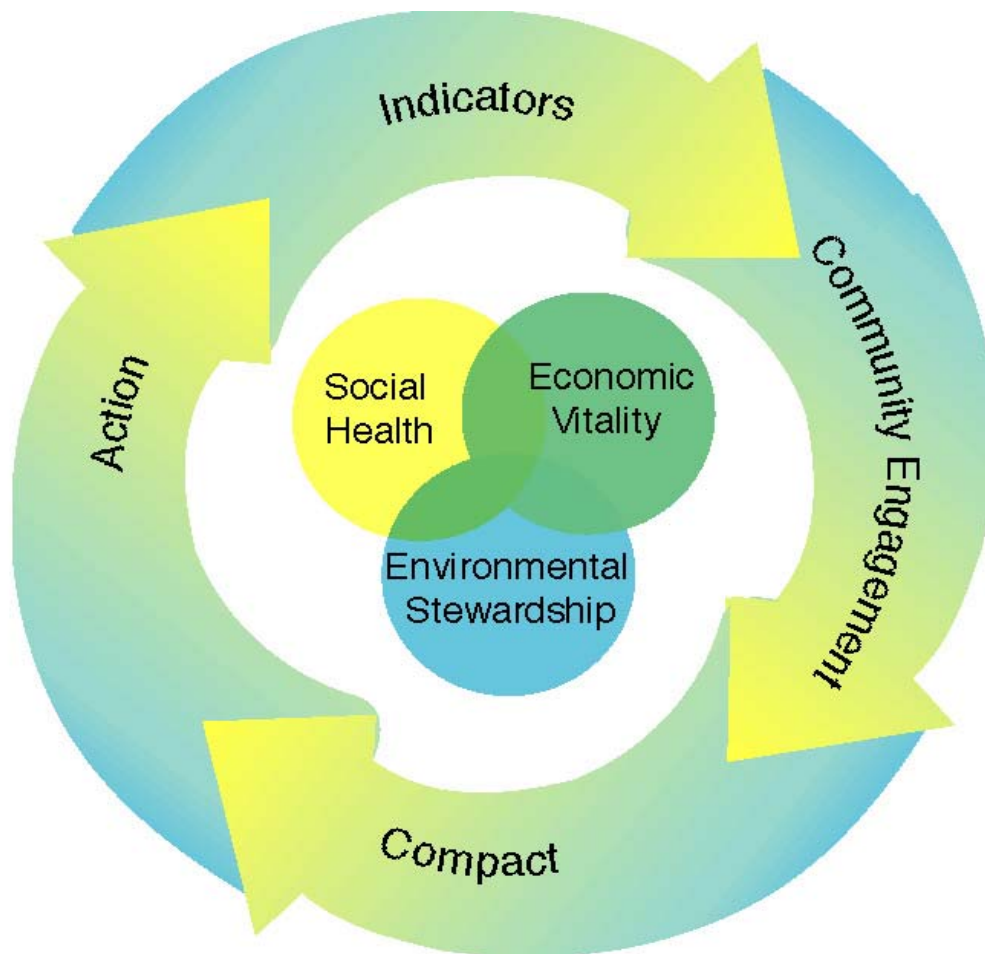


# SUSTAINABLE WASHTENAW INDICATORS REPORT



**“A Work in Progress”  
Full Group Meeting  
9/27/2002**



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**The Collaboratory**  
FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. Sustainable Washtenaw

Sustainable Washtenaw is a multi-stakeholder coalition established as a result of a March 1998 gathering of business, nonprofit, government, academic and community representatives convened by Bob Guenzel, Washtenaw County Administrator.

**Vision:** Sustainable Washtenaw has embraced the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development definition of sustainable development as the ability "to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

**Mission:** Sustainable Washtenaw leads and supports citizens, organizations, the private sector, business and governments working individually and collaboratively, to promote environmental protection, economic development and human well being in the County.

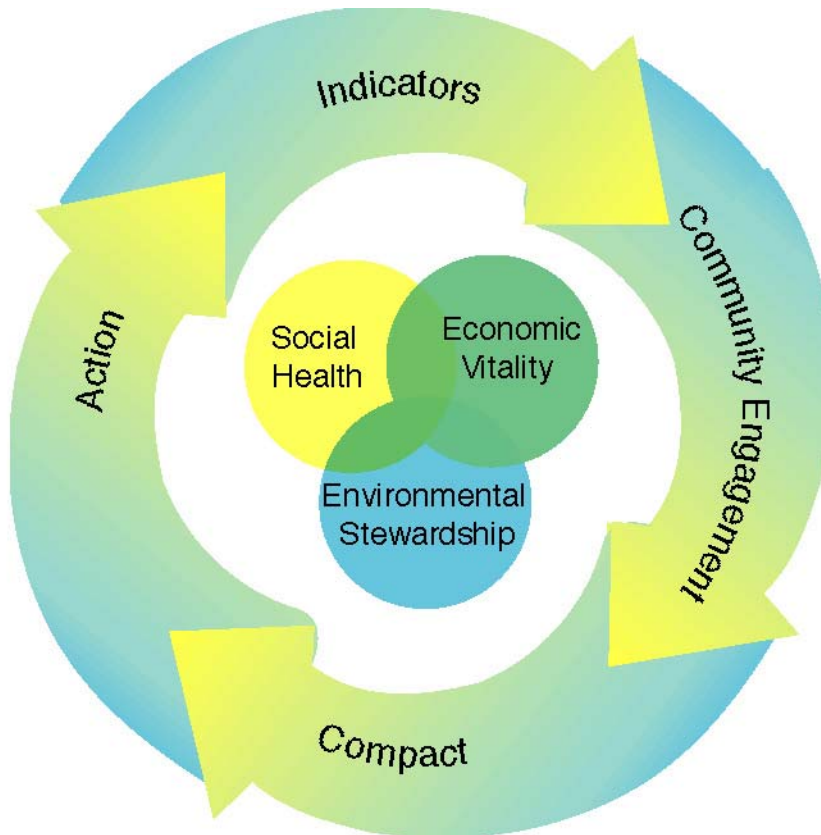
The **overall goal** of Sustainable Washtenaw is to reach consensus region-wide among a critical mass of stakeholder organizations, municipalities, civic leaders and citizens regarding a new **shared vision** rooted in **common values** about how the region can grow in a more sustainable manner. The **overarching strategy** has been conceived in two stages.

1. It was necessary to develop an information and knowledge base regarding definitions, best practices from across the country and a set of measures or indicators that allow us to ascertain progress toward sustainability. The dissemination of this *Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report*, the result of thousands of hours of volunteer time and expertise from Washtenaw County residents, marks the completion this information gathering phase and our transition to the more action-focused second strategic stage.
2. Through a series of initiatives, actions and technical supports, based on positively impacting the sustainable indicators, we will seek to achieve the region wide consensus on a new shared vision that can become the foundation for implementation actions by both the public and private sectors at the local, regional and state levels.

Sustainable Washtenaw is committed to facilitating a region-wide **dialogue** on how the region can grow in a more sustainable manner, and to taking actions commensurate with achieving that goal.

This *Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report* introduces a set of indicators to watch as the region navigates through this transformation. With this set of facts many possible futures still exist for Washtenaw County. We believe that to ensure a safe passage through this transformation to sustainability, the region must seek vitality in the economic, social and environmental arenas. The region must recognize and build on the **interdependencies** of these arenas rather than assume inherent conflicts among them.

As Figure 1 (Sustainable Washtenaw Strategic Framework) illustrates, we believe that the economy, society and the environment can be connected in a “Vital Circle” that will produce a rising standard of living and an outstanding quality of life for the people of our region.



**Figure 1**

**Sustainable Washtenaw Strategic Framework:** A view of community that shows the links among its three parts: the economic part, the social part and the environmental part.

## B. What is a good indicator?

Indicators are measurements to tell us how we are doing: whether we are going up or down, going forward or backward, getting better or worse, or staying the same. Good indicators meet the following criteria:

- ❑ They are reflective of a strong regional value or interest.
- ❑ They are bellwethers that reflect fundamentals of long-term Regional well-being.
- ❑ They are statistically measurable on a frequent basis.
- ❑ They measure outcomes, rather than inputs.
- ❑ They have interest in appeal for use by the media.

The 34 indicators that follow were chosen in consultation with 10 indicator action teams. These teams convened meetings and surveyed hundreds of citizens, they interviewed civic leaders, and they reviewed the experiences of other communities around the country who tackled similar projects. These teams made the important and often difficult decisions about which indicators to include in this inaugural *Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report*. This is intended as a living document; our goal is to periodically review the relevance of the indicators, making changes in future editions as new and better data becomes available.

