

The Quarterly



SWMPC

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Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected

The Strategic Placemaking Initiative has launched!

On March 6th, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) hosted the final session of its two-part MiPlace Partnership Placemaking Training Program for local leaders of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph. This program, administered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority targets centers of regional commerce around the State to train local leaders on how to leverage community assets to build more active and prosperous places.

At this final workshop, community leaders participated in an exercise to develop a handful of concepts which could be explored in the future as part of a plan for place in the community. The six concepts are:

- Development of a year-round market/agricultural hub in Benton Harbor (farmer's market, aggregation, food processing, art/crafts sales)
- Creating a multi-modal connection between the assets of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, including a trolley route (walk, bike, trolley and connections for off major street transportation)
- Redevelopment of the bluff parking lot area into mixed-use. – St. Joseph
- Repurposing and restoring the Bobo Brazil building/park area for upgraded commercial use in Benton Harbor
- Paw Paw River corridor improvements (connect to downtown, improving access points, development standards) – Benton Harbor and St. Joseph
- To have connectivity in the Arts District, Harbor Shores, Paw Paw River in Benton Harbor



Ryan Soucy speaking to the group

The concepts proposed above could be developed in further detail as part of a formal Placemaking strategy. Similar to other community plans, it is expected that ample opportunities would be provided for public input and the process will allow for other concepts to be generated before any plan is adopted. Various paths exist for the development of this document; however, a handful of Michigan communities (such as Kalamazoo and Holland) have participated in the next step of the MiPlace Partnership program, by coordinating with the Michigan Municipal League for the development of a PlacePlan. Visit the link to learn more: <http://placemaking.mml.org/place-plans/>

The SWMPC is interested in assembling all interested stakeholders to discuss the potential for moving forward on the topic of Placemaking in Benton Harbor/St. Joseph and the region beyond. If you are interested in attending future sessions to discuss this topic, or if you have a innovative concept for what could make your community a “great place”, please contact Ryan Soucy, Associate Planner by phone at 269-925-1137 ext. 1513, or by email at soucyr@swmpc.org.

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission has moved to 376 West Main Street, Suite 130 Benton Harbor, MI 49022.

Ways to protect surface water!

What is surface water?

- Rain water and runoff that collects in lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands on the earth's surface
- Surface water also comes from groundwater

How is surface water used?

- As a natural habitat for wildlife
- As a recreation area for people in our community
- As a source of drinking water

How do pollutants enter surface waters?

- In urban areas storm sewers are the main source of pollutants, draining virtually everything from lawns, streets, and parking lots directly into local surface waters.
- Storm water is not cleaned and is known as Nonpoint Source Pollution. Common contaminants include; fertilizers, pesticides, grass clippings, leaves, oil, grease, toxic chemicals, sediment, and livestock and pet waste.

Simple Steps: For You to Protect our Water

- **Properly dispose of household hazardous waste.** Never dump items such as motor oil, fuel products, cleaners, paints, pharmaceuticals, and pesticides on the ground or down the drain. They can contaminate groundwater and surface water. Check with your county on free collection or drop off dates.

- **Use no-phosphorus fertilizer.** During watering or rainstorms, unnecessary phosphorus applied to lawns is washed into street storm drains, which empty directly into local waterways. Get a soil test at a MSU Extension Office to see what amenities your soil or lawn needs.

- **Septic System.** If you have a septic system, have it checked and pumped every 2-3 years to insure it is working properly.

- **Abandoned Wells.** Close any abandoned wells on your property. They can act as conduits for contamination of groundwater.

- **Only rain in the storm drain.** Rainwater and snow melt is the only thing that should wash down our storm drains. Anything else grass clippings, leaves, motor oil, even fertilizer is considered an IL-LICIT DISCHARGE.

- **Pollution Emergency Alerting System (PEAS).** In case of environmental emergency affecting air, land, water, wetlands, dams public drinking water supplies call: 1-800-292-4706

For more information on what you can do for water quality visit: www.swmpc.org/what_can_i_do.asp



Clean water begins at home...

Websites Support Healthy Choices!

Find great local fresh food and places to be active with these two new websites! SWMPC and the Be Healthy Berrien partnership launched two new websites, www.EatLocalBerrien.org & www.BeActiveBerrien.org. These websites will provide the community with the resources to encourage buying locally grown produce and physical activity in all shapes and forms.



