

## ALTERNATIVE #4 IMPLEMENT THE ST. CLAIR COUNTY MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan for St. Clair County continues to be a visionary document.

There are disadvantages to having and using a countywide Master Plan. It requires an investment of time and energy. It involves public education and technical assistance. It necessitates proactive and coordinated cooperation among people and government officials throughout the county.

In spite of these immediate disadvantages, there are many long-term advantages that make the Master Plan a desirable tool to manage growth and change within St. Clair County. The Master Plan contains the means through which citizens and government can:

- Preserve and enhance the county's rural character.
- Protect water and air quality.
- Set aside sufficient land for commercial and industrial growth.
- Direct growth to areas best suited to provide public facility and services.
- Mitigate the need for increased taxes to pay for urban services and utilities.
- Protect the environment for both animal habitat and human enjoyment.
- Create public transit systems to improve mobility.

## Land Use Alternative Comparison: Implement the County Master Plan

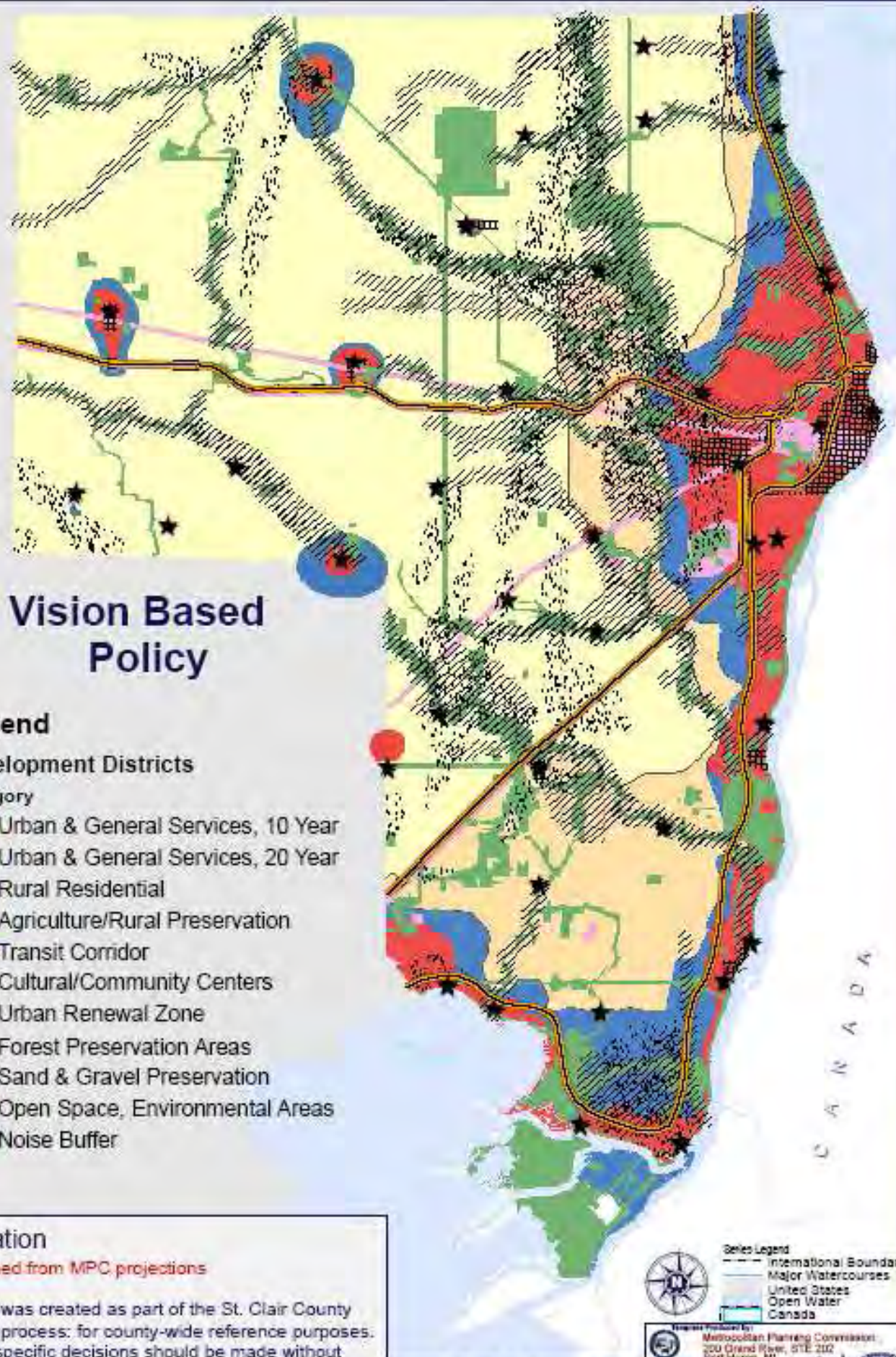
Quality of Life Factors	County Master Plan
Land and Development Value	Positive
Water & Air Quality	Positive
Agriculture	Positive
Open Space	Positive
Sewer & Water	Positive
Jobs	Positive
Affordable Housing	Positive
Education, Health & Safety	Positive
Recreation	Positive
Driving Time	Positive
Level of Taxation	Positive
Sustainability	Positive
Cultural/Historic/Community Character	Positive
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>13 Positive</b>