## C. How can people use the *Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report*?

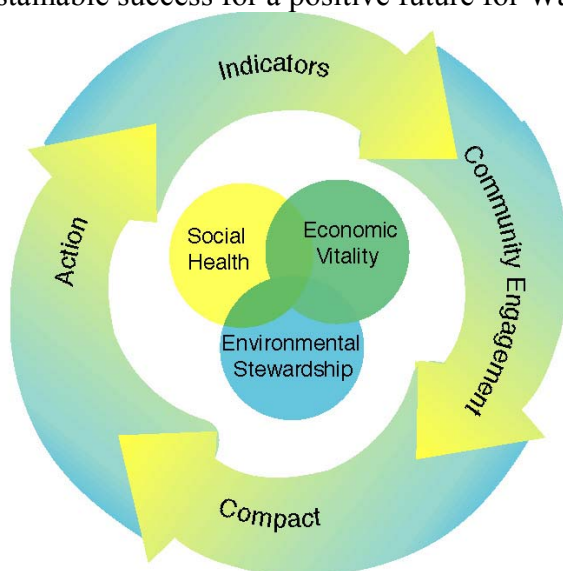
The central purpose of this *Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report* is to promote the use of indicators by public, business, and other community leaders to make informed decisions about the future of Washtenaw County. These indicators provide a definition of what is important for regional quality of life. They do **not** provide a comprehensive diagnosis of issues, nor do they advocate a specific set of solutions; rather, they seek to stimulate dialogue and problem solving that marry the economic, social, and environmental aspirations of Washtenaw County. This *Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report* can be used in several ways:

- ❑ **Educate:**  
Increased understanding about what is important for regional quality of life.
- ❑ **Monitor:**  
Track progress overtime on regional quality of life indicators.
- ❑ **Scan:**  
Surface trends that need to be addressed to achieve quality of life aspirations.

- ❑ **Compare:**  
Provide the basis for relevant comparisons to other regions or to ourselves, over time.
- ❑ **Make decisions:**  
Provide information for better decisions by leaders and citizens alike.

## D. Implication for Future Sustainability:

The publication of the *Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report* is a crossroads and marks a transition for Sustainable Washtenaw. After four years, it is a natural point in the lifecycle. The trick is how to become more concrete about goals and objectives while at the same time preserving our guiding principles and broad representation. Not necessarily an easy task. The ambiguity that permeates ideas based on the interconnectedness of economic, environmental and social systems provides a mirrored slate on which nearly everyone can see their position represented. When, however, activities shift to functional, pragmatic decisions and policymaking recommendations, there is the very real possibility of Balkanizing the various interests. It is for this reason, that the strategic framework (introduced in figure one) not only features the interdependencies of decisions regarding economic vitality, social vitality and environmental vitality, but also, describes an interactive, sustainable cycle of performance. As with Sustainable Washtenaw four years ago, the cycle begins with **community engagement** and the development of **indicators** of regional performance: this *Indicators Report*. Our intention is that the *Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report* set the stage for individual, neighborhood and community **action**. This action leads to and is reinforced by a **compact** across municipalities, as well as, public and private organizations (see Section VIII – Regional Compact), which in turn broadens our engagement. This broader **regional engagement** will bring us back periodically to an updating and refinement of the **indicators** of performance. This dynamic is our vision of sustainable success for a positive future for Washtenaw County.



## II. 2002 WASHTENAW COUNTY SPOTLIGHT

The Washtenaw County, Michigan region is in the middle of a major transformation—and experiencing growing pains. It is trying to manage a significant increase in population and a rapid expansion in its economy—while trying to preserve a highly valued quality of life enjoyed by residents throughout the region. The results so far are mixed.

Though the Washtenaw County economy reflects the nationwide reaction to the over aggressiveness of the technology / Internet build-up in late 1990's and the sluggish venture markets, in many ways, it is continuing its expansion unabated. Be it the ever powerful influence of the University of Michigan, the continuing expansion and development of Pfizer, the embrace and support of life science initiatives or the strong technology sector, Washtenaw County, with an unemployment rate below the state and the national averages, can be said to have nothing but a thriving economy.

At the same time, not all of Washtenaw County's residents have benefited from the region's economic vibrancy. The income of the region's poorest households has not improved in real terms (i.e., adjusting for inflation) during the 1990's. Rents have risen much faster than wages and overall affordability of housing is a growing concern. Further, despite regional economic growth, a growing number the region's children remain in or near poverty—12 percent in the most recent figures, up from 10.5% at the beginning of the 1990's.

Traffic congestion has skyrocketed. Commute times are dramatically increasing. Land uses are shifting as the County's built environment expands. There has been a significant decrease in agricultural acreage in the past decade. Of concern, in the midst of the region's transformation, there is not yet a consensus about balance between the built and the natural environment, including the amount and location of protected open space and agricultural lands.

How this region will manage its economic, social, and environmental transformation is still an open question. Although we cannot return to the past, we can embrace change to become an even more attractive and vibrant region. We can build on the positive benefits while addressing the negative consequences of change.

With this *Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report*, our intention is to set the stage for regional action in engagement of citizens and building a positive future for Washtenaw County. Achieving this positive outcome will not be easy. We will need to be more creative, more committed, and more collaborative than ever before. We welcome your comments and collaboration in building a better Washtenaw County in the years to come.

### III. SUSTAINABILITY PRIMER

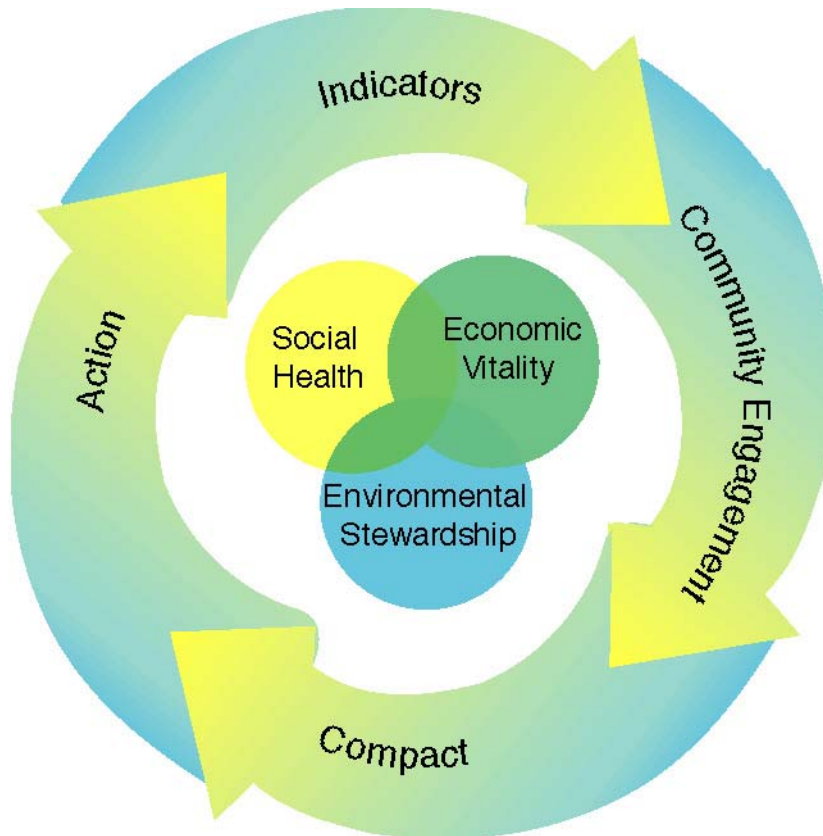
What does "sustainability" really mean for Washtenaw County and how can we tell if our community is sustainable? Sustainability is related to the quality of life in a community—whether the economic, social and environmental systems that make up the community are providing a healthy, productive, meaningful life for all community residents, present and future.

The traditional measures of communities—like "Unemployment rose 0.4 percent in January," or "The economy grew 2% last year"—only show changes in one part of the community without showing the many links between the community's economy, society and environment. It is as if a community was made of three separate parts -- an economic part, a social part and an environmental part that do not overlap.

However, when society, economy and environment are viewed as separate, unrelated parts of a community, the community's problems are also viewed as isolated issues. Economic development councils try to create more jobs. Social needs are addressed by health care services and nonprofit organizations. Environmental agencies try to prevent and correct pollution problems. This piecemeal approach can have a number of bad side effects:

- Solutions to one problem can make another problem worse. Creating affordable housing is a good thing, but when that housing is built in areas far from workplaces, the result is increased traffic and the pollution that comes with it.
- Piecemeal solutions tend to create opposing groups. How often have you heard the argument 'If the environmentalists win, the economy will suffer,' and its opposing view 'If business has its way, the environment will be destroyed.'
- Piecemeal solutions tend to focus on short-term benefits without monitoring long-term results. The pesticide DDT seemed like a good solution to insect pests at the time, but the long-term results were devastating.

Rather than a piecemeal approach, what we need is a view of the community that takes into account the links between the economy, the environment and the society. The Sustainable Washtenaw Strategic Framework has been developed to show these connections:



**Sustainable Washtenaw Strategic Framework:** A view of community that shows the links among its three parts: the economic part, the social part and the environmental part.

