

## 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 (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. Your County Extension Director could possibly be part of the PMT at the beginning. The LPE provides staff assistance 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 this county. 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 LPE.
- *County Office Commitment.* If the Coalition wants to continue their affiliation with Extension after the WKK grant ends, the County Extension Director needs to concur. Specifically, the Extension office will have to agree to continue supporting the LPE and United Growth expenses, such as: meeting space, postage, printing, and other general expenses.

## **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, letterhead, newsletter, membership form 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 year and a half.

#### **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 provided a venue for guest speakers and group brainstorming sessions.

### **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 9 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**

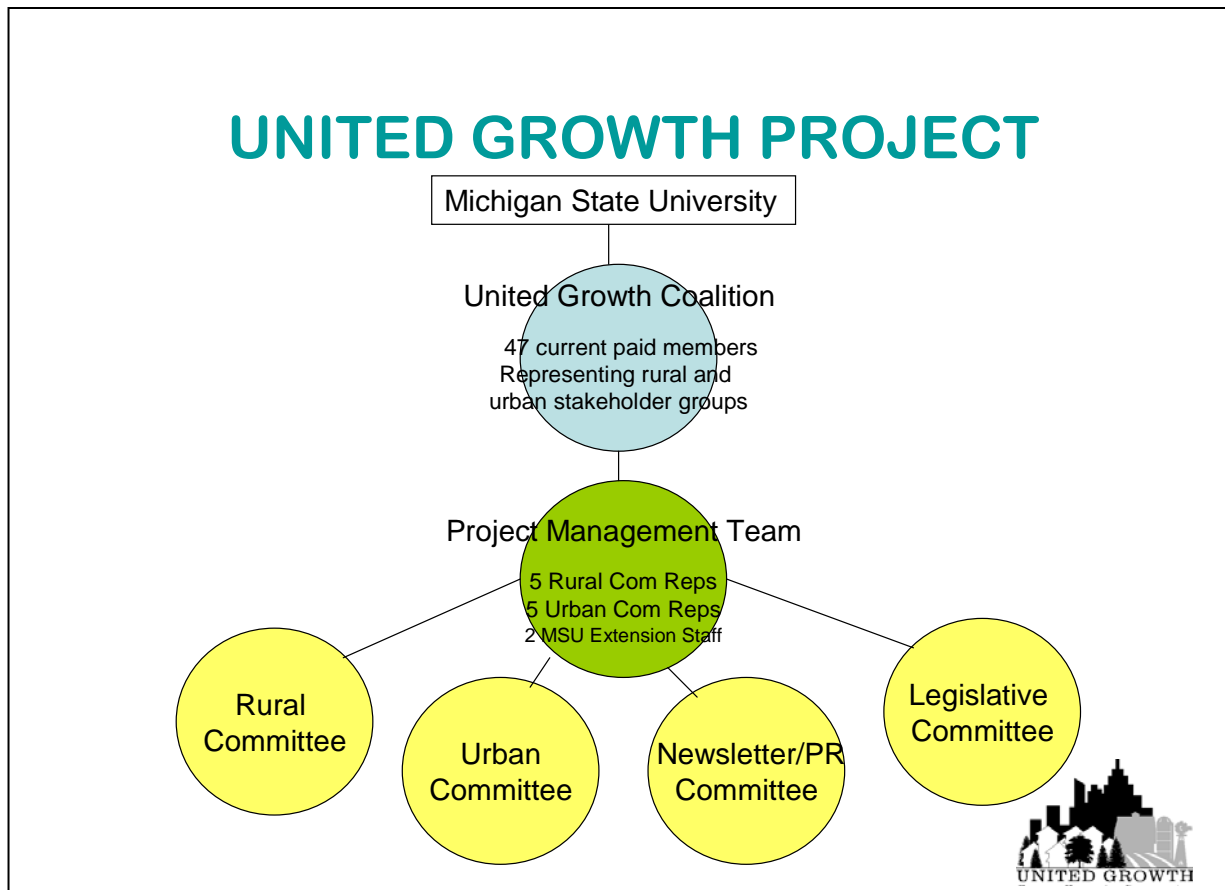
- a. Member Announcements
- b. Please reserve September 21, 2005 from 11:30 – 1:30 p.m. at Kent / MSU Extension for the annual Land Use Networking Luncheon. This is where organizations give a 3 minute update on their work. This is a popular event that you won't want to miss!
- c. Check out the calendar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



