



*Making the Urban-Rural  
Connection!*

## 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

[www.msue.msu.edu/unitedgrowth](http://www.msue.msu.edu/unitedgrowth)



Dear United Growth Members, Partners and Supporters,

2002 was quite a year for land use issues in Kent County and 2003 promises to be even more productive! As chairpersons and vice chairpersons of *United Growth for Kent County's* Rural and Urban Committees, we are pleased to present the project's 2002 annual report.

We continue to appreciate the 56 committee members and 82 Project Partners for their dedication and hard work. This report is only a summary of the many successes that were accomplished in partnership over the past year. Please take a few moments to review this report.

Thank you for your support over the past four years. We would also like to thank our 2002 funders who make this project possible: Americana Foundation, Comerica Bank, EPA Environmental Education Grants Program, FFA Glassbrook Endowment, Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Michigan Economic and Environmental Roundtable, Michigan State University, People and Land, Steelcase Foundation, Urban Cooperation Board and Wade-Trim.

Sincerely,

Jeanine Bryant  
2002 and 2003 Chair  
Urban Committee

Mary Hartfield  
2002 and 2003 Vice Chair  
Urban Committee

Cynthia Heinbeck  
2002 Chair  
Rural Committee

Cynthia Price  
2002 Vice Chair  
2003 Chair  
Rural Committee

For a more in-depth report, visit [www.msue.msu.edu/unitedgrowth/2002annualreport](http://www.msue.msu.edu/unitedgrowth/2002annualreport).



## 2002 Successes

- ?? United Growth Coalition Formation Committee Completes 2002 Action Plan
- ?? Grand Rapids Master Plan Involves Over 3,000 Residents
- ?? Kent County Purchase of Development Rights Program
- ?? West Side Neighborhood Undertakes Successful Planning Project
- ?? *This Land Is Your Land* Youth Land Use Learning Series Completed
- ?? Citizen Planner Certificates Awarded to Kent County Participants
- ?? Kent County Supports MSU Extension Land Use Educator
- ?? Gentrification Study of Two Grand Rapids Neighborhoods Completed
- ?? Profitability Supports Preservation: Increasing Profitability on the Fruit Ridge
- ?? MSU Faculty Research On Citizen Participation in Grand Rapids, Flint and Lansing
- ?? United Growth Receives GVMC Blueprint Award



## United Growth Coalition Formation Committee Completes 2002 Action Plan

In order to accomplish the United Growth project's goal of formalizing a sustainable, citizen-based organization focused on promoting positive land use in Kent County, the Rural and Urban Committees will unite under the umbrella of the United Growth Coalition. At the January 2001 Joint Meeting, an action plan was developed to determine the best options for the organizational structure of the Coalition. The Coalition Formation Committee was formed and carried out the action plan, which consisted of meeting with over 10 land use organizations. On February 26, 2003 Rural and Urban Committee members will determine the organizational structure based on the Coalition Formation Committee's findings. The Coalition is scheduled to be launched by early 2005.

Coalition Formation Committee: Dave Bee, Andy Bowman, Rick Chapla, Andy Guy, Sue Levandoski, Cynthia Price, Mike Williams, Kendra Wills

## West Side Neighborhood Undertakes Successful Planning Project

The South West Area Neighbors led their area through a planning process that created a shared vision for the redevelopment of their neighborhood and an Action Plan that will achieve the vision. Their planning effort, assisted by United Growth urban component coordinator Carol Townsend, culminated in a Neighborhood Summit on June 1, 2002. Action Teams have continued to meet to implement the Action Plan.

A manual, "Building Great Neighborhoods", is being written which describes the SWAN planning process model. It will provide a step-by-step guide to neighborhood-based planning. Funding for this

project was provided by Steelcase Foundation, Urban Cooperation Board, and MSU.

## Kent County PDR Program

On November 26, 2002, Kent County passed an ordinance that allows for growth, while designating areas for the preservation of prime and unique farmland through a voluntary purchase of development rights (PDR) program. United Growth's Rural and Urban Committees both passed resolutions in support of the PDR effort, while several members and partners participated in committee meetings and testified at the public hearing. Many United Growth members and partners articulated the connection between farmland preservation and reinvestment in the urban core-which is the foundation of the project.