Actions to improve conditions in a sustainable community take these connections into account. The very questions asked about issues in a 'sustainable' community include references to these links. For example, the question 'Do the jobs available match the skills of the available work force?' looks at the link between economy and education. Understanding the three parts and their links is key to understanding sustainability, because sustainability is about more than just quality of life. It is about understanding the connections between and achieving balance among the social, economic, and environmental pieces of a community.

Sustainability requires managing all households—individual, community, national, and global—in ways that ensure that our economy and society can continue to exist without destroying the natural environment on which we all depend. Sustainable communities acknowledge that there are limits to the natural, social and built systems upon which we depend. Key questions asked in a sustainable community include: 'are we using this resource faster than it can be renewed' and 'are we enhancing the social and human capital upon which our community depends?'

The ***Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report*** seeks to measure whether a community is getting better or worse at providing all its members with a productive, enjoyable life, both now and in the future. In short, it is about ways for residents of Washtenaw County to measure and strengthen our community's long-range economic, environmental and

social sustainability.

## **IV. SOCIAL HEALTH**

“Social Health” refers to the relationship between and among individuals and entities in a social system. It is the connective tissue that ties individuals and organizations into the social matrix—the ‘glue’ that holds the community together. The Social Health is the social capital, which is developed as people know each other and interact on common aspirations and interest. This capital is then drawn on as individuals and institutions work together to address common issues and problems. The opposite—social isolation and excessive individualism—breeds social alienation and dysfunction. Sustainable social health is capable of adapting to and supporting the individuals and social entities of which it is comprised over time so that they maintain and enhance their health and their contribution to the system as a whole.

The following are the original seven (7) outcomes that were created and from which the indicators were developed:

1. Families, in all their forms, are strong & functional.
2. Individuals and families are effectively involved in social networks (family, ethnic, neighborhood-geographical, faith-religious, social-community service, cross-generations, youth development and recreation, etc.).
3. Public and private employers have conditions, benefits, services and programs that support individuals, their families, and the community.
4. People value and are benefiting from diversity in all its forms.
5. The private and public, formal and informal initiatives, programs, and projects that are oriented to maintain and enhance the social health are coordinated, cooperative, collaborative, effective and efficient.
6. High level of citizen participation in democratic processes in public and political organizations.
7. Social isolation and anti-social behaviors are reduced.

We chose several indicators to assess the strength of social health for Washtenaw County. The five types of indicators measure arts and culture, care of children: education and family vitality, safety, community health, and civic engagement. These indicators reveal

the social health of the region's community—the physical, intellectual, and community well being of its residents.

## A. Arts and Cultural

### Grant Dollars Awarded

A critical aspect of a region's quality of life is the presence of arts and culture. Of course, what individual residents define and value as arts and culture varies considerably. Rather than focus on any particular aspect, we seek an indicator of the overall presence of arts and culture in Washtenaw County. One such indicator is the number of grant dollars awarded to arts and culture agencies in Washtenaw County.

*Why is this important?*

Economically viable arts and culture organizations are an indicator of a strong community. Although clearly the variety, quality, and accessibility of arts and culture for the County's residents have many aspects, few are measurable on a county level at this time.

The Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs (MCACA) is a state agency that provides funding through grants to a selected number of Michigan arts and cultural programs. Grant awards to local arts and cultural programs are one indicator of the presence and viability of arts and culture in the region.

*How are we doing?*

For fiscal year 2002, Washtenaw County received \$1,308,700 in Arts & Cultural awards from MCACA. Thirty-seven grant applications were submitted, and of the thirty-seven, twenty-eight applications were awarded funds. Washtenaw County received 18% of the total dollars available for awards in the State of Michigan. They are ranked xxxx in the State for receipt of awards.

Source:  
Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs  
FY2002 Arts & Cultural Grants  
<http://www.cis.state.mi.us/arts/grants/grants.htm>

## **B. Care of Children: Education and Family Vitality**

The education and care of Washtenaw County's children today is a good indicator of the health and well being of the region's residents in the future. And the vitality of family networks, in all their forms, is seen as one of the foundations of a sustainable community. Care of a community's children is at the heart of sustainability's intergenerational concern. Though the supports and risks to family strength are multifaceted, the indicators chosen try to capture this from birth to divorce.

Note: The following three indicators, which all center on education, will be the subject of a UM research project in the fall of 2002. The specific indicators may change based on the results of this project. Jim Crowfoot and Susan Santone, of the Sustainable Washtenaw Steering Committee, will coordinate this project

- 1. Free school lunches provided/1000 population.**
- 2. Percentage of students at reading level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.**
- 3. Percentage of students who complete their formal education at high school graduation and within six months is employed at living wage.**

*Why is this important?*

There is often a correlation between one's level of education and wages earned. Individuals who do not receive additional education past the high school level are often caught in low-end jobs earning minimum wages or requiring assistance from government programs. Measuring the percentage of individuals able to secure living wage employment with minimum education is believed to be a measure of the quality of life they could sustain as well as the community's commitment to providing wages that allow such self-sufficiency for individuals

## 4. Percentage of child support payments / payment obligations

*Why is this important?*

Payment of child support indicates acceptance of a legal responsibility to care for a child even when one is not living in the same household as that child. The ability for single parent families to meet their financial obligations is often dependent on receipt of child support payments from the non-custodial parent. Such payments allow a custodial parent to provide the same or similar level of care to a child as would be available in a two-parent household. In addition, consistent and timely support payments are believed to be one measure of the non-custodial parent's commitment to providing for and being involved in their child's life. This demonstration of commitment indicates to a child that he or she is a priority within the family structure. In turn, feelings of security may help reduce adjustment difficulties, loss of self-esteem, and loss of stability experienced by children of non-married or divorced parents.

*How are we doing?*

In 2000, child support obligations\* in Washtenaw County totaled \$59,728,195 and \$38,759,504 was collected, resulting in a collection success rate of 65%. In 2001, \$40,239,886 was collected of an obligated \$62,773,572, resulting in a 64% collection rate. At first glance, it appears that the success in collections has decreased in the past two years; however, this requires some explanation.

In 1996, MCL 552.603a initiated a surcharge for payments past due, calculated at an 8% annual rate. This "interest" on unpaid obligations, compounded twice annually, is added to the original past due payments. Any payments made by the debtor are applied first to the amount obligated for current support and then to any support arrearage. Because of the interest assessed on arrearages, it is likely that the child support collection *rate* will decrease despite any increase in the number of actual collections.

When the annual surcharge of 8% is eliminated from the equation, collections for both 2000 and 2001 amounted to approximately 80% of the total obligation (80.96% in 2000, 81.8% in 2001), and have been relatively steady at this rate since approximately 1994.

*\* Obligations listed include child day care expenses but not medical expenses. Statistical data obtained from Washtenaw County Friend of the Court, PO Box 8645, Ann Arbor, MI 48107 (734-994-2466).*

## **5. Decline in teen birth rates/1000 population under 19:**

*Why is this important?*

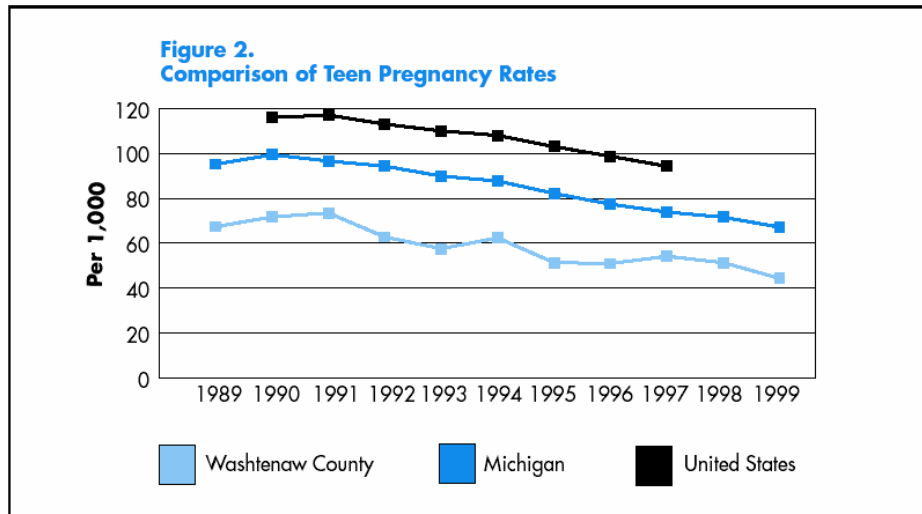
Teenage pregnancy is both a symptom and a cause of breakdown in the social health of a community. Pregnancy among women under 19 can be a result of many factors: inadequate sexual health education for youth, low self-esteem or isolation, peer pressure, and media that portray sexuality without consequences. These factors themselves are undesirable, but lead to an even greater problem of teenage pregnancy.