## Chapter 6: Public Policy - The Third Prong



The third prong of the United Growth strategy is public policy. Some United Growth participants may have experience in this realm, but many may not feel comfortable talking with legislators and thinking on a policy level. However, it is a natural progression for United Growth to explore ways it can impact policies that affect land use decisions in the county. The following are suggestions on how to move into this public policy stag.

### Meet with Local Public Officials

From the beginning when the Rural and Urban Committees start tackling local land use issues, they should be encouraged to meet with their local officials - both those elected and those appointed. The Rural Committee should develop a relationship with township supervisors, clerks, and planning directors. The Urban Committee should develop a relationship with city commissioners, mayor, city



**Kent County's Urban Committee met with former State Representative Bill Byl at a regular committee meeting in 2001.**

manager, and other city department heads. Both committees will want to know their county commissioners. Let your County Extension Director know when you are meeting with these officials. This will accomplish at least two things: gain more information on the issues and become better acquainted with the officials. The official may be invited to attend a committee meeting to discuss an issue, or a special meeting can be arranged.

Meeting with local officials will also help them become better acquainted with United Growth and your activities. You might want to present each official with a folder that contains materials you have produced (United Growth newsletter, brochure, etc.).

### Meet with Area Legislators

When the Urban and Rural Committees are ready, arrange meetings with their area legislators. This can be done individually or as a group. Here are some possible scenarios:

- Committee members meet with their legislators at a breakfast meeting at a local restaurant to talk about current land use issues of concern. Committee members must feel comfortable talking about their issues and be receptive to hearing what the legislators have to say. (Legislators usually like to meet Mondays or Fridays – the days designated for working in their districts.)
- A specific legislator, who is deemed “friendly”, is invited to a monthly committee meeting to discuss United Growth land use issues, and/or pending legislation that is of interest to the committee.
- Some legislators may hold regular, weekly office hours in the district. A United Growth delegation can go and meet with the legislators for a few minutes.

### **Organize a Legislative Committee**

Once some experience has been gained in meeting with public and elected officials, you will probably want to organize a Legislative Committee. This group will consist of representatives from both the Urban and Rural Committees. It is also an opportunity to involve additional people in United Growth activities by recruiting others. A chair and co-chair should be selected as soon as possible. The issues that are taken up by the committee can be assigned by the Rural and Urban Committees or Coalition, decided on by the committee itself, or a combination of the two. Here are some suggestions on how to get started:

- If there is a particularly hot land use issue happening in the state or county, the Legislative Committee can become informed. They could print the pros and cons of the issue and distribute it. They could take a stand on the issue. (If a stand is taken, this should come as a recommendation from the Legislative Committee to the Coalition. The Coalition will then vote it up or down.)
- The Legislative Committee can review the current, proposed legislation before the House and the Senate. The best reference is [www.michiganlegislature.org](http://www.michiganlegislature.org). You may want to consider having committee members sign up for email notifications for meetings and agendas through this web site. The email notification service is only available for the House.
- Beth Moore, Extension Public Policy Specialist, offers an orientation to the Capitol. The entire Legislative Committee could participate in the orientation. (Contact Beth Moore for more information at [mooreeee@msu.edu](mailto:mooreeee@msu.edu).)
- Get to know your state legislators. Meet with them annually so that they know the Legislative Committee and committee members know their legislators. Make sure your committee members have a copy of the Citizen's guide to state government available through legislators' offices.



### **MSU Policies on Lobbying**

First of all, the Land Policy Educator should never be involved in lobbying activities. It makes it easier if this is the general rule that is widely known and followed. However, United Growth participants are under no restrictions. United Growth or the LPE should never support an individual candidate for public office through their professional role. What one does as a private citizen is up to the individual. See MSU's Policies on public policy education at the end of the chapter.

