in this program during the next few years. The funding comes from the County's general fund. Currently, 65 of the County's 73 local governments have signed Memorandums to participate in the program. The County has spent approximately \$1 million in the past four years on the County Comprehensive Plan (*Landscapes*) and the *Vision Partnership Program*.

The Chester County Planning Department has a total staff of 40 employees, of which 12 senior planners are working on the *Vision Partnership Program* (Local Planning Assistance). The Chester County Planning Department is also the staff to the Agricultural Development Council and the Agricultural Land Preservation Board. Chester County has currently preserved approximately 5,600 acres of farmland through their Purchase of Development Rights program.

Chester County 1997 Population Estimate: 417,000 persons

Chester County Land Area: 485,000 acres (758 sq. miles)

Chester County Land in Farms in 1992: 176,000 acres

Proximity of County Seat (West Chester) to Downtown Philadelphia: 25 miles

● **York County, Pennsylvania - Local Planning Assistance**

The York County Planning Department provides a couple of levels of local planning assistance to its 70 local units of government. The bottom end of this service ranges from simply providing technical and information resources to the local unit, to meeting with a local government boards and their citizens 2 to 4 times on planning issues. These meetings assist the local unit with identifying appropriate planning process needs which could include the steps to hire a consultant and to identify the desired product needed.

The upper end of these services is a formal agreement between the local unit and the County in which the County planning department provides the consulting services to update the local unit's comprehensive plan or ordinance. Most of the local units who use the County planning department as a consultant are the urbanizing local units. They choose the County as a coordinating agency in order to establish urban growth boundaries with other local units in the County.

The York County Planning Department has 5 divisions and 31 total employees. The Municipal/Current Planning Division has 6 employees and provides the local planning assistance. The Information Systems Division is contained within the York County Planning Department. It houses the County's GIS program and has 3 total employees. The Information Services Division provides GIS support to a number of County departments, but provides substantial GIS services to the Planning Department and the Agricultural Land Preserve Board. The Department has an annual budget of \$2 million.

York County has currently preserved 9,500 acres of farmland through their Purchase of Development Rights Program.

York County 1997 Population Estimate: 370,000 persons

York County Land Area: 580,000 acres (906 sq. miles)

York County Land In Farms in 1992: 252,000 acres

Geographic Information System (GIS) Programs

● **Lancaster County, Pennsylvania - GIS Department**

Lancaster County has a Geographic Information Systems Department. The department provides GIS services to many county departments. The departments that use the GIS department's services the most include the Planning Department, Tax Assessment Department, the Agricultural Preserve Board, the Engineering Department, the Parks Department, and the 911 system.

The GIS Department has 7 full-time positions and \$1 million annual budget. Additionally, the Planning Department has 3 full-time positions who have GIS duties and the Tax Assessment Department has 5 full-time positions who have GIS duties

as well.

Lancaster County has preserved 24,000 acres of farmland through its Purchase of Development Rights program and Conservation Easements.

Lancaster County 1997 Population Estimate: 454,000 persons

Lancaster County Land Area: 609,000 acres (952 sq. miles)

Lancaster County Land in Farms in 1992: 388,000 acres

● **Adams County, Pennsylvania - GIS Department**

Adams County has a GIS Department which provides GIS services to all County departments. The departments that they provide the most services to include the tax records/assessor's office, the land conservation districts, the Agricultural Preserve Board, and the Planning Department. The department has 4 positions. The Adams County GIS Department has an annual budget of approximately \$300,000.

Adams County has preserved 5,600 acres through their Purchase of Development Rights program.

Adams County 1997 Population Estimate: 86,000 persons

Adams County Land Area: 333,000 acres (521 sq. miles)

Adams County Land in Farms in 1992: 172,000 acres

Appendix B: Task Force Plan Support of the County GIS Program

Goal II, Objective 1:

Strategy a: Identify and prioritize agricultural lands, including large contiguous blocks of agricultural land. Utilize existing information resources including the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, MIRIS, etc.