Teenage pregnancy is undesirable for a healthy, sustainable community because it can often lead to truancy, limited educational or career opportunities for the mother, low income and increased use of resources provided by a welfare system, unemployment, low birth weight and prematurity among babies of mothers under nineteen. In short, teenage pregnancy affects sustainability because it results in families that are less likely to be strong and functional.

Measuring the indicator of teen birth rates provides insight into how well our community has prepared its children for adulthood, and demonstrates the effectiveness of prevention methods currently being used to alleviate the occurrence of teenage pregnancy.

*How are we doing?*

For Washtenaw County, the teen pregnancy rate for 1999 was 44.4 per 1,000; in 2000, it was 42.4 per 1,000. The teen pregnancy rate reflects the number of live births to women aged 15-19 and includes pregnancies that ended in induced abortion or miscarriage (data from the Michigan Department of Community Health). Actual teen births in Washtenaw County in 1999 totaled 251 (a rate of 20.3 per 1,000) and 238 in 2002, showing that less than half of teen pregnancies result in births. On the following page is a graph indicating the decline in teen pregnancy rates in Washtenaw County from 1989 to 1999.



Data sources: Michigan Department of Community Health and National Center for Health Statistics

### Comparison to State and Nation:

The estimated pregnancy rate for all U.S. women fell in 1997 to the lowest rate in more than 20 years. During the 1990s teen pregnancy rates also fell in the state of Michigan. The Michigan teen pregnancy rate dropped from 95.2 per 1,000 in 1989 to 67.2 in 1999, compared to national rates of 116.3 per 1,000 in 1990 and 94.3 in 1997. Washtenaw County's 1999 teen pregnancy rate was 34% below the state rate.

#### Sources:

- “Moving In a Healthy Direction”, Washtenaw County Health Improvement Plan (HIP) Progress Report, Washtenaw County Public Health Department, presented by the Community Health Committee in December 2001 (see full results at <http://www.co.washtenaw.mi.us/depts/health/kids3Ateenpreg.pdf>)
- Michigan Department of Community Health (found at <http://www.michigan.gov/mdch>)

## 6. Number of divorces/1000 population:

### *Why is this important?*

The indicator in question is the number of divorces -- often a result of many factors -- age of marriage, lack of professional or family support, sense of equality or shared trust between marital partners, financial disputes, or the presence of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. However, these measures are difficult to track, and do not necessarily lead to divorce in all cases. Thus, the divorce rate is what we use to indicate the health of families and marriages in Washtenaw County.

Divorce often correlates with the breakdown of a family's fabric, and can lead to or results from deterioration in that family's quality of life. A lowered divorce rate indicates that members of our community live in an environment that supports a strong marriage, and the outcome of this is that families, in all their forms, are strong and functional.

*How are we doing?*

In 2000, 1,660 divorces took place in Washtenaw County, resulting in a divorce rate of 10.8 per 1000 population. This rate is higher than that of Michigan, which experienced 38,932 divorces (a rate of 7.9) and higher than the national divorce rate of 8.2 per 1000 population in 2000. Longitudinal statistics indicate inconsistent trends in Washtenaw County’s divorce rate. In 1990, 1,254 divorces resulted in a rate of 8.8, and 1,127 divorces in 1998 resulted in a rate of 7.4 per 1000 population, but the flux in these county divorce rates are consistent with national trends.

**Note:** Marriage and Divorce rates are persons per 1,000 population rather than events per population.

**Sources:**

- 2000 Michigan Occurrence Marriage and Divorce Files, Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics, Michigan Department of Community Health, found at <http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/index.asp?Id=5>.
- “A Portrait of Washtenaw County”, MSU Extension, found at <http://www.msue.msu.edu/countyprofiles/washtena/temp/Washtenaw.pdf>

## **C. Safety Indicators**

The level and perception of crime in a community are significant factors that affect the quality of life. Crime has wide-ranging effects on communities. In addition to economic costs, the fear, frustration, and instability resulting from crime undermine social progress and our sense of community. We have identified four categories of crimes that have particular impact on a community’s social health: crimes involving families and children; crimes of domestic violence; crimes of hate and bias; and crimes of violence.

### **1. Family & Children Offenses/1000 population:**

*Why is this important?*

In the context of the State of Michigan Uniform Crime Report, “Family and Children Offenses” are any non-violent offense by a member of the family, which threatens unity, physical welfare, economic welfare, or morals of members of the family.

*How are we doing?*

In 2000, 182 and 10,699 such offenses were reported in Washtenaw County and the State of Michigan, respectively.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Washtenaw County</u>	<u>State of Michigan</u>
1997	.52	.95
2000	.56	1.07

## **2. Domestic Violence crimes/1000 population:**

*Why is this important?*

In the context of the State of Michigan Uniform Crime Report, “Domestic Violence” is physical abuse committed by a spouse, a former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, person living in the same household, or a cohabitant upon another person.

*How are we doing?*

2000 is the most recent year of comparable data for Washtenaw County and Michigan.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Washtenaw County</u>	<u>State of Michigan</u>
2000	4.96	4.59

## **3. Number of Hate-Bias Crimes/1000 population:**

*Why is this important?*

In the context of the State of Michigan Uniform Crime Report, “Hate-Bias Crime” is a criminal offense committed against a person or property that is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender’s bias against race, religion, ethnic/national origin, sexual orientation or disability group.

*How are we doing?*

1999 is the most recent year of comparable data for Washtenaw County and Michigan. Though Washtenaw’s crime in this area is predominantly non-violent, the fact that more incidents occur per population than for the state as a whole, should be sobering and of significant concern

<u>Year</u>	<u>Washtenaw County</u>	<u>State of Michigan</u>
1999	.089	.057

## **4. Violent Crime offenses/1000 population:**

*Why is this important?*

Violent crimes include homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

*How are we doing?*

In 2000, there were 12,028 incidents of violent crime in Washtenaw County, while there were 401,398 such crimes for the State of Michigan, as a whole. With reductions over time at both county and state level, Washtenaw County's decrease was in excess of 20% and at a faster rate than Michigan's reduction.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Washtenaw County</u>	<u>State of Michigan</u>
1997	47.7	46.2
2000	37.4	40.4

## D. Community Health

Community health provides the basic foundation for individual and community well being and progress. Community members who live in healthy environments are more likely to participate in activities that promote the well being of other residents and to take part in the vibrant daily life of Washtenaw County, from the economy to arts and culture. Washtenaw County has an existing method of measuring performance for a wide range of health related subjects. The Health Improvement Plan (HIP) first established goals in the mid-1990's and just issued its first "report card." HIP is incorporated into this Indicators Report by reference with specific health risks and behaviors shown below. Aside from health risks, a meaningful measure of a community's health is its residents' insurance coverage. The assumption being that those insure will tend to be more proactive about their health care.

### 1. Health Risks/ Behaviors in Washtenaw County Residents

<b>Risk</b>	<b>% of Residents</b>
Currently Smoke Cigarettes	23%
Admit to using illicit drugs during the past 12 months	7%
Have engaged in binge drinking during the past month	22%
Admit to driving after drinking too much alcohol	5%
Have had more than one sex partner during the past year	30%
Have loaded or unloaded firearms in home or vehicle	24%
Adults who always use safety belt when in car	78%
Have had three or more sunburns during their lifetime	27%
Have diets low in fiber (eat less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day)	85%
Are overweight (greater than the 85th percentile for Body Mass Index - weight in kg /height in meters squared) (Men $\geq 27.8 \text{ kg/m}^2$ , Women $\geq 27.3 \text{ kg/m}^2$ )	23% - Adults 16% - Children (age 9-17)

Source: 1995 Washtenaw County Health Improvement Plan (HIP) Survey

## **2. Number of County residents who do not have health insurance:**

*Why is this important?*

There is a significant correlation between an individual's health status and their overall quality of life. In addition, an individual's ability to access health care services has a direct impact on their health status. One measurement of an individual's ability to access health care services is whether they have insurance to pay in whole or part of the cost of those services. Therefore, measuring the number of individuals who have health insurance can be used as one indicator of their overall quality of life.

*How are we doing?*

Currently, 5% of residents in Washtenaw County have no health insurance, comparable to the State of Michigan where 9.8% of residents have no health insurance, and 12.4% of total U.S. residents have no health insurance.

Note: These data indicate good news for Washtenaw County Residents. The 2000 HIP Survey revealed that the percentage of County residents without health insurance has decreased significantly in all categories since 1995. One important caveat, however, is the fact that these data are from a telephone survey. People without telephones were not included in the survey. Yet, if poverty has caused someone to forego having a telephone, that low-income status may also mean that they are uninsured. Therefore, the number of people without health insurance in Washtenaw County may be higher than the survey results indicate.

