

Urban Region | Public Workshop
 Washtenaw County Comprehensive Plan
 Wednesday, December 10, 2003
 Washtenaw Community College

**Regional Public Comments
 on
 Issues & Opportunities in Washtenaw County**

LAND USE OPEN SPACE	
Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more economically and socially diverse housing developments • New construction developments waste land • Increase housing density • Need to retain unique identity of small towns & hamlets • Absence of “community” in suburban developments • Too many strip developments along with less identifiable boundaries (green space) between communities • Unregulated/poorly directed residential planning • Promote legislation that will permit more progressive planning, zoning & funding options • Update antiquated zoning rules (i.e., height restrictions, “mother-in-law” apartments) • Zoning through litigation very costly • Lack of tools & resources to properly manage our growth • Too many real estate developments • County-wide we need to limit sprawl and increase density in urbanized areas • Increase development in areas with high or medium density zoning • There are more and more people growing up in suburbs and expect more of the same – larger homes and lots • Freeze pending developments • Density and current development is not nearly dense enough, moreover, it is not designed to foster community • Sprawl is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ unattractive ○ a poor use of land ○ costly, places burden on governments due to higher infrastructure and school costs than it generates in tax revenues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Washtenaw-specific list priorities with SEMCOG • Discourage increased auto use • Need a better land use plan for housing, transportation patterns, building activities, etc. • Plan/direct growth and land use. Don’t let land use plan you. • Actually adhere to master plans that are developed, defend in court • Have the legal authority to say no to a perspective development. Cities now don’t seem to have enough or don’t use it. • Local zoning needs to comply with a county plan in order to achieve diversity. Local autonomy leads to “not in my back yard” • Design neighborhoods and communities that reduce traffic congestion and provide diverse opportunities for access to community activities • Make most out of use of urban areas • More developed “urban” mixed use centers, less sprawl, i.e., strip malls • Improve plan/zoning education of local boards • Create high densities in existing municipalities and along main roads to save green space • Increase housing density • Require development designs to incorporate business and support services to create communities instead of subdivisions • Change zoning to encourage density and mixed income development • Encourage density along transit corridors • Support/require better land use legislation from the state government • Follow community planning principles, adopt by all units of local government • Maintain interesting old neighborhoods • Some planning from past remains important today, i.e., parks in neighborhoods

LAND USE OPEN SPACE	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ destructive of farmland ○ anti-pedestrian ○ anti-transit ○ auto-dependent ● There is a huge amount of people that commute to Washtenaw County, maybe housing closer to jobs would keep the traffic down. ● How about cluster housing, more density means less sprawl and sprawl is taking up excellent farmland. ● Too much urban sprawl/unfocused community development. Small planned community developments are being scattered across rural lands outside suburban/urban areas with no centralized development strategy. ● Lack of businesses within walking distance ● No, or little, consideration of visual & spatial qualities of proposed developments. ● Setbacks create “low quality” green space & false sense of privacy ● Need standards and rules in planning to moderate organic nature of growth (shows how to address fears) ● Directly connect residential areas with parks and green space ● Land development has not kept up with best available knowledge, especially with respect to watershed issues ● Update arcane development criteria such as road width, size of parking lots ● Transformation of Townships into “Anywhere, USA” (i.e., big box stores, chain stores) ● Sprawl = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ugly ○ poor use of resources (waste of \$\$) ○ loss of wildlife ● Improve health of cities ● Fear & lack of understanding of density ● Mitigate NIMBY (Not-In-My-Back-Yard) attitudes ● Need for coordinated transportation/transit planning and connection to land use planning ● People unwilling to consider or defer to what’s best for the Community ● Need coordinated development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Slow residential growth ● Create sufficient densities to support infrastructure ● More multiple unit/closer-together housing, save “green” land ● Establish maximum lot sizes instead of minimum ones ● Develop designs that make high density development an attractive lifestyle. Easy access to parks and shopping. ● No qualitative development standards, opportunity for innovation in development ● Create a Countywide plan that supercedes local planning and creates an overall consistent land use vision ● Integrate businesses (workplaces) and shopping areas with residential areas ● Encourage mixed use areas: workplaces in scale commensurate with nearby housing, local stores in walking distance (a gas station, food, books, etc.), library quick-stop pickup stations, recreation and housing of various price ranges ● Create qualitative development standards through public workshops and research ● Create Live/Work development along Geddes Blvd./Huron Parkway in Superior Twp. towards Ann Arbor Twp. ● Developments designed with community in mind, should be higher density, mixed use, pedestrian-oriented, not auto-centric, transit-oriented, ● Infill in existing urban/suburban areas, or directly adjacent to them ● When land is developed, a portion should be set aside as a natural setting (or left untouched, not mowed) ● Limit agriculture zoning to 40-50 acres so that property cannot be split especially in the areas further out from the city. This will reduce sprawl and allow farming to survive

