

*Southwest Washtenaw
Council of Governments
Regional Plan
Summary*

DRAFT



Introduction:

The communities of southwestern Washtenaw County have been working cooperatively for over 50 years. Though consisting of five separate municipalities and a school district, southwest Washtenaw has for many years been characterized as a shared community. They have worked cooperatively on such projects as the annual Manchester Chicken Broil, which raises funds for community improvements, and a co-op multi-jurisdictional landfill that has evolved over time into a transfer station and now operates as the Western Washtenaw Recycling Authority.

Among the most successful collaborations to date has been the shared Mineral Extraction Ordinances. Originally created by Bridgewater Township in the early 1990s, the other townships worked to perfect the Ordinance and all have since adopted it. The Ordinance continues to hold up to challenges in Court in part because of its regional significance and support.

Members recognized the region was beginning to change more rapidly. Thus, the communities of Manchester Village, Bridgewater, Freedom, Manchester and Sharon Townships, and the Manchester School District formed the Southwest Washtenaw Council of Governments (SWWCOG).

In 1999, SWWCOG invited the Washtenaw County Metropolitan Planning Commission (WCMPC) to talk about regional planning efforts and what opportunities there may be in southwest Washtenaw. The WCMPC had been working with the nearby Chelsea Area Planning Team (CAPT - Chelsea Village and surrounding townships) to create a regional plan for that area, also experiencing tremendous growth pressure.

Since then, SWWCOG and the WCMPC have been working cooperatively to create a regional plan that addresses such major issues as land use planning, agriculture and rural character, housing, transportation, and others.

SWWCOG Goals:

The SWWCOG has several goals that it hopes to accomplish with this plan, including:

- Develop common future land use districts for use in a regional plan map
- Resolve inconsistencies in master plans and zoning ordinances between local unit borders
- Create a coordinated strategy for where all land uses should go, and at what density

- Make the plan defensible against legal challenges
- Develop strategies to maintain the functional and scenic integrity for major traffic corridors
- Create a plan for shared resources, including public amenities and future public service expansion
- Implement the plan by:
 - Adopting local unit master plans that area consistent with the regional plan
 - Rewriting zoning ordinances to support the master plans
 - Develop performance measures to evaluate how the regional plan is doing in future years
 - Implement supporting ordinances, including natural features and subdivision regulations

Site Analysis

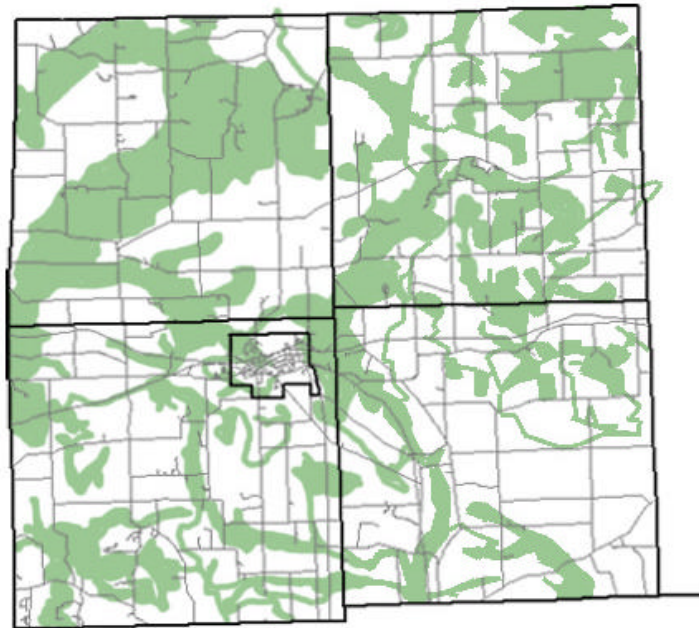


Figure 1: Southwest Washtenaw Site Analysis

Figure 1 is an estimation of where the corridors currently exist. Connections were drawn based on drainage systems, surface water features, wetland connections, and sensitive areas, allowing for buffer zones on both sides. Aerial photography was used to eliminate those corridors that have been interrupted by development. This map is useful at a large scale, but is not site specific. Identification of the most important natural features, recognizing environmental constraints, and opportunities for connections of open space, can aid in protecting and enhancing the quality of life for the Southwest area residents.

How can we protect these resources?

While it is not feasible to prevent development near all natural resources, there are tools the Southwest Area communities can use to maximize the usability and protection of these significant features:

- Create a natural features overlay district requiring a 50-foot naturally vegetated buffer on both sides of the identified corridors.
- Conduct a natural features inventory to obtain more accurate information on important wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife habitats, for site specific accuracy.
- Use new data and community input to prioritize these resources and designate areas of special concern, which are subject to more stringent development regulations.
- Implement Planned Unit Development zoning and site plan review standards that permit a wide range of development types as long as they satisfy standards intended to prevent violation of environmental constraints (such as wetland encroachment and impervious surfaces).

Common Plan Districts

One of the goals of the SWWCOG regional planning process was to coordinate land use planning across jurisdictional boundaries. A key tool for accomplishing this is for the local units to agree on a common set of land use planning categories, with common densities. The following section describes these districts, outlines their goals, and the accompanying maps show where these areas fit into the regional plan.