Furthermore, the survey only gathered information about whether or not people were insured. Additional study is needed regarding the adequacy of coverage. As more people become insured, the issue of underinsured becomes more prominent. This is particularly important as more and more insurance companies are covering less and less (e.g., prescription drugs and senior care coverage).

Additional attention is also needed on the disparities in coverage for African Americans and other minorities. African Americans had the highest rate of uninsured. Other races (combines in the survey data) had the next highest level of uninsurance, while whites had the lowest level.

Source: Washtenaw County Public Health Department HIP Progress Report, December 2001 [http://www.ewashtenaw.org/content/ph\\_adults10Ahinsurance.pdf](http://www.ewashtenaw.org/content/ph_adults10Ahinsurance.pdf)

## E. Civic Engagement

The future of the region will ultimately depend on the civic engagement of its citizens. Social health is partly a product of a society that is actively engaged in deciding who will represent it in the public arena. Another measure is the informal networks of exchange, socialization and sharing.

### 1. Percentage of voter turnout for local elections:

*Why is this important?*

A vital strand tying individuals and families into the community is their political connection. Sustainable communities require strong democratic participation of members of the community who support sustainable programs and initiatives. This political participation includes, among others, participation in neighborhood associations, interest groups and political parties; voting in elections; and service on governmental boards and commissions. One key measure of this political involvement is voting in local elections.

*How are we doing?*

The registered voters, ballots cast and percentage turnout in the general elections in Washtenaw County<sup>1</sup> for the years 1994-2000 are as follows.

Year	Registered Voters	Ballots Cast	Percentage Turnout
1994	194,100	94,821	48.85
1998	228,108	99,377	43.57
2000	234,171	145,974	62.34

---

<sup>1</sup> Washtenaw County Clerk's office.

## 2. Individuals who report that they share things/socialize/exchange labor with friends, neighbors or acquaintances/1000 population:

*Why is this important?*

After the family, the next closest geographical opportunity people have for connection is in their neighborhoods. Measures of the linkages and activities among neighbors are a key indicator of the presence and strength of social health.

*How are we doing?*

Detroit Area Study--2001<sup>2</sup>  
Percentage of Respondents  
In Washtenaw Co.

Of the 10-15 neighbors living nearest to you, how many adults do you know by name?

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All or almost all   | 21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More than half      | 17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> About half          | 16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than half      | 32 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None or almost none | 14 |

How often do you visit with these neighbors?

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily/Almost daily     | 6  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 Times a Week       | 25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 Times a Month      | 25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than Once a month | 28 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never                  | 16 |

During the past year have you:

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attended a meeting of a neighborhood association or block club?                     | 22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Served on a committee or as an officer in a neighborhood association or block club? | 7  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contacted government officials or city hall to deal with a neighborhood problem?    | 19 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Met informally with neighbors to discuss a neighborhood problem?                    | 33 |

How often do you and your neighbors do favors for each other:

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily/Almost daily     | 5  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 Times a Week       | 13 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 Times a Month      | 20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than Once a month | 38 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never                  | 24 |

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.tcaup.umich.edu/workfolio/DAS2001/index.html>

## V. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Environmental Stewardship is as important as economic and social vitality. The environment must remain vital as an ecosystem and a quality-of-life amenity for residents—not to mention a critical recruitment asset for the workers in our industries and universities. Several indicators were chosen to assess the state of environmental vitality in Washtenaw County. These indicators are three kinds:

- A. Measures of environmental quality;
- B. Efficient resource use;
- C. Measures of the disconnect between residents’ preference regarding environmental futures and their willingness to act consistently.

### A. Environmental Quality

The quality of the physical environment—its land, air, and water—is a basic requirement for “vitality.” In addition, evidence of stewardship—the management of the environment to ensure its vitality for future generations—is an important measure of the long-term prospects for maintaining environmental quality and vitality in Washtenaw County.

The indicators that have been selected to measure our Environmental Quality are: Open Space; Air Quality, and Water Quality

#### 1. Open Space Indicator

##### **(TBD)**

Discussion on impervious surface indicator could be here or in the water quality section. Ann Arbor Township has an Open Space ordinance, which is new on the books; you could probably get some good definitions and language from that document. Also the discussion on the parks and demographic use of the parks could be tied in here.

##### *Why is this important?*

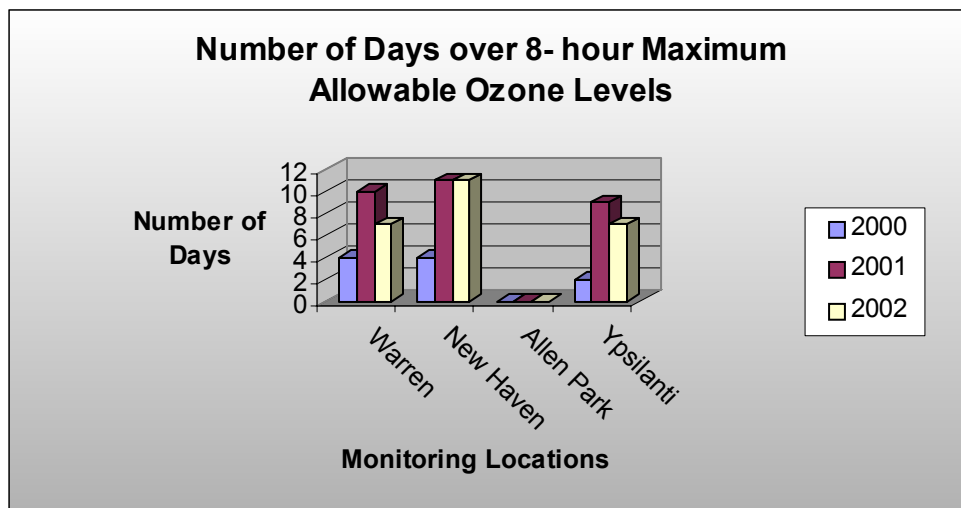
Preserving open space protects natural habitats and recreational opportunities, focuses development near existing developed areas, and safeguards the visual appeal of Washtenaw County. This indicator includes the lands permanently protected through public ownership and private conservation easements

##### *How are we doing?*

## 2. Air Quality Indicator

A critical aspect of a region's quality of life is the presence of breathable air to minimize health problems. Often transportation can contribute to problems with air quality. The number of air quality violations in the region gives a good indication whether the air is getting better, worse or staying the same. The weather, also, plays a role in the number of violations recorded during a particular summer. Long periods of hot dry weather contribute to the number of violations.

### Number of Air Quality Violations



#### *Why is this important?*

Economically clean air impacts the ability to site new businesses, to construct transportation improvements in addition to the ability to enjoy the outdoors. It also impacts the health of our youth as the incidence of asthma increases in our area.

The Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for protecting the air quality in our country. They work together with the US Department of Transportation to see that transportation improvement to not degrade the air in places that do not meet air quality standards.

#### *How are we doing?*

The US Supreme Court recently upheld the more rigid eight hour standard for air quality. Under the present, more lenient one hour standard, the region was close to losing its maintenance designation because of too many violations. The region will likely be non-attainment once the eight-hour standard takes effect.

### **3. Water Quality Indicator**

**(TBD)**

#### **B. Efficient Resource Use**

As Washtenaw County grows in population, importance of efficient resource use also grows in order to achieve lasting environmental quality and vitality. Indicators chosen to measure efficient resource use are the share of recycled solid-waste, acres of parkland and demographics of park users.

##### **1. Share of Recycled Solid Waste Indicator**

**(TBD)**

##### **2. Acres of Parkland / 1000 Resident Indicator**

In order to meet the increase in population from 2000 to 2002, Washtenaw County needed to add from 315 – 495 acres of parkland to meet the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standard of 35 –55 acres per thousand population. WCPARC acquired 254 acres of parkland from 1998-2002

###### Population

April 2000	Census	322,895
May 2002	SEMCOG Estimate	332,084

(Estimated increase 2000 to 2002 = 9,189)

###### Parkland (1998 data except as noted)

Washtenaw County (2002)	1,394 acres
State of Michigan	15,753
Huron Clinton Metropolitan Authority	1,800
Local Units	3,800
Public Schools	2,100
Colleges and Universities	2,800
Private	3,860
TOTAL	31,507

### ***Why is it important?***

Parkland has social, environmental, and economic benefits. Parks provide places for people to participate in active and passive recreation. Active people are healthier and longer-lived than sedentary individuals. Parks provide habitat for wildlife and preserve fragile lands, like wetlands, that store water and reduce the risks and severity of floods. Areas with parks have higher property values than corresponding areas lacking parks. Parks stimulate businesses that provide recreational equipment and apparel, and the entire tourism industry.

### ***How are we doing?***

In 1990 the number of acres of parkland per 1000 people varied from a high of 56.6 for the City of Milan to a low of 0 for some townships without any parks. The values for the cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti were 17.3 and 3.2 respectively. Washtenaw County has more than twice the amount of parkland recommended by the NRPA standards. The ratio of 108 acres for 1000 people, (calculated in 1998) is probably dropping, however, as the population is increasing faster than the rate at which parkland is being acquired.