Goal III, Objective 1:

Strategy c: Identify and prioritize open space lands at the county and local level. Utilize existing federal, state, county, and private information resources including the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, MIRIS, Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, etc.

Strategy d: Identify and prioritize potential greenways and greenbelts throughout the County as an aid in coordinating planning and development of publicly held and privately held recreational open space.

Goal III, Objective 2:

Strategy d: Identify and prioritize fragile lands at the county and local level, including large contiguous blocks of land for preservation of habitat and ecosystems prioritizing those which have multiple critical features...Utilize existing information resources (same resources listed above)

Goal IV, Objective 1:

Strategy a: Work with cities, villages, and townships to develop a database of vacant and undeveloped land that exists within developed areas for use as potential infill development areas and green space.

Strategy b: Identify areas serviced by sanitary sewer and water systems and identify potential serviced areas by communicating with local officials and infrastructure authority officials.

Strategy g: Work with economic development agencies to identify and inventory existing commercial and industrial sites and promote areas targeted for redevelopment...

Goal IV, Objective 2:

Strategy b: Work with Downtown Development Authorities, the Washtenaw Development Council, and Chambers of Commerce to identify, inventory, and promote available commercial sites in city and village centers. Includes implementing GIS and trained staff to assist with the inventory.

Goal V, Objective 3:

Strategy c: Implement GIS technology, including modeling development, at the county level to assist in the identification and prioritization of agricultural lands, open space and fragile lands

Strategy d: Continue to develop the County's GIS including the provision of timely and accurate information tied to land ownership.

Strategy e: Collaborate with townships, cities, and villages to continue to develop GIS systems that will assist in the identification and prioritization of agricultural lands, open space and fragile lands.

Washtenaw County

Agricultural Lands and Open Space

Preservation Program

Urban Revitalization Component

A Proposed Concept

The Washtenaw County Agricultural Lands and Open Space Task Force

found that urban revitalization is an important component to agricultural land and open space preservation in Washtenaw County. The concept involves, reinvestment and re-development in our urban and suburban communities as well as promoting well designed development in vacant areas with urban services. This will contribute to the improvement of the quality-of-life in urban and suburban areas of Washtenaw County, making them more attractive places to live and work and prevent some of the pressure of development in agricultural and open space areas of Washtenaw County.

The provision of reasonable priced housing within urban and suburban areas is also important to agricultural land and open space preservation. When housing affordability issues exist within a region, moderately priced housing is sometimes sought in the rural areas where land may be more affordable. Reasonable priced housing opportunities within urban and suburban areas is integral to relieving some of the pressure to develop in agricultural areas.

This paper defines the different elements of urban revitalization, examines some of the funding gaps to urban revitalization, and proposes a concept for the urban revitalization component of the Agricultural Lands and Open Space Preservation Program.

Elements of Urban Revitalization

Urban revitalization consists of several elements. The enhancement of these elements contributes to the quality-of-life and sustainability in a community. These elements include the following:

- **Neighborhood Revitalization**

The concept of neighborhood revitalization is to provide for the stabilization of the economic, physical, and social forces within a neighborhood to maintain its viability and desirability as a place of residence and employment. The focus of neighborhood revitalization is largely a social one that is targeted toward the conservation of existing human and physical resources as a means of maintaining a stable population and averting neighborhood deterioration. It includes the following:

- Rehabilitation of Existing Housing
- Infill Housing (New Construction)
- Infrastructure Improvements (Sidewalks, Streets, Water, Sewer)
- Beautification and Landscaping
- Neighborhood Business District Improvements
- Neighborhood Parks and Open Space

- Preservation of Cultural/Historic Significant Properties
- Elderly housing

- **Brownfield Redevelopment**

Brownfields are commercial and industrial sites that, due to either past or current use, are impacted by known or suspected contamination of petroleum or other hazardous materials. Brownfield Redevelopment is a way of developing a wide variety of regulatory and financial approaches to redevelop these sites so tax revenue can be generated from the site, environmental contamination can be cleaned up, and additional job opportunities can be created for the community. Brownfield Redevelopment is viewed as both an environmental goal and an economic development goal.

