



The Quarterly

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected

SWMPC celebrates its 40th Year Anniversary!

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2014 marks the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission’s 40th year of serving Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. Through many changes in administration, society, the economy, and the environment the original vision of the three counties remains strong and viable. That vision recognized that many of our challenges within each county are regional in nature and that solutions necessitate creative ways of applying our shared assets. For four decades now, the SWMPC has sought to understand the goals set by our communities and to map out pathways to creatively combine and apply assets to achieve those goals. Good planning should precede the application of our precious community assets. In a world where revenues are projected to remain static or shrink, it has become ever more important to carefully plan how to get maximum value from them. The SWMPC remains dedicated to being a valued resource to the people, organizations, and governments in southwest Michigan.

John Egelhaaf

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is moving.

Office construction should be finished and we expect to be conducting business from our new location beginning February 3rd, 2014. Our new address will be **376 West Main Street, Suite 130 Benton Harbor, MI 49022-3651**. Our other contact information remains the same.



The Niles Area Transportation Study Walk & Roll Survey 2014



The Niles Area Transportation Study (NATS) would like you to take a few minutes to complete a short survey so that we can better understand the transportation needs of ALL users. This will help us identify locations that need better infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists and develop a priority list of locations for future projects. Thank you for your time! Take the survey here: www.surveymonkey.com/s/NATSSurvey2014 or visit: www.swmpc.org/natswalkroll.asp

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2013 State of the Region Report

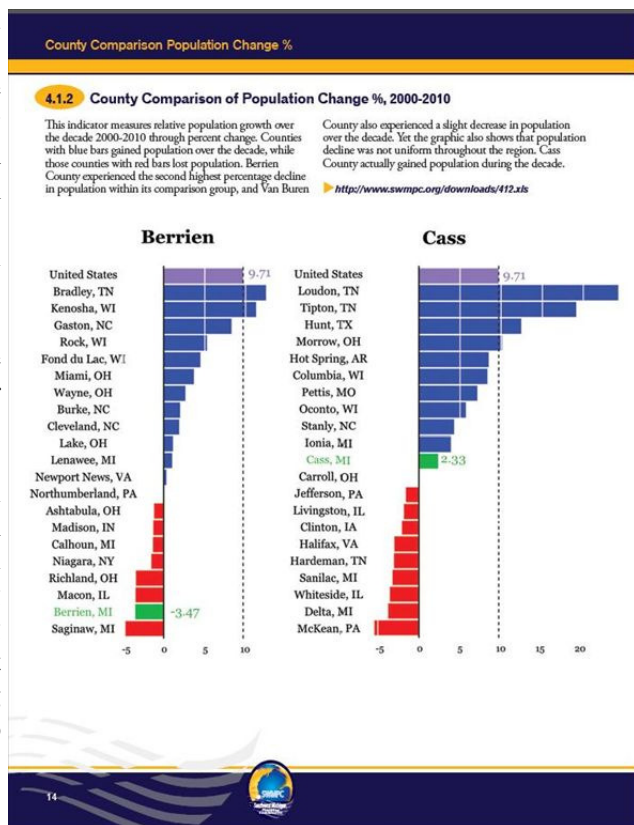
SWMPC is proud to announce the release of the 2013 State of the Southwest Michigan Region Report. The 250-page, full-color document represents a culmination of an effort that SWMPC has been undertaking since the initial data sets from the 2010 Census were released. The document presents data from a variety of sources from the last decade related to Population Vitality, Economic Strength, Personal Prosperity, Community Wellbeing, Lifelong Learning, and Government Finance. The Report now compares Southwest Michigan's counties to counties with similar economic bases throughout the United States to assess conditions and performance across many key statistical indicators. The Report is also full of graphics to aid in interpretation of what are often very complex data sets. The aim of this new format for the Report was to create a document that is accessible for all users and serves as a useful measurement tool for regional performance in the future.

The State of the Region Report, and detailed appendix files, are now available at <http://www.swmpc.org/2013sotr.asp>. Paper copies will also be available very soon.

The data in the document suggests that Southwest Michigan will face a challenge not uncommon throughout the United States: an aging year-round population. At the same time, the population throughout Southwest Michigan is continuing a decades-long trend of moving away from the traditional urban cores. Allowing Southwest Michigan residents to age and thrive in the place that they desire will require new, coordinated strategies for providing services throughout the region, particularly when it comes to healthcare delivery, recreation, transportation, and housing.

It is the hope of SWMPC that residents, businesses, government agencies, and citizen groups are able to use this document to advocate for the changes they wish to see in their communities, and to preserve those factors that already contribute to a high quality of life in our region.

If you would like a paper copy of the document, or have any questions, please contact Gautam Mani, Transportation Planner, at manig@swmpc.org or (269) 925-1137 x 24. Paper copies will be sent out to members of the SWMPC board in early 2014.



Southwest Michigan's Employer Internship Training Program on February 12th.

Southwest Michigan's Employer Internship Training Program (EITP), is a collaborative partnership between a handful of our region's higher education institutions (Lake Michigan College, Western Michigan University-Southwest, and MSU's Institute of Agricultural Technology), Kinexus (Michigan Works!), and SWMPC. This pilot program seeks to educate employers in the fields of agribusiness and manufacturing on the basics of how to develop strong internship programs for local students in order to cultivate important career skills that will support them for their entire professional lives.

If you or an employer you know have an interest in finding out more about what it takes to hire one of our region's young professionals from a local college or university, then please join us. Joining this breakfast training session is 100% free for employers curious about the development of an internship program.

