



# The Quarterly

## Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

*Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected*

### A Fresh Look at Fresh Food

Local master plans, economic development strategies, and regional scale policies feature agriculture as an economic driver in southwest Michigan. Most people accept this as a constant for our region. However, over the last two years, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) has been attempting to take a fresh look at how powerful agriculture can be as an economic development engine.

Regional resources of soils, abundant fresh water, and proximity to the moderating breezes from Lake Michigan have a direct benefit on area agriculture. A wide variety of fruits and vegetables are provided to the local market. If considering “local” to mean food produced within 250 miles of its end user, the food grown in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties is considered local for both Chicago and Detroit. Our region is ideally situated to serve these major population centers.

Regional leadership across government, business, nonprofit, education/training and university sectors, is merging around agriculture as an economic engine. SWMPC has been collaborating with organizations doing similar work across six Midwestern states -- the Great Lakes Food Hub Network. These leaders are developing strategies and forging connections that will include southwest Michigan as a quality produce center serving Great Lakes markets, and a locus for agriculture-connected commerce and tourism.

Business clusters thrive when they are interconnected and interrelated. Southwest Michigan’s agricultural sector should function like a large business cluster, but is currently prevented by gaps in opportunities to add value to the raw product, referred to as the “value chain”. The



processing of crops into shelf-stable products or ingredients utilized in other consumer goods can be an important way to increase the value and versatility of the harvest. Regionally, the scale of food processing does not match the scale of food grown. Processing is only one of many opportunities in the food value chain. The SWMPC role will be to understand the range of opportunities and create a clear plan for how the region can capitalize on them.

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## TRANSPORTATION

### Michigan's Longest Garage Sale on US 12



Many homes, organizations and businesses across US 12 participated in Michigan's Longest Garage Sale on August 10, 11 & 12, 2012.

US-12, the nation's second oldest highway, stretches along an old Native American trail from Detroit to New Buffalo on the state's southwest coast. It is one of 16 Michigan State Scenic Byways, designated by the State Legislature to preserve the state's historic highways.

Since the sale started in 2003, it has taken place every August during the second weekend.

#### Destination Interest Growing

Michigan's Longest Garage Sale continues to grow in popularity with people in Michigan and the surrounding states. "This sale has become a destination with people from around the Midwest. Every year there are more and more information requests about lodging because people are making a weekend out of the sale event," says Kim Gallagher Project Manager of the US 12 Heritage Trail Project. "Everyone involved in this sale is helping to create a unique travel experience for people interested in history, bargains, scenery and making connections with real people who live in the towns that dot Michigan's US 12 Heritage Trail."

Shoppers who love searching for hidden treasures and finding great bargains are drawn to this event from throughout the country. They find everything from antiques, collectables, furniture, dishware, fresh garden produce, homemade jams and jellies, live entertainment, and much more. Residents preparing for sale's can be found sorting, pricing and figuring out if they can really part with a particular item. Many nonprofit organizations collect donations for the sale because it is one of the biggest fund raising events of the year. Other organizations rent space to people interested in participating, but without a place to showcase their items.

#### Website Features

Those interested in hosting a sale were encouraged to register their sale on the US 12 Heritage Trail website. Their location would be included on the site's interactive map and also in a downloadable print-ready list of sales at no cost.

Sale hosts and visitors are encouraged to upload stories about their experiences to the US 12 Heritage Trail website. Comments include: *"These sales are giving people the opportunity in the tough times we're facing right now. It's a chance to come out and pick-up those items that people can use. This is my fourth year participating in the U.S. 12 Garage Sale. Although I could turn a profit with my sales, I donate my earning to homeless veterans in Niles."*

There were several community-wide garage sales that took place on the West side of US 12 in Three Oaks, Buchanan, and Edwardsburg and on the East side of US 12 in Allen, Jonesville, Village of Clinton, Saline, Ypsilanti, Irish Hills, Rentschler Farms and Wayne.

For more information about Michigan's Longest Garage Sale and other attractions visit the US 12 Heritage Trail website at

[www.us12heritagetrail.org](http://www.us12heritagetrail.org)

and like us on

[Facebook US 12 Heritage Trail](#)

## STAFF NEWS

### Arrival

SWMPC welcomed **Gautam Mani** as an Associate Planner in July 2012. He earned a B.A. in Geography from Macalester College, and a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Michigan. In addition, he is a LEED® Green Associate. Mani worked on a plan to improve public transit along Washtenaw Avenue in the Ann Arbor area through his master's studio. As an intern, he also gained valuable experience at Bread for the City, a non-profit project to improve food access among low-income populations in his hometown of Washington, D.C. His research interests include the transformative potential of non-motorized activity on neighborhoods, and the strategic location of alternative fuel infrastructure to reduce the harmful impacts of automobiles.



### Departures

Recently SWMPC said farewell to **Christina Phippen and Trevor Thomas**. Both have been engaged with the SWMPC since June 2010.

Phippen served as Mobility Consultant and worked closely with transit agencies throughout all three region counties. She was involved in the development of the new fixed routes in the Twin Cities area and the reduced fare card program. She plans to move back to her hometown of Detroit.

Associate Planner Trevor Thomas has focused on transportation planning at SWMPC. He is leaving to study for a doctorate in Urban Planning at the Luskin School of Public Affairs at UCLA. His general focus is going to be on transportation, particularly the interactions between low-income populations and transportation systems, the relationship between transportation and land use, the role that transportation systems play in economic development, and the ways in which transportation systems are assessed.



Van Buren Conservation District  
named Senior Planner  
**Marcy Colclough**  
2012 Conservationist of the Year

### 2013 GRAHAM WOODHOUSE AWARD

Nominations for the 2013 Graham Woodhouse Award are due **December 1, 2012**. The award is presented annually for projects that exemplify intergovernmental cooperation by local units of government. Anyone may nominate a project which includes at least two government agencies with any number of non-profits and/or other businesses also involved. The project should be completed, or at least some phase of a multi-stage program completed.

Nominations may be sent by email or fax. Printed material may be delivered in person or mailed. Download the application at:

[www.swmpc.org/gwhistory.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/gwhistory.asp)

Send to:

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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](mailto:mooret@swmpc.org)**

## Calendar of Events 2012

<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>December</u>
<b>15<sup>th</sup></b> 9:30 am TwinCATS mtg** <b>16<sup>th</sup></b> 9:30 am SWMPC Full Commission Meeting <b>23<sup>rd</sup></b> 1:30 pm NATS mtg*	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b> General Elections: Vote <b>12<sup>th</sup></b> Veterans Day observed Office Closed <b>19<sup>th</sup></b> 9:30 am TwinCATS mtg** <b>22<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 23<sup>rd</sup></b> Thanksgiving Office Closed <b>27<sup>th</sup></b> 1:30 pm NATS mtg*	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b> 2012 Graham Woodhouse Nominations Due <b>17<sup>th</sup></b> 9:30 am TwinCATS mtg** <b>18<sup>th</sup></b> 1:30 pm NATS mtg* <b>24<sup>th</sup> &amp; 25<sup>th</sup></b> Christmas Office Closed <b>31<sup>st</sup></b> New Year's Eve Office Closed afternoon only

\*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](http://www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp)**

2012 SWMPC Board Meeting Schedule	
<b>SWMPC Full Commission Meeting</b> <i>Location: Van Buren Conference Center</i> 490 South Paw Paw Street, Lawrence, MI October 16, 2012 9:30 a.m.	<b>SWMPC Administrative Committee Meeting</b> <i>Location: Vincent Place Conference Room</i> 185 East Main St. Benton Harbor, MI December 18, 2012 9:30 a.m.