- **Economic Development**

Economic Development is usually aimed at stimulating private sector investment within a specific area in order to generate employment, increase the tax base, and increase the commercial viability of an area. It includes the following:

- Retention of Business and Industry
- Expansion of Business and Industry
- Marketing of the Community as a Location Choice for Business and Industry

- **Downtown/Commercial Corridor/Community Gateway Improvements**

A strategy that provides a framework for guiding expansion or revitalization within downtown areas, commercial corridors and community gateways of communities. Such strategies look at issues related to current building conditions, building facades, streets, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, traffic volume and circulation patterns, and the availability of parking.

- **Infrastructure Improvements**

Infrastructure includes water systems, sewer systems, and utility systems. However, in the broadest sense it also includes transportation systems, public facilities, and parks. Infrastructure is also important to the viability of urban areas because those communities that have adequate infrastructure have a greater potential for development and attracting residents.

- **Transportation**

Transportation plays an important role in the viability of communities and neighborhoods as well. Community residents must get to work, school, shopping, and entertainment and, thus, it plays an important role to a community. Having an adequate transportation system is important for mobility concerns, but transportation systems have implications on the design of residential developments as well as streets and roads.

- **Public Facilities**

Public facilities and community services refer to government buildings, such as city and township halls, county court houses and county government facilities, public libraries, civic auditoriums, cultural facilities (museums), neighborhood meeting places, etc. The services and opportunities provided by public facilities, and access to them, directly impact the quality of life of a community and are important to revitalization efforts.

- **Aesthetics/Open Space/ and Parks**

Aesthetics/Open Space/ and Parks includes scenic views, street landscaping and trees, neighborhood beautification, active areas that include structural playground features, passive areas that have less structural features and are in more natural areas, ecological and natural areas. These open space elements are important to the viability of urban areas because they provide recreational and environmental benefits to residents.

- **Public Safety**

Public safety includes police, fire protection, and emergency services. The quality of the enforcement of laws related to criminal and traffic offenses, preventing and extinguishing fires, and assisting in life threatening situations are integral to the viability of community. When crime rates increase, and fire protection is not adequate, communities deteriorate due to the perception of insufficient safety.

- **Education**

Education is a critical element in strengthening and enhancing a community and its neighborhoods. Educational institutions are usually the focal point of a neighborhood and the quality of those institutions (including public and private elementary and middle schools, junior and senior high schools, and colleges and universities) is a significant contributor to the viability of communities and neighborhoods and their ability to keep and attract residents.

- **Job Training**

Job Training refers to the training of individuals for a specific employment position and/or an occupation and/or career opportunities. Job Training activities are important for preparing people for the workforce, thus, preventing and reducing unemployment and increasing households incomes, as well as attracting specific industries to a community who need trained individuals for the occupations that are necessary to the industry.

- **Health and Human Services**

Health and Human Services refers to hospitals and medical facilities, child care, and other social services including mental health and counseling services, nutrition services, employment services, and legal services. The quality of these services is an important part of controlling social problems which can contribute to the blight of urban areas.

- **Community Participation**

The involvement of individuals and community groups in the development and evaluation of government plans, proposals and decision making. Community participation and support often prevents projects in the late design stages from being abandoned because of sudden citizen opposition.

- **Front End Community and Neighborhood Planning and Visioning**

These are visioning activities and plans that are undertaken by local community planning boards or officially designated neighborhood planning boards, non-profit neighborhood development organizations, civic groups or a municipal planning department. Community and neighborhood planning activities may range from direct problem solving, such as petitioning the city for a traffic light, to long range/comprehensive neighborhood planning that includes assessing problems and issues, visioning sessions, developing goals and strategies, and an implementation strategy. These comprehensive neighborhood planning activities include active participation by neighborhood residents, which is important for accurately defining the needs of the neighborhood and provides the residents ownership and the desire that the plan gets implemented.