### **Impacting Pending Legislation**

The role of the Land Policy Educator should always be educational. The LPE can assist the Legislative Committee in researching an issue or pending legislation to determine its effect on your county. Publicizing this information is educational – especially if the pros and cons of the issues are explained.

The United Growth Coalition, or any of its committees, can support or oppose any issue or bills. In meetings with legislators, they can express their support or opposition. They can testify before legislative hearings, write letters to legislators advocating their position and encourage others to contact their legislators. These activities should be done without the involvement of the LPE. Extension letterhead should not be used for communication on behalf of the local UG Coalition. They should develop their own stationery and identity.

If the above activities constitute a significant percent of the Coalition's activities, the lobbying laws pertaining to non-profits should be followed.

It should also be noted that the Legislative Committee's efforts should be non-partisan. Meet with both Republican and Democratic law makers. Land use issues require the support of both political parties.

### **Examples of Legislative Committee Activities**

The following examples demonstrate the broad range of activities that can be undertaken by a Legislative Committee. Although the focus here is on impacting policy, you will notice that these activities also can have a capacity-building element for both United Growth and the individual Legislative Committee members. There is always an educational component to the activities.

*1. Bill Review.* One of the first major projects undertaken was an extensive review of a controversial bill that was supported by the United Growth Coalition. The bill encouraged cooperation among governmental jurisdictions. There was much misinformation circulating about the bill, which had stalled legislative action on it.

United Growth for Kent County Legislative Committee organized a diverse group to review the bill - page by page - to see where agreement and disagreements existed. The review committee had representatives from the following: home builders, neighborhood association, REALTOR, environmental group, local college, regional planning organization, etc. When someone disagreed with a section in the bill, the group discussed the point and offered alternatives. The amazing outcome was a document with which everyone in the group agreed. Our suggestions for changes and an outline of our process were communicated to area legislators.

*2. Organizing Support.* The Legislative Committee actively supported the bills that established the Michigan Housing & Community Development Fund. They first distributed information explaining the bills and how they will impact affordable housing in Kent County. An online network of local organizations and individuals supporting the bills was developed. A good working relationship with the Community & Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM), the state organization coordinating much of the effort on these bills, was formed. When the bills started through the committee process, our local network generated over 100 communications to area legislators. Legislative Committee members testified at committee hearings on the bills in Lansing. The bills passed both the House and Senate and became law when the Governor signed them in December 2004.

3. *Issue Research.* One of the recommendations from the MI Land Use Leadership Council was the designation of Commerce Centers. There has not been much action on developing this concept. The Legislative Committee decided that their major goal for 2005 would be to research this concept and offer recommendations. The committee contacted state “experts” to gather their thoughts on Commerce Centers, studied SB 344 which identifies Commerce Centers sponsored by Senator Jason Allen, brainstormed what they would like to see in a Commerce Center, and did other related research. They are now in the process of putting their ideas into a position paper that will be circulated throughout the state as a way to galvanize action.

### **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.

# United Growth for Kent County's Legislative Committee

## Impact on the Affordable Housing Issue

Formation of the United Growth Coalition officially occurred in February 2004 when the Urban and Rural Committees came together. Although still under the MSU Extension umbrella, the Coalition re-structured as a membership-based organization.

The lack of affordable housing surfaced as an issue in both urban and rural areas of Kent County. The Legislative Committee of United Growth for Kent County chose the affordable housing bills that had been introduced into the state legislature as their primary focus for 2004. The bills (H.B. 4787 & 4788) would establish the Michigan Housing & Community Development Fund – a needed tool for funding of affordable housing activities.

United Growth's Legislative Committee developed a several prong educational strategy:

- created informational materials that explained the affordable housing crisis in Michigan and the content of the bills; provided periodic informational e-mails on the status of the bills,
- met with area legislators to learn more about the bills and share above materials (Rep. Kooiman and Senator Birkholz were major sponsors of the bills),
- contacted area organizations and business leaders who are interested in affordable housing to share informational materials and began developing a relationship/network with them so future activities could be coordinated,
- developed a working relationship with the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM) and its executive director Tony Lentych, who coordinated activity on the bills among the Senate, House, and Governor's office,
- authored several articles that explained the affordable housing crisis in Grand Rapids and the purpose of the bills.

