

## Chapter 4: Building the Common Ground – Making the Urban-Rural Connection



Now that you have launched a Rural Committee and an Urban Committee, it is time to start thinking about bringing the two groups together to begin building the common ground between them. This should also be the time where you begin the second phase of the model – *Capacity-Building*.

Capacity-building involves increasing the ability of an organization to effectively handle more complicated issues and projects. The Urban Committee will be concerned with looking at ways to build the capacity of neighborhood associations and other community-based groups. The Rural Committee will want to assist townships and agricultural groups in building their capacity. Each committee's activities will still consist of educational efforts, but the emphasis should now be on capacity-building activities. Committee members will have to specifically look for ways to increase the skills of the organizations that they consider to be important to their land use work.

Capacity-building also refers to the United Growth project. Building the common ground between the Rural and Urban Committees is a critical point. It involves a process that results in committee members understanding that urban and rural land use issues are two sides of the same coin. It involves a process that develops United Growth as an organization.

A joint activity that unites rural and urban members should probably first occur six months to a year after the committees start meeting - to make sure that each have a good understanding of the land use issues in their own area (urban or rural) before bringing them together to understand the other's perspective.

### Introduction of a Joint Meeting

At a leadership meeting with the chair and co-chair of each committee as you prepare the next meeting's agenda, ask them what they think about starting to plan a joint meeting with the other committee. If they are agreeable, have them introduce the idea at the next committee meeting. If committee members are not interested or not yet ready, wait a while longer for this. If there is interest, continue with the following steps.



### Appoint a Joint Planning Committee

Brainstorm at both the Rural and Urban Committee meetings what format would be good for a first joint meeting. Then 2 or 3 members from each committee should be selected/elected to form the planning group - the Joint Planning Committee.

At the first meeting of the Joint Planning Committee, the ideas brainstormed by each committee should be presented and discussed. Do members have other ideas? The following is a list of items that the Planning Committee should consider for a first meeting:

- Do an ice breaker that gets Urban and Rural Committee members meeting and talking with each other.
- Each committee reports on their activities for the past year.
- Brainstorming/discussion on what the next joint activity will be.
- Decide on whether a speaker who would be of interest to both urban and rural perspectives would be invited.
- Luncheon versus just a meeting (food attracts, but is costly).
- Date, time, and place.
- Involvement of as many committee members as possible in facilitating/leading the meeting.
- Review United Growth Coalition models. (Models are explained on page 51 at the back of Chapter 5.)

### **First Joint Meeting**

Just having this meeting is an achievement! However, there are several success indicators you can use to measure how well the meeting went:

- *Attendance.* At least half the members of each committee attended. (If one committee did not have many members attending, this would be a clue that further analysis needs to be done to determine the reason. It could mean that re-organization efforts must be undertaken to bring this group up to speed.)
- *Productivity.* The agenda was followed and completed. Plans have begun for the next joint activity/meeting.
- *Quality.* There was good interaction among rural and urban members. There was a feeling that this was a worthwhile meeting - time well spent. Most felt good about the meeting and indicated their interest in continuing with the project.
- *Commitment.* Several people volunteered to plan the next event.

An evaluation form should be completed by the participants. Questions should relate to the above four points.

### **Additional Coalition-Building Activities**

In the year following the first joint meeting, the Urban and Rural Committees should decide to pursue other joint activities. These activities should both address land use concerns in your county, but also be laying the foundation for the United Growth Coalition. Possible coalition-building activities include:

- Tour de Sprawl – a bus tour that shows both urban abandonment and new rural and suburban development
- Mini-Grant Program – a small grant program administered by Urban and Rural Committee members
- Newsletter – a quarterly publication written by United Growth participants (See the back of Chapter 9 for an example.)

- Workshop – organized by United Growth committee around a land use issue of interest to the broader community

### **A Balancing Act**

You have now moved into the capacity-building phase of the project and started bringing the Rural and Urban Committees together to begin building the common ground. Of course, educational efforts are also continuing. This is a very tricky part and requires staff to do a balancing act.

