



The Urban-Rural

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Summer 2004

Welcome to the first expanded edition of the Urban-Rural Connection!

United Growth for Kent County and the newly formed United Growth Coalition is working to be an important source for local land use news – both rural and urban.

The content of this newsletter was developed by a committee of United Growth members. Support for this expanded edition was provided by a grant from the new MSU Land Policy Program directed by Dr. Soji Adelaja, John A. Hannah Distinguished Professor in Land Policy. This grant also supported United Growth’s public service announcements, which will be airing from August – October 2004 on local Clear Channel radio stations, so be sure to listen for them!

We invite individuals and organizations working on land use issues in Kent County or West Michigan to become a member of the United Growth Coalition. A membership form is included on the back cover of this newsletter. Member benefits include:

- Supporting the United Growth’s Coalition’s

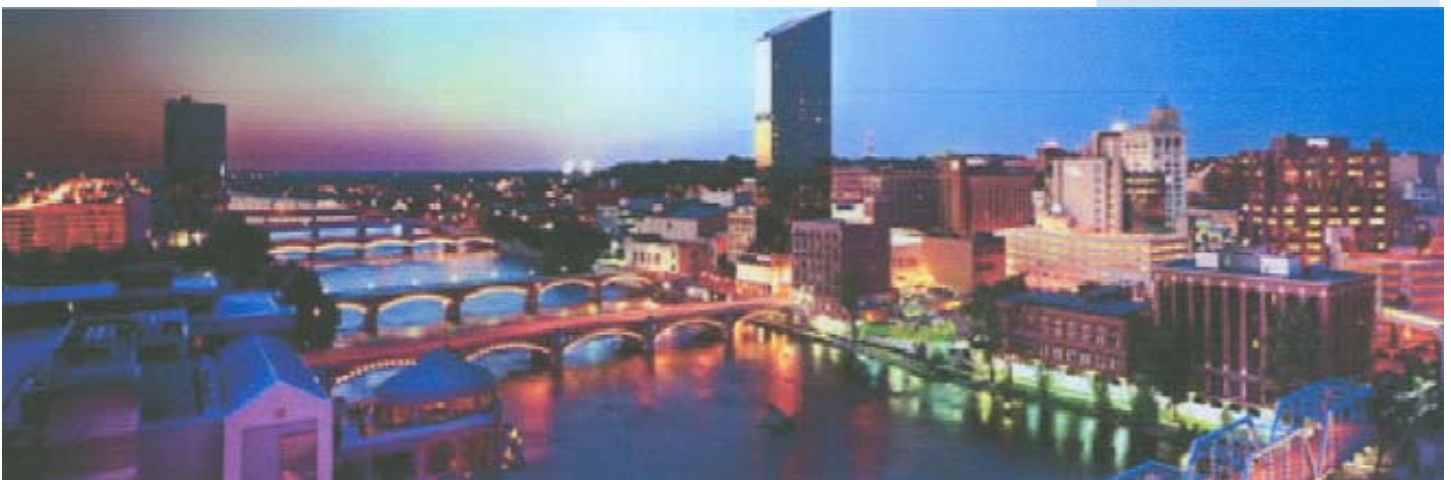
work to promote positive land use in our community.

- Quarterly newsletter “*The Urban-Rural Connection*” Fall 2004 edition will be electronic, Winter 2005 will be hard copy and Spring 2005 will be electronic.
- Reduced registration cost at United Growth events, such as the upcoming luncheon in early October 2004 where the keynote speaker will be Dr. Soji Adelaja.
- Land use organization networking opportunities.
- Eligible to apply for future mini-grant funds.
- Recognition in United Growth publications, web site and at events.
- All membership benefits are transferable to individuals within the member organization.

We hope you enjoy this expanded edition! If you have any ideas about how this newsletter could be more informative to you, please contact Kendra Wills at (616) 336-3265 or willsk@msu.edu.