Agricultural Districts

Prime Farmland/Agri-Business:

Goals:

- Preserve a conducive environment for income-producing agriculture for farmers who wish to continue farming;
- Maintain a critical mass of agricultural land in the Southwest Washtenaw Area;
- Prevent the intrusion of incompatible uses into agricultural areas;
- Designate areas appropriate for implementing agricultural lands preservation tools such as Transfer of Development Rights, sliding

scale zoning, exclusive agricultural zoning, and the State Purchase of Development Rights program

Implementation Strategies:

- Minimum lot size = one unit per 10-40 acres
- Implement sliding scale zoning provisions.
- Put the emphasis on agricultural activities and farm housing, not new single-family housing development into the intent/definition of the zoning districts.
- Allow limited agri-business activities (such as processing) in agricultural zoning districts to add value to the products generated in the Southwest Washtenaw area.
- Work with large landowners to develop and implement viable agricultural preservation strategies.
- Support P.A. 116 and State PDR applications in this area.
- Encourage commercial and support activities (equipment repair, veterinary services, etc.) that promote long-term agricultural operations.
- Discourage the expansion of sewer and water service into these areas.
- Advocate the use of assessment policies reflecting the agricultural value of land in agricultural use

Low Density Agriculture/Residential:

Goals:

- Maintain the rural character of the Southwest Washtenaw region.
- Base residential density on the carrying capacity of the land (maximum population that can be supported by the resources available).
- Protect natural features, such as wetlands and woodlands, through the use of large lot zoning.
- Minimize conflicts between agricultural and residential uses.

Implementation Strategies:

- Maximum density = 1 lot per 3-10 acres
- Implement sliding scale zoning provisions as a timing mechanism for managing the transition between agricultural and residential uses.
- Discourage the expansion of sewer and water service into these areas.
- Implement design standards requiring buffering (both land and landscaping) between housing sites and agricultural areas.
- Advocate the use of assessment policies reflecting the agricultural value of land in agricultural use.
- Use overlay districts to protect natural features and connect open space in these areas.

Moderate Density Agriculture/Residential:

Goals:

- Provide areas for small agricultural uses and hobby farms as well as rural residences
- Manage the transition of these areas from agricultural to rural residential use
- Base residential density on the carrying capacity of the land (maximum population that can be supported by the resources available).

Implementation strategies:

- Use conservation zoning techniques (i.e.-zoning based on maximum density rather than minimum lot sizes); maximum density of one lot per 3 acres.
- Include mandatory cluster requirements in zoning districts in this area (with density bonuses)
- Implement design standards requiring buffering (both land and landscaping) between housing sites and agricultural areas.
- Review requests for rural residential development in these areas on a case-by-case basis by evaluating the capability of local infrastructure and public services to support new development
- Use overlay districts to protect natural features and connect open space in these areas.

Common Nomenclature for Agricultural Zoning Districts

As part of the implementation of this Plan, local units of government within SWWCOG have agreed to the following nomenclature for agricultural districts within their zoning ordinances:

Agriculture

District	Lot Size/Density
A-1	1 Acre Minimum
A-1a	1-2 Acre Minimum with Cluster Option
A-1b	1 Acre Minimum with Sliding Scale
A-2	2 Acre Minimum
A-10	10 Acre Minimum
A-10a	Cluster with 1 lot per 10 Acre Overall Density, 1 Acre Minimum Lot Size

Residential Districts

Rural Residential

Goals:

- Base residential density upon the carrying capacity of the land (the maximum population that can be supported by the resources available)
- Recommend a cluster provision for zoning districts in this area (to further preserve rural character)
- Recommend a cluster provision for zoning districts in this area to allow for innovative site design and the provision of open spaces within developments
- Promote cohesive neighborhoods through innovative design
- Limit the number of residences “stripped” along major transportation corridors, which detract from the rural character of the area
- Preserve connected open space and natural systems

Implementation Strategies:

- Minimum lot size = 1-acre
- Implement a Planned Unit Development district in the local zoning ordinances to provide opportunities for creative, quality design and clustering (see the WCMPC model open space development ordinance)
- Include mandatory PUD/conservation zoning provisions within local zoning ordinances
- Implement access management overlay districts or other innovative zoning techniques to limit curb cuts on major transportation corridors
- Use overlay districts to protect natural features and connect open spaces in these areas

Medium Density Urban Residential

Goals:

- Target density to the most appropriate area, so that rural character can be preserved in other areas of the region
- Base residential density on the carrying capacity of the land (maximum population that can be supported by the resources available).
- Recommend a cluster provision for zoning districts in this area to allow for innovative site design and the provision of open spaces within developments

- Promote cohesive neighborhoods through innovative design
- Designate an area for the expansion of urban density housing to help meet the needs for a diverse range of housing in the region

Implementation Strategies:

- Minimum lot size = 10,000 sf-1/2 acre
- Implement a Planned Unit Development district in the local zoning ordinances to provide opportunities for creative, quality design and clustering (see the WCMPC model open space development ordinance)
- Implement mandatory PUD/conservation zoning provisions
- Explore intergovernmental agreements and annexations to extend sewer and water service to these areas