State of the Region Report

SWMPC is proud to announce the release of the 2013 State of the Southwest Michigan Region Report. 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 State of the Region Report, and detailed appendix files, are now available at www.swmpc.org/2013sotr.asp.

If you would like a paper copy of the document we have them in stock, please contact Gautam Mani, Transportation Planner, at manig@swmpc.org or (269) 925-1137 x 1524 for a copy.



McCoy Creek Watershed Improvement Project Honored

SWMPC announced the selection of the **McCoy Creek Watershed Improvement Project** for the 2014 Graham Woodhouse Intergovernmental Cooperation Award during the January 21, 2014 meeting at the Van Buren Conference Center. Executive Director John Egelhaaf, explained that "This Award recognizes the value of cross-jurisdictional, regional cooperation. The nominated projects utilize limited resources efficiently, combine goal-setting, and visualize the world as nodes of regional resources. The players in this thankless process are frequently not recognized, so to those who search for collaborative change, SWMPC appreciates your work!"

The project process required the dismissal of a previously controversial dam and dredge strategy to maintain a functioning millrace and established an interconnected watershed-scale solution that restored white water, established fish habitat, and re-established a viable millrace to supply historic Pears Mill. Commenting on the project, Egelhaaf said it was "a model for creative, collaborative problem solving,

persistent advocacy, and successful broad based funding." He also noted that creative, dedicated work by the Watershed Committee saved an estimated \$113,000 during the life of the project.

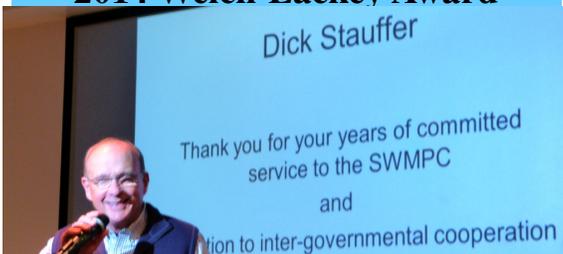
SWMPC Chair Jeff Radtke and Director Egelhaaf presented award plaques to representatives of the agencies present: City of Buchanan, Friends of McCoy Creek, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division, Buchanan High School Advanced Biology, Buchanan Preservation Society, Friends of the St. Joseph River, Michigan Gateway Community Foundation, Michigan Historic Preservation Network, Padnos Redbud Recycling, Louis and Helen Padnos Foundation, and River Tenders, Inc. (*see photo*)

US Fish and Wildlife Service, American Electric Power, Fredrick S. Upton Foundation, Laura Jane Musser Fund, St. Joseph River Valley Fly Fishers, Sauk Trails RC & D Council, State Farm Insurance Buchanan and Trout Unlimited were also involved in the project but were unable to send representatives.

Established in 1987, the award honors former Dowagiac Mayor Graham Woodhouse and is presented annually for projects that exemplify cooperation by local units of government. The criteria used in evaluating project nominations include relative degree of effort by local units, methodology, scope, and project dimension.



2014 Welch-Lackey Award



2014 SWMPC Officers

Chair: Gloria Payne, Lake Charter Township Clerk
 Vice Chair: Barbara Cook, Cass County Planning Commission
 Treasurer: Yemi Akinwale, Hartford City Manager
 Alternate Treasurer: Richard Remus, Berrien Citizen Representative
 Secretary: Linda Preston, Pokagon Township Supervisor
 Alternate Secretary: Fran Sage, Van Buren Citizen Representative



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

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Calendar of Events 2014

<u>April</u>	
18 th	Office Closed (Afternoon)
30 th	9:30 am Joint NATS & TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg***

<u>May</u>	
26 th	SWMPC Office Closed
19 th	9:30 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg**
27 th	1:30 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*

<u>June</u>	
16 th	9:30 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg**
24 th	1:00 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*

*NATS Meeting 1345 E. Main Street, Niles, MI **TwinCATS Meeting 1123 Territorial Road, Benton Harbor, MI
 ***Berrien RESA 711 St. Joseph Ave, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

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

2014 SWMPC Board Meeting Schedule	
<p>SWMPC Full Commission Meetings <i>Location: Lake Township Hall, 3220 Shawnee Bridgman, MI</i> July 15, 2014 9:30 am October 21, 2014 9:30 am</p>	<p>SWMPC Administrative Committee Meetings <i>Location: SWMPC Conference Room</i> June 17, 2014 9:30 am September 16, 2014 9:30 am December 16, 2014 9:30 am</p>