### *Master Plan for St. Clair County*

The map associated with this alternative contains many colors and land use designations. It depicts a composite of where we can best protect, preserve, or provide:

- Rural, agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional land
- Public facilities
- Utilities and transportation systems
- Recreational areas, open space, and environmental and natural resources

The map associated with this alternative also represents a departure from the fixed boundary for the Urban and General Services District as depicted in the 2000 Plan. After a careful review of existing and forecasted data, staff of the Metropolitan Planning Commission developed a 10-year and 20-year vision for the Urban and General Services District.



# Vision Based Policy

## Legend

### Development Districts

- Category
- Urban & General Services, 10 Year
  - Urban & General Services, 20 Year
  - Rural Residential
  - Agriculture/Rural Preservation
  - Transit Corridor
  - ★ Cultural/Community Centers
  - Urban Renewal Zone
  - Forest Preservation Areas
  - Sand & Gravel Preservation
  - Open Space, Environmental Areas
  - Noise Buffer

### Map Citation

Data obtained from MPC projections

This map was created as part of the St. Clair County Master Plan process: for county-wide reference purposes. No site-specific decisions should be made without independent field verification of the information presented.

Series Legend

- International Boundary
- Major Watercourses
- United States
- Open Water
- Canada

Map Prepared by:  
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 COUNTY OF ST. CLAIR  
[www.stclaircounty.org/Offices/metro/](http://www.stclaircounty.org/Offices/metro/)

- ☑ Foster a diverse, healthy, and sustainable economy.
- ☑ Make the county an attractive location for tourist and tourist dollars.
- ☑ Make the county a more desirable place to live and thus create more jobs.

How can all of these advantages be accomplished?

First, recognize that St. Clair County has many strengths, then take steps to preserve those strengths. We have space for homes, farms, industrial and commercial centers, education institutions, waterways and recreational areas, public facilities, small towns and big cities, urban scenes and country vistas, cultural and tourist attractions and historical resources and modern structures. We have sand and gravel, uplands and wetlands, woodlands and roadways.

We have diversity in St. Clair County. All we need to do is plan, preserve, and manage our inevitable growth.

The next section, "Recommendations," provides a detailed look at each of the colors and layers represented on the Vision-Based Policy Map.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

To objectively evaluate the four alternatives described in this chapter and to come up with the recommendations in the next section, staff from the Metropolitan Planning Commission:

- ☑ Measured each alternative against quality of life factors.
- ☑ Rated each factor with a scale of positive, negative, or neutral.
- ☑ Totaled the ratings.
- ☑ Chose the alternative with the best rating.

## ANALYSIS RESULTS

The following matrix shows the rating of each quality of life factor within each for the four alternatives.

- ☑ The quality of life factors, which relate to citizen input obtained throughout the planning process, are represented in the left column.
- ☑ The four alternatives are represented in the four remaining columns.