In this phase, staff must support both committees as they undertake capacity-building activities with the organizations that are important to the success of the rural and urban components of this project. At the same time, staff must be building the connection between the two committees, which will entail additional meetings and activities. It would be natural for staff to feel at this point that s/he is being pulled in many different directions at the same time.

Here are a few suggestions to help you successfully maneuver through this difficult period of the project:

- This is a leadership development opportunity. One staff person just cannot perform all the leadership tasks required, and this is not desirable anyway. Encourage and facilitate the involvement of more committee members into leadership roles within the project. If they have not already, participants must take responsibility for making sure activities are undertaken.
- Explore partnership opportunities with other land use related organizations. It is always desirable to collaborate with other groups on an activity if there are shared goals to be achieved. Although developing a partnership requires time, the partner organization will also have time and resources to devote to the activity.
- Brush up on good time management techniques. Your time is limited, so you must be sure that you are using it wisely and effectively.
- Make sure that your priorities and the priorities of the Urban and Rural Committees match. If you are not undertaking the activities of most interest to participants, you will not obtain much assistance from them.
- Explore the possibility of hiring a consultant to assist with a specific activity or program if you have funding available. See “Using Consultants” in Chapter 11 for additional information on this.

### **Supplemental Information**

The rest of the chapter consists of examples for Kent County that can be used as templates for your program. Please note that a lot of the information will be different for your county/region, but the basic framework of the materials should be useful.

## Proposed Goal Definitions

At the January 2004 Search Conference, the task of defining terms in one of the goals that was developed was given to the Project Management Team. The following definitions are proposed to the Coalition for consideration at their February 17 meeting.

**Goal:** *To assist and empower communities in implementing positive land use projects and practices.*

### **Community**

A geographical area that is recognized/identified by its residents.  
(For example: neighborhood, township, county, region. etc.)

### **Positive Land Use**

Using land so that a community's vision is achieved while its benefits are balanced among all members of society.

### **Empowerment**

Providing the opportunity for residents to participate in making decisions that affect them and helping provide the resources needed to achieve their community's vision for positive land use.

# Tour de Sprawl Itinerary

Itinerary	Route	Message/Material
<p>1:45 pm Board Bus, Amway Grand Plaza Hotel</p> <p>① 2:00 pm Bus Departs</p> <p>Introduction to the Tour and the issue of urban sprawl</p>	<p>① Pearl</p> <p>① Front</p> <p>① Bridge</p>	<p>I. Introduction to the Tour – Carol Townsend, Director of the MSU Center of Urban Affairs – Grand Rapids</p> <p>A. Story of where resources are and where they are not being invested</p> <p>B. Goal is to stimulate thinking about where on the regional landscape we (individuals, businesses, government, foundations) should be applying our resources</p>
<p>② West Grand Neighborhood</p>	<p>② Broadway</p>	<p>II. Abandoning the City: Industrial/Residential</p> <p>A. Negative: Life space threatened by economic space</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Few residents employed locally—industry disregard for neighborhood quality of life</li> <li>2. Corporate welfare to keep industry from leaving</li> <li>3. Destruction of historic structures</li> <li>4. Concentrated poverty/Socio-economic isolation and segregation</li> </ol> <p>B. Positive: Neighborhood/business dialogue partnerships</p>
<p>③ Alpine Avenue Commercial Strip</p>	<p>③ Alpine Ave.</p>	<p>III. Sprawling into the Countryside: Unplanned Commercial Development</p> <p>A. Negative: Everywhere USA Commercial Strip Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unplanned</li> <li>2. Unwalkable</li> <li>3. Auto-dependent (limited transit)</li> </ol> <p>B. Positive: Diverse Housing Opportunities</p>
<p>④ The Fruit Ridge – Alpine Township</p>	<p>④ Alpine Ave.</p> <p>④ 7 Mile</p> <p>④ Fruit Ridge Ave.</p> <p>④ 10 Mile</p>	<p>IV. Sprawling into the Countryside: Threatened Farmland</p> <p>A. Negative: Unique agriculture/fruit-growing ecosystem lost</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regional losses</li> <li>2. Global losses</li> </ol> <p>B. Positive: Purchase/Transfer of Development Rights and Value—Added Agricultural Initiatives</p>
<p>⑤ The City of Rockford Rockford Schools and Boulder Creek</p>	<p>⑤ 10 Mile</p> <p>⑤ Main St.</p> <p>⑤ Ogden</p> <p>⑤ Northland</p> <p>⑤ Brewer</p> <p>⑤ Cannonsberg Rd.</p> <p>⑤ East Beltline</p>	<p>V. Sprawling into the Countryside: Inefficient School Development II</p> <p>A. Negative: School building in the suburbs and abandonment in the urban core</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Urban education underachievement</li> </ol> <p>B. Positive: Boulder Creek Development: revitalization of what once was an eyesore to the community (gravel pit)</p>