High Density Urban Residential:

Goals:

- Concentrate higher density residential development in areas having urban services, lessening the pressure for development in the more rural areas
- Residential density should be based upon the carrying capacity of the land (the maximum population that can be supported by the resources available)
- Promote cohesive neighborhoods through innovative design
- Provide areas for both single and multiple family residential developments

Implementation strategies:

- Implement a Planned Unit Development district in the local zoning ordinances to provide opportunities for creative, quality design and clustering (see WCMPC model open space development ordinance)
- Allow mixed-use developments (i.e., single-family residential, multi-family residential, office, and/or commercial components in these areas through the PUD process

Manufactured Housing Residential:

Goals:

- Designate the most appropriate sites for manufactured housing based upon the assessed need for the entire region
- Create a special district for allocated manufactured housing for the entire region
- Locate manufactured housing parks near employment and service areas

- Limit the size of manufactured housing parks to an appropriate scale based on the character of the surrounding area and the total number of units needed for the region (see Housing Section of this Plan)

Implementation strategies:

- Conduct an analysis of housing needs (including affordable housing) for the Southwest Washtenaw region
- Allow individual manufactured homes in all single-family residential areas (not “parks”) in accordance with State of Michigan regulations
- Require appropriate phasing of manufactured housing development to minimize impacts on public services (i.e., police, fire, school districts).
- Implement site plan review standards for manufactured home parks which include review of impacts on natural features

Common Nomenclature for Residential Zoning Districts

As part of the implementation of this Plan, local units of government within SWWCOG have agreed to the following nomenclature for residential districts within their zoning ordinances:

Residential

District	Lot Size/Density
R-1	1 Acre - Septic and Well; Can cluster w/10,000 sf lots if served with water and sewer
R-1a	1 Acre Minimum with water and sewer, within the Village
R-3a	13,000 sf Minimum with water and sewer, within the Village
R-3b	13,000 sf Minimum with water and sewer, within the Village; 20,000 sf Minimum for 2-Family or Multi-Family development
R-3c	13,000 sf Minimum with water and sewer, within the Village; 20,000 sf Minimum for 2-Family; 5 Acre Minimum for Multi-Family development
R-5	1/4 Acre with water and sewer; 0.5 Acre Minimum for 2-Family units
MHP	10 Acres Minimum with water and sewer, 5,000 sf per unit minimum; Located in or adjacent to the Village
MHP	40 Acres with package or on-site water and sewer, 5,000 sf per unit minimum

Commercial Districts

Local Commercial

Goals:

- Accommodate commercial uses that support agriculture and rural character
- Provide adequate services for rural residents in the region
- Prevent strip development by creating planned commercial centers that fit in with the character of existing developments
- Minimize the negative impacts of commercial developments on roads, adjacent land uses and the environment
- Create a pedestrian-friendly environment
- Maintain Manchester Village as the central place for commerce for the Southwest Washtenaw region

Implementation Strategies:

- Minimum lot size = 5,000 sf – 2 acres (depending on the availability of public sewer and water service)
- Encourage the use of combined drives, common parking areas and service drives to minimize curb cuts
- Implement specific buffering and landscaping requirements within local zoning ordinances that will minimize conflicts between commercial and rural residential uses
- Encourage the redevelopment and use of existing structures in Manchester Village
- Amend zoning ordinances to accommodate mixed-use (residential and commercial) developments

General Commercial

Goals:

- Provide adequate commercial services for the population of the region
- Prevent strip development by creating planned commercial centers that fit in with the character of existing developments
- Minimize the negative impacts of commercial developments on roads, adjacent land uses and the environment
- Maintain Manchester Village as the central place for commerce for the Southwest Washtenaw region

Implementation Strategies:

- Minimum lot size 20,000 sf – 2 acres depending on the availability of public sewer and water services

- These districts shall be located along major transportation corridors and within Manchester Village
- These districts shall include the following types of development:
 - Highway service
 - General commercial
 - Regional service commercial
- Encourage general commercial nodes in areas served by public water and sewer
- Encourage the use of combined drives, common parking areas and service drives to minimize curb cuts
- Implement specific buffering and landscaping requirements within local zoning ordinances that will minimize conflicts between commercial and rural residential use

Common Nomenclature for Commercial Zoning Districts

As part of the implementation of this Plan, local units of government within SWWCOG have agreed to the following nomenclature for commercial districts within their zoning ordinances:

Commercial

District	Lot Size/Density
C-1	5,000 sf Minimum - Serves primarily the Village
C-2	10,000 sf Minimum - 1 Acre without water and sewer
C-3	20,000 sf Minimum - Serves Village and Townships
C-4	CBD - Allows Mult-Fam housing on 2nd floor or above
C-5	1 Acre Minimum
C-6	2 Acre Minimum - 20 Acre minimum project size

Industrial Districts

Light Industrial

Goals:

- Provide adequate employment opportunities for the growing population of the region
- Allow relatively low-impact industrial, manufacturing and office park uses within sensitive groundwater recharge areas
- Provide areas for high-tech industries and research parks to locate in the Southwest Washtenaw area
- Minimize the negative impacts of industrial developments on roads, adjacent land uses and the environment