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Kent / MSU Extension
775 Ball Ave., NE,
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Tel: (616) 336-3265-Fax: (616) 336-3836
unitedgrowth@msue.msu.edu

STAFF

Project and Rural Coordinator
Kendra Wills, willsk@msu.edu
Urban Coordinator
Carol Townsend, townse36@msu.edu
Project Assistant
Sue Levandoski, levando6@msu.edu
County Extension Director
Betty Blase, blase@msu.edu
Graphic Artist
Bonnie Kim, bonnie.kim@kentcounty.org
Intern
Brian Anderson

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Chairperson
Bonnie Shupe, Cannon Township Clerk
Vice Chair
Terry Sanford, Nederveld Associates

Andy Guy, Michigan Land Use Institute
Paul Haan, Get The Lead Out
Barb Holt, Walker City Commission
Cynthia Price, Greater Grand Rapids Food
Systems Council
Dr. Mike Williams, Aquinas College
Marsha Wilcox, Vergennes Open Space
Committee

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Forbes, Delta Strategy
Barb Holt, Walker City Commission
Cynthia Price, Greater Grand Rapids Food
Systems Council

Kendra Wills, Land Use Agent
Kent / MSU Extension

Special thanks to Cynthia Price for creating the heading for the Urban-Rural Connection.

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Guest Editorial
George Heartwell
City of Grand Rapids Mayor

“Cool is as Cool Does”

Governor Granholm talks about cool cities and urges us to define the term in our own context. She has made some grants to projects around Michigan – two in Grand Rapids – that exemplify cool. Every city is hustling to out-cool every other city, to attract the coolest businesses, the coolest entertainment, and the coolest people.

What is “GR Cool”?

Here’s what I know about cool:

- Cool is working together to craft imaginative solutions to community challenges
- Cool is celebrating the diverse character of our city and opening leadership opportunities to young women and men of every race
- Cool is being able to live where you work and play, downtown and in great neighborhoods
- Cool is having outstanding education systems for lifetime learning

“GR Cool” is not a state of mind...it is a way of acting. We will *be* cool as we *act* cool.

Acting cool is acting smart. It is sharing resources, working in teams, and directing assets to research and development, to innovation and collaborative problem-solving. It is not cool to hoard, to grab the spotlight, or to elevate oneself at the expense of others. The coolest ventures join multiple participants and are mutual in their inputs and their outcomes.

Acting cool is taking risks. We understand risk-taking in business. Our entrepreneurs – past and present – have married studied risk-taking to hard work to generate successful business enterprise. Cool is extending this entrepreneurial spirit

into community problem-solving. Acting cool is building institutions that are adaptable, that have the seeds of perpetual transformation planted in their evaluative structures. Cool knows that what works today is outmoded tomorrow. Institutions that are cool are reinventing themselves in light of changing environmental stimuli.

Acting cool is breaking down barriers that divide us. Racial and cultural parochialism won’t get us to cool. Cool is realizing that what I have to bring to the community table is important...but no more so than what you have to bring. When we set the table with the rich array of offerings of all the races and cultures living here then we go beyond cool to successful.

We are working our way to cool. It doesn’t happen overnight. But here is why I know we’ll get there:

- Data shows we are keeping our young people (24-34), a trend that reverses prior losses.
- Immigrants (now 10% of our population) are contributing new ideas, vitality in business and the arts, and a love for their adopted home.
- The torch is passing as new philanthropists are rising to the challenge of building public cultural institutions.
- A recently released housing study identifies an enormous demand for downtown housing among young singles, married couples without children, and empty-nesters.
- The Partners for Livable Communities designated Grand Rapids as one of “America’s Most Livable Cities” in its decennial award.
- And the Knowledge Competitiveness Index ranks Grand Rapids (SMSA) third in the world.

We’re on the path to “way cool” and we’ll get there together.



On June 2, 2004, Governor Granholm announced that the City of Grand Rapids would receive two Cool City grants of \$100,000 each and access to \$100 million in other development resources:

- The Avenue for the Arts Project includes the historic renovation of seven buildings, streetscape improvements along with the creation of public art, murals and the development of 35 loft apartments.
- The Uptown Revitalization Project contains a new retail development utilizing green technology that is compatible with historic district standards, a facade improvement program for historic commercial structures and a wayfinding design program to increase the walkability of the Uptown area.

Projects in Alpena, Bay City, Detroit, Ferndale, Flint, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Marquette, Port Huron, Portland, Saginaw, Saugatuck, Sault Ste. Marie, Traverse City, Warren and Ypsilanti were also awarded. "If Michigan is to be competitive in the 21st century economy, we have to attract new businesses and retain the highly educated, talented young people who are crucial to building and sustaining businesses in today's global marketplace," Gov. Granholm said. "Building vibrant, energetic communities is essential to attracting jobs, people and opportunity to our state."