TRANSPORTATION TRANSIT	
Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce unclear street patterns, one-ways, changing street names • Make cities/villages/townships more walkable • Reduce auto dependence • Shopping areas are not bike friendly • Need better transit system, current one has good time schedule, but are too far apart • Washtenaw & Carpenter intersection: too much traffic • Coordinate transportation by creating incentives to reduce car use to/from work, leisure • Create public transit options between towns and to Detroit • Too much traffic on Washtenaw and Geddes • Lack of county-wide transit opportunities • Increase in number of traffic jams • Traffic speeds are too high • Need more and better transit options • Extreme excess of motor vehicles, need to encourage more alternative transportation • Too much reliance on widening roads to deal with congestion • Too many cars on the road, no place to park, can't park in front of own house • Traffic congestion on I-94 in Ann Arbor • Relative lack of viable mass transit, e.g. no mass transit to airports • Need better roads • Develop a Transportation oriented master plan that allows people to live close to their place of work. Reduce the need for auto-based lifestyles by providing housing with walkable access to daily life needs. • Declining road conditions, both within and outside high-traffic (mainly urban) areas, road conditions are beginning to decline with seemingly little construction being done to remedy it. • County has too few areas to ride bicycles, walk, use the bus outside Ann Arbor city limits • Transit, limited hours going to/from downtown AA/Ypsi at night • Public Transportation, especially in urban areas, public transportation is not quite convenient enough to make it preferable to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote less dependence on cars – Build roads and housing and shops to allowing walking/biking, Improve public transportation • Washtenaw County would be better if it had county-wide bike paths on the roads (bike friendly) • On-road bicycle facilities on all new and reconstructed roads • Developing an excellent public transport system in order to reduce traffic/pollution • Meaningful support for transportation alternatives, de-emphasis on road widening • Coordinate transportation by creating incentives to reduce car use to/from work, leisure • Transit Planning – coordinates its transit county-wide and with contiguous counties • Reduce driving distances and pollution by public transportation • Develop transportation alternatives to the automobile • Develop long-term strategy to encourage mass transit and non motorized use • Commuter rail to connect different cities • Create right-of-way (ROW) master plans • Provide even more convenient bus schedules • County wide transit needs to be paid county wide • More development of bike paths/walking routes • Bike paths included with all new roads and road enhancements • Better public transportation • Require all new developments and renovations (e.g. road paving) to provide alternatives to auto transportation (e.g., sidewalks, bike lanes, safe intersections for pedestrians, bus stops) • Countywide public transportation plan with city hubs • Well-connected transportation systems of all kinds to provide multi-modal choice, with conscious reduction of “cars first” – stop building cul-de-sacs • Improve parking access for UM, it's become almost impossible to attend an event there • Better transportation planning and design, non-motorized transportation rates, improve