<p>Ⓒ Plainfield Ave./Creston Neighborhood</p>	<p>Ⓒ Plainfield Ⓒ Leonard Ⓒ Laffayette</p>	<p>VI. Abandoning the City: Plainfield Avenue/Creston Neighborhood  <b>A. Negative: Commercial District as “canyon”</b>  <b>B. Positive: Traditional neighborhood development and potential streetscaping initiatives</b></p>
<p>Ⓓ REACH Neighborhood</p>	<p>Ⓓ Wealthy Ⓓ James</p>	<p>VII. Abandoning the City: Vacant Housing/Concentrated Poverty  <b>A. Negative: Vacant and boarded-up housing</b>  1. Little private market value  2. Lost property tax base  3. Concentrated poverty/Socioeconomic isolation and segregation  4. Social needs  5. Racial isolation and segregation  6. Defacto policy for the provision of affordable housing [gettoized]  <b>B. Positive: Non-profit efforts to rehabilitate housing</b></p>
<p>Debriefing Session REACH Headquarters</p>		<p>Questions, Comments, and Refreshments</p>
<p>Return to Amway Grand Plaza Hotel</p>		<p>VIII. Abandoning the City: Demise of the Central Business District  <b>A. Negative: underutilized commercial and industrial property</b>  1. Relocation of furniture and other manufacturers  2. Lost commercial tax base  3. Urban expressways  4. Gentrification  <b>B. Positive: Downtown revitalization/“Back to the city” movement</b></p>

# Mini-Grant Program

## Summary of Proposals & Funding Sources

Rural and Urban Committee members implemented a Mini-Grant Program that funded six community land use projects from October 2000-July 2001. Eight proposals were received requesting \$18,110. A total of \$11,200 is available for the Mini-Grant Program. Most organizations did not receive the amount of funding they requested, and two did not receive an award. The average grant was \$1,860.00. The following is a brief summary of the proposed projects and the approved funding level.

### Funding Sources:

- Frey Foundation
- Grand Rapids Community Foundation
- LISC
- Standard Federal Bank
- Steelcase Foundation

#### **Aquinas College Community Leadership Institute** \$2,200

The proposed “Student Transit Initiative” will seek to promote college student use of transit services through campus surveys on barriers to transit use and then work to eliminate those barriers. (The mini-grant is a match for other funding for this project.)

#### **Garfield Park Neighborhoods Association & Garfield Development Corp** \$3,500

This joint project will prepare part of the Garfield area for a neighborhood-based planning process that will assist the two community-based organizations in moving forward on their revitalization efforts.

#### **Faith in Motion** \$1,050

This project addresses land use in the suburbs by reaching out to suburban citizens through the religious communities of the area.

#### **Ada Township** \$1,400

This project includes the development of a brochure on the recently adopted Open Space Protection Plan and will be distributed to all Township households.