In Grand Rapids, We're Just Warming Up

Suzanne M. Schulz, AICP
City Grand Rapids Planning Department

Am I tired of hearing about "cool cities?" You bet. I cringe whenever I hear the word.... then I feel guilty. Does this little, 4-letter word deserve the frequent eye-rolling signal of "oh brother, there it is again"? Albeit over-used, "cool" is an easy way to express that urban revitalization is a key component of Governor Granholm's strategy to rebuild Michigan's economy. If people can be enticed to live in already developed areas, then treasured farmland and open space may be preserved and sparse tax dollars can be stretched a little further. It doesn't make sense to me (or my 4-year old for that matter) to build new churches, schools and stores when so many are being shuttered in urban and first-tier suburban areas. Urban revitalization really boils down to where and how we, as a citizenry, choose to invest our financial resources for the good of Michigan's future.

Grand Rapids has been involved in a broad array of projects to advance urban revitalization. In large part, these efforts have been wildly successful. More than \$1 billion in new investment and 1,845 housing units have been added to Downtown in the past five years. A recent report by Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc. suggests that there is enough interest to add another 355 housing units per year over the next five years. The awarding of grants for the Cool Cities Initiative in early June did not mark the beginning of "cool" for GR, rather it reinforced how far we have come. Neighborhood organizers have worked for decades to save historic homes and maintain a high quality of life, family-owned businesses have continued to invest in the city and community leaders have made bold visions a reality with projects such as the Van Andel Arena. According to the Census, Grand Rapids and Ann Arbor were the only cities in Michigan that did not experience population loss between 1990-2000. In the past three years the population of those 25-35 somethings that we hear so much about has been on an upswing in the Grand Valley.

In 2002 the City adopted a new Master Plan. Thousands of people shared their Smart Growth visions of great neighborhoods, vital business districts and balanced transportation. Now, Grand Rapids is looking to update its Nixon-era zoning code in an entirely new way that will bolster urban revitalization, yet preserve the unique characteristics of the community. Context-sensitive street design, form-based codes and citizen involvement – it's all on the drawing board and ready to be put into action this Fall. The City of Grand Rapids, Grand Valley Metropolitan Council and The Right Place, Inc. encourages you to participate in a series of September planning meetings to discuss the future of the Region and the City. If you enjoy living in Downtown, on a farm or somewhere in between it benefits us all when 3,600 households locate on underutilized urban land. So, keep your eyes and ears open, we're just warming up!

Kent County's Purchase of Development Rights Program

Kendra Wills, United Growth Project Coordinator
and staff person to the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board

After the passage of the PDR ordinance in November of 2002, much has happened to implement the new county PDR Program. In early 2003, the seven member Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board was appointed to administer the program. An impressive 19 out of Kent County's 21 townships passed resolutions to allow landowners to voluntarily apply to the program.

Kent County accepted 44 PDR applications for over 5,300 acres in 11 townships during the first application cycle held from December 1, 2003 – January 31, 2004. 27

out of the 44 applications met the federal program requirements, which include 50% prime farmland soil types.

Enabled by the generous support of many area foundations and townships, Kent County was able to secure \$625,275 in USDA funding to preserve three farms in the Lowell area: the 64 acre Merriman farm in Lowell Township, the 156 acre Seif farm in Grattan Township and the 106 acre Howard farm in Vergennes Township. Participation in the program is still questionable for the Seif and Merriman properties as those landowners and the

Agricultural Preservation Board work through concerns regarding appraisal amounts and property splits on those parcels. The County has until September 30, 2009 to complete the transactions but hopes to schedule a closing on the Howard farm as soon as possible.

The Preservation Board is working to offer an application cycle in the fall of 2004 to better align with the federal and state grant programs. Funding for the 2004-05 program still needs to be secured, however, three matching grants have been offered: \$200,000 from the Frey Foundation for preservation on the Fruit Ridge, \$200,000 from the Steelcase Foundation and \$10,000 from Kent County Farm Bureau.

For more information on the Kent County Purchase of Development Rights Program, contact Kendra Wills at (616) 336-3265 or willsk@msu.edu.

If you would like to help meet the Steelcase Foundation's challenge grant and make a contribution to the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Fund, please make checks payable to the Kent County Treasurer and mail to: Attention: Kendra Wills, Kent / MSU Extension 775 Ball Ave., NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503.

The Steelcase Foundation will match your donation on a dollar for dollar basis. 100% of your donation will be used to purchase development rights on prime and unique farmland in Kent County. Your contribution is tax deductible.

Kent County Apples: From the Ridge to Your Local McDonalds!