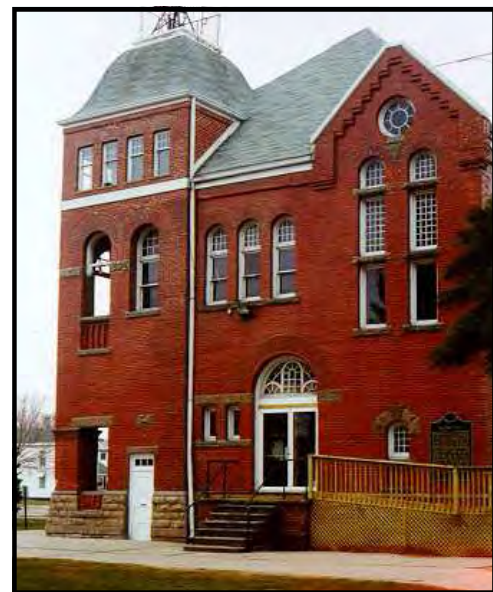
- ☑ The total of positives, negatives, and neutrals appears at the bottom.

## PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Based on the comparison of quality of life factors detailed on page 173, the preferred alternative for future land use in St. Clair County is that which results from the St. Clair County Master Plan and its Vision-Based Policy.

The Vision-Based Policy strives to:

- ☑ Protect critical natural resources;
- ☑ Preserve farmland and open space;
- ☑ Revitalize downtowns;
- ☑ Ensure governmental collaboration and the efficient provision of public services;
- ☑ Ensure the county is prepared to successfully compete in the knowledge economy;
- ☑ Ensure that the county's workforce is well-educated and highly-trained for 21st century jobs;
- ☑ Support entrepreneurs and enhance the business environment in the county;
- ☑ Ensure there are affordable housing opportunities throughout the county;
- ☑ Promote the sustainable use of resources;
- ☑ Capitalize on St. Clair County's cultural, historic and community character.



*The historic Marine City Hall on Broadway Street.*

## St. Clair County Land Use Alternatives: Comparison of Quality of Life Factors

Quality of Life Factors	Existing Trends	Generalized Master Plans	Generalized Zoning	Master Plan for St. Clair County
Land and Development Value	Negative	Neutral	Negative	Positive
Water & Air Quality	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive
Agriculture	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive
Open Space	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive
Sewer & Water	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive
Jobs	Negative	Neutral	Neutral	Positive
Affordable Housing	Negative	Neutral	Negative	Positive
Education, Health & Safety	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive
Recreation	Negative	Neutral	Negative	Positive
Driving Time	Negative	Negative	Positive	Positive
Level of Taxation	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive
Sustainability	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive
Cultural/Historic/Community Character	Negative	Neutral	Negative	Positive
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>0 Positive</b>	<b>0 Positive 5 Neutral</b>	<b>0 Positive 1 Neutral</b>	<b>13 Positive</b>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## VISION-BASED POLICY

The initiatives put forward in this Master Plan will not implement themselves. It will take continued commitment and support for many years. Cooperation and planning will be critical in order to achieve the goals desired by St. Clair County residents and maintain the high quality of life that we currently enjoy and crave in the future.

## INTRODUCTION

Change is inevitable. The challenge is to anticipate change, plan for it, and thus benefit from it. For St. Clair County, the big change between 2000 and 2020 will be growth.

Therefore, there is one overriding recommendation within the St. Clair County Master Plan: Manage growth in a phased or timed manner. To do this, we must have a plan and we must make decisions consistent with that plan.

The following pages contain recommendations supported by the details and data found within the Master Plan Technical Reports and the main body of this Summary Document. These recommendations are in regard to:

- Urban and General Services District
- Rural Residential District
- Rural and Agriculture Conservation district
- Existing Commercial and community Centers
- Redevelopment and Renewal Areas
- Sensitive Environments
- Sand and Gravel Resources
- Forest Preservation Areas
- Open Space Corridors, Environmental Areas, Trails, and Parks
- Transportation Improvements
- Noise Zones
- Transit Corridors
- Infrastructure Planning



*The Urban & General Services District includes areas of existing higher residential, commercial and industrial use densities.*

## URBAN AND GENERAL SERVICES DISTRICT

The Urban and General Services District (UGSD) is along the eastern and southern shore and in inland communities of Adair, Allenton, Avoca, Berville, Capac, Goodells, Memphis, Rattle Run, and Yale. These are areas of existing higher residential, commercial, and – in several cases – industrial use densities. Investing in public infrastructure will lead to even higher densities which are capable of supporting infrastructure and a full -range of public services.