Urban Revitalization Funding Gaps in Washtenaw County

Urban revitalization requires an ongoing dedicated funding stream to have a significant impact to address all of the elements described above. Several Federal and State funds exist to address these issues, some of which are being used currently to address these issues. However, an important funding stream that contributes significantly to urban revitalization are funds available from the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the form of Community Development Block Grant funds (CDBG) and the Home Investment Partnership Program funds (HOME). The following defines these two funding streams more specifically (Appendix A lists some other funding programs for urban revitalization):

- **Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG)**: CDBG provides eligible metropolitan cities and urban counties (called "entitlement communities") with annual direct grants that they can use to revitalize neighborhoods, expand reasonable priced housing and economic opportunities, and/or improve community facilities and services, principally to benefit low- and moderate-income persons. States also receive these funds which they provide to "non-entitlement communities" on a competitive grants-in-aid basis.
- **Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME)**: HOME provides formula grants to States and "entitlement communities"

that localities use-often in partnership with local non-profit groups-to fund a wide range of activities that build, buy, and/or rehabilitate reasonable priced housing for rent or homeownership or provide direct rental assistance to low-income people.

Washtenaw County is currently not designated as an "urban county" and therefore does not receive an annual allocation of CDBG and HOME entitlement funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Additionally, 27 of the 28 local jurisdictions in Washtenaw County are not designated as "entitlement communities" by HUD. The City of Ann Arbor, however, is designated as an "entitlement community" as determined by HUD and receives an annual allocation of CDBG and HOME funds.

Washtenaw County and all of the 27 other local jurisdictions are eligible to apply for CDBG and HOME funds through the State of Michigan's Small Cities - Non-entitlement program. For housing and neighborhood preservation programs, these non-entitlement funds are available from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). For economic development programs, non-entitlement CDBG funds are available from the Michigan Jobs Commission.

Local communities and non-profit organizations within Washtenaw County have been successful in obtaining grants from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority and the Michigan Jobs Commission for the purposes of housing development and economic development. However, without this constant stream of funding, the ability to address all of the elements of urban revitalization is limited.

Moreover, there are not enough non-profit housing organizations to serve the identified housing needs of low- and moderate-income households in Washtenaw County. This illustrates a capacity issue to address reasonably-priced housing needs.

The funds available from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) require a 25% local match for application to the state's non-entitlement funds. Any match to MSHDA programs would provide a greater chance that more proposals would be funded in Washtenaw County. It would illustrate a substantial commitment from the County and that the project is important to the community. A new funding initiative may also increase interest from non-profits, lending institutions, the development community, and the private sector as a whole to develop more reasonable priced housing opportunities and, thus, increase the capacity to develop more affordable housing in Washtenaw County.

"The Neighborhood Concept"

This concept paper proposes "The Neighborhood Concept" as the approach to address urban revitalization in Washtenaw County. The purpose of the Neighborhood Concept is to direct financial resources from the County (the Ag Lands and Open Space Millage -- Urban Revitalization Component) to local communities to target efforts of urban revitalization in manageable-size areas and to make an impact towards the gradual overall revitalization of a community. This approach is different than a community-wide approach where funds are not targeted and the impact is limited as resources are limited to address urban revitalization effort in a comprehensive manner.

The concept also is based on neighborhood-level participation, which will support a feeling of ownership among its residents in deciding the vision of their community.

The proposed County program could address the gaps by providing a revolving loan fund program and/or a grant program to assist in the funding of the following urban revitalization activities by matching other current and potential funding from federal, state, and private resources. The focus of these funds is on "bricks and mortar" projects (physical improvements):

