

Southwestern Michigan Commission

Serving Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties

January 2004

Census Factoids!

- The Michigan median family income increased just over 11% in the last decade.
- The median family income in Michiana Village (in New Buffalo Township) increased over 56% in the last decade.
- 11% of those who commute to work in southwest Michigan commuted by carpool in 2000. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau)
- The overall population forecast for Michigan anticipates an increase of 4% by 2010 while the projected increase for 2010 of Michiganders age 55-64 is 48%. (Source: The Regional Econometric Model, Inc. [REMI], 2003)

THE 2003 EXTRACT

The 2003 Extract, containing the latest data from the 2000 U.S. Census, and state and local entities became available in August. The Extract, billed as "A Concentrate of Information About Southwest Michigan" contains data relating to population, income, housing, business, labor force, government/education, and transportation for Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties at the county and, in many cases, down to the local jurisdiction level as well.

Funding to prepare the Extract came from Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant moneys and SWMC's local match. At the end of

August over 200 complimentary copies were sent out to local community leaders, school and community libraries, and members of the Southwestern Michigan Commission Board.

Community planners, grant writers, real estate and business people have come to depend on the Extract for quick access to data for Southwest Michigan. It has shown up in the classroom where at least one local math teacher has incorporated the Extract into her statistics class.

The history of the Extract goes back to 1984 when Southwestern Michigan Commission began compiling data on

our region from the 1980 U.S. Census in what was then called the Fact Book. The format and scope of the publication has grown in each subsequent edition. In 1992 the format was refined and the name Extract was adopted. New features of the 2003 Extract include maps of selected characteristics and an electronic version on CD-ROM.

Copies of the print and CD-ROM version of the 2003 Extract are available from the Southwestern Michigan Commission.

The combined print and CD-ROM version is \$20.00. The print copy is \$15.00 and the CD-ROM is \$10.00.

NEW BOARD OFFICERS ELECTED

At the January 20, 2004 Full Board meeting, Don Ryman, Chairman of the nominating committee announced that James Sayer of Cass County had accepted the nomination as SWMC Chairman and Tom Tanczos, of Van Buren County, had accepted the nomination as Vice-Chairman for the 2004 term.

The board members and staff of the SWMC would like to thank former Chairman Larry Clymer and former Vice-Chairman Jim Snow for their unfailing dedication and support. Their interest and continued involvement is greatly appreciated.

Board members needed

If you are a resident of either Van Buren or Berrien County and are interested in serving as a Citizen Representative on the SWMC board, please send a letter of interest (please include which municipality you are a resident of) to the SWMC before March 1, 2004. The full board meets four times per year and reviews various programs and projects involving the SWMC.

2004 BOARD OFFICERS

Chairman: James Sayer

Vice-Chairman: Tom Tanczos

Secretary: Frances Sage

Treasurer: Donald Gast

Alternate

Treasurer: Yemi Akinwale

WELCH-LACKEY AWARD PRESENTED TO JUDY LAMMERS

Judy Lammers, former executive director of the SWMC, was presented with the 2003 Welch-Lackey Award at the January 20, 2004 Full Board meeting. Chairman Clymer praised Ms. Lammers for her service and dedication to the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation. Ms. Lammers had been with the SWMC for almost 25 years. Prior to becoming the executive director, she served as the Economic Development Program Manager, and a Technical Assistance Grant Writer.

The Welch-Lackey Leadership Award is presented annually in honor of former Commissioners George A. Welch and William F. Lackey. These commissioners served the SWMC in times of great personal difficulties, yet continued to represent the spirit of public service. Their contribution to the communities they served embodies the leadership qualities essential to the preservation of our citizen form of government.



Judy Lammers with SWMC Chairman Larry Clymer

POKAGON BAND'S NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - A Model Open Space Development for Region

Planner Marcy Colclough was invited to attend the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians groundbreaking ceremony on September 5, 2003 for their new housing development in LaGrange Township. The seventeen homes to be built at this site will serve the tribe's elders while being dedicated to natural resource protection. This will be accomplished by clustering the housing units to promote community, preserve open space and limit impervious surfaces. Several large trees will be preserved, native plants will be planted and walking trails are planned for the development.