TRANSPORTATION TRANSIT	
Issues	Opportunities
<p>automobile transportation. However, the increased difficulty of parking in urban areas is also making this mode more inconvenient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need better transportation network for bikes to connect urban areas • Limited rail connections, Ypsilanti to Chelsea through Dexter. • Limited bus service, few connections, few park 'n' ride lots since Arborland no longer viable • Lack of alternative methods of transportation, e.g., public transit, bike lanes, safe crossings for pedestrians at intersections • Public transportation further into suburbs • Need traffic & public transportation and safe bike paths for transportation • Improve deteriorating roads • Too much congestion on Ellsworth and lack of traffic lights onto it • Need more bike paths • Too much traffic congestion, too many cars on road, lack of public transport options • Overdependence on cars • Less traffic congestion does NOT mean more and bigger roads 	<p>public/mass transit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit between core cities and all bedroom villages • Traffic – make places difficult to drive in, persuades people to use transit, walk, bike and create “downtowns” – not sprawl with huge lots along collector roads • Progressive enhancements in public transportation – to keep ahead of future transportation needs – also dealing with congestive parking situation in urban areas • We have an opportunity to lower our dependence on the automobile as a primary source of transportation • Progressive road and infrastructure maintenance and repair – Keep road, sidewalk and other infrastructure conditions up instead of waiting until there is significant decline in conditions • Streets – ensure adequate streets before zillions of houses go in. Companies that come to downtown need access for employees to get to work • Public Transit- put more bus routes outside Ann Arbor, make it easier to go from one side of town to the other without going downtown • Stoplights – stoplights should be timed on major streets, Ellsworth, State, and Ann Arbor-Saline Road. • Encourage more circulations and smaller buses with frequent service, have more park and ride lots, more people carpooling together • Build more bicycle trails, feed links to Huron River paths, encourage more safety for bicyclists and pedestrians by signs, street markings • Better bicycle usability, greenway along Huron River, more bike lanes and paths in general • More people need to walk their talk. When was the last time we took the bus when we could have?

HOUSING	
Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan housing options for what community wants (needs rather than just happening) • Increase supply of affordable housing (county-wide) • Need mix of housing types to accommodate workforce housing and cut down on commutes • Increase affordable housing dispersal throughout County • Many people can't afford to live where they work, why can't they get extra credit for mortgage to reduce traffic problems • Increase/Regulate barrier free housing • Encouraging the building of different kinds of housing is important • Housing being turned into group housing, destroying the neighborhood concept • Have UM more involved with replacing the downtown housing they tear down and eliminate, taking into account for other large institutions that may do the same • Affordable housing, housing costs are very high for moderate and low incomes • Housing prices too expensive in Ann Arbor, but fringe suburban areas not very livable • Affordable housing & affordable taxes for younger families & those on fixed incomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More quality housing for low income people • Stricter controls on housing developments • Work with UM to deal with student housing and faculty housing. It should not be up to local landlords to rent old houses. • Discourage "status" housing in favor of low-to-moderate housing, don't let Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti be a place the people who work there can't live in • Encourage affordable housing, housing mix • Affordable housing through use of design, such as cluster development, higher density, redevelop older areas • Housing – more density and more units in cities reduces prices – law of supply and demand, also require artificially affordable housing to be included in new developments and mix types of housing in neighborhoods, allow accessory apartments • We have the opportunity to provide a range of housing options for the range of economic levels of county residents • Housing – more quantity and quality of affordable housing, promote cohousing, co-ops, condos, townhouses, senior residences • Use of multi-family cluster housing where land is left vacant for all to enjoy • Provide low-income housing to keep county diverse

NATURAL RESOURCES AGRICULTURE HISTORIC PRESERVATION	
Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce loss of agricultural land • Need better connection of parks-greenways • More effort to preserve large trees and valuable natural features • Too many disappearing natural areas • Lack of recreation facilities for all ages, e.g. water parks, dry ski slopes • Too many ozone alert days now, what will happen in future? • Washtenaw County should work to maintain and improve our air quality • Overdevelopment, impacts on natural features, impacts on wild flora & fauna, impact on Huron River Watershed and tributaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need county-wide farmland PDR millage • Need county-wide PDR/TDR program • Preserve viable agriculture • Protect natural areas wherever and whenever possible • Increase emphasis on environmental preservation, preservation of rural areas, natural areas, trees and natural features in cities • Enforce regulation and protection of wetlands • Improve river conditions to be able to swim in them. • Provide incentives to maintain open space and farmlands

