

**2006 RURAL COMMITTEE GOALS WORK SESSION  
VISIONS, GOALS AND STRATEGIES – A WORKING DOCUMENT**

**1. LONG TERM VISION:** "A healthy and sustainable regional agricultural system."

**GOALS TO ACHIEVE THIS VISION:**

- ? Preservation of 25,000 acres of prime and unique farmland through the Kent County PDR Program (from PDR ordinance) and other tools
- ? Implementation of a retention and enhancement plan for the Fruit Ridge (partnership with WMEAC Sustainable Ag and REAP?)
- ? Reduction of taxes for agricultural businesses and land

**STRATEGIES TO ACCOMPLISH GOALS:**

- ? Direct communication with producers. This may require the Rural Committee to hold meetings at different times and locations.
- ? Presentation of PDR Position Paper to Board of Commissioners in support of county funding for PDR.
- ? Contact all 14 townships in the PDR Program who have not pre-qualified to help them make Master Plan and future land use map adjustments to pre-qualify to access Michigan Agricultural Preservation grant funds.
- ? Track and support state and local polices to reduce taxes on agricultural businesses and land, including the implementation of Agricultural Districts. Encourage Kent County township participation in Agricultural Districts program if adopted.
- ? Sponsorship of research report documenting the economic profile of the agricultural industry in Kent County. Offer a stipend and issue a "Request for Research" to MSU and local colleges/universities.
- ? Explore the possibility of creating a community land trust to hold easements on agricultural lands. Contacts: Michigan Farmland and Community Alliance (Kendra), American Farmland Trust (Cynthia), Michigan Farm Bureau, Frey Foundation.
- ? Explore possibility of partnering with the Michigan Land Use Institute to promote local ag products in the media. Also use the United Growth newsletter to promote buying local.
- ? Publicize Alpine Township's adoption (in March 2006) of farm market friendly zoning ordinances in United Growth newsletter.

**2. LONG TERM VISION:** "An interconnected network of open space and wildlife habitat, a strong recreational trail system, and preserved natural areas protecting streams, creeks, rivers and wetlands in Kent County."

**GOALS TO ACHIEVE THIS VISION:**

- ? Implementation of comprehensive Green Infrastructure preservation plan (in partnership with WMSA and others)

**STRATEGIES TO ACCOMPLISH GOALS:**

- ? Participation by Rural Committee members (Tom Cary and Cynthia Price) in WMSA Green Infrastructure committee meetings. Will report out progress at Coalition/Rural Committee meetings.

**3. LONG TERM VISION:** "Thriving small cities and villages in Kent County." Characteristics of a thriving small city or village may include: active Chamber of Commerce, effective collaborations between cities, villages and surrounding townships to solve community problems.

**GOALS TO ACHIEVE THIS VISION:**

- ? Need to define these goals.

**STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS:**

- ? Explore interest in reconvening the North Kent Townships Association by distributing a survey (possibly in April 2006) to townships, villages, Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, Business Associations.
- ? Host a presentation by Dave Ivan with MSUE to present results of study on "How Small Towns Can Be Cool" in September 2006. Present results of above survey and begin conversations on how to implement ideas to create thriving small cities and villages.
- ? Promote strategies for collaboration between cities and townships by sponsoring workshops and articles in United Growth newsletter. One strategy to promote is Vergennes Township considering paying the City of Lowell for its residents' use of city parks, library and other services.