Implementation Strategies:

- Minimum lot size = 1-3 acres
- Amend zoning ordinances to limit uses in this district to those that can use septic tanks and drainfields with little or no risk of discharging toxic wastes
- Implement specific buffering and landscaping requirements within local zoning ordinances that will minimize conflicts between light industrial and rural residential uses
- Consider performance standards for industrial zoning districts, which will allow local units to review industrial developments for environmental and site design criteria
- Encourage the use of combined drives, common parking areas and service drives to minimize curb cuts

General Industrial

Goals:

- Provide adequate employment opportunities for the growing population of the region
- Provide appropriate areas for manufacturing and other industrial uses that will minimize impacts on water quality and quantity
- Minimize the negative impacts of industrial developments on roads, adjacent land uses and the environment

Implementation Strategies:

- Minimum lot size = 3 acres
- Limit general industrial districts to areas served by public water and sewer and prohibit them in sensitive groundwater recharge areas
- Explore intergovernmental agreements and annexations to extend sewer and water service to these areas

- Consider performance standards for industrial zoning districts, which will allow local units to review industrial developments for environmental and site design criteria
- Encourage the use of combined drives, common parking areas and service drives to minimize curb cuts

Common Nomenclature for Industrial Zoning Districts

As part of the implementation of this Plan, local units of government within SWWCOG have agreed to the following nomenclature for industrial districts within their zoning ordinances:

Industrial

District	Lot Size/Density
I-1	1 Acre Minimum - Restrictive to non-obtrusive uses
I-2	1 Acre Minimum - 20 Acre Minimum project size
I-3	2 Acre Minimum - For "Light" industrial uses only
I-4	3 Acre Minimum - Less restrictive (includes a provision for 2 Acre Minimums with public sewer service)

Agriculture and Rural Character

Early on in the planning process, SWWCOG members identified rural character as one of the most important things to preserve in the community. Rural character is a difficult thing to define, but as one participant stated: “You know it when you see it, and you miss it when it’s gone.”

Goals that the SWWCOG has set during this process relating to agricultural lands and rural character include:

- Maintaining a critical mass of land for agriculture
- Preserving the rural character of the community
- Encourage commercial activities that support agriculture
- Enact policies which avoid “takings” and that leave land owners with income generating options

Clearly, agriculture is a major contributor to the rural feel of the Southwest Washtenaw area. However, many other characteristics of the land, developments and culture play a role in shaping this community as well. This section focuses on identifying those qualities, as well as tools that local communities can use to preserve them.

Several implementation tools are also mentioned in the common plan districts section of this plan, including:

- Transfer of development rights
- Exclusive agricultural zoning
- Design standards for buffering and landscaping
- Conservation zoning techniques (zoning based upon maximum density rather than minimum lot sizes) and mandatory clustering

Below are some additional strategies that could be used by local units to ensure that new developments do not detract from the character of the area:

Local unit master plans: If protecting rural character is important to a community, it must be discussed in the local master plan. This plan guides development and growth; thus, it is important to include a vision for the character of the community in the plan so that new development can fit in with the fabric of the community. The local zoning ordinance can then support the plan by including guidelines for new developments so that they will fit in with the desired scales and patterns for the community.

Natural Beauty Roads: The State of Michigan allows roads with unique environmental and scenic characteristics to be protected. Twenty-five or more

property owners along a road may petition the County Road Commission for a Natural Beauty Road designation. The County Road Commission reviews the petition, holds a public hearing, and makes a decision on the designation. Local units may include vegetation protection guidelines in their site plan review process for developments along natural beauty roads. These could include restrictions on clear-cutting housing lots to the road edge, and maintaining wooded buffers from between 50 and 100 feet from the road. Because disturbances to natural beauty roads are supposed to be minimal, upgrades to the road such as paving, widening or straightening may be restricted.

Guidelines for residential development: Appropriate guidelines for new developments will vary across the Southwest Washtenaw region. For example, development in and around Manchester Village should emulate the existing historic character of the neighborhoods; this means smaller setbacks and narrower street widths.

To maintain the “lack of sameness” in the Southwest Washtenaw Area, language should be added to local plans and ordinances that discourages or prohibits developments with homogeneous lots and houses. For example, local zoning ordinances could require that new developments include a variety of lot sizes and house sizes within the same development. Design standards could also be included for features such as roof shape and pitch, gable orientation and front setbacks. New developments should also be encouraged to include rectilinear streets that connect with each other.

Guidelines for commercial development: One of the qualities residents like about the Manchester area is having local businesses downtown in the Village that can serve their everyday needs. The current downtown has variety, convenience and neighborliness that contribute to the rural character of the community. Thus, maintaining a healthy downtown Manchester is crucial to maintaining the community’s quality of life.

New commercial development should fit in with the existing character of the village. This means that local zoning ordinances should be updated to allow zero front setbacks, rear parking, and mixed uses. A mixed use zoning district can allow the downtown business district to expand while allowing a smooth transition into residential areas.

Community Handbook: The SWWCOG could publish a community handbook that would educate new residents about aspects of the community, including rural living. A sample of such a handbook is the “Guidebook for Rural Living in Washtenaw County” published by the Washtenaw County MSU Extension Service.