The PDR ordinance was based on the work of two 25 member citizen committees, over 20 meetings and 350 individuals participating in the open process. Midwest Land Legacies, the Kent County Administrator's Office and Kent / MSU Extension partnered in staffing the PDR initiative.

## Grand Rapids Master Plan Involves Over 3,000 Residents

The Urban Committee of United Growth actively encouraged the City to seek neighborhood input in the development of the Master Plan.

The Grand Rapids Planning Department coordinated over 250 public meetings and involved over 3,000 people in the planning process. Urban Committee members Jay Hoekstra, Nancy Dudley, Rick Chapla, and Carol Townsend served on the Citizens Advisory Committee to the Master Plan. The City Commission approved the Plan in December 2002.



## This Land Is Your Land Youth Land Use Learning Series Completed

In an effort to equip tomorrow's leaders with the knowledge and tools to make wise land use decision in the future, MSU Extension, through the United Growth for Kent County project, partnered with several organizations to compile existing land use educational materials into a land use learning series for upper elementary students, 3rd through 5th grades.

**This Land Is Your Land** was designed to be an interactive, educational experiences for teachers and students to learn about land use planning and decision-making in their community. The series is the first of its kind to be tied to the Michigan Curriculum Framework standards (MEAP) in addition to the Kent County Collaborative Core Curriculum (KC<sup>4</sup>).

A design team, made up of representatives from United Growth Project Partner organizations including: GVMC, Michigan Farmland and Community Alliance, Michigan Farmers Union, and WMEAC served as the creative body that directed the project. Anne Williamson served as author of the series, Cynthia Price provided graphic design services and Kara Griffith served as senior editor.

This Land Is Your Land is available for free download from [www.msue.msu.edu/kent/yourland](http://www.msue.msu.edu/kent/yourland).



## Citizen Planner Certificates Awarded to Kent County Participants

Nine Kent County community leaders were recruited and funded by United Growth to participate in the February–May 2002 Ionia Citizen Planner Program. All received full scholarships through a Urban Cooperation Board grant. Six out of the nine participants received certificates of completion. Those receiving certificates were: Sr. Lucille Janowiak, Rural Committee, Grand Rapids Dominicans, WMEAC and Greater GR Food Systems Council member; Charles Lea, Cannon Township Planning Commissioner; Tom Medendorp, Vergennes Township Planning Commissioner; Korrie Ottenwess, GVSU; Guy Stermin, Cedar Springs Planning Commissioner; and Robert Swenson, Cannon Township Planning Commissioner.

For more information on Citizen Planner, visit [www.msue.msu.edu/cplanner](http://www.msue.msu.edu/cplanner)



*Citizen Planner Certificate Recipients: Korrie Ottenwess and Guy Stermin*

## Kent County Supports MSU Extension Land Use Educator

The Kent County Board of Commissioners approved the Urban Sprawl Committee's recommendation to provide partial salary support for the next three years for a Kent / MSU Extension Land Use Educator for the county. The educator will provide staff support to the Agriculture Preserve Board as well as other land use initiatives, including United Growth. Kendra Wills is currently serving as the Land Use Educator.

## Gentrification Study of Two Grand Rapids Neighborhoods Completed

When middle income households move into central city neighborhoods, significant reinvestment and revitalization can occur. At the same time, current low income households can be displaced. The challenge is to capture the positive and minimize the negative effects of gentrification. A study conducted by MSU Urban Planning students showed that gentrification is occurring in the East Hills area while the SECA neighborhood has the potential for gentrification in the future. Tools must be developed so that low income housing opportunities remain in gentrifying areas.

## Profitability Supports Preservation: Increasing Profitability on the Fruit Ridge

The efforts of the Rural Economic Development Agent (REDA) in initiating new revenue streams for the growers and producers on the Ridge, continues to discover new opportunities and enhance current avenues. The highlights of these accomplishments include:

- ?? A successful NxLevel–Tiling the Soil of Opportunity, ag entrepreneur business course with 11 graduates;
- ?? Increased financial stability of the Fruit Ridge Country Market Guide project;
- ?? Capacity building of REAP (Ridge Economic Agricultural Partners);
- ?? Securing external funding, including Julian Stile Value Added Agriculture Fund support, to research a new fresh apple slices product ;
- ?? Marketing of specialty niche products through the [www.fruitridgemarket.com](http://www.fruitridgemarket.com) web site.