## **3. Demographics of Parks Visits/Year**

According to a recent survey conducted by the Institute for Social Research (ISR) (2001), 84% of respondents visited a county or local park within the previous year. Visitation rates were highest for people under 45 years of age and lowest for those over 80. Married people with children used parks more frequently than single parents. Married people under 45 without children (93%) visited parks at about the same frequency as people under 45 with children (91%).

### ***Why is it important?***

All types of people should have access to and feel welcome in parks. Park visitation is affected by location, site character, access, and amenities available. It is known that certain activities are more popular with certain groups of users. Younger users are more likely to participate in active pursuits than older persons, for example. Until recently, the handicapped were less able to access some amenities in parks. Since public parks are publicly owned they should be available to all.

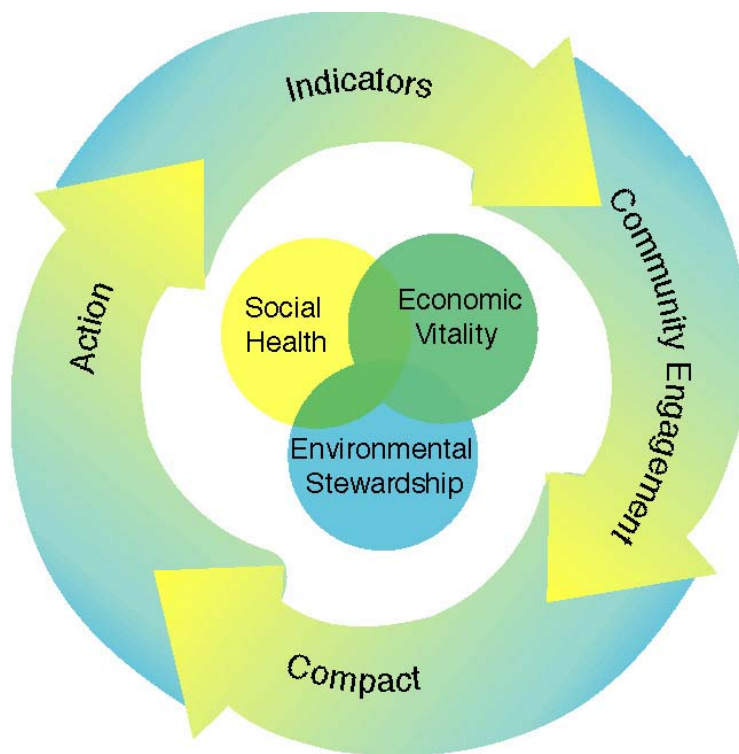
### ***How are we doing?***

In planning new parks and refitting existing ones, park agencies try to meet the needs of the entire population. Surveys and public information meetings are used to help determine the needs of all potential user groups. Parks are designed and built to meet the widest range of interests possible. Park usage in Washtenaw County is the highest of the counties included in the ISR study.

## C. County Resident Disconnect: Environmental Perception and Preference.

Not all indicators of note are of objective environmental performance. In assessing the quality of community life, the Detroit Area Study (DAS 2001 – see Appendix A) with specific Sustainable Washtenaw data compilation, illuminates a gap or in some cases irreconcilability between environmental preference and the perception of what is required to achieve that desired future.

Reviewing these indicators over time will be a method of determining the success of the *Sustainable Washtenaw Strategic Framework*, because changing attitudes, preferences

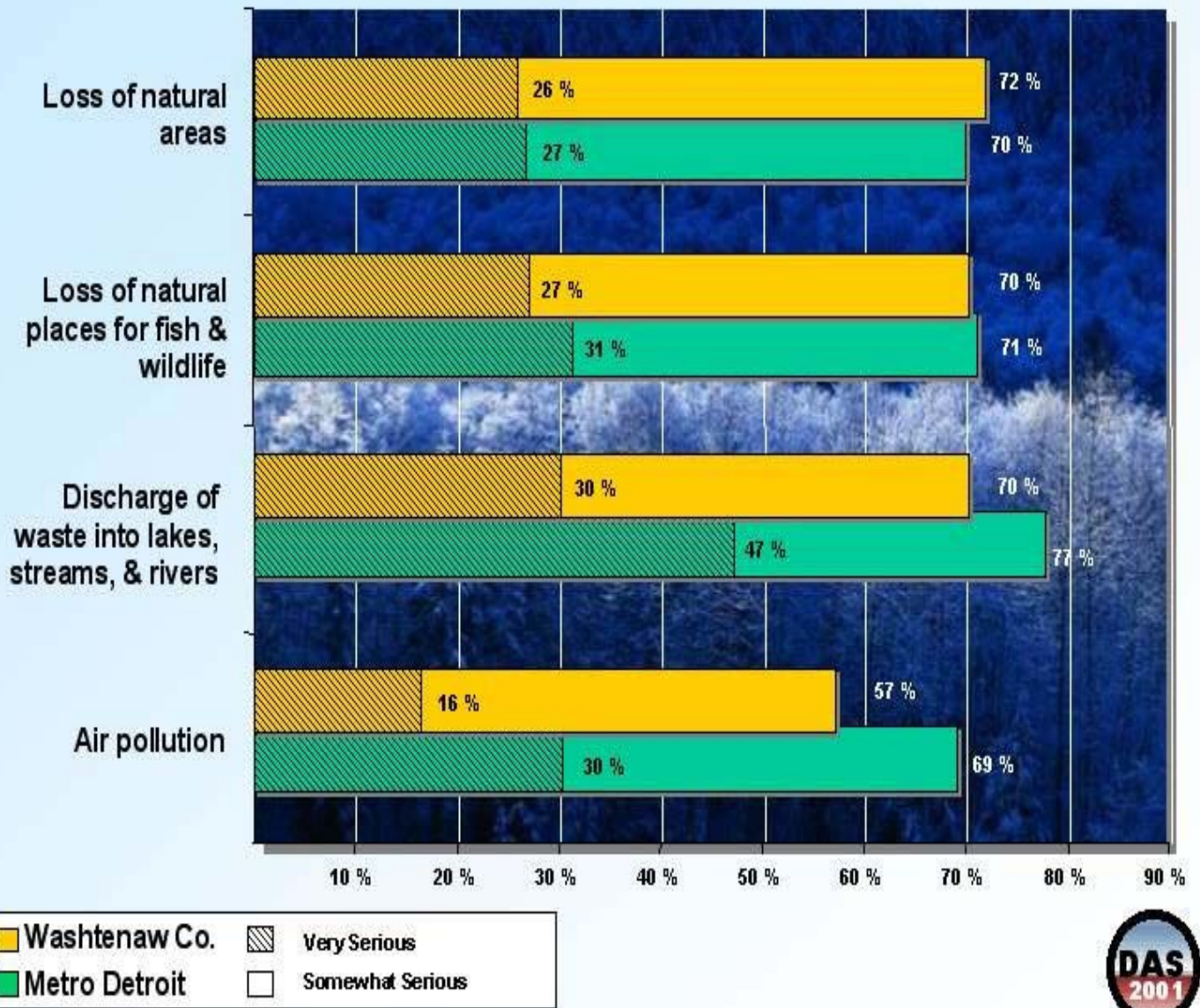


and perception is a function of the community education which is part of the community engagement / indicators / action / compact performance cycle.

The following four indicators should be viewed in total. They progress from Washtenaw County residents' **Perception of Environmental Problems** to a seemingly inconsistent pattern of priority and **Willingness to Pay More Taxes** to address those problems. The next two indicators—**Travel Behavior** and **Neighborhood Preference**—are powerful measures of a region's willingness to change person behaviors in order to achieve sustainable goals. The last two accurately capture “market forces” running counter to achieving solutions to the problems laid out in the first indicator.