Dark Skies Ordinances: Many communities concerned about light pollution are adopting so-called “dark skies” ordinances. These ordinances set guidelines and regulations on how much light, what types of light, and what hours light can be emitted from various types of developments. Sample ordinances and guidelines for developing language can be found from the International Dark-Sky Association (www.darksky.org).

Natural Features

Based upon the Site Analysis, a Natural Features Overlay Zone was developed for the region. Figure 35 at right represents the Natural Features Overlay Zone for the Southwest Washtenaw Regional Plan.

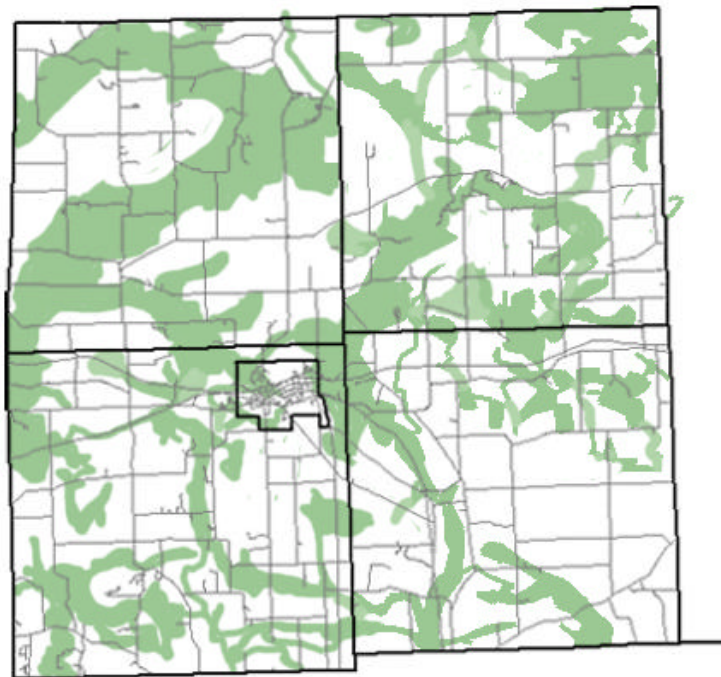


Figure 35: Southwest Washtenaw Natural Features Overlay Zone

Implementation Strategies:

The following are implementation strategies for the Southwest Region Natural Features Overlay Zone:

- Conduct a natural features inventory to obtain more accurate information on important wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife habitats, for site-specific accuracy.

- Use new data and community input to prioritize these resources and designate areas of special concern, which are subject to more stringent development regulations.
- Create natural features overlay zones within local zoning ordinances.
- Implement Planned Unit Development zoning and site plan review standards that permit a wide range of development types as long as they satisfy standards intended to prevent violation of environmental constraints (such as wetland encroachment and impervious surfaces).
- Require a 50-foot naturally vegetated buffer on both sides of the identified corridors.
- Partner with local land trusts and other organizations to acquire conservation easements to protect particularly sensitive natural features identified in the natural features inventory.

Site Specific Tools:

Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Characteristics:

- An alternative to lot-by-lot development, PUDs combine project elements - such as housing, streets, open space, recreation areas, and commercial/office uses - into a functional unit that is integrated with the natural features of the site.
- Lot configurations and use restrictions are lifted to allow more design creativity and flexibility, including clustering by transferring density from other parts of the site, preservation of natural features and open space, and/or energy conservation.
- Requires a special set of standards and procedures.
- Needs a rigorous site plan review process that allows for greater administrative discretion and room for negotiation between the developer and the community.
- Can be integrated into zoning ordinance as a separate zoning category or as a provision of a Special Land Use category.

Challenges:

- PUD regulations are not self-executing like traditional zoning standards and therefore require a considerable amount of technical support to properly review and approve site plans
- Low levels of understanding of the concept and conventional views toward density have led some communities to set lot size thresholds to use the PUD technique so high that it discourages use
- Careful consideration for guidelines and regulations must be given when adopting these useful tools into local zoning ordinances

Cluster Developments

Cluster developments are similar to PUDs and should be processed under PUD provisions. As with PUDs, cluster developments provide permanent protection of large areas of open space and protection of rural living opportunities without corresponding threats of over-development and excessive infrastructure impacts. The main difference is that required densities remain the same as if clustering was not provided, but clustering is centered in a few selected areas on a parent parcel, rather than being spread across the entire site.

Characteristics:

- Units are clustered in areas that are screened from roadway views, avoiding sensitive environmental areas and prime farmland, and where services can be effectively provided.
- Remaining open spaces are permanently protected through a conservation easement, allowing for continued farming.
- Provides opportunities for farmers to sell their land and still continue farming.
- Two types of clustering exist:
 - Clustering to create a shared large open space for the entire development.
 - Clustering that focuses on open spaces within individual lot layouts.
- Responsibility for a development's open space is determined by ownership, with five possible alternatives:
 - a. Homeowner, condominium or cooperative associations or organizations (usually the developer is responsible for set up).
 - b. Shared, undivided interest by all property owners in the subdivision.
 - c. Quasi-public organizations, subject to their acceptance.
 - d. The municipality, subject to acceptance by the governing body of the municipality.
 - e. Other public jurisdictions or agencies subject to their acceptance.