- **Rehabilitation and New Construction of Housing:** The rehabilitation of existing housing or new construction of affordable housing in infill areas of established targeted neighborhoods.
 - These targeted neighborhoods could be identified by the local unit and the boundaries of the neighborhoods should be established through a collaborative effort of the neighborhood residents, neighborhood organizations, and the local government unit.
 - Housing rehabilitation and new construction in infill areas should conform to neighborhood architectural and site design standards so that the residential units blend in with the neighborhood.
 - Phase I Environmental Audits of specific projects in Neighborhood Areas
 - Site Preparation and Planning of specific projects including lot reuse preparation
-
- **Target Area/Neighborhood Infrastructure Improvements** including:
 - Streets
 - Sidewalks
 - Water systems
 - Sewer systems
 - Outdoor Lighting
 - Landscaping (Street Trees)
 - Neighborhood Gateways
 - Open Space/Park elements within neighborhood districts
-
- **Commercial Structure Renovation** and new construction in vacant lots (infill development) in neighborhood business districts and commercial corridors including:
 - Landscaping
 - Sidewalks
 - Street improvements
 - Phase I Environmental Audits of specific projects in Neighborhood Areas
 - Site Preparation and Planning of specific projects including lot reuse preparation
 - **Brownfield Redevelopment** activities including the following:
 - Pre-redevelopment planning -- providing communities with resources to identify potential brownfield redevelopment areas, identifying highest and best use and doing a preliminary assessment to determine whether they are eligible for brownfield redevelopment financing.
 - Funds for land clearance and site preparation
 - Funds for Phase I Environmental Audits

The Process

- **Urban Revitalization Technical Advisory Committee**

The Urban Revitalization Component includes the creation of the Washtenaw County Urban Revitalization Technical Advisory Committee (URTAC). The purpose of this committee is to provide an advisory recommendation to the County Board of Commissioners regarding the evaluation of proposals to the Urban Revitalization Revolving Fund and Grant Program. Additionally, URTAC's other responsibilities include monitoring and making recommendations to the County

regarding the implementation and progress of awarded projects, providing and sponsoring educational workshops and forums on urban revitalization in Washtenaw County, and providing support and collaboration towards urban revitalization within the County.

The County Board shall appoint the members to URTAC. URTAC shall consist of nine (9) members. All the members of URTAC must be county residents. The membership shall include the following representation:

- a. A representative from the Washtenaw Development Council
- b. A representative from a banking or a lending institution
- c. A contractor who specializes in residential development
- d. A Realtor
- e. A private sector architect, urban planner, or urban designer
- f. A representative from an affordable housing non-profit organization
- g. A representative from a neighborhood organization
- h. Two (2) members from the general public

Washtenaw County Metropolitan Planning Commission Staff shall staff URTAC.

To the extent of available funding, URTAC may consult experts. URTAC members shall serve two-year terms, except that the initial terms of three of the members shall be for a three-year period. The County Board may reappoint members to successive terms. The County Board shall have the discretion to remove URTAC members for good cause. URTAC members shall not be compensated for their services but shall be reimbursed for attending meetings and for mileage as provided under the Rules of the County Board.

The County Board may terminate URTAC upon approval of 2/3 of the County Board elected and serving. Individual URTAC members shall disclose any potential conflict of interest and abstain from any discussion or voting on the matter in which he/she has a conflict.

● **The Application Process**

The process is designed to be a collaborative process that is initiated at the local level by neighborhood groups, non-profits, the private sector, and local units of government and includes advisory recommendations from the local unit of government, the Washtenaw County URTAC, the Washtenaw County Metropolitan Planning Commission and the County Administrator. The County Board of Commissioners makes the decision, based on these recommendations, which projects will be awarded.

The following outlines the process of reviewing proposals to the County Urban Revitalization Revolving Loan Fund and Grant Program:

1. A neighborhood organization, a non-profit, a private enterprise, or a local government or a collaboration of all these groups can apply to the program by submitting a proposal to County staff.
2. The proposal must include a resolution of support from the governing board of the local unit of government.