#### **Grand Rapids Center for Independent Living** \$1,550

This project will address the transportation and livability of our region and the importance of walkable/rollable communities. (The mini-grant is a match toward other funding for this project.)

#### **Land Conservancy of West MI** \$1,500

This project will identify 15 to 20 priority conservation areas important to Kent County and launch an intensive land owner contact program. (The mini-grant is a match for other funding for this project.)

#### **Community Foundation of Grand Rapids Township** - 0 –

This \$2 million project is to purchase a 118 acre farm for the use of a nature preserve and park. Fund raising will continue until 12/31/01.

#### **Gaines Charter Township** - 0 –

This is a project to purchase 80 acres. The first phase is to develop a non-motorized trail, which will begin in the spring 2001.

## Chapter 5: Organizing the United Growth Coalition



After the Rural Committee and Urban Committee have experience working together on joint activities (about one year), it will be time to officially bring the two groups together to form the Coalition. The following process is suggested for actually accomplishing this.

### **Organize a Project Management Team (PMT)**

The Project Management Team can be organized as early as the leadership is ready. There should be an equal number (such as 3) from each of the Urban and Rural Committees. This is the group who tracks the progress of the project, its finances, and helps in planning. The Joint Planning Committee that decided what activity the Rural and Urban Committees would first pursue may morph into the PMT. Staff assistance needs to be provided to the PMT.

The PMT should develop a strategy and timeline for when the Coalition should be officially launched. It is most important that leadership for the Coalition emerge through the PMT. The PMT focuses on increasing the ability of United Growth members to form a sustainable organizational structure. This continues the capacity-building phase of United Growth.

### **Building Sustainability into the Coalition**

Launching the Coalition takes the project to a new level. It is a level that says United Growth is an organization that will be a permanent player in land use issues in the community. To make sure that happens, plan how the Coalition will sustain itself. Here are some suggestions on how to accomplish that:

- *Membership-Based.* The Project Management Team or a special committee should explore whether the Coalition will require membership dues. Yearly dues will be a source of revenue for the Coalition, which the PMT will decide how to spend. The full Coalition should vote on whether yearly dues will be collected and set the amounts.
- *Volunteer Leadership.* United Growth participants must step up to chair the various committees and to assume responsibility for the direction of the organization by being on the Project Management Team. As the organization grows, volunteers must generally assume more and more responsibility for running the organization. Developing agendas, taking minutes, contacting speakers and other partners, making funding decisions, recruiting members, etc. are all tasks that should not automatically be left to the staff.

### **Maintenance of Urban and Rural Committees**

While working toward the first meeting of the United Growth Coalition, you will still want to keep the Rural Committee and Urban Committee meeting monthly and undertaking activities of their choice. At this stage, they should be doing capacity building activities as well as educational efforts.

### **History of the First Coalition Meeting**

Due to the fact that United Growth for Kent County was a brand new organization, a significant amount of time was spent determining whether or not the United Growth Coalition should remain under MSU Extension, should become affiliated with another organization or should launch itself as an independent non-profit.

To lead the group through this decision-making process, a Coalition Formation Committee (CFC) was formed consisting of four members of the Urban Committee and four members of the Rural Committee and one MSUE staff person. An independent contractor was hired to facilitate this process because MSUE staff did not want to bias the group toward staying with MSU Extension.

The CFC determined that they needed to interview potential organizations with which the Coalition may want to become affiliated. First, the group developed a list of organizations to interview and then developed a list of questions that would be asked of each organization. After months of interviewing representatives of several organizations and collecting facts about the pros and cons of each alternative, a meeting of all Rural and Urban Committee members was called to make a decision. After some deliberation in three small groups, each small group came to the conclusion that the pros of staying with MSU Extension outweighed all other options.