Members of the Legislative Committee learned with the rest of the community about affordable housing needs. Over 7,000 families were waiting for subsidized housing in Grand Rapids in 2003. Grand Rapids Public Schools identified 1,115 homeless students attending their schools as of May 2004. Michigan ranks 48<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in state and local government spending on housing, according to *Governing* magazine. Over 41,000 households in Michigan live in sub-standard housing. The proposed Fund would address these and other consequences of the lack of affordable housing in our city, county, and state.

In addition to the social justice aspects of affordable housing, the committee chose to focus on the economic development impact of the issue. There is a growing mismatch between what employees are earning and the cost of housing. For example, between 1990 and 2000, the median value of owner-occupied housing in Michigan increased by 92.3%, while median household incomes increased by only 44% - so the cost of housing is increasing at twice the rate of wages! Some are calling this a "workforce housing" problem. In order to find suitable housing, employees are being forced to live farther away from their place of employment, thereby

increasing commuting times, traffic congestion, air pollution, and instability both at home and in the workplace.

As a result of the committee's efforts, over 100 letters were generated by the network to legislators. Committee members provided testimony at the House and Senate hearings on the bills. Even though the conventional wisdom was that these bills would not be acted upon by this lame duck session, they were passed by both the House and Senate by wide margins in December 2004. Rep. Kooiman was able to obtain \$2 million in TANF funds to provide the initial funding. Similar bills had been introduced into the Legislature since the 1980's.

# Michigan Housing & Community Development Fund

## What Is It?

- The Fund will provide incentives to housing developers to build units for low income residents and will provide housing-related assistance to low income individuals, such as paying a security deposit.
- The Fund will increase the production of affordable housing in Michigan.
  - the Fund would support the annual development of 1,000+ housing units and assist 1,500 households with special needs
- Identical bills that establish the Fund and operationalize it have been introduced in both the House and the Senate.

## Why Is It Needed?

- Over 41,000 households in Michigan live in sub-standard housing.
- The lack of affordable housing has meant an increase in the number of homeless people. On a typical night in 2003, there were 800 people in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs *in Grand Rapids*. Of those using the shelters on any given night, 36% of them are children.
- In December 2003, there were more than 7,000 families on the Section 8 waiting list in Grand Rapids.
- Michigan ranks 48<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in state and local government spending on housing, according to Governing magazine.

## Who Will Use It?

- According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), housing is *affordable* if it costs 30 percent of a household's income or less. Almost 750,000 Michigan residents are living in housing that they cannot really afford.
- HUD reports that a family with one full-time worker earning the minimum wage cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment – anywhere in the United States!
- This housing crisis affects households in the suburbs and in the townships throughout Kent County.

## Some Important Facts About Affordable Housing

The proposed Michigan Housing & Community Development Fund would help alleviate the affordable housing crisis that exists in Grand Rapids and throughout the State of Michigan.

### In Grand Rapids

- In 2003, **7,011 families were waiting for subsidized housing**, which is a 31.2% increase over the waiting lists in 2002.
- As of May 2004, **Grand Rapids Public Schools identified 1,115 homeless students** attending their schools. (*GRPS Homeless Students Program*)

### In Michigan

- Elderly households are twice as likely to experience housing need as non-elderly households. (*MI State Housing Development Authority*)
- In Michigan, **40% of renter households pay more than 30% of their income for rent.** (*National Low Income Housing Coalition/LIHIS*)
- Michigan ranks 48<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in state and local government spending on housing, according to *Governing* magazine.

### In the United States

- According to lender-established ratios, **a minimum wage earner (\$5.15 per hour) can afford monthly rent of no more than \$268.** (*National Low Income Housing Coalition/LIHIS*)
- **One out of every 7 American households has a critical housing need.** These families spend more than 50% of their income for housing and/or live in severely substandard conditions. Most alarmingly, **a growing proportion of these households were low to moderate-income families working full-time jobs.** (*Nation Housing Conference Report, Housing America's Working Families: A Further Exploration*)