Challenges:

- Land division regulations must remain consistent with the Land Division Act of 1997 and could prove to be more administratively complex than large lot zoning.
- Over-development is possible unless carefully planned and implemented
- Entails significant administrative resources.

Landscape Buffers:

Landscape buffers are an important element in a site plan when different uses will be in close proximity (i.e. residential and agricultural uses) or when natural

features are present on a site. The Natural Features Overlay Zone for the Southwest Washtenaw region shows important natural systems and recommends a buffer zone around these systems.

Characteristics:

- Protects or improves property values
- Reduces land use conflicts
- Encourages preservation of existing vegetation

Challenges:

- Effectiveness requires familiarity with landscape architecture terms and techniques
- Requires follow-up inspections to ensure the sites comply with buffer and setback regulations

Conservation Easements

Characteristics:

- Easements may be designated for a certain period of time, or be granted in perpetuity
- The owner has a great deal of flexibility in deciding how development will or will not occur on the parcel within the easement.
- An easement does not remove the property from the tax rolls
- The easement does not automatically grant public access to the land, unless that is part of the easement agreement.
- Conservation easements run with the property, not with the owner. Thus, a subsequent owner is subject to the same easement conditions as the previous owner.
- Conservation easements may include the following:
 - Maximum number of houses that may be located on a parcel, and where they may be placed
 - What the land may be used for in the future
 - Provide for future activities such as hiking trails, hunting or fishing.

Challenges:

- Restrictions placed on the land may limit the parcel's future marketability
- Local resources must be dedicated to monitoring easements
- Easements must be properly documented so that new landowners can be made aware of easements.
- A local policy should be in place that directs the acquisition of easements, to encourage connected systems of protected resources.

Housing

This section attempts to address these issues by answering some fundamental questions about housing in the Southwest Washtenaw Area, namely:

- How much housing will the Southwest Washtenaw communities need in the next 10 years?
- What constitutes “affordable” housing?
- How difficult is it to find affordable housing in the Southwest Washtenaw Area? What are the housing “gaps”?
- How does manufactured housing help to address these needs? And where should it be located?
- How can a planned community with a broad range of housing for its residents be achieved?
- What tools can communities use to keep housing in the Southwest Washtenaw Area affordable?
- How can more types of senior housing be provided in the Southwest region?

Manufactured Housing:

Specific areas that the SWWCOG has identified as the most appropriate for manufactured housing parks are presented in the Common Plan Categories section of this Plan. More policy-oriented goals and strategies are as follows:

Goals:

- Designate the most appropriate sites for manufactured housing based upon the assessed need for the entire region
- Locate manufactured housing parks near employment and service areas so that workers can live near their jobs
- Limit the size of manufactured housing parks to an appropriate scale based on:
 - The ability of the local unit to provide public services, such as police and fire protection, infrastructure, and schools.
 - The density and character of the surrounding area
 - The natural features on and surrounding the site
- Establish appropriate site plan review standards for manufactured housing developments, to ensure that impacts on the environment are minimized

Implementation strategies:

- Designate areas for manufactured housing parks in locations served by public water and sewer

- Allow individual manufactured homes in all single-family residential areas (not “parks”)
- Work with manufactured housing developers on reasonably sized projects that are designed to fit in with the character of the surrounding area
- Establish a dialogue with the Mobile Home Commission to review site plan review standards for manufactured housing
- Require appropriate phasing of manufactured housing development to minimize impacts on public services (i.e., police, fire, school districts).
- Rezoning for densities necessary to assure the economic viability of any inclusionary developments, either through mandatory set-asides or density bonuses, as may be necessary to meet all or part of the municipality's fair share;

Strategies for Senior Housing:

In order to meet the goal of fostering independent living for senior citizens in the Southwest Washtenaw community, the SWWCOG advocates the following strategies:

1. Shared Housing: Shared housing is an arrangement involving elderly people with extra space in their homes that agree to share the space with others. This can be ideal for seniors who wish to stay in their homes but need extra income, assistance with chores around the house, or both. Shared residences, whereby a small number of seniors live together as a family, are also an option. Help for establishing a shared housing program locally can be obtained from the Housing Bureau for Seniors (University of Michigan Health System) or from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).
2. Accessory Apartments and Elder Cottages: These options are ideal for seniors who want to live independently but would enjoy the support of family or friends living nearby to provide occasional assistance. Accessory apartments and elder cottages can be allowed as special, conditional, or accessory uses within a local zoning ordinance. These apartments are formed from a portion of an existing house, and usually include its own kitchen, bath, sleeping and living areas. Elder cottages are similar in function, but are detached dwelling units placed on the same lot as a member of the family.
3. Rental Assistance (Section 8): Federal rental assistance is available through MSHDA. This program offers vouchers and certificates to help lower income people pay their rent in a privately owned unit. Currently,

elderly people are using approximately 2/3 of the subsidies available through this program.

