



**United Growth Coalition Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, January 17, 2006**  
**Dwelling Place**

Attendees: Cynthia Price, Don Hilton, Mike Cary, Betty Blase, Carol Townsend, Herb Ranta, Paul Haan, Dave Bee, Bonnie Shupe, Kevin Wisselink, Tom Cary, Lori Stanton, Heather Aldridge, Kendra Wills

Call to order at 8:50 a.m. by Cynthia Price.

- I. Motion by Mike Cary supported by Tom Cary to approve the November minutes. Minutes were approved.
  
- II. PDR Position Paper Subcommittee to plan presentation to Board of Commissioners**
  - a. Introduced subject. Betty noted that 60% of Kendra's salary being covered by the County for the next three years to pay for her time staffing the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board.
  - b. No one present immediately volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. It was noted that Marsha Wilcox previously volunteered and members thought Jim Ferro would be interested. Cynthia Price and Herb Ranta volunteered. Bonnie Robinson may also be interested. Contacts also are Kent County Farm Bureau and the new advocacy organization "Friends of Agriculture."
  
- III. Announcements**
  - a. People were reminded to submit comments on United Growth Legislative Committee's Commerce Centers Position Paper to Carol Townsend by Jan 25.
  - b. Bonnie Shupe announced that there will be a reception at the Amway to honor outgoing Michigan Townships Association President, Don Hilton on Jan 24 from 5 – 6:30 p.m. All are invited. No RSVP and free of charge. Flyer to come via email.
  - c. Cynthia announced there will be a Food Systems Council conference on March 11 at Calvin College. More information to come.
  - d. Kendra collected ideas for MSU Citizen Planner Advanced Academy bus tour throughout Grand Rapids metro area in mid June.
  
- IV. Goal Setting Session**
  - a. In an effort to develop more long-term goals that are measurable, tied to a big-picture vision and strategic plan on how to accomplish that vision, we will be reviewing two important big picture visions that have been developed by citizens and diverse stakeholders: GVMC's Regional Blueprint and the City of Grand Rapids' Master Plan.

When we break-up into Rural and Urban Committees today, the Urban Committee will review the City of Grand Rapids Master Plan and select a few things it can do to accomplish the vision of the Master Plan. The Rural Committee will continue to work off the Blueprint and will pick a few rural projects to focus on. That way, everything we are doing ties into where we are headed as a city, county and as a region and the goals we set can be measured.

**1. 30 minute presentation by Andy Bowman with Grand Valley Metro Council on the Regional Blueprint – what is it, big picture visions and next steps:**

The concept of the Blueprint came about in the early 1990s. (GVMC was founded in 1990.) Many planners in the area thought we needed a regional picture. 1960 was the last time the County had a county plan. People felt a big picture was needed to determine how we want to grow as a region. Detroit was doing this already with a grant from MDOT. West Michigan also wanted funding from MDOT for a similar project and GMVC secured an MDOT grant. GVMC hired a consultant to develop the original Blueprint, which was a regional vision that pulled together the best ideas with approximately 60 strategic action to work together on. These included housing downtown and the development of the Arena. Andy thinks about 75% of these strategic actions are completed.

Another objective was to develop a regional land use plan that would include schools, transportation, water/sewer, green space, farmland preservation, etc. GVMC needed staff to accomplish this. Andy Bowman was hired and Jay Hoekstra joined GMVC land use department from GVMC's transportation department. Andy and Jay then began work on the Blueprint II project.

The Blueprint isn't called a plan because GVMC doesn't want it to be confused with local master plans. The Blueprint would be a regional vision, which they are calling a development framework. One of the primary goals of the project is to identify where compact livable communities should be located so everyone could get behind putting in infrastructure.

GMVC received another grant from MDOT (\$300,000 over 3 years) to create a map of where compact livable communities should be located as well as the form based code project and housing market study, which would help prove that there is a market for compact development to local officials and developers. GVMC adopted the Metropolitan Development Framework, which is designed to be adapted over time. Some components they are working on as additions to the Metropolitan Development Framework are:

- ✍ West Michigan Strategic Alliance's Green Infrastructure plan that outlines where green spaces, parks and trails should be developed in the region.
- ✍ Kent County PDR targeted agricultural preservation areas, which was adopted as part of Metro Development Framework.
- ✍ GVMC is submitting a People and Land (PAL) proposal to better define Commerce Centers, which may relate to compact livable communities. The

project will determine where Commerce Centers fit into the region. Project would conduct focus groups in the South Belt sub-region and the Urban Metro sub-region, where both wanted a large amount of the region's growth to occur.

- ✍ Watershed planning. Trying to bring about a Lower Grand Watershed Council. Also working with the Rogue River Watershed Council.
- ✍ GVMC's land use department and transportation department will be rolling out a long range transportation planning process that is tied to land use by holding meetings with local units of government. Meetings are being set up in the next few weeks.
- ✍ GVMC is also assisting the Home Builders Association with their grant project on low impact (more environmentally friendly) development/designs.

GVMC also adopted 21 Blueprint Principles (on GVMC web site). One principle from 1992 talked about an area wide authority for sewer and water. Have made very little progress on this. GVMC not quite ready to tackle this but need to be thinking along these lines.

It is GVMC's hope that local units would adopt some of the codes in the form-based code book, which is tied to the transect and focused on compact forms of development.

Motion by Dave B. Supported by Herb Ranta to extend the Coalition meeting until 10:15 a.m. Approved.

**V. Presentation by Heather Aldridge on "Avenue of the Arts" Cool Cities project**

- a. Heather (Neighborhood Revitalization Director for Dwelling Place) distributed a handout on the "Avenue of the Arts" project which is located along Division Ave. between Oaks St. and Fulton. \$10.5 million total investment. Two arts businesses have already moved into new studio/living space units (over 30 total units). All units will be rental for 7 years (federal funding guidelines) and will then be put into a community land trust to make sure artists don't get priced out of the area that they helped revitalize. Adding public art in the form of seating and tree guards/bike racks. Also added new street lighting on both sides of the street and new arm traffic lights. See handout for more details on the project.

**VI. Goal Setting Next Steps**

- a. After some discussion it was decided that a Subcommittee would meet on Friday, February 3 from 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. (after the PMT meeting) to review the following principles:
  - i. Blueprint principles
  - ii. United Growth's principles (not formally adopted)
  - iii. City of Grand Rapids Master Plan principles
  - iv. Smart Growth/New Urbanism principles

Kendra will send out an email to the entire group inviting them to attend the meeting and distributing a copy of these principles in advance. Lori Stanton and Kevin Wisselink volunteered to attend this meeting. Cynthia requested that Andy Bowman be invited. Carol volunteered to staff the meeting.

## **VII. City of Grand Rapids Master Plan**

Carol gave a quick overview of the City of Grand Rapids Master Plan, which was adopted by the City Commission in December of 2002. The future land use map and overview of the plan was included in member's packets. The plan focused on:

- ✍ Strengthening residential neighborhoods
- ✍ Improving walkability
- ✍ Concentrating development to improve public transit
- ✍ Enhancing traditional business districts

The first step in implementing the plan is the adoption of a new zoning ordinance. This has not been completed due to lack of staff and budget and other delays. The Urban Committee is committed to pushing for the adoption of the new zoning ordinance. Area-specific plans may also be added to the Master Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:32 a.m. with the Rural and Urban Committees meeting for a few minutes afterward.

Submitted by,  
Kendra Wills