At the conclusion of this meeting, it was determined that a goal setting meeting would take place to determine the function and purpose of the United Growth Coalition. This meeting was called a "Search Conference." All Rural and Urban Committee members and MSUE staff were invited to participate in this meeting as well, and another independent contractor was hired to facilitate this meeting. At the Search Conference, the group came up with four goal areas. Several sub-goals were identified under each goal area. The four goal areas were:

- To establish a base of support to sustain the Coalition over the long term.
- To provide a resource network on land use. To educate the community about the benefits of positive land use.
- To assist and empower communities in implementing positive land use projects and practices.
- Organizational structure issues.

The group agreed that regular United Growth Coalition meetings between Rural and Urban Committee members (and anyone else who wanted to join) needed to take place to work on these four goal areas. The first Coalition meeting was scheduled one month later.

The group also determined that the Coalition should become a membership organization where members voluntarily pay annual dues to help establish a base of support to sustain the Coalition. A sub-committee was formed to determine membership dues rates and to research MSU policies on membership dues. United Growth for Kent County currently charges \$25 for individual members, \$100 for Bronze level members, \$250 for Silver level members and \$500 for Gold level members. Members are listed on the web site, and other publications.

### **First Coalition Meeting**

United Growth for Kent County Coalition's first official meeting was held in February 2004 as a result of the Search Conference. The Urban Committee and the Rural Committee came together to create the United Growth Coalition.

The group determined that the best way to hold Coalition Meetings and continue to meet as Rural and Urban Committees would be to hold monthly, one hour Coalition Meetings from 8:30 – 9:30 a.m. at Kent/MSU Extension and then adjourn at 9:30 a.m. for separate Rural and Urban Committee meetings from 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. This meeting schedule has worked well for the past several years now.

#### **First Coalition Meeting Agenda:**

- Introductions
- Review Search Conference Report
- Legislative Committee Update
- Set Coalition Meeting Schedule
- Create Subcommittee on Organization Structure
- Other Business
- Committee Member Announcements
- Adjourn for Rural and Urban Committee Meetings

One of the more important tasks for Coalition Meetings is time for relationship building between Rural and Urban Committee members. This helps build trust, increase collaboration and strengthens the organization as a whole. Committee updates serve an important role as they promote communication among members so all are aware of what each committee is working on and everyone is invited to attend committee meetings.

Coalition Meetings also gave an opportunity for staff to communicate with all members at once about project business, funding issues, etc. Coalition Meetings also provide a venue for guest speakers and group brainstorming sessions. Guest speakers have proved popular and continue the educational aspect of United Growth. Recent speakers have addressed wind energy, mass transit proposals, and geothermal energy.

### ***Becoming an Independent Nonprofit Organization***

As United Growth for Kent County became more involved in advocating positions on land use issues, it became necessary to separate from Extension. They decided to become an independent nonprofit organization since there were still many issues they wanted to impact. However, they also wanted to keep a relationship with Extension. The process United Growth followed in establishing its own identity could be used as a model for other groups.

### **Memorandum of Understanding**

An agreement was developed that outlined the relationship between United Growth and Extension. Extension would continue to provide meeting space and some staff time to assist with educational programming on land use concerns. United Growth outlined their time line for becoming an independent organization. The agreement was signed by both parties, and it has worked very well.

## **By-Laws**

Writing by-laws can be a capacity-building activity for the organization, or it can tear the group apart. Decisions about what constitutes a quorum, who can be a member, and what committees to require can create much heated debate. A process must be set up to facilitate this discussion.

United Growth for Kent County appointed a committee to draft the by-laws, with Extension staff support. An active UGKC volunteer was a retired attorney, and he was very helpful in clarifying legal matters. Drafts were e-mailed to United Growth members for input at various times. The full Coalition approved the final by-laws.

## **Annual Meeting**

The first, official meeting of United Growth members was the annual meeting that officially launched the “new” organization. United Growth’s first meeting was March 20, 2007. A seven member Board of Directors was elected.