4. Home Improvement Loans: Home improvement loans can allow seniors to make modifications or improvements to an older home, which may allow them to remain in their home longer. MSHDA finances Home Improvement (HIP) loans at low-cost to homeowners. Interest rates range from 1 to 8 percent based on the homeowners income. Currently approximately 1/3 of the recipients of these loans are over age 62.
5. Home Equity Conversion Loans: Home equity conversion loans, also referred to as “reverse mortgage” loans are designed to convert the equity a homeowner has in a house into a source of income. These loans are designed to help seniors remain in their home while supplementing their Social Security and retirement income. The loans are secured by a portion of the equity in the home, and the repayment terms can be set up to allow the owner to stay in the home for life. Meanwhile the money from the equity in the home is made available to the owner to spend while still living in the house.
6. Property Tax Foreclosure Prevention: The Housing Bureau for Seniors, serving Washtenaw County, administers a program to help seniors avoid losing their homes to property tax foreclosure. Delinquent property taxes can be an overwhelming burden for older homeowners on a fixed income. The Housing Bureau’s program works with seniors to prevent foreclosure, lower the property tax bill, apply for emergency loans, and manage their financial resources more effectively. Low-interest loans from the Washtenaw County Loan Fund and grants for property taxes from such agencies as the Community Services Agency, Veterans Services, and Family Independence Agency are also available.
7. Home-based Care Programs: The Area Agency on Aging 1-B, serving Washtenaw and surrounding counties, has home-based care programs for older adults and persons with disabilities. These programs can help seniors who have some physical limitations to live independently in their home through supportive services.
8. Retirement Communities: Retirement communities are designed for independent seniors who want to live on their own but desire the security and conveniences of community living. These often include organized social and/or recreational activities, laundry and linen services, meals or access to meals and local transportation. Retirement communities in the Southwest Washtenaw region should be located near existing village-type services (found in Manchester or the Clinton area).

9. Assisted Living Facilities: These facilities are for those senior citizens that need more assistance than is available in their own home or in a retirement community, but who do not require heavy medical or nursing care. Typically these facilities provide personal services, 24-hour supervision and assistance, activities and health related services. Assisted living services may be provided in a number of settings: freestanding facilities, on a campus with skilled nursing, as components of a retirement community, or at independent housing complexes. To encourage family and community involvement, these facilities should be located within the high-density residential areas in Manchester Village.

Strategies To Provide More Affordable Housing

The SWWCOG is committed to providing a broad range of housing options for its current and future residents and workers. To that end, the following strategies are suggested. Affordable housing strategies fall into two broad categories: financing strategies and regulatory strategies.

Examples of financing strategies:

1. Homebuyer assistance. This strategy involves providing down payment and closing cost assistance, either through a direct subsidy or a grant that is tied to a homebuyer counseling component or through a lease-to-own program. In the case of the latter a portion of rent for typically a three-year period is escrowed into a down payment and closing cost fund.
2. Federally assisted low interest loans. Most lenders have programs to assist first time or low-moderate income homebuyers with low interest loan terms enabled by use of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac programs.
3. Employer-assisted housing. Employers (e.g., corporations, hospitals, municipal governments) provide down payment assistance to employees living within a defined distance of the work site, within certain salary/wage limits, and having a minimum tenure with the employer. This strategy is seen as recruitment, retention, and benefit enhancement program.
4. Tax-exempt bonds as part of a financing package. With this option "affordable housing" is seen as a public purpose justifying use of municipal bond sales. Tax-exempt bonds lower the overall cost of the project. These bonds can then be retired as properties are sold. This type of financing can be tied to the lease-to-own strategy in which a

- property management component is needed. Tax-exempt bonds are gaining popularity as it is seen as a public-private venture.
5. Condominium ownership. Homeownership does not only have to mean single-family detached dwellings. There are benefits to condominium arrangements for many homebuyers. These homes can be built new or converted from apartments to condos.
 6. Land trusts. Non-profit trusts can be created to own vacant land for construction and the land under existing housing. A land trust can lower the cost to the homebuyer by 20-30% (depending on the value of the land relative to the housing). Upon resale the trust has right of first refusal and/or "recapture" provisions prevent windfall profits to the first homebuyer, and retain the affordable price structure for subsequent buyers.

Examples of regulatory strategies:

1. Density and design. Communities can facilitate more affordable housing by creating areas for higher density housing (with public sewer and water service) and encouraging innovative designs in the zoning ordinance. Areas with public sewer and water service can accommodate smaller lots, reducing land costs and, in turn, housing costs. The SWWCOG Area Planning Team has designated such areas near the Villages of Manchester and Clinton. Local units are encouraged to consult the Washtenaw County Model Open Space Communities ordinances for tools that encourage affordable housing designs.
2. Inclusionary zoning. This tool requires a certain percentage of a new development (typically 10-15%) to be affordable to households at 80% Area Median Income. This approach also includes density trade-offs, similar to a PUD approach, whereby greater density on a portion of a development enables lower overall cost per unit pricing. Well designed, moderately priced housing, with good "curb appeal" and quality construction is feasible with this approach.
3. Encourage mixed income development. This is a PUD approach that utilizes density trade-offs and includes design standards. A wide variety of housing types, including multi-family, single-family attached, and single family detached are built on same site.
4. Expedited site planning and permitting processes. Developments meeting local criteria for affordability (i.e., a portion of the new units does not exceed a certain cost range) receive "fast track" approval and/or an "ombudsman" from within the municipal structure who serves as liaison between the developer and all regulatory offices, such as planning, fire

department, public works, etc). Existing standards are not reduced or modified for the development. It would, though, facilitate the procedural processes and provide internal coordination within a unit of government in order to save the developer time and money.