# 1. Perception of Environmental Problems Indicator

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS**  
 (proportion of respondents reporting serious problem)



## 4. Neighborhood Preference Indicator

Definitions: The two neighborhoods described above differ in their transportation options. They are defined as follow:

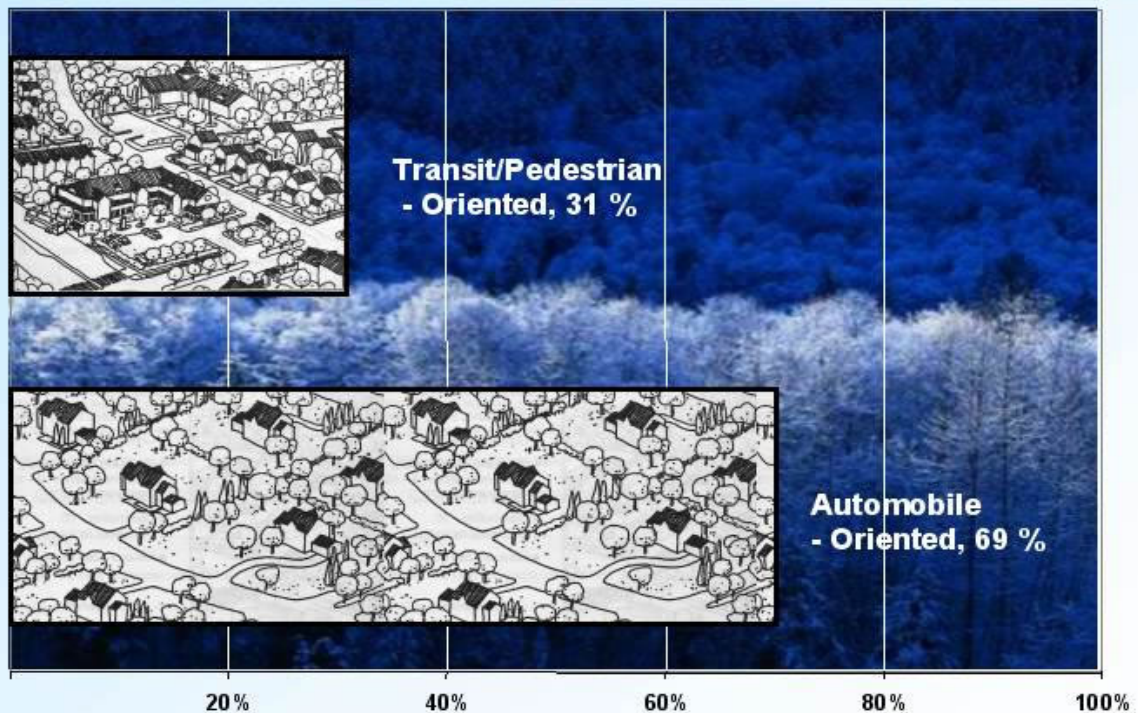
### Transit/Pedestrian-Oriented Neighborhood

- Good Public Transportation
- Convenient Walking
- Shopping, parks, library, and schools within a 10-15 minute walk
- Commuting—20 minutes away by transit
- Houses close together

### Automobile-Oriented Neighborhood

- Convenient Driving
- Not convenient to walk or use public transit
- Shopping, parks, library, and schools within a 10-15 minute drive
- Commuting—20 minutes away by car
- Single family houses on large lot

## PREFERENCE FOR TRANSIT/PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED NEIGHBORHOOD – WASHTENAW CO.



## **VI. ECONOMIC VITALITY**

Several indicators were chosen to assess the state of economic vitality in Washtenaw County. These indicators are of the kinds: economic strength, mobility and living standards.

### **A. Economic Strength**

**(TBD)**

#### **Regional Mobility**

The ease of moving people and goods across the region is an important aspect of economic vitality – and social and environmental vitality, as well. A smooth flowing transportation system can minimize environmental impacts (air, land, water) and improve productivity (shorter, less stressful commutes). The indicators chosen to measure regional mobility are the following: transit accessibility (percent of households, shopping and work sites that have public transportation available); transportation mode split (use of automobiles, transit and others); alternative transportation incentives.

#### **Percentage of households, shopping and work sites that are accessible to have public transportation.**

*Why is this important?*

Increasing the availability of transit as an option for traveling to work has many benefits. The primary economic benefit is that it allows workers who do not own a car or who choose not to own a car greater choice of and access to jobs throughout the region. The level of congestion on the region's highways affects our quality of life. Traffic congestion is a function of economic activity and the way we design our cities and outlying municipalities. The location of jobs and housing and the availability and accessibility of travel options, such as transit and carpooling affect our decisions about how we travel to work. It allows workers to travel in a less polluting mode than a private automobile and, as congestion on highways increases, it can offer a more reliable and timely mode of travel.

*How are we doing?*

TBD – can use GIS, census data and AATA routes to determine. Communities with new development can update it.

## **Modes of Transportation**

*Why is this important?*

The decisions we make about how we get to work depend on a number of factors: The location of work site relative to our home is most important. The closer we live to work or shopping the more likely we are to walk, ride a bike or take a bus. Another factor is the design of our work sites and the proximity of transit services. If our work site is within walking distance of restaurants, stores, and commercial services and is accessible by transit, we are more likely to leave our car at home.

*How are we doing?*

TBD – possibly use WATS model once developed.

### **3. Alternative Transportation Incentives**

*Why is this important?*

The number of employers that offer alternative transportation incentives or at least accommodate their employees who seek such alternatives can significantly impact freeway congestion and downtown gridlock. Organizing car or vanpools, creating flexible schedules, providing sheltered bike parking with changing accommodations, distributing transit tokens, and designing sidewalks to heighten pedestrian access are all examples of providing incentives for use of alternative transportation modes.

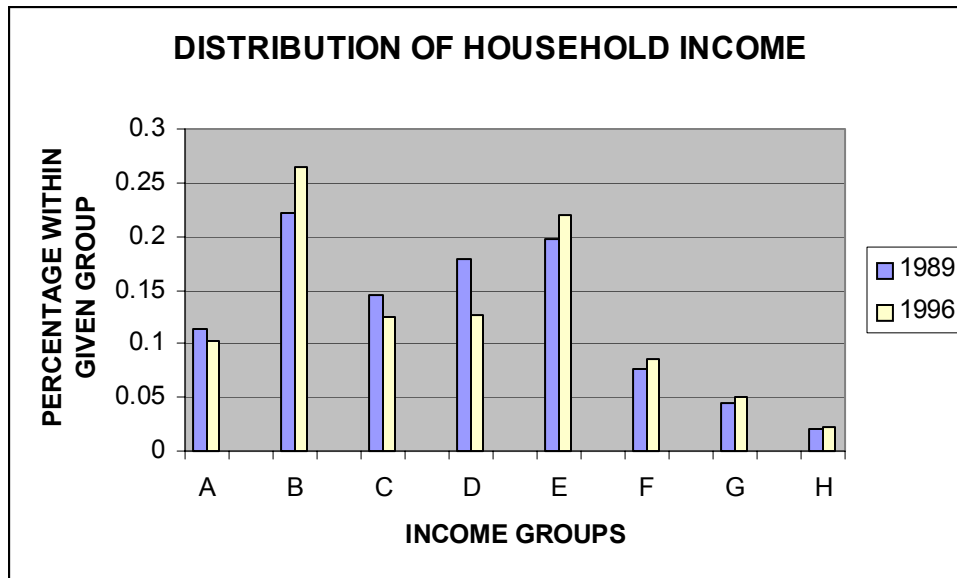
*How are we doing?*

TBD – Ann Arbor Chamber is a prime proponent of these incentives.

## C. Living Standards

Above all else, economic vitality is likely to produce a rising living standard for the residents of the region. To assess the living standards for the region's residents, we selected changes in the level of household income, indicators of housing affordability, and a measure of children in poverty.

### 1. Household Income Indicator



**Income Groups:** A – less than \$10,000; B - \$10,000 to \$24,999; C - \$25,999 to \$34,999; D- \$35,000 to \$49,999; E - \$50,000 to \$74,999; F - \$75,000 to \$99,999; G - \$100,000 to \$149,999; H – above \$150,000.

#### *Why Is This Important?*

This indicator examines the real change throughout the distribution of household income groups. It focuses attention on the distribution of gains across the household income spectrum.

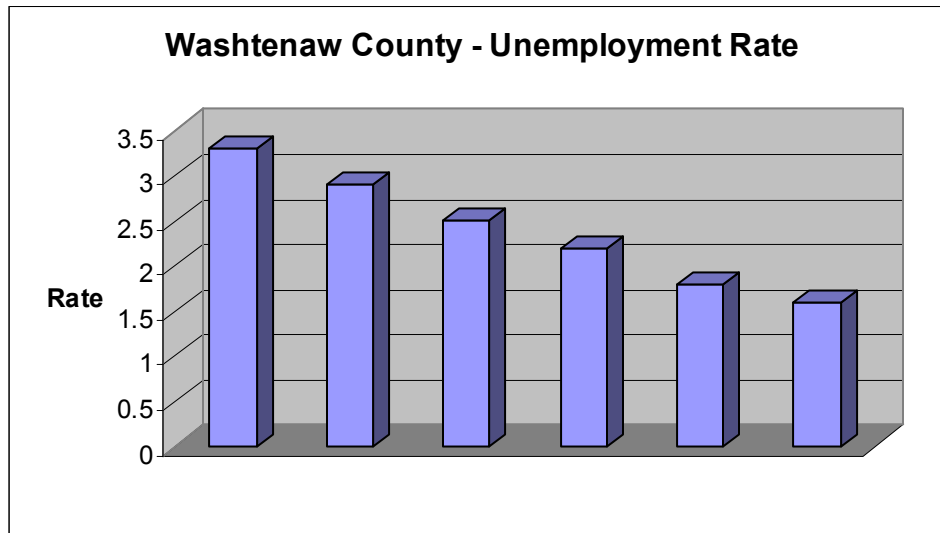
#### *How Are We Doing?*

While the estimated median household income of Washtenaw County moved from \$36,307 in 1989 to \$75,386 in 1998, the distribution actually shows an increase in the gap between the top 7% and the bottom 50%. Income groups A, B & C, representing incomes up to \$34,999, accounted for half the families in both 1989 and 1996. Thus the standard of living remained constant for the bottom 50% while the household income at the top improved. This gap has consequences for social equity as well as the County's ability to hold its workforce.