Tribal Vice Chair, Marchell Wesaw said at the groundbreaking ceremony, "This is truly an historic moment for our nation. The groundbreaking represents a commitment to our elders who are currently living in substandard living conditions, to new and safe, quality housing. More importantly, it also represents more than buildings and landscaping. It represents our nation's efforts to strengthen our community and to build a community where we all support each other ...my heart is happy talking about housing in a field of

grasshoppers with all of you here."

There are 2,764 tribal members of the Pokagon Band, with approximately 1,833 living in Michigan and Indiana. The Pokagon Band is represented on the Southwestern Michigan Commission Board of Directors and the SWMC congratulates the Pokagon Band on achieving this major milestone. They will create a housing development that will serve as a model open space development for the region. Many may not realize the connections between this project and the SWMC. It is our Commission's involvement with the Dowagiac River Watershed (DRW) Project and LaGrange Township's master plan update that forged the bond.

The DRW Project's mission was to balance development with the protection of natural resources and water quality. The Pokagon Band utilized LaGrange Township's open space development ordinance to plan their project. The ordinance was developed with assistance from the Dowagiac River Watershed Project's land use initiative. Through this initiative, six townships in Cass and Van Buren County worked with a land use planning consultant and the Cass

County Conservation District to include better natural resources and water quality protection in the watershed. The new policies that were developed in the master plans and ordinances encourage a balance between development and natural resource protection.

The purpose of LaGrange Township's Open Space/Cluster Development Ordinance is to promote the continuation of rural character, protection of environmental resources, and preservation of active agricultural lands. The resulting quality of life should be appreciated by all Township residents. LaGrange Township offers developers incentives (density housing bonuses) to preserve open space and to utilize either shared private or public sanitary and water services. To view the ordinance that was adopted by LaGrange Township visit www.swmicomm.org. Another model open space development in our region that protects water quality and open space is Longmeadow Development in Niles Township. Visit www.longmeadow.info for more information about this development.

HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has mandated that every county create a hazard mitigation plan by November 2004 or lose funding eligibility for hazard mitigation grants.

A hazard mitigation plan identifies, analyzes, and prioritizes hazards (severe weather, tornadoes, fires, hazard materials incidents, etc.). The mitigation plan suggests strategies to reduce community impacts and cost to governments resulting from business closures, claims of community liability, higher insurance rates, interruption of services, and other potentially devastating results when disaster strikes within its borders.

Local units of government must either create their own plan or join the county mitigation planning process to be eligible for grant funding and reimbursement in the future. Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties are inviting the active participation of each local unit of government in the countywide planning process so that each individual community does not have to develop and finance their own

plan to remain eligible for funding.

Top hazards in Berrien County include severe winter weather, extreme temperatures, tornadoes, and power plant accidents. Cass County's top hazards include tornadoes, nuclear incidents, grainery explosions, and bioterrorism. Van Buren County is currently updating the ranking of their hazards.

The Southwestern Michigan Commission is assisting both the Berrien and Van Buren County Offices of Emergency Preparedness with their hazard mitigation plans. The SWMC wants to ensure that the needs and concerns of local units are covered in the county plan, especially because strategies may need to be implemented at the local level or with local unit cooperation. Two worksheets have been sent to all Berrien and Van Buren County villages, cities and townships along with a sample resolution of support for the county's planning process. These items must be returned to SWMC by the end of February. Additional copies of the worksheets and resolutions can be

found at the following websites:

Berrien County www.swmicomm.org

Van Buren County www.vbco.org

In Cass County, Bernie Williamson, Emergency Management Coordinator, is developing the hazard mitigation plan. Ms. Williamson has been meeting with stakeholders and collecting information while preparing to take the plan to each municipality in Cass County for their review and endorsement.

For more information on the hazard mitigation plan contact:

Berrien County: Mike Bradley at
(269) 983-7111 ext. 7216

Van Buren County: Al Svilpe at
(269) 657-7786

Cass County: Bernie Williamson at
(269) 445-1216

SWMC: Marcy Colclough at
(269) 925-1137 ext. 25.