5. Invite a partnership with the Washtenaw Home Builders Association. The National Home Builders Association established a ten-year plan in July 1999 to generate more home ownership opportunities for low and moderate-income households. Locally, the Washtenaw Home Builders Association has expressed an interest in a partnership that will enable acceptable financially feasible.

Transportation and Access Management

Recently, transportation has come to the forefront of issues concerning the Southwest Washtenaw community as growth pressures increase in the area. The Southwest Washtenaw region's communities wish to maintain both the functional and scenic integrity of major transportation routes, including state highways and primary county roads. To accomplish this, the SWWCOG supports the following goals and strategies:

Goals:

- Increase safety on all county primary and state roads
- Consider model ordinance from the Saginaw County Metropolitan Planning Commission
- Restrict the number and spacing of driveways on major thoroughfares
- Work toward better communication and cooperation between local units, the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) regarding permits and planned improvements
- Implement design guidelines on new developments to more effectively manage access to major transportation routes.
- Establish a corridor overlay district, adding access management requirements to the underlying zoning districts

Implementation strategies:

- Develop an access classification system to provide a common basis for coordinated action, considering:
 - Functional class of the roadway
 - Character of surrounding development
 - Roadway design

- Cooperation with MDOT and WCRC
- Increase minimum lot frontage requirements on all county primary roads and state highways
- Require interconnected streets in new subdivisions
- Promote internal access systems such as internal streets and reverse frontage for new residences
 - Consult the Washtenaw County Road Commission for guidelines on appropriate numbers of access points for new developments
- Prohibit “flag lots” along major thoroughfares
- Allow the option of “bonus lots” for new developments that implement access management systems (where possible through the land division act)
- Permit shared driveways for some small residential developments (see the Manchester Township ordinance for examples).
- Implement stricter access standards for new commercial developments where appropriate, such as:
 - Dual service drives
 - Frontage roads

Employment and the Economy

Downtown Manchester:

To increase the vitality of local businesses, create new jobs, and maintain the character of the Village, the SWWCOG recommends the following strategies:

- Create a mixed use, Village Center zoning district that includes provisions for mixed-use developments, and design standards so that new development will fit in with the existing character of the area. This district should have more flexible standards than conventional zoning, in order to foster the diversity currently found in the Village.
- Consider allowing conversion of large existing homes near the village center to multi-family and office uses. Permitting “mom and pop” stores (with a maximum square footage, and operated by an owner living on the premises) in residential areas near the downtown area as a conditional use is another means of allowing mixed uses and providing more services and jobs.
- Improve circulation (both automobile and pedestrian) within the Village to encourage the region’s residents to patronize businesses there.
- Include incentives to encourage the preservation or adaptive reuse of existing older buildings in the Village’s zoning ordinance. For example, lot size standards could be reduced to allow for more development per square foot lot area in an existing building. Or bonuses could be granted

for using a shared driveway or common parking area by two adjoining lots.

Skilled Jobs:

In order to prevent the Manchester area from becoming a bedroom community, the supply of skilled jobs should be increased. Communities are increasingly interested in high-tech businesses and office parks because of their need for skilled employees, large payrolls, and lack of noisy, polluting production facilities. But attracting these types of businesses to a rural community can be a challenge.

Studies have shown that rural communities can succeed in bringing new industries into the area by maintaining or increasing the quality of life of the region. This strategy is often successful because “clean industries” are less constrained in where they locate than traditional manufacturing companies. Based on this theory, the SWWCOG supports the community focus on the following traits:

- Parks & open spaces
- Affordable housing
- Good schools
- Community spirit and entertainment opportunities

To attract technology-based industries, the Manchester Area also needs to plan for another type of infrastructure: telecommunications. Information technology companies look for areas that are “well-wired” to locate their offices. To better provide for telecommunications infrastructure, the SWWCOG supports working with the Washtenaw Development Council and the Washtenaw County Planning Department on a countywide telecommunications plan.

Extraction Operations:

The SWWCOG and residents have indicated their concerns particularly regarding transportation impacts and the redevelopment of pits once the extraction operation is completed.

Policy recommendations:

- Discourage extraction operations in areas with significant natural resources that may be adversely affected
- Encourage the identification of sand and gravel deposits to be conserved for future use

- Assess the relative importance of losing agricultural lands to extracting local sand and gravel resources that have regional importance.
- Continue to regulate extraction operations as conditional uses within local zoning ordinances, including requiring restoration and rehabilitation plans.
- Consider re-issuing sand and gravel extraction permits annually, and requiring annual inspections of all pits in the region.
- Encourage the use of railroads to transport sand and gravel where possible
- Consider size restrictions for sand and gravel carriers, to minimize negative impacts on the transportation network.
- Create and maintain strict policies in local ordinances to prevent abandoned pits. These should include restoration plans, financial guarantees, penalties and enforcement measures.