3. The Washtenaw County Urban Revitalization Technical Advisory Committee (URTAC) evaluates the proposal using the criteria as listed within this paper to determine the importance and priority of the project to the overall urban revitalization needs of the county.
4. The proposals are then reviewed by the Washtenaw County Metropolitan Planning Commission. The Planning Commission shall consider how the proposal affects the following areas: (1) long range planning; (2) existing land use; (3) current zoning; (4) compliance with County and local unit master plans; (5) impact on fragile lands/natural resources; and (6) impact on infrastructure and the community as a whole.
5. County Administration shall review the recommendations from the local unit, URTAC, the County Planning Commission, and make a final recommendation to the Board of Commissioners on which proposals should be awarded funding.
6. The County Board at a regularly scheduled or special meeting shall make the final decision on whether to award the proposal. Notwithstanding any advisory recommendations, the County Board has complete discretion to determine whether to award any urban revitalization proposal and may decide not to award any particular proposal if it finds that such action is in the County's best interest.
7. County staff shall monitor the implementation and progress of the project and provide reports to URTAC, the County Planning Commission, and the County Board.

● **Criteria for Awarding Urban Revitalization Proposals**

The following criteria shall be used in assisting URTAC in determining the order in which applications will be prioritized in any Selection Round to assist in the financing of urban revitalization project proposals submitted to the County for the Urban Revitalization Revolving Loan Fund and Grant Program.

This criteria system has been developed to prioritize urban revitalization proposals. After an initial screening for eligibility, Part I of the ranking system, proposals will be evaluated using this system. It is the intention of the users of this system to direct efforts towards those projects that make the most significant contributions toward urban revitalization in Washtenaw County and are an important project on the local level.

Part I: Eligibility Criteria

The projects must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the program:

- a. **The project is supported by the local unit of government (resolution must be submitted)**
- b. **Funding proposal must be a "bricks and mortar" project (physical improvements) and all activities in the funding proposal must be an urban revitalization activity listed above in "The Neighborhood Concept" section.**
- c. **The majority of funds (51% or more) for the project are from other sources.**
- d. **The project complies with local master plans and zoning ordinances.**
- e. **Neighborhood/Target Area Plans and/or Visions: Neighborhood and/or target area planning, that included neighborhood resident participation, has been completed in the neighborhood/target district (either individually or as components of local master plans) where the project is located and**

the project addresses the goals of the neighborhood/target area plan or the project supports a neighborhood/target area vision that included neighborhood resident participation. Neighborhood Preservation Plans that are prepared by a local unit of government or a community organization for the Neighborhood Preservation Program available from MSHDA will satisfy this criteria.

Part II: Proposal Evaluation Criteria

After meeting the eligibility criteria listed above, the proposal will be evaluated on the following factors. The percentage points indicated the weight of the factor for evaluating proposals.

a. **Urban Revitalization:** How the project contributes to overall urban revitalization efforts in the County. (25%)

For example:

- Number of residential structures rehabilitated
- Number of newly constructed residential units constructed and the number of vacant lots filled in.
- Number of acres developed for commercial or industrial purposes within the urbanized area
- How the proposal is part of a greater strategy within the local community that addresses the other elements of urban revitalization listed above.

b. **Preservation of Agricultural Lands and Open Spaces:** How the project addresses the goals, objectives and recommended strategies of the *Washtenaw County Agricultural Lands and Open Space Preservation Plan*. In other words, how does it prevent the development of agricultural lands and open spaces and at the same time revitalize urban areas. (15%)

c. **Affordable Housing Needs:** How the project addresses the goals and strategies of the *Washtenaw County Housing Plan*. (15%)

d. **Economic and Community Development Needs:** How the project addresses the goals, objectives, and strategies of the *Economic Development Strategic Plan for Eastern Washtenaw County* or how the project address the goals of local plans or local visions related to community and economic development. (15%)

e. **Matching Funds:** The amount of funds that can be leveraged for the project (i.e. MSHDA, Michigan Jobs Commission, Tax Credits, private and non-profit resources, etc.) (15%)

f. **Community Support:** Support and/or sponsorship from community and neighborhood organizations (15%)

g. **Parks and Open Space Element (Optional/Extra Points):** Finally, proposals will receive an additional 5 percentage points if the project contains a parks/open space element.