With planned developments and proper provision of public services, the UGSD has more than sufficient land area to accommodate all of the residential, commercial, and industrial growth expected within St. Clair County between 2008 and 2030.

Additionally, this plan update incorporates a new recommendation for the UGSD. Like the district which was created with the 2000 Plan, the UGSD anticipates a 20-year planning period during which higher density development and public services will be focused and directed. What has changed is the addition of a 10-year and 20-year area within the UGSD. The new 10-year and 20-year boundaries closely approximate the differences between existing water and sewer service areas and planned water and sewer service areas.

By directing growth toward this district, we can preserve the rural character and agricultural quality that exists in the northwest part of the county.

## Recommendations

- ☑ Direct residential, commercial, and industrial growth to the Urban and General Services District.
- ☑ Provide and extend a full-range of public services, including water and sewer lines, in a managed, phased, and incremental manner as populations increase in the Urban and General Services Districts.

## RURAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

The Rural Residential District is in the south-central part of St. Clair County. It serves as a transitional zone between the Urban and General Services District along the coast to the east and south and the Rural and Agricultural Conservation District to the west.

The Rural Residential District provides for rural, low-density home construction. While farm operations would be preserved in the short term, fewer resources would be devoted to farmland protection as in the central and western portions of the county.

This part of the county is already the site of the highest proliferation of new home construction and residential sprawl, primarily because of its proximity to counties to the south. Soils in this area can accommodate a relatively few or lower density of septic systems.



*The Rural Residential District is a transitional zone between the Urban and General Services District along the eastern and southern shoreline and the Rural and Agricultural Conservation District to the west and northwest.*



*The Rural and Agricultural Conservation District, located in the west and northwest part of the county, is the primary target area for farmland preservation programs*

## Recommendations

- ☑ Allow rural residential structures at a density of one unit per five acres.
- ☑ Discourage strip residential development.
- ☑ Do not extend public sewer and water lines into this district.
- ☑ Encourage farming – but not concentrated animal feeding operations – as long as it remains viable.

## RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Rural and Agricultural Conservation District occupies the central and northwest part of St. Clair County. Residences in this district would primarily be farm families and their employees.

Density would be one residence per 40 acres, which is not the same as 40 acre lots. Rather, residences would be clustered in lot sizes of one-half to three acres, leaving larger tracts of land for viable agricultural and farming purposes.

New residents to these areas would be encouraged to move into existing villages, cities, or commercial and community centers (this is an opportunity not available to most people moving into this area of the county.)



Families enjoy a day at the Northrup Farm in Brockway Township during the 2007 St. Clair County Fall Farm Tour.

### Recommendations

- ☑ Preserve the Rural and Agricultural conservation District for agricultural purposes.
- ☑ Direct new residential development toward existing cities and villages, in a manner recommended in the Urban and General Services Districts.
- ☑ Prohibit extension of sewer and water lines into the Rural and Agricultural Conservation District.
- ☑ Promote farmland preservation programs.
- ☑ Establish programs to purchase development rights.
- ☑ Revitalize cities and villages, making them an attractive alternative to development on farmland.

### EXISTING COMMERCIAL AND COMMUNITY CENTERS

Existing Commercial and Community Centers are places of commercial activity and civic function. Some of these are incorporated cities or villages. Others are smaller settlement areas that have a higher residential density than surrounding areas.

Some are along the county's original trails, roadways, or railroad lines. But like those transportation routes, the communities have dwindled in size and railroad depots, post offices, churches, and one-room schools have disappeared.



Memphis is a primary place of commercial activity and civic function.

Yet, because of the history and heritage within these centers, a certain level of public and private infrastructure remains, and the communities themselves are worth saving.

### Recommendations

- ☑ Invest in and reinvigorate Existing Commercial and Community Centers rather than create new ones.
- ☑ Redevelop communities in which residential areas are clustered with small shops and stores that provide essential services, such as groceries and pharmaceuticals.
- ☑ In rural community centers, allow only development and commerce that contribute to the community's unique character.
- ☑ Permit and encourage localized public sewer and water systems in Existing Commercial and community Centers.

### REDEVELOPMENT AND RENEWAL AREAS

Redevelopment and Renewal Areas are communities or parts of communities that, for any of several reasons, are in apparent decline. Development and Renewal Areas include neighborhoods with rundown houses, designated brownfields, and sites that may have contaminated soil due to previous industrial or commercial uses.



*Some neighborhoods in the South End of Port Huron are prime for infill development and neighborhood revitalization.*

## Recommendations

- ☑ Direct public funding and create legislation to improve and revitalize redevelopment and Renewal Areas.
- ☑ Encourage home improvement, Brownfield restoration, and site cleanup projects within Redevelopment and Renewal Areas.

## SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Sensitive Environments are the county's wetlands, floodplains, forests, and stream corridors. These areas are sensitive because of the land and vegetation, and they are valuable as habitat for the animals that live there.

They also have economic value. People like to live in areas where birds chirp and deer leave tracks in the snow. Tourists like to visit pleasant places where quiet abounds. These are the characteristics of sensitive areas.

It is important to remember that the influence of these Sensitive Environments goes beyond their immediate physical boundaries. Animals that live within Sensitive Environments require adjacent buffer zones to roam without danger from humans and to avoid being considered pests.

## Recommendations

- ☑ Limit or in some cases prohibit development and establish special design requirements for uses that are permitted.
- ☑ Target the most Sensitive Environments for public acquisition.
- ☑ Create buffer zones for public use, such as a natural park, in areas immediately adjacent to Sensitive Environments.
- ☑ Manage nearby development areas to minimize adverse environmental impacts and to maximize economic value.
- ☑ Require that storm runoff from parking lots and concrete areas pass through retention ponds prior to entering drains and streams and sensitive environments.

## SAND AND GRAVEL RESOURCES

Sand and Gravel Resources are areas where sand and gravel deposits still exist in the county. These deposits are currently being mined in small quantities and are in danger of being taken for granted. However, as populations grow in St. Clair County, sand and gravel resources will become important assets for use in private septic systems, for building foundations, and as roadbeds.

## Recommendations

- ☑ Preserve and mine Sand and Gravel Resources for widespread benefit.
- ☑ Discourage development and construction above sand and gravel deposits.



*Sand and gravel resources are important resources for use in private septic systems, building foundations, and roadbeds.*



Forested land is an important component of St. Clair County's community character.

## FOREST PRESERVATION AREAS

St. Clair County was once home to vast forests. Only six general forested areas still exist within the county, but they are neither large nor contiguous. In some places, woodlots within these Forest Preservation Areas are separated by several acres of open land.

Forest Preservation Areas are like roses near the county's most developed urban centers. As such, they are greenbelts that buffer dense development from less-dense development, help define rural character, and provide a refreshing get-away for city dwellers and rural residents.

### Recommendations

- ☑ Prohibit or discourage tree cutting or destruction of Forest Preservation Areas.
- ☑ Encourage tree planting in open spaces adjacent to Forest Preservation Areas in order to connect individual woodlots and enlarge those forested areas.
- ☑ Encourage tree planning, in general, throughout the county.

## OPEN SPACE CORRIDORS, ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS, TRAILS, AND PARKS

The optimum location for open space corridors, environmental areas, trails and parks is along natural watercourses, of which there are many in St. Clair County, and their attractive natural land formations.

These corridors, areas, trails, and parks help define rural character, provide recreation opportunities, enhance water quality and wildlife habitat, and invite tourist. They are places where residents can play, work, relax and enjoy the quality of life,

### Recommendations

- ☑ Acquire land that can be used for future public Open Space Corridors, Environmental Areas, Trails, and Parks.
- ☑ Create Open Space Corridors, Environmental Areas, Trails, and Parks according to the proposed Southeast Michigan Greenways Plan, the St. Clair County Recreation