Betty Blase, Kent / MSU Extension Director

The next time you visit a McDonald's restaurant, check out a new item on the menu. "Apple Dippers" have been added to the menu nationally, both as an individual order item and as an optional component in the Happy Meal. What you may not realize is that this is an Empire apple very likely grown in Kent County. This pre-sliced apple is a healthy choice that will have significant economic implications for the apple industry in Kent County. Research on the feasibility of large-scale production of pre-sliced, packaged apples has been happening in west Michigan for the past ten years. The Michigan Agriculture Experiment Station at Clarksville has been the site of various trials to identify suitable apple varieties for this process. Kent/MSU Extension agent Dianne Novak worked with local growers from 2000-2003 on an apple-slice feasibility study funded by state Project GREEN dollars through United Growth for Kent County. The MSU Product Development Center continues studies with fresh apple slices, and is conducting fundamental research on additional markets for this product.



What is the economic impact for Kent apple growers? Current estimates show that to supply McDonald's restaurants in this country would take two-thirds of the Michigan fresh market apple production. **Kent County is the top producer of apples in Michigan**, with more than 210 million pounds harvested (US Census of Agriculture, 1997). Additionally, the Apple Dipper product requires a high quality apple, so growers can expect a price paid to them for Empires more than double the price they received two years ago.

This broad exposure of Michigan apples on the national market should increase demand for more as consumers discover what we've known all along—the best apples grow in Kent County!

Signs of Life for Affordable Housing

Andy Guy, Michigan Land Use Institute and
United Growth Joint Legislative Committee Co-Chairperson



To read the proposed legislation to create the Michigan Housing and Community Development fund, visit www.michiganlegislature.org and look up the following bill numbers:

Senate Bill 533 (same as House Bill 4787)
Senate Bill 523 (same as House Bill 4788)
Senate Bill 524 (same as House Bill 4789)

For more information, contact Carol Townsend, United Growth Urban Coordinator at (616) 336-3265 or townse36@msu.edu.

Nearly one year after Michigan lawmakers introduced a plan to provide more affordably priced housing throughout the state, United Growth's Legislative Committee has renewed its drive to see that the proposed legislation is enacted. Committee members recently met with state and local housing advocates and with Representative Jerry Kooiman, a Grand Rapids area lawmaker who is sponsoring the bill to establish the Michigan Housing and Community Development Fund. The hope is that the Legislature will act on the proposal this fall.

"The momentum is here now," said Rep. Kooiman. "Between the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council and the governor's Cool Cities initiative, there is a growing understanding that quality affordable housing is a key component of building healthy and attractive communities."

Last August, the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council, the bi-partisan panel launched by Democratic Governor Jennifer M. Granholm with the assistance of top state Republican lawmakers, identified financing and constructing more affordable housing as key to revitalizing Michigan's many declining cities and to slowing the state's high sprawl rate, which is among the nation's most severe. The leadership council formally urged the Legislature to expand both market rate and affordable housing opportunities by establishing special funding incentives for them.

Representative Kooiman and several other west Michigan lawmakers were among those who last May cosponsored enabling legislation for the new fund. Other area legislators supporting the bill include Senator Patty Birkholz from Saugatuck, and Representatives Joanne Voorhees and Barb Vander Veen from Wyoming and Allendale, respectively.

The state's ongoing research about land use and urban revitalization issues indicates that free market forces will not provide significant amounts of affordable housing on their own. Instead, the market requires community investments designed as part of a town's infrastructure, in the same way that roads, schools, or parks are. Michigan, however, has a large amount of catching up to do. Respectively, the state ranks 48th and 49th nationally on per capita spending and spending as a percentage of personal income on affordable housing, according to a May 2001 report prepared by Public Sector Consultants, a Lansing-based research group.

As proposed, the fund would target the state's most critical housing needs and spend as much as \$25 million each year to expand ownership and rental choices for people with limited incomes. The proposal is widely viewed as an opportunity to nurture vibrant neighborhoods and strengthen local economies.

Source: Great Lakes Bulletin News Service

Local Farm Markets

Bonnie Shupe, Cannon Township Clerk
 United Growth Project Management Team Chairperson



On any Saturday morning from June 5 through October 9, in the City of Rockford, you can wander over to the parking area beside the 10 Mile bridge and see stands set up with local vendors selling their wares. The Rockford Farmers Market has been in existence now for three years. It's a great place to find a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and some other surprises as well.

In early summer, vendors are selling fresh cut asparagus, specialty lettuces, hothouse tomatoes, and fresh strawberries. You can also find a variety of plants from hanging baskets to perennials. There are also some products like honey and fresh baked goods. As summer progresses to fall, you see other items like apples, blueberries, pumpkins, and gourds. And always, there's a great array of flowers.