## **Articles of Incorporation**

United Growth drafted Articles of Incorporation so that they could become a Michigan nonprofit corporation. This would provide Board members and volunteers with some protection from lawsuits, etc. The official name for the organization was chosen. A \$20.00 filing fee was paid.

To maintain nonprofit corporation status, organizations must submit an annual report, plus a \$20.00 fee. The report must be filed by October 1 of each year. This process is handled by the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth, Bureau of Commercial Services, Corporation Division.

## **Other Logistics**

Several other actions had to be done to establish United Growth as an independent organization:

- a mailing address had to be established, which was achieved by renting a post office box
- a free checking account was set up with a local bank
- a United Growth web site was established at <http://www.unitedgrowth.org> (paid for with grant funds)
- application was made for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) Form SS-4 from the Internal Revenue Service can be obtained from [www.irs.gov/businesses](http://www.irs.gov/businesses)

## **501(c)(3) Application**

To be a nonprofit organization that is legally able to raise and receive grant funds without paying taxes on them, United Growth filed Form 1023 - Application for Recognition of Exemption Under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The application form and instructions can be attained at: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

Although it is not required to file this form immediately, we recommend that it be pursued as quickly as possible. When done shortly after the organization is officially organized, there is less financial accounting needed in the application. Additionally, members and other donors are able to take tax deductions on their contributions to the organization.

### **Michigan Sales & Use Tax Certificate of Exemption**

After you receive a letter from IRS saying that you qualify for tax exempt status, it is wise to have sales tax exemption, which is not included in your federal exemption. You cannot request vendors to remove sales taxes from purchases made by the organization unless you have completed the proper certificate. See [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov) for information.

### **Charitable Solicitation License**

The last legal document United Growth completed was an Initial Charitable Trust/Charitable Solicitation Questionnaire. This was done so that United Growth could legally raise funds in Michigan. The Charitable Solicitation License is issued through Michigan's Attorney General's office.

### ***Determining Outcomes and Impacts***

Take some time now to evaluate the capacity-building progress you have made so far.

- Have relationships and collaborations been formed as a result of United Growth meetings and projects?
- What issues or projects have neighborhood organizations been able to undertake as a result of the capacity-building work you have done with them?
- What issues or projects have townships been able to undertake as a result of the capacity-building work you have done with them?
- Is there a functioning Project Management Team where members are taking responsibility for the success of the project?
- Is the United Growth Coalition structure in place?

Although the emphasis now has been on capacity-building, you should have continued educational efforts. This might also be a good time for you to review what educational impacts you have continued to make both with United Growth members as well as with the public.

Remember that Chapter 10 on Evaluation can give you more detailed information in this regard.

### **Supplemental Information**

The rest of the chapter consists of examples for Kent County that can be used as templates for your program. Please note that a lot of the information will be different for your county/region, but the basic framework of the materials should be useful.

# MSU Organizational Models

## **Incorporated**

- Separate legal entity but uses MSU's name with permission from MSU
- Usually has a sizable asset the group wants to control and not be threatened by MSU control.
- Separate board
- Example: 4-H Foundation, County 4-H Councils

## **Unincorporated**

- MSU faculty members ultimately responsible for making sure work of the group fits MSU's mission and purpose
- Members/volunteers of group covered by MSU's liability insurance and legal staff
- An organization "controlled" by MSU but can have its own by-laws. (No known limitations for by-laws as long as group fits MSU's mission and purpose. NO ADVOCACY!)
- Can have, but does not use separate 501c3 status

## **Next Steps:**

- Determine which model the Coalition should follow.
- Talk with your Regional Director. Work out details of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MSUE.
- Talk with other departments. Work out details of MOU with them.

# United Growth for Kent County Decision-Making Process

Three breakout groups will examine two scenarios describing UGKC's future (below), choose one scenario as their preferred future for UGKC, and report their recommendation to the full group. Each group will designate a spokesperson who will present the group's findings, taking no more than 10 minutes.

