



The Quarterly

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected

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Southwest Michigan Broadband Initiative



CONNECT Michigan

Beginning this July, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) will be partnering with Connect Michigan on re-launching its efforts to evaluate our region's broadband adoption strategy. Community leaders throughout Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties will be assisting SWMPC and Connect Michigan by filling out assessments that address local high-speed internet accessibility, adoption, uses, and educational opportunities in a variety of contexts.



If you represent a local unit of government or an organization/institution with a stake in southwest Michigan's broadband (high speed internet) future, please complete the Southwest Michigan Broadband Assessment Survey online!

www.surveymonkey.com/s/SWMIBroadbandSurvey.

While much of the southwest Michigan region currently has some form of high-speed internet available, there are still significant barriers preventing widespread adoption and the utilization of broadband to its fullest potential. Identifying these barriers and developing policies and initiatives to remove them will help make southwest Michigan a more connected and more prosperous place.

Connect Michigan is working to help communities identify their technology needs and opportunities. Bolstered by benchmarking data that has been gathered through Connect Michigan's mapping and market research, the Connected Community Engagement program is drilling down to the regional and local level to facilitate community technology planning. Upon completion of the community assessment phase, Connect Michigan will offer policy and program recommendations for achieving southwest Michigan's goals as they relate to broadband usage.

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For questions or comments regarding the Southwest Michigan Broadband Initiative, contact Ryan Soucy, Associate Economic Development Planner at (269) 925-1137, ext. 13 or by email at soucy@swmpc.org or on the web where hard copy surveys are available to download: www.swmpc.org/broadband.asp

ENVIRONMENT

Water Quality Tips for the Summer!

It's summer time in Southwest Michigan and we are fortunate to have an abundance of high quality lakes and streams that everyone can benefit from, whether it is swimming, boating, fishing, drinking water or simply enjoying the view! We can all do our part to help keep our water, lakes, and rivers clean!

When rainwater falls on a natural landscape the vegetation and soil collects and absorbs it. However, when rainwater falls on a manmade surface like parking lots or roof tops, it quickly runs off into storm drains, drainage ditches, or it can flood a lawn or a road.

While proper drainage is needed to protect your home and property from damage, the storm water can pick up fertilizer, sediment, pesticides, and other pollutants, rapidly carrying them into waterways as it runs off your property. Eventually these waterways connect to lakes, streams, rivers, and other bodies of water that can be harmed by these pollutants and also lead to flooding.

When you are looking at doing landscaping around your home this summer, look at ways to landscape with water quality in mind. There are attractive, low-cost landscaping techniques, widely available in our region, which protect the quality of Michigan's lakes and streams.

Rain Gardens



One landscaping technique that every home or property owner can do is to create a rain garden. A rain garden is a slightly depressed area created to collect rainwater with a coarse or porous soil mixture of sand or gravel beneath a bed of native plants. Gutters and downspouts from roofs can be directed to a rain garden and you can create it where water pools up on your property naturally. Rain and storm water collects in the rain garden, soaks quickly into the soils and is absorbed by the plants in the garden. As the

water soaks into the ground, pollutants are filtered out and the groundwater is recharged. For more information visit www.raingardens.org

Buffer Zones



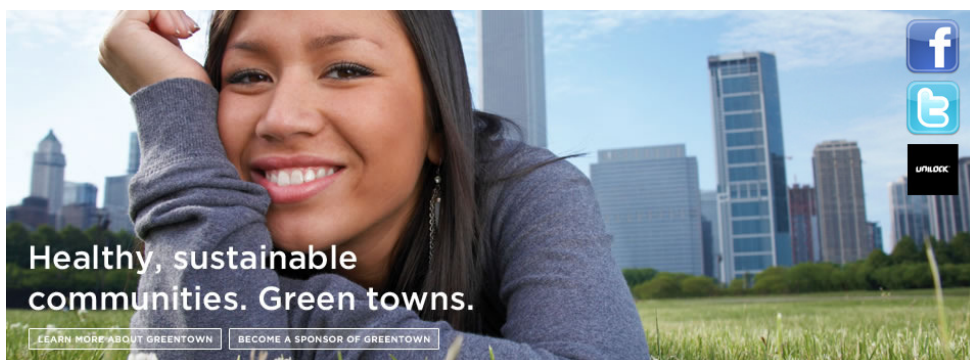
Another technique that home and property owners who live along lakes, ponds, drains, streams, rivers and wetlands can do is to grow a vegetated buffer zone. You can simply stop mowing a strip of land along the water's edge or you can plant native species consisting of trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers. Like a rain garden, buffer zones filter and trap sediment, fertilizer, and pollutants flowing off site. These buffer areas next to streams and lakes are critical, a sort of last line of defense, for filtering polluted run-off and protecting our waters.