Please RSVP by phone at 269-925-1137 x 13 or by email to [Ryan Soucy \(soucy@swmpc.org\)](mailto:soucy@swmpc.org) by February 7th, 2014 in order to secure your attendance at this introductory breakfast session. **SAVE THE DATE** for Wednesday, February 12th, 2014 from 7:00 am-8:30 am. This training program take place at the Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center located at 2755 E Napier Ave Benton Harbor, MI located in room F101.

Michigan's New Water Trail Website!



Water trails are marked routes along rivers, lakes, and coastlines for boating usually intended for quiet water recreation (kayaks and canoes). The trails include: signs and route markers; maps and promotion of water routes; facilities for parking, boat put-in/take-out areas, and places to picnic and sometimes camp. Water trails can be used for both single day and multiple day trips. An established trail provides safe/legal access to and information about waterways while also providing connections to Michigan's diverse history, ecology, geology, heritage and wildlife.

The State of Michigan has funded the creation of a statewide promotional website to display water trail information and resources. You can view the new website at www.michiganwatertrails.org. The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is partnering with other regional planning agencies around Lake Michigan to plan for a continuous water trail along the coast of Lake Michigan. This is an historic effort to catalyze the various governmental, economic, and cultural institutions that benefit from our globally unique freshwater coastline. Through this project, SWMPC will be actively engaging southwest Michigan coastal communities to make this trail a reality. SWMPC has worked with volunteers to inventory existing public access sites along Lake Michigan and connecting rivers in Berrien, Van Buren and Allegan counties. The next step will be to add amenities to the website that will enhance a paddlers experience on a water trail. These amenities include places to eat, lodging and places to visit such as museums, parks, nature centers, lighthouses and shipwrecks.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

In 2013, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) began the process of developing its annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) as a function of the U.S. EDA's Partnership Planning grant. Through this process, the 2013 CEDs Strategic Advisory Committee was formed and met at a series of four monthly meetings between August and November 2013 in order to develop the framework of a regional strategy for economic development in southwest Michigan. This team was made up of representatives from local private-sector firms across a range of the region's industry sectors, as well as public sector economic and workforce development professionals, higher education representatives, and state and local government officials. By the end of this strategy development process, a handful of priorities were identified; among these priorities were the need to better align the education-to-workforce pipeline, as well as focusing on talent attraction and retention initiatives.

Click the link to view the report: <http://www.swmpc.org/ceds.asp>

Placemaking Trainings!

SWMPC's Strategic Placemaking Initiative activities will kick off in 2014 with a two-part [MiPlace Partnership](#) training session for educating local leaders in the Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph on the topic of [Placemaking](#). This program is provided by the Michigan State Housing and Development Administration (MSHDA), with assistance from MSU's Land Policy Institute (LPI) and is expected to empower local leaders to engage in development activities that inspire a "sense of place" in their communities.

Session 1: Placemaking Training Modules 1, 2, & 3

Thursday, February 13, 2014 9 am-noon

Kinexus (Michigan Works)

499 W. Main Street Benton Harbor, MI 49022

Session 2: Place Strategy Technical Assistance for Benton Harbor and St. Joseph

Thursday, March 6th, 2014 9 am-noon

Kinexus (Michigan Works)

499 W. Main Street Benton Harbor, MI 49022

A waiting list is now open for interested parties outside of the project area to attend the *first session only*; please contact [Ryan Soucy](#) to add your name to this list. Please be sure to include your name, organization, and the locality that you represent. If demand is significant enough, we will leverage this to host another set of trainings in the future.

Although MSHDA is specifically targeting the Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph at this initial event, more Placemaking activities will be provided throughout the region for other localities as the year progresses. This training is one of three programs emerging from SWMPC's new Placemaking Initiative; other programs include a GIS mapping project which will inventory the place-based assets of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties; as well as a project to cultivate targeted Placemaking projects throughout the region.

Are you currently engaged in Placemaking, or have a future project in mind? If so, SWMPC's Economic Development Planner, Ryan Soucy would like to learn more about your activities and begin compiling a list for the region. You may reach him by email at soucyr@swmpc.org or by phone at (269) 925-1137 Ext. 13



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*The SWMPC Mission is to promote a sustainable high quality of life through
 facilitation of sound planning and decision making*

Save Paper By Receiving Our Newsletter Electronically: email mooret@swmpc.org

Calendar of Events 2014

<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>
22 nd 1:30 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*	12 th 7 am Internship Training Program	6 th 9 am Place Strategy Technical Assistance
27 th 9:30 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg**	13 th 9 am Placemaking Training	17 th 9:30 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg**
	17 th SWMPC Office Closed	25 th 1:30 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*
	24 th 9:30 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg**	
	25 th 1:30 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*	
	26 th 6 pm MI Water Trail Workshop	

*NATS Meeting 1345 E. Main Street, Niles, MI **TwinCATS Meeting 1123 Territorial Road, Benton Harbor, MI

For more information and other events visit: www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp

2014 SWMPC Board Meeting Schedule

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<p>SWMPC Full Commission Meetings <i>Location: Van Buren Conference Center</i> 490 South Paw Paw Street, Lawrence, MI * Lake Township Hall, 3220 Shawnee Bridgman, MI</p> <p>January 21, 2014 9:30 am* April 15, 2014 9:30 am July 15, 2014 9:30 am October 21, 2014 9:30 am</p>	<p>SWMPC Administrative Committee Meetings <i>Location: TBA</i></p> <p>March 18, 2014 9:30 am June 17, 2014 9:30 am September 16, 2014 9:30 am December 16, 2014 9:30 am</p>