Support of the Agricultural Lands and Open Space Preservation Plan

"The Neighborhood Concept" supports Goal IV and all of its objectives and recommended strategies of the *Agricultural Lands and Open Space Preservation Plan*. The following are the specific recommended strategies that are supported by the "The Neighborhood Concept":

GOAL IV: To maintain and restore the viability of urban areas in Washtenaw County

OBJECTIVE 1: Encourage county and local initiatives which utilize existing infrastructure for accommodating future population growth.

Recommended Strategies:

- a. Provide consulting/technical resources and financial incentives to support the redevelopment of brownfield sites.

- b. **Promote the retention and creation of a variety of safe and decent housing, including affordable housing opportunities, in developed areas where infrastructure and community services exist (sewer, water, fire, police, public transportation).**
 - j. **Identify federal and state funding programs which can assist county and local governments with revitalization of urban areas.**

OBJECTIVE 2: Promote the retention and expansion of businesses within city and village centers.

-

Recommended Strategy:

- a. **Work with economic development agencies and other participating agencies to implement the Economic Development Strategic Plan for Eastern Washtenaw County.**

Appendix A: Additional Funding Programs for Urban Revitalization

The following programs are additional funding streams identified for neighborhood revitalization and housing development, brownfield redevelopment, and the revitalization of commercial areas. Please note that these programs may not be a comprehensive listing of all the funding programs that are available for these areas.

Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing Development

- **Michigan State Housing Development Authority -- Federal CDBG and HOME funds for Housing Rehabilitation, New Construction of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation**
- **Washtenaw County currently has a home owner rehab program funded through these funds for \$400,000 for two years with a maximum of \$15,000 per unit.**
- **MSHDA offers a Neighborhood Preservation Program and a Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Program. The intent of these programs is to emphasize neighborhood-based strategic planning and implementation through community development organizations coupled with public and private sector resources.**
- **Michigan State Housing Development Authority -- Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program providing tax credits to developers who develop housing for low and moderate income families.**
- **City of Ann Arbor Community Development Department -- Federal CDBG and HOME funds for the City of Ann Arbor only**
- **Projects focus on housing and human services issues, address at least one of the City's priorities, and must target residents who are very low (<50% median income) or extremely low (<30% median income) income or below.**
- **Tax Increment Financing is a means of funding infrastructure improvements such as roads, sewers, etc. which are needed for development. Bonds are issued by the community to pay for the needed improvements and then paid off by capturing the resulting increases in property taxes spawned by the improvements.**

Brownfield Redevelopment

- **EPA Brownfield Assessment Demonstration Pilots -- up to \$200,000 for a 2 year period.**
- **Brownfield Redevelopment Authority Act of 1996 (PA 381) through Tax Increment Financing (TIFs)**
- **The City of Ypsilanti has recently established a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority**
- **CDBG Section 108 Loans -- used as a loan on future CDBG funds which could amount to five times the future CDBG annual allocation and can be paid back over a 20 year period.**
- **Michigan Jobs Commission -- Brownfield Redevelopment is an eligible activity under the CDBG program, the Michigan Renaissance Fund, the Urban Land Assembly Loan Program, the Small Business Administration 504 Loan Program, and the Industrial Development Revenue Bond and Taxable Bond Programs.**

Revitalization of Commercial Areas

- **Downtown Development Authorities finance a variety of projects in downtown districts and neighborhood commercial areas. To be eligible to use this funding mechanism, a downtown development authority must be established according to Michigan Public Act 197 of 1975. Currently, the Cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, the Village of Chelsea, and Scio Township have Downtown Development Authorities.**
- **The Redevelopment of Shopping Areas Act, Public Act 120 of 1961, as amended by Act 260 of 1984. This act basically authorizes municipalities to utilize the special assessment district financing mechanism for the maintenance of commercial areas. Funds can be utilized for a variety of activities including redevelopment, maintenance, and promotional efforts.**

The act also calls for a creation of a board to direct the various improvement efforts. This act could be useful, for example, in upgrading existing commercial shopping areas within urban areas of Washtenaw County.

- **Tax Increment Financing as described under Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing Development.**

[Return to BOC June 17, 1998 Agenda Page](#)