FIND OUT HOW TO RIDESHARE!

If you are looking to share a ride to work, school, or any other route that you take with regularity, the SWMC is your resource in southwest Michigan. We work hard at the Commission to spread the word about the Rideshare program that links people together who want to "share the ride."

This program fits well into our effort to diversify our approach to transportation planning and one of our underlying transportation objectives which is to explore methods to reduce traffic congestion. In 2004 we will be using a broad range of media and special events to raise the awareness of the Rideshare program in southwest Michigan. The SWMC role in the program is to connect people together so to that end, we maintain a database of

drivers and riders.

There are numerous advantages to participating in the program. One of many is the "Guaranteed Ride Home" program. In the event that there is a personal or family emergency, an illness of the participant or a family member, an unscheduled overtime (with supervisor verification), or an unscheduled early departure of the carpool/vanpool driver, you will be reimbursed for the cost of your ride home (up to \$25).

Other benefits you may enjoy by sharing the ride include saving money on car costs such as fuel, maintenance, repair, and insurance expenses. You may also enjoy a stress-free ride while somebody else does the driving.

If you are interested in entering your name into our database call the

**Rideshare toll-free number -
1-877-959-POOL**

**Or the SWMC number -
1-269-925-1137 x 18**

For more detailed information about Rideshare please visit our website at www.swmicomm.org and click on the section devoted to Rideshare.

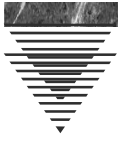


Southwestern Michigan Commission
185 East Main Street, Suite 701
Benton Harbor, MI 49022
269-925-1137



Printed on Recycled Paper

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 1
St. Joseph, MI



WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.SWMICOMM.ORG

RECREATION GRANTS AVAILABLE

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources offers grants to local units of government for the development of public outdoor recreation facilities and the acquisition of land for outdoor recreation and/or resource protection. To apply for the grants, a community recreation plan must have been locally adopted by March 1, 2004 and submitted to the DNR by March 31, 2004. Grant applications are due by April 1, 2004. There is a second deadline for land

acquisition grants on August 1, 2004. Development project grants have a minimum/maximum of \$15,000 to \$500,000.

There is no minimum/maximum limits on land acquisition projects. Both development and acquisition grants require at least a 25 percent match.

This year's special initiatives include acquisition and development of trailways that contribute to an overall State trail system; acquisition of lands

open to hunting or development of hunting related facilities (shooting ranges); acquisition of lands that provide habitat for deer with thermal cover; acquisition projects that establish protected and managed State or local natural areas, forests or game areas.

If you need assistance with developing a recreation plan or a grant application, please contact the SWMC.

MAPPING NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS

In December, the SWMC was approached by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to produce a new kind of map for the southwest portion of the state. MDOT is entering into a new era of transportation mapping where a much wider range of transportation modes will be represented and supported through state-wide mapping. In this case, MDOT is ready to produce the first non-motorized transportation map that would follow its Bicycle Facility Map Prototype and Feasibility Study. The study provides a template for non-motorized mapping in the State.

Independent of that study, the SWMC had made it one of its goals to have a non-motorized planning orientation when it carries out trans-

portation planning in the region. To that end we have actively organized a regional coalition of individuals and organizations involved in non-motorized transportation and trail development. The group that has evolved from that effort will be a strong resource for the SWMC's non-motorized transportation planning and for one another. As a byproduct of this concerted effort to hear and respond to the needs of the non-motorized transportation community, MDOT and the SWMC have seen an opportunity to tap into what appears to be a fortuitously symbiotic set of priorities to begin the state-wide mapping process in southwest Michigan. The map will be the first to use the MDOT Bicycle Facility Map Prototype methodology and the goal is

for the map to be a model for the rest of the state. The area covered by the map will encompass nine counties (Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren). The mapping will make use of expertise and data already present at the SWMC. Traffic counts, already developing trail mapping, and Geographic Information Systems expertise are all assets that the SWMC will bring to bear on the project.

We are enthusiastic about the project for the way it fits so naturally into our priorities and for the way it will improve the available resources for the non-motorized transportation community in southwest Michigan.