NATURAL RESOURCES AGRICULTURE HISTORIC PRESERVATION	
Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment, how to control water sources, quality of water. We cannot depend on artificial water purification process alone to have good water • Lack of protection for natural features, fens, forests, etc. • Not enough preservation of hamlets, villages and rural areas • Loss of farmland, economics of farmland taxation • No assessment of quality & use of green space, forest is as valuable as an urban vacant lot • No comprehensive plan for preserving natural features • Assess ecological health, loss of wood lots, wildlife, loss of open space • Loss of open space, small place feel • Pressure to tear down historic structures in all areas • Declining bikeability & walkability • Improve access to quality recreational centers for exercise • Improve access to parks • Lack of exercise facilities. County gym is too small. Need more facilities outside west of Ann Arbor • Need nearby parks and open spaces • Absence of neighborhood parks • No coherency of green space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement various PDR and open space protection initiatives • Create greenbelt throughout county and into adjacent counties • Support historic museum, parkland and open space – paid for by business and industry, demand more from UM to support community • Maintain/Market historical identities • Conduct an inventory of existing natural features, rank them according to value, and limit development to lower value areas • Preservation of farmland, encourage/help build buffers between ag land and sensitive natural features • Return drainage ditches to natural flow • Direct development away from Waterloo Recreation Area, and wetlands and water resources • Require working mitigation for developed open spaces. Mitigation for all rare and sensitive natural area types • More connection and preservation of natural areas. Natural corridors and buffers around natural areas • We have the opportunity to solve several environmental problems at one time by providing high density residential development, close to jobs – lower greenhouse gases, save farmland, save wildlife habitat and build human centered communities • Open space/agricultural protection through PDR/TDR, growth boundaries around cities • Encourage water conservation and limit use in yards, use recycled water on golf courses – refer to Scottsdale, AZ policies • Link open space and trails – greenway system • Build off excellent existing parks around the city • Parks – new opportunities for more activity in existing park system • Link county-wide open space, parks, rail trails • Widening and extension of Gallup Park trail system to Downtown Ann Arbor • Parks – more of them, more hiking opportunities • Build more and better health and exercise indoor facilities, put in areas around the county

PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE	
Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads & sewers not up to same government specs • Overloading of existing infrastructure (roads, sewers, electrical facilities) • Maintain/Improve water supply • Mounting pressure for more urban density with minimal commitment to addressing aging/failing infrastructures, particularly water systems • Lack of public will to invest in needed services such as transportation (roads + transit), parks, utilities, etc. • Need sanitary sewer and water lines in townships available for development and failing septic systems • Encourage all residents to reduce trash and recycle more • No recycling in Scio Township, why doesn't county run recycle centers + bins + facilities • People using facilities & not paying for them • All jurisdictions should grow only as fast and in amount that can be serviced by tax base • Costs of fire & police protection in low density areas • Access to reasonable continuing education • Well-funded public education, both lower and higher • Unequal taxation among local units of government • Developers need to pay real costs of effects on environment, quality of life • Not enough services in central cities, i.e., affordable grocery stores • Assess economic impact of how farmland is taxed • Since townships do not provide urban services -schools, recreation, shopping, police, etc – residents and visitors clog city streets seeking services in the city • Deteriorating quality of life in urban areas • Improve intergovernmental cooperation for planning • The townships and cities in Washtenaw do little to coordinate land use planning. The county could act as a convener and facilitator • Create vision for Washtenaw County and lay out how it will be achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of stand-alone sewer systems • Increase urban revitalization/infrastructure funding • Maintain/Expand excellent public library systems • Incorporate joint city/village/township agreements on land use • Similar rules across County would aid both development and preservation • Require new developments to pay cost of new roads, schools, utilities, parks, etc. • Municipalities should not extend water/sewer leads to developments in rural areas • County should control and design recycling facilities and services • More county wide revenue sharing to improve equitable amenities • Reform taxes on farmland • Coordinated litigation protection for local governmental authority • Develop quantified targets related to where we want County to go, broken down by jurisdictions, broken down by category, fair distribution with regards to land use, transportation, revitalization • Foster governments, private companies, and people working together. Focus on making this a place to live. • More citizen involvement in making Washtenaw County a better place to live. • Greater coordination of governmental planning • Use resources at UM's School of Architecture and Urban Planning • Seek leadership and political will to make public investments, i.e., transit and sewer infrastructure • County backed litigation protection (under well prescribed conditions) • Improve publicity for public services and public needs • Provide assistance to local governments on how to craft legally defensible plans and zoning • Careful county/local government assessment of SEMCOG projected populations and self defined projections • Coordinated regional/community planning with

PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE	
Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient coordinated planning with adjacent counties • Need to move to more regional government (township ideal may be antiquated?) • Regional planning might be better than individual city/village/township planning • Need assessment of development on creating future problems • Insufficient cooperation/coordination between providers of similar services (ex: bus service) • Citizen fear and resistance to change, no one wants growth near them. 	<p>enforcement power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated planning in sub-county areas centered around cities, villages and townships • Ensure that urban areas remain desirable places to live and work by focusing resources on value added services and projects • Take advantage of the activist, involved, caring population in this county • Vigilant about growth, on-going planning meetings, town meetings to get people involved • Get all residents involved to solve problems, Washtenaw County contains an intelligent and well-educated population • Improve relations between universities and businesses/universities and community • Cross-jurisdictional boundaries – develop authorities overlapping jurisdictional boundaries, i.e., YCUA, County parks • Communication between townships and cities regarding planning and sharing services/parks/needs • Educate our citizens about how cities are vital to county health, how density saves money and resources • Offer a new vision for community development for our state, “We could be Portland, Oregon!” • Develop coordination between local units of government to create a cohesive master plan • Coordinate planning in townships. Have some areas set aside for large housing tracts and manufactured housing communities • More municipal control over rural and suburban development – don’t let private development interests completely drive planning and development throughout the region • More/better coordination between localities in region(county) – both between residents and government/planning commissions

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for basic stores downtown (groceries, drug stores, etc) • Stratification by income due to zoning laws • Serious job growth is projected; the county needs to ensure that we remain an attractive place to locate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance viability of communities outside Ann Arbor including Ypsilanti, Dexter, Manchester, Milan, Saline, and Chelsea • Washtenaw County needs to ensure that training is occurring to create a sought after workforce

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of adequate jobs that provide livable wages • Don't assume all work needs to be centralized, work to cut commutes by clustering housing, stores and smaller workplaces, work at home • Create more ways to live/work in same place • Business and Industry should take on more of the burden, not receive tax breaks • Recognize aging of farmers in county and effects on agricultural economy • Need to recognize impacts of decisions on established neighborhoods and preserve vitality of urban areas • Improve economic diversity throughout the county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washtenaw County would be better if it proactively attracts technology-driven businesses, de-emphasize manufacturing • Expand redevelopment of brownfield areas • Allow for mixed income communities • Market specialized farming opportunities – organic, community farms, niche farms • Encourage business and industry to include public land, like Domino's Farms • Decrease economic pressure that drives people off farms, keep a reasonable amount of local food production capacity, and keep some contiguity of farming resources • Stressing development and improvements in less popular areas – don't only concentrate improvements in areas already popular to the public – try to bolster areas that have potential, but are and have been overlooked "spread the wealth" • Brownfield redevelopment, not Greenfield development (development on open land) • Encourage flexible workplace environments • Have county job fairs each month, help the unemployed workers gain solid paying jobs • More diversity – ethnic, cultural outside Ann Arbor, also housing and economic diversity • Washtenaw County would be better if it strengthens the attractiveness of its cities and towns