Native plants are perfect for planting in rain gardens and buffer zones. "Native plants can help prevent erosion from polluted run-off by increasing the infiltration of the water into the soils, slowing the water flow, and reducing the chance of flooding out roads and rivers during heavy rain events," Nancy Carpenter, administrator for the Berrien Conservation District says. "Native plants have deep roots that hold the soil in place and allow water to soak into the soil, which leads to less erosion."

These deep roots also allow for less watering and don't require fertilizer in order to grow successfully. They also provide great habitat for birds and insects and add beauty to any landscape. Native plants can be grasses, flowers, or shrubs. Native plants can be found at your local greenhouse or at plant sales from the Berrien and Van Buren County Conservation Districts.

These tips were provided by the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission working to protect streams, rivers and lakes in southwest Michigan. To learn more about what you can do to protect our water resources visit www.swmpc.org/what_can_i_do.asp.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES & NEW STAFF



on PBS and George Heartwell, Mayor of the city of Grand Rapids. Topics at the conference include health and wellness sustainability, Energy/Built Environment, Transportation, Sustainable Business, Food and Waste, and Water.

Green Town

GreenTown brings together the public sector and the private sector to “connect the dots”, to inspire and to work together to remake our communities. From healthy living to local food, energy to green infrastructure, water to outdoor space, GreenTown will help you make the healthy choice the easy choice.

The GreenTown conference will be held Friday, October 11, 2013, at the Double Tree Hotel in downtown South Bend, Indiana. Pre-conference events will be held on Thursday, October 10.

Be a part of GreenTown Michiana, featuring exceptional presentations including our two keynote speakers, Mark Fenton, host of "America's Walking"

In addition to being outspoken and enthusiastic on television, Mark Fenton works as a professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. He has authored numerous books including the best seller “Complete Guide to Walking for Health, Weight Loss, and Fitness,” and continues to be a vocal advocate for non-motorized transportation. He will be speaking at GreenTown Michiana on how to create more livable, sustainable, and successful cities.

George Heartwell is currently serving his third term as the mayor of Grand Rapids, Michigan. He came into his position with the goal of creating a healthier and more sustainable city.

For more information on the conference and ways to register visit: www.greentownconference.com

We welcome our new employee Ryan Soucy, Associate Planner



Ryan joined the SWMPC staff as an Associate Planner in April 2013. He earned his Bachelor’s degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Michigan State University in 2011 while working at MSU’s Land Policy Institute as a Research Assistant. Ryan’s experience prior to joining the SWMPC team consisted of water quality protection efforts, local planning and zoning, non-motorized facilities planning, and strategic place making to support local economic development. Ryan’s primary focus is on the development and maintenance of the Region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

We welcome our new contract employee Carolyn Sundquist



Carolyn is a new contract employee with SWMPC and the Be Healthy Berrien initiative. She comes to us from Michigan State University, where she studied Journalism and Environmental Studies. She will be working through September to create two websites. One, eatlocalberrien.org, will house a searchable inventory with all the places in Berrien county to buy local food. This includes direct from farms, farm stands and farmer's markets. The other, beactiveberrien.org will house a searchable inventory of all the places to do physical activity in Berrien county. If you have any questions, comments or want to share with her where you exercise or get your local food, please contact her at csundquist4@gmail.com.



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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 2013

July	August	September
4 th SWMPC Office Closed 15 th 9:30 AM TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg** 17 th 6:30 PM Our Wetlands at Work Event*** 17-19 th Michigan Transportation Planning 2013 Conference 23 rd 9:30 AM NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*	19 th 9:30am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg to talk about climate change final report** 27 th 1:30 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*	2 nd SWMPC Office Closed 30 th 1:00 pm Combined NATS and TwinCATS Meeting! Rail safety, transit, and implementation of the long range plan will be on the agenda. ****

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

***Love Creek Nature Center 929 Huckleberry Rd. Berrien Center, MI 49107

**** Berrien RESA 711 St. Joseph Ave. Berrien Springs, MI

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

2013 SWMPC Board Meeting Schedule

SWMPC Full Commission Meetings	SWMPC Administrative Committee Meetings
<i>Location: Van Buren Conference Center 490 South Paw Paw Street, Lawrence, MI July 16, 2013 9:30 a.m. October 15, 2013 9:30 a.m.</i>	<i>Location: Vincent Place Conference Room 185 East Main St. Benton Harbor, MI September 17, 2013 9:30 a.m. December 17, 2013 9:30 a.m.</i>