It's a wonderful experience going from stall to stall and seeing what these local farmers have to offer. Many of these vendors have a close relationship with their produce, having nurtured it from seeds. Many of these products are organically grown and handpicked with loving care.

In addition to the pleasure of open air shopping on a summer's day, is the pleasure of the camaraderie as people congregate in small groups, sharing greetings with friends and neighbors. It is truly a local gathering place.

Besides the Rockford Farmers Market, other area markets include the Ada Farmers Market, Grand Rapids Fulton Street Market, Greenville Farmers Market, and the SECA Farmers Market at the Franklin/Jefferson intersection. These and other farmers' markets in West Michigan are listed on the WMEAC web site – www.wmeac.org - with their location, days and time of operation.

I encourage you to visit one of these markets and enjoy the experience!

<p>Allegan Farmers Market City of Allegan parking lot 200 block of Hubbard Street Thursday, 9:00 a.m. — 6:00 p.m. May — October</p> <p>Greenville Farmers Market Veterans Park Tuesday & Friday, 7:30 a.m. — 1:00 p.m. July — October</p> <p>Kalamazoo Banks Street Farmers Market 1200 Banks Street Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday 7:00 a.m. — 6:00 p.m. June — September</p>	<p>Coopersville Farmers Market DDA Pavilion, north of Main Street Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. — 1:00 a.m. May — October</p> <p>Hastings Farmers Market Tyden Park, North Bradley Street (M43) Wednesday & Saturday 7:00 a.m. — 3:00 p.m. May — October</p> <p>Muskegon Farmers Market 700 Yuba Street Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday 8:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m. May — December</p>	<p>Grand Rapids Fulton St. Farmers Market 1147 Fulton Street N.E. Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 8:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m. May 1st to Christmas</p> <p>Grand Rapids SECA Farmers Market 121 Franklin St. SE Thursdays, 2:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m. May — October</p> <p>Rockford Farmers Market South Squire St Parking Lot Saturday, 8:00 a.m.— 1:00 p.m. Mid June — Mid October</p>
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Recent Land Use Legislation: Enabling Transfer of Development Rights?

Cynthia Price, Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council and United Growth Rural Committee Chairperson

Purchase of Development Rights, or PDR, has been all over the local news; however, fewer people are familiar with Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). Both PDR and TDR separate the development rights from a property, that is, the owner retains all other rights of the property but agrees, in perpetuity, not to develop it beyond current use, often farming. In the case of TDR, the development rights are either sold directly to a developer or purchased and “banked” through a government unit to be sold to a developer. TDR programs involve the designation of “sending” districts, where land will be preserved, and “receiving” districts, appropriate to develop at a higher density than zoning originally allowed (for example, where water and sewer lines already exist).

For years, the standard response to why TDR programs don't exist in Michigan (in addition to the heavy administrative burden) has been that TDR was not enabled by legislation. Some believe Public Act 228 (signed into law in December 2003) changed that, with one simple sentence: “Unless explicitly prohibited by the planned unit development regulations, if requested by the landowner, a township may approve a planned unit development with open space that is not contiguous with the rest of the planned unit development.” This may open the door for the establishment of sending and receiving districts, and therefore, may enable TDR.

At the same time, another far-reaching piece of legislation addressed another problem associated with TDR in Michigan. Some townships found in exploring TDR that there was actually not enough land to establish both a sending and receiving district within their own borders. Public Act 226 of 2003 provides “for joint land use planning and the joint exercise of certain zoning powers and duties by local units of government; and ... the establishment, powers, and duties of joint planning commissions.” This particular statute has many other implications for land use planning, but for the purpose of this discussion, it may mean that a sending district can be in one municipality and a receiving district in another.

Many believe TDR offers great advantages for developers. Greater density allows for more efficiency in building; the ability to obtain inspections and permitting at once versus two lower-density developments means projects can be expedited. Municipalities are able to make sounder infrastructure investments and preserve the character that residents love. The public benefits through stronger town centers and cities, and the ability to have farmers continue growing the food we eat or for conservation of open spaces and natural resources that enhance all of our lives.

In the future, the Urban-Rural Connection will investigate and report on attempts throughout the state to use this legislation for establishing TDR programs as they arise. Communities interested in TDR should consult your professional planner and legal counsel.

