

The Process

In the fall of 2003, the political leadership of the Washtenaw Metro region came together out of a shared belief that many issues bearing on the long-term success of their communities were in fact regional concerns and should be addressed as such. It was understood that the region's continued development and growth offered both opportunities and challenges, and that many issues related to the growth of the region were better managed through partnership.

The result of the efforts was the creation of the Washtenaw Metro Alliance (WMA), a voluntary body represented by the region's cities and townships, together with Washtenaw County, aimed at tackling regional concerns proactively.

A series of workshop sessions were held with the WMA partners to identify key strategic considerations early in the process. In addition, workshops were held with the public to identify the interests, concerns, and sensitivities of area residents on the subjects of open space and green infrastructure. Based on these workshops, WMA developed a set of goals and objectives for the plan including:

- Elevating open space to a matter of regional importance in order to draw greater support to the issue, both publicly and politically.
- Offering a regional perspective on the subject of open space, through which regional priorities with the greatest strategic significance can be identified and focused on collectively.
- Organizing and aligning the various resources available throughout the region for maximum effectiveness.



The Goals

The Plan for Coordinated Parkland and Open Space has several goals:

- Coordinate open space preservation efforts throughout the WMA region for maximum long-term benefit.
- Elevate the stature and visibility of the "green infrastructure" concept region-wide, to support preservation efforts and promote the region.

Definition of Green Infrastructure

A functional system of open spaces that exhibits connectivity, considered essential for successful communities.

- Focus preservation efforts on critical elements of the region's "green infrastructure," to preserve intact, viable systems and functional open space for future generations.
- Reform land use policies region-wide to achieve broader success in open space preservation.
- Capitalize on the capabilities of existing programs in the administration, management, maintenance and stewardship of preserved open space.
- Develop partnerships to further preservation objectives throughout the region.
- Improve, enhance and coordinate means of connecting residents to the parkland and other open spaces they enjoy.



The Benefits—The Regional Impact

The Washtenaw Metro Alliance identified the key benefits of collaborating on an open space preservation plan.

Open Space Is A Regional Issue—Open space is enjoyed collectively by all our citizens, and makes a direct and indirect contribution to the quality of life of the region as a whole.

Our Resources Need To Be Stretched—Consolidating efforts on a regional scale will result in efficiencies and greater impact.

Action Needs To Be Taken Now—The region as a whole is under pressure, and limited fiscal capacity will strain preservation efforts.

We Should Look At The "Big Picture"—A regional look at open space provides a wider perspective and creates a systematic approach to preservation.

A Team Effort Is Required—In order to implement the plan, multiple entities need to be involved, and the dialogue needs to continue.

It Will Improve Our Quality Of Life—Preservation of open space will create a better quality of life for our citizens.

There Will Be An Economic Benefit—A coordinated open space preservation plan will facilitate economic development and create a strategic advantage for the entire region.

To view the full plan please visit
wma.ewashtenaw.org



Action Items and Next Steps

Getting the Word Out About Open Space—Provide information to residents, businesses and community groups about the plan. Let everyone know we care about our quality of life and get their comments on how we can have the best open space system possible.

Endorsing the Plan—WMA Members present the plan to their local Commissions and Boards. Local governments adopt the plan and incorporate the open space strategy into their master plans.

Strengthening the Partnerships—The high level of coordination among the existing partners that exists today increases as the partners help implement the plan. Regular meetings and cooperative structures will facilitate establishing a clearinghouse and identifying highest priority open space areas for acquisition.

Implementing the Plan—Open space partners serve as a clearinghouse for preservation information and assistance by coordinating activities and acting as a one-stop shop for preservation information and local, state and federal program assistance.

Leveraging Open Space Funds/Resources—Local governments and partners coordinate their funding resources to leverage state and federal programs. Partners work together to maintain or initiate local millages and explore new funding and grant opportunities.

Identifying Highest Priority Areas for Acquisition—Regional open space partners meet to identify important areas for preservation based on individual program goals, ability to connect open space in the region and to county-wide open space systems, public use and access and other important considerations.

Improving Pedestrian, Bicycle and Transit Access to the Region's Open Space—Develop a detailed access plan, identify funding and build access connections within the region and to larger open space systems such as the Border to Border Trail.

Coordinated Land Use and Development Approach—Regional governments adopt best practices and model ordinances to promote open space plan implementation such as open space development, access easements and transfer of development rights.

Monitoring Progress and Sharing Success—WMA will report on the progress made and additional actions needed to realize the vision and meet the open space goals for the region on an annual basis.