*Fresh apple slices*

## MSU Faculty Research on Citizen Participation in Grand Rapids, Flint, and Lansing

Through the sponsorship of MSU Urban Collaborators and funding by the Agricultural Experiment Station, cutting-edge research was matched with practical needs. Dr. John Schweitzer led the study that surveyed 451 residents in three neighborhoods in the three cities of Grand Rapids, Flint, and Lansing. The purpose of the study was to identify factors related to participation in neighborhood activities. The major finding of the study was that the “sense of community” among immediate neighbors was the strongest predictor of participation. Dr. June Thomas led a study in the same three cities exploring the quality of the relationship between city government and community-based organizations, citizens, and neighborhoods. Major findings included: city government in all three cities is making an effort to link with citizens and that citizens view specific city departments very differently.



*Grandville Mayor and GVMC Chairman Jim Buck presents Cindy Heinbeck, Carol Townsend and Kendra Wills the Blueprint award.*

## United Growth Receives GVMC Blueprint Award

United Growth received a 2002 GVMC Blueprint award at the June annual conference held at Meijer Gardens. United Growth was recognized for excellence in public awareness, community capacity building and issue development.



Michigan State University has made a strong commitment to being a leader in land use issues. United Growth appreciates the support from the following MSU departments and units: Agriculture Experiment Station, Institute for Water Research, Land Use Area of Expertise Team, Landscape Architecture, MSU Extension, University Outreach, Urban Affairs Programs, Urban Collaborators, Urban and Regional Planning and the Victor Institute for Responsible Land Development and Use.

We would also like to recognize the commitments that MSU has made to the *United Growth for Kent County* project:

- ?? Funding support project personnel
- ?? MSU West Regional Office provides office space for the project
- ?? 12 MSU faculty members supporting United Growth efforts
- ?? Urban Planning Practicum Students for 5 Grand Rapids Neighborhood Projects
- ?? MSU Urban Collaborators Program grant support
- ?? 4 MSU Urban Planning Summer Interns
- ?? MSU Extension's Children, Youth, and Family Programs and Victor Institute for Responsible Land Development and Use support for This Land Is Your Land
- ?? Two land use research projects based in Kent County
- ?? 2002 Project Management Team:

Betty Blase, County Extension Director

Jeanine Bryant, Urban Chair

Kara Griffith, Rural Project Coordinator

David Guikema, MSU Extension Regional Director

Mary Hartifeld, Urban Vice Chair

Cindy Heinbeck, Rural Chair

Sue Levandoski, Project Assistant

Dianne Novak, REDA

Cynthia Price, Rural Vice Chair

Carol Townsend, Urban Coordinator

Kendra Wills, Project and Rural Coordinator

*Carol Townsend and Laura Wisniewski, MSU Summer Interns*





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**2003 Proposed Activities**

- ?? Determine the organizational structure for the United Growth Coalition and carry out implementation plan
- ?? Work with the Grand Rapids Planning Department to implement the Grand Rapids Master Plan
- ?? Support the Kent County Ag Preserve Board and participate in PDR Program development
- ?? Facilitate United Growth input to the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council
- ?? Partner with stakeholder groups to support the creation of a Michigan Affordable Housing Fund
- ?? Partner with the Ridge Economic Agricultural Partners and the Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council to promote local agricultural products
- ?? Assist the Southeast Community Association in their efforts to redevelop their neighborhood as a mixed income neighborhood
- ?? Support Grand Valley Metro Council's Blueprint Process and explore connections between planning for farmland and open space protection and the creation of mixed income neighborhoods
- ?? Market *This Land Is Your Land*
- ?? Link United Growth efforts with the West Michigan Strategic Alliance
- ?? Sponsor a Fall 2003 Citizen Planner Program for Allegan, Kent and Ottawa County residents
- ?? Distribute the *Building Better Neighborhoods* workbook locally and statewide
- ?? Secure 100 Project Partners