## 2. Employment Indicator

The unemployment rate has been steadily declining in Washtenaw County for the past six years. In 1995 the rate was 3.3%, in 1996 it was 2.9%, in 1997 it was 2.5%, in 1998 it was 2.2%, in 1999 it was 1.8%, and in 2000 the unemployment rate dropped to 1.6%.



## 3. Housing Affordability Indicator

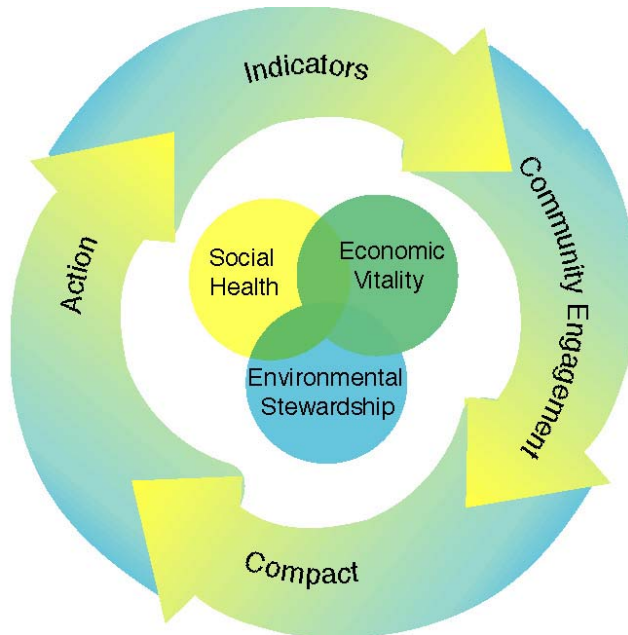
**(TBD)**

## 4. Children in Poverty Indicator

Per the US Census, despite the nearly 141% increase in household income in the 1990's, there was an increase in the percentage of children living in poverty over the decade. In 1989, 10.5% of the children living in the County were considered living below the poverty level. By 1997, this figure had increased to 12% of the children of Washtenaw County living in poverty.

## VII. TEN AVENUES OF ACTION

With the indicators in place to measure and to spur community dialogue, we now turn to the next element of our Sustainable Washtenaw Strategic Framework: action.



The members of Sustainable Washtenaw propose the following avenues to bold action. The Ten Avenues are inextricably interconnected, and they are directly linked to pursuing vitality across the economic, social and environmental arenas. The order of listing is not intended to imply a priority.

Enable a diversified and sustainable economy to continue to prosper and provide jobs and a high quality of life for all Washtenaw County residents.

Accommodate sufficient affordable housing to all income levels within Washtenaw County to match population increases and job generation.

Target transportation investment to achieve a world-class comprehensive, integrated and balanced multi-modal system that supports efficient land use and decreases dependency on single-occupancy vehicle trips.

Preserve and restore the region's natural assets, including the Huron River, farmland, open space, other habitats, and air and water quality.

Use resources efficiently, eliminate pollution and significantly reduce waste.

Focus investment to preserve and revitalize neighborhoods.

Provide all residents with the opportunity for quality education and lifelong learning to help them meet their highest aspirations.

Promote healthy and safe communities.

Implement local government fiscal reforms and revenue sharing.

Stimulate civic engagement.

These Ten Avenues to Action form the centerpiece of the **Draft Compact**, which is published in the next section.

## **REGIONAL COMPACT**

**We, the undersigned elected officials of Washtenaw County, hereby declare our support for this Compact. We are dedicated to regional coordination, cooperation and collaboration to plan for future generations. We agree that:**

- We are part of Washtenaw County, a sub-region of Southeast Michigan.
- We must maintain and value our individual community identities within this region.
- We will lose our unique community identities unless we work together.
- We can maximize the benefits of growth, while protecting our region and communities from costly sprawl and its negative impact on the natural environment.
- We already have some tools to address today's and future challenges, but we must also develop new tools.
- We will develop new collaborations, while strengthening established cooperative activities in such areas as:
  - Transportation – Mobility and Accessibility
  - Parks, Open Space and Trails

- Agriculture and Land Use
- Water Supply and Quality
- Air Quality
- Education
- Arts and Entertainment
- Emergency Management and Disaster Preparedness
- Public Health and Safety
- Housing

We will establish a dialogue in our communities to make further regional progress and to assure that this progress is sustainable.

Shepherding Washtenaw County’s economic, social and environmental vitality offers us both challenges and opportunities. In particular, the region needs to work together to achieve four major goals:

**Goal 1. Create Coherent Regional Growth and Development Patterns.**

**Goal 2. Coordinate Land Use, Infrastructure, Public Services and Transportation.**

**Goal 3. Reinforce our Community Identities and Sense of Place while Maintaining Quality of Life for all Income Levels.**

**Goal 4. Protect and Enhance Open Space and Recreational Opportunities.**

To carry forward the work of the Washtenaw County Compact, We will:

- Meet regularly to review progress and coordinate activities
- Report regularly to the citizens of Washtenaw County, informing the community of our progress in each of these areas.

We recognize that this document is not legally enforceable. We nevertheless enter into this Compact in a spirit of full cooperation and with anticipation that this spirit will lead to the sustainability of the quality of life in the region for all of its inhabitants.



## **IX. APPENDIX A – DATA SOURCES**

The 34 indicators presented were chosen in consultation with 10 indicator action teams. These teams, comprised of residents throughout Washtenaw County, convened meetings and surveyed hundreds of citizens. They interviewed civic leaders, and they reviewed the experiences of other communities around the country who tackled similar projects. These teams made the important and often difficult decisions about which indicators to include in this inaugural *Sustainable Washtenaw Indicators Report*. These indicator action teams developed many of the data sources listed below.

This report intended as a living document; our goal is to periodically review the relevance of the indicators, making changes in future editions as new and better data becomes available.

### **Arts and Culture**

Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs  
FY2002 Arts & Cultural Grants  
<http://www.cis.state.mi.us/arts/grants/grants.htm>

### **Education**

These three indicators will be developed by a UM student project in the fall of 2002. This project will be coordinated under the auspices of the Sustainable Washtenaw Steering Committee.

### **Child Support**

Statistical data obtained from Washtenaw County Friend of the Court, PO Box 8645, Ann Arbor, MI 48107 (734-994-2466).

### **Teen Births**

“Moving In a Healthy Direction”, Washtenaw County Health Improvement Plan (HIP) Progress Report, Washtenaw County Public Health Department, presented by the Community Health Committee in December 2001 (see full results at <http://www.co.washtenaw.mi.us/depts/health/kids3Ateenpreg.pdf>)  
Michigan Department of Community Health (found at <http://www.michigan.gov/mdch>)

### **Divorce Rates**

**2000 Michigan Occurrence Marriage and Divorce Files,  
Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics,  
Michigan Department of Community Health,**

**found at**

**<http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/index.asp?Id=5>.**

“A Portrait of Washtenaw County”, MSU Extension, found at  
<http://www.msue.msu.edu/countyprofiles/washtena/temp/Washtenaw.pdf>

## Safety

The State of Michigan Uniform Crime Report 2000.

[www.state.mi.us/msp/cjic/ucrstats](http://www.state.mi.us/msp/cjic/ucrstats)

## Community Health

Washtenaw County Public Health Department HIP Progress Report,  
December 2001

[http://www.ewashtenaw.org/content/ph\\_adults10Ahinsurance.pdf](http://www.ewashtenaw.org/content/ph_adults10Ahinsurance.pdf)

## Civic Engagement

The Washtenaw County Clerk's Office and the Detroit Area Study 2000.

<http://www.tcaup.umich.edu/workfolio/DAS2001/index.html>

## Environmental Quality

TBD

## Resource Use

Washtenaw County Department of Parks and Recreation.

[http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/parks\\_recreation/pr\\_index.html](http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/parks_recreation/pr_index.html)

## “Disconnect” – Perception and Preference

The Detroit Area Study 2000.

<http://www.tcaup.umich.edu/workfolio/DAS2001/index.html>

## Economic Strength

**TBD**

## Regional Mobility

The Washtenaw Area Transportation Study. [www.miwats.org](http://www.miwats.org)

## Living Standards

Washtenaw Economic Development Council. <http://wdc-econdev.com/>