The scenarios are:

**Scenario A** Assume that United Growth for Kent County remains affiliated with MSU.

Describe UGKC's future in this scenario by answering the questions below. If you address all of these questions, feel free to add other elements as you see fit.

**Scenario B** Assume that United Growth of Kent County becomes an independent nonprofit organization not affiliated with any other non-profit or public sector entity.

Describe UGKC's future in this scenario by answering these questions. If you address all of these questions, feel free to add other elements as you see fit.

- i. What opportunities does this offer, including both the best possible benefits and the more realistic/most likely benefits?
- ii. How does this scenario hinder UGKC's success/fulfillment of its mission? That is, what are both the worst possible and most likely liabilities of this scenario?
- iii. How might UGKC change in response to this scenario, for better or worse? (Even making permanent what has been seen as a temporary arrangement might cause changes to occur.)
- iv. What will the organization look like?  
(Governance, committees, staffing, structure, funding, services, etc.)
- v. How will your duties as a member change?

# Option #1

## Recommendation by the Coalition Formation Committee On An Organizational Structure for the United Growth Coalition

Scheduled to be launched in early 2005

**Recommendation:** The United Growth Coalition should remain under the administrative management of Michigan State University.

**Service Area:** Kent County and its individual communities with the possibility of future expansion by replicating the United Growth model in other counties through partnerships with MSU Extension offices.

### Summary of the Committee's Findings:

- *United Growth for Kent County's* greatest strength is its ability to bring people and organizations together to discuss and work on land use and community development issues.
- The benefit of the affiliation with Michigan State University and Extension outweighs the limitations in advocacy by MSUE/United Growth staff as well as MSU bureaucracy.
- Choosing to form an independent advocacy organization may alienate some existing Project Partners and conflict with other organizations.

### Potential Role of the United Growth Coalition:

- United Growth should be the open forum for diverse people and organizations to come together and identify priority rural and urban land use issues and develop a strategy for tackling them.
- United Growth should be a prominent organization within the community.
- Community leaders should look to United Growth in setting land use policies.
- Members of United Growth should be connected with land use advocacy organizations and should advocate as committees and individuals.
- The United Growth Coalition should explore producing research, white papers and a speaker series on priority rural and urban land use issues.
- The Coalition should continue to analyze and comment upon proposed land use policies. United Growth's Coordinated Planning Act Review Process is a model that will be used.

### Member Commitment:

- Members should take on the responsibility for project oversight, convening meetings, carrying out projects, chairing committees and recording minutes.
- Members should also take on the responsibility for securing funds for projects.

### MSU Commitment:

- MSU should work with the Coalition to formalize a structure for the Coalition within MSU, MSUE and/or Kent / MSUE.

### Staffing Implications:

- MSU *United Growth for Kent County* staff will be phased out of their current role. Work must be done to determine MSU's future role and commitment.
- The Coalition must raise funds to pay for secretarial support and other staff (including MSU staff), however, MSU has personnel resources that can be utilized by the Coalition.

### Funding Implications:

- Grant funds are not sustainable and cannot be relied upon to keep the project going.
- Research must be done if MSU can accept membership dues.
- Work must be done to find creative funding sources for activities, events and projects.

## Option #2

# Recommendation by the Coalition Formation Committee On An Organizational Structure for the United Growth Coalition

Scheduled to be launched in early 2005

**Recommendation:** The United Growth Coalition should become an independent 501(c) advocacy organization.

**Potential Service Area:** Kent County and adjacent communities in surrounding Counties.

**Summary of the Committee's Findings:**

- Due to the absence of a unified rural/urban voice for land use issues in Kent County and growing momentum and leadership at the state-level, *United Growth for Kent County* should become a land use and community development advocacy organization.
- No existing organization that has been examined is appropriate as an umbrella organization.
- The importance of strong advocacy on land use policies at the local, state and federal level outweighs United Growth's affiliation with MSU.

**Potential Role of the United Growth Coalition:**

- The newly established United Growth Coalition should work to establish legislative priorities and then collaborate with other similarly aligned land use organizations to advocate adoption and implementation of those priorities.
- United Growth Members and Partners will be encouraged to become actively involved in advocacy on land use policies at all levels. This will be the organization's primary purpose.
- All current Members and Partners will be given the opportunity to pull out or stay with the newly formed organization.

**Member Commitment:**

- A strong board and membership will be essential for this organization to survive.
- Members must be able and willing to become actively engaged in advocacy at all levels.
- Depending upon the bylaws of the Coalition, local government Members and Partners will have to consider their advocacy limitations when deciding to become Members of the newly formed organization.

**MSU Commitment:**

- MSU staff will assist in the transition phase by transferring project information and resources to the new staff.
- After the Coalition is formed, MSU will no longer be involved in managing or staffing the Coalition but may still participate in an educational role.

**Staffing Implications:**

- Staff must be hired. A Board must be created.
- Staff and/or Board members must be experienced in advocacy/lobbying.

**Funding Implications:**

- MSU has secured a small amount of funding for the start-up of the Coalition. All additional funds as well as office space and equipment must be secured.
- Approx. \$2,000 for 501c status.
  - 501 (c) allows for tax deductible donations, endowments and membership dues.



*Making the Urban-Rural Connection!*

## **United Growth Coalition Meeting Agenda**

August 16, 2005 Kent / MSU Extension

8:30 – 9:30 a.m. Coalition Meeting

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. Rural Committee Meeting (Urban Committee is not meeting this month.)

## *Agenda*

### **I. Welcome and Introductions – Cynthia Price, PMT Chair**

### **II. Approval of July Minutes**

### **III. Business**

- a. Review and discuss Purchase of Development Rights Paper
  - i. Any revisions?
  - ii. List those willing to sign on to the paper before it is mailed to County Commissioners' homes and brought to the Commission at a meeting after the first of the year when a new Chairperson is in place.
- b. Committee Reports (only if new information to report)
  - i. Project Management Team
    1. How many people are still interested in hosting a Conflict Management Workshop? (Draft agenda and budget attached.)
    2. Review Draft Press Release relating state and local budget issues and sprawl (will be handed out at meeting)
  - ii. Legislative Committee – Seeking input on purposes of Commerce Centers
  - iii. "Matrix" Committee
  - iv. Rural and/or Urban Committees
  - v. Others

### **IV. Quick Announcements**

- a. Member Announcements
- b. Please reserve September 21, 2005 from 11:30 – 1:30 p.m. at Kent / MSU Extension for the annual Land Use Networking Luncheon. This is where organizations give a 3 minute update on their work. This is a popular event that you won't want to miss!
- c. Check out the calendar on United Growth's web page accessible at <http://www.unitedgrowth.org> for land use events.

### **V. Adjourn for Rural Committee meeting**

#### **2005 United Growth Coalition Goals**

1. Form a Subcommittee to conduct research and create a product listing Kent County/West Michigan land use/open space groups and their work. Members include: Bonnie Shupe, Cynthia Price, Marsha Wilcox, Dave Bee, Andrea Dewey, Kendra Wills.
2. Examine how local government budget cuts now and in the future will affect sound land use decisions.
3. Sponsor a Conflict Management workshop. (Working on)
4. Sponsor a breakfast or luncheon with a speaker on eminent domain in the summer of 2005, after the Supreme Court's ruling.
5. Support the upcoming transit conference in Grand Rapids. (Andy Guy is United Growth's representative on the planning committee.)
6. Sponsor the GVMC conference. (UG contributed \$150 of MSUE's \$500 sponsorship.)
7. Continue to provide land use news and information by publishing United Growth's quarterly newsletter, *The Urban-Rural Connection*.

# United Growth Organizational Structure Under MSU Extension