Land Use Court Rulings

Compiled by Gary Taylor, JD
MSU Extension Specialist

OPEN MEETINGS ACT

When relief is sought only under the FOIA, judicial review is not available to decide whether a public body had the authority under the Open Meetings Act (OMA) to go into closed session. Plaintiff's reading of the statute to require disclosure of the minutes even though no claim was brought under the OMA was not supported by the statutory language. Plaintiff's failure to bring an OMA claim was fatal to its case. <http://www.michbar.org/e-journal/052404.html#9>

TAKINGS

Plaintiffs petitioned defendant to rezone 363 acres of land from its current designation of A-1 agricultural and R-2 single-family suburban to R-3 single-family urban and R-6 mobile home park residential. The township board denied plaintiffs' petition. Plaintiffs did not file a petition for review or seek a variance before the Zoning Board of Appeals. Plaintiffs argued there was no uncertainty regarding the permitted uses of the property as zoned and they had exhausted all available administrative remedies. The Palazzolo and MacDonald cases require a determination of alternative uses of property as zoned as a condition precedent to a valid takings claim. In other words, the landowner must show he or she sought alternative uses of the property as zoned and was denied, leaving the property owner with land having no economically productive or reasonably beneficial use. <http://www.michbar.org/e-journal/052404.html#12>

RIPARIAN RIGHTS

The MI Supreme Court says the riparian landowner has exclusive use rights “to the waters edge” not the ordinary high water mark. However, the state actually owns the land up to the ordinary high water mark. You have to read it to really get it, especially the last 4 pages. <http://www.michbar.org/e-journal/051704.html#11>

LOCAL CONTROL

Local governments may not set more stringent controls on waste discharges into lakes, streams and other surface waters than is established by permits issued by the Department of Environmental Quality. The Michigan Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act pre-empts local standards because it creates a comprehensive and pervasive regulatory scheme for uniform statewide standards. <http://www.michbar.org/e-journal/012004.html#11>

Achieving Smart Growth By Creating Cool

**Andy Guy, Michigan Land Use Institute and
United Growth Joint Legislative Committee Co-Chairperson**

When first-term Maryland Governor Parris Glendening signed his state's Smart Growth Act seven years ago, the action marked a singular achievement in the national movement to contain sprawl. The pioneering law redirected much of the state's budget for roads, schools, public works and buildings, housing, and other new construction away from the countryside and back toward established community centers.

Although it gained little immediate national notice, the legislation eventually earned a reputation as one of the most important public policy accomplishments of the 1990s. It helped Maryland achieve the lowest unemployment rate and one of the highest levels of economic growth of any state in the nation, even as it conserved tens of thousands of acres of farmland and forests and strengthened Baltimore's economy.

First-term Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm is attempting to accomplish much the same thing through the Cool City Pilot Program. Ms. Granholm has galvanized business executives and voters around the idea that Michigan needs "cool cities" to attract jobs, young professionals, diversity, and innovation that she believes is central to the state's economic competitiveness. She also succeeded in convincing cities and non-profit economic development groups across Michigan to compete for state funding from a small grant program that uncannily echoes much of what Governor Glendening signed into law in 1997.

The Cool City grant program will help several of Michigan's downtown business districts and neighborhoods, including two in Grand Rapids, compete with the sprawling suburbs for the right mix of housing, jobs, arts, recreation, and retail resources that make them the kind of places that people want to be. It will do so by making modest amounts of taxpayer funds available — no more than \$100,000 per grant — for rebuilding streets, adding lighting, expanding parks, improving housing, building art centers, preserving historic structures, or beautifying store fronts.

Source: Great Lakes Bulletin News Service

Guess What This Photo Is

Barbara Holt, Walker City
Commissioner and United Growth
Urban Committee Member

The purpose of this section is to familiarize people with their community in a fun and interactive way. Each issue of the Urban-Rural Connection will have a different photo of a location in Kent County. The first person to correctly identify the object or location in the photograph will be recognized in the following issue. To submit an answer, send an email to Kendra Wills at willsk@msu.edu or call her at (616) 336-3265. For the first issue, we made it fairly easy, so submit your guess today to identify the object in the photograph.



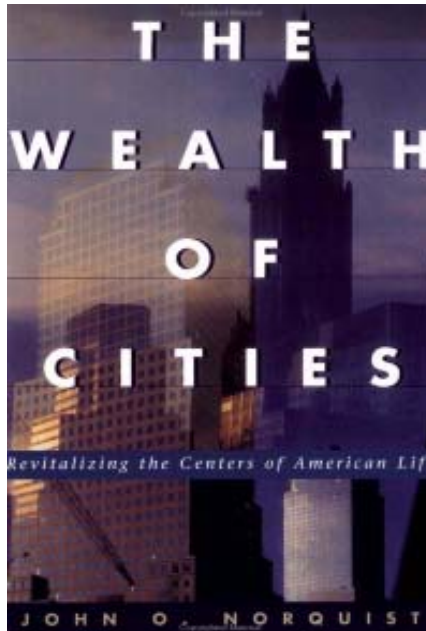
A Land Use Book Review

Jay Hoekstra, Grand Valley Metro Council and
United Growth Urban Committee Member

Cities have natural advantages which make them the finest places to: do business, have a residence, go to school, and generally live life. So don't pity the city and don't ask for special help for cities. But this country needs to stop a raft of public programs and policies that are harming and have harmed cities.

These are the basic premises of John Norquist's book *The Wealth of Cities*. We cannot put Mr. Norquist in one of our usual categories of liberal or conservative, pro this or con that. So if you read this book, you may find yourself uttering some expressions of surprise. His proposals and criticisms are based on many years of practical experience and public decision making. John Norquist is an architect, was a Wisconsin state legislator, was Mayor of Milwaukee for at least four terms, and is a fervent advocate of cities.

There are eleven chapters in this 200 page book. In chapters one through four Mr. Norquist asserts, 1) that cities should quit asking for pity but should recognize their natural advantages, 2) that city governments should keep budgets low by managing by purpose rather than by mindless cuts, 3) that it is absolutely essential to stop crime in cities and make them safe for everyone 4) that our system of welfare is degrading and ineffective. His alternative is to get more income directly to low income households so they can buy the housing, transportation and education they prefer from the diversity of choices that are always present in a city. Therefore he supports the



The Wealth of Cities: Revitalizing the Centers of American Life

by John O. Norquist
Paperback: 256 pages
Publisher: Perseus Publishing
(April, 1998)
ISBN: 0738201340

earned income credit program of the federal government, and probably would support the income tax credits that the State of Michigan provides to renters and homeowners, and other policies that provide adequate wages for good work.

While he mostly prefers less action by federal government, Norquist feels it should lead the way with strong environmental protection based on results. Related to this is his belief that

federal construction of freeways has wrecked cities and undermined transit systems that were much more efficient, environmentally sound and in many cases privately operated. He suggests that cities, which I take to mean metropolitan areas, should raise their own transportation funds and spend them as they see fit. As I understand, this would mean eliminating the federal gas tax and enabling cities or metro areas to collect it instead.

The state of urban schools is a constant cause of gnashing of teeth in city regions. Norquist believes that the natural diversity of opportunities that cities provide should also be available to parents of grade school students. He supports school vouchers to public, private and religious schools. To those who argue that the least able will be left behind in an even more deteriorating public system, he says ... they already are. And that a voucher system brings people back to the cities within increased participation in public schools by less needy families.

Norquist's last but essential solution is the return to excellent urban design. Streets designed for pedestrians, plazas and parks for public life, and a diversity of buildings and places which respect humans not motor machines are the way to allow cities to flourish as they should.

This book encourages the reader to think positively and fundamentally about – no, not solutions to “Problems” – but to think about unleashing the potential excellence of cities.

Land Use Web Site of the Quarter: www.planning.org

Dave Bee, AICP West Michigan Regional Planning Commission and
United Growth Urban Committee Member

Since this is the first in an ongoing series of articles related to land use web sites, it makes sense to start with the site for the American Planning Association (APA).

Overall, the site provides research opportunities, summaries of national legislation and policies, access to publications produced by APA (from the broad *Planning* to the detail oriented *Journal of the American Planning Association*), a description of APA, news, jobs, and conference schedules. The site provides possibilities for continuing education such as AICP (national certification). The site also links to all of the state chapters of APA, including the Michigan Society of Planning – which provides additional links to information more specific to Michigan. Membership is stressed throughout the site.

While APA is a member-oriented organization, many areas of the site are available to non-members – but certain areas are reserved for members or even sub-categories of membership. Even with these limitations, anyone interested in planning will find this site interesting and useful since it provides a vast amount of information and a variety of sources for further research into the topic of planning.

The site is very well organized and has many pull-downs that users can explore for hours. It is very apparent that the resource is updated on a very regular basis and that a lot of time and energy are expended on the site. A visit is well worth the effort.

Read our Fall 2004 quarterly issue at: www.msue.msu.edu/unitedgrowth

(Continued from page 9)

The Solution to Sprawl is...Density

By Adesoji Adelaja and Paul D. Gottlieb

and environmental resources to be the product of public sector decisions, with lands acquired and held as a public trust? Or do I want most of Michigan's open space to be held in individuals' backyards, making them as large as they need to be in order to get the job done?

We are not saying that the first of these two paths is easy – obviously it isn't. But the second path looks a lot like the one we are currently on. In addition, environmental regulations would continue to be in force. Properly applied, these are a more direct and defensible method of development control than large-lot zoning.

The second objection will be that our proposal is politically naïve. As a state mandate, it would violate the sacred doctrine of home rule.

It is true that maximum lot zoning would need to be mandated from the top. Many communities regard high-density development as undesirable. For this plan to work, it is essential that every community have an equal chance of attracting this kind of development, and that individual communities not be permitted to opt out. That would make the program tough, to be sure, but ultimately fair. The market, not planners or politicians, would decide where the high-density development would go.

It is a long-established fact of American constitutional law that the state legislature has the ultimate right to enforce a binding zoning ordinance in each community. If our lawmakers wish to step up their assault on urban sprawl, they might consider an idea that is so simple and obvious, people often have trouble seeing it: The solution to sprawl is density.

The Solution to Sprawl is...Density

Adesoji Adelaja, Ph. D, John A. Hannah Distinguished Professor in Land Policy at MSU, and Paul D. Gottlieb, Ph. D, Cook College, Rutgers University

Sprawl, which is defined in dictionaries as “to spread out,” is a buzz word in Michigan these days. People and communities are becoming increasingly aware of the problems associated with the ever increasing trend toward suburbanization, especially the harm to agriculture, rural communities and even the abandoned urban areas that spew suburban growth. Unfettered growth results in duplicated infrastructure and higher costs of providing services that stay with a community long after the culprit development projects have been completed. One of the most poignant features of sprawl is the large residential lots that eat up the landscape. One- and three-acre lots are common, while six- and ten-acre lots are not unheard of in many Michigan communities.

To us economists, these lot sizes (and densities) in fringe areas are not the product of market forces. That is because it is *illegal* to build a home on a small lot in most New Jersey municipalities. The typical zoning ordinance specifies a minimum lot size. All lots larger than the minimum size are presumed to be legal, while lots smaller than the minimum are prohibited.

Why should the citizens of Michigan care about this? Smart growth advocates have a bunch of reasons. They tell us that when residential densities are low, local governments must pay for more infrastructure (basically, roads and sewers) to connect homes that are far apart. Walking and public transit become virtually impossible. Rural land is consumed at a rapid rate, relative to the demand for housing generated by the state’s economy. Finally, housing becomes more expensive because of the extra land the municipality literally forces you to buy. On the other hand, we tend to worry about the affordability of housing.

We have embarked on a major research



1 acre lot



Higher density, more walkable



Large side yards

project to examine the costs and benefits of alternative methods of zoning, including some that are quite different from what we are used to.

For example, imagine a world in which Michigan municipalities enforce not a minimum lot size, but instead a *maximum* lot size. Everybody has a right to build on a small lot, no questions asked. If you want to build a home on a large lot, however, you must lobby for special permission — or perhaps make a payment into an open space fund for the privilege.

Consider what the effects of such a zoning system would be:

- The one thing that we all agree is a problem — large residential lots — would require special justification or be subject to financial penalties. This would provide strong disincentives to precisely the behavior we believe to be socially irresponsible. While it would clearly not eliminate “McMansions,” it would make them more expensive, collecting fees that could be used to buy open space and infrastructure.
- Developers would begin to serve a market for affordable housing in fringe areas that does not currently exist.
- New high-density residential development would take place near employment centers and interstate intersections (where land is more valuable), raising the possibility of alternative transportation options for more Michiganders.
- Because less land would be needed to accommodate each new home, open space and farmland would be developed at a much slower rate.

We are aware of objections that will be raised to this idea. Environmentalists will argue that when and if the state is ultimately built out 50 to 100 years from now, it will be at a very high density with massive population, exceeding the carrying capacity of the land.

But environmental protection is largely a race against time. This plan would give us the breathing room needed to acquire more land. Thinking about the long run, environmentalists should ask themselves the following question: Do I want the preservation of Michigan’s open space

(Continued on page 10)

Thank you to our current supporting members:

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Paul Haan
Gail Heffner
Denny Heffron
Don Hilton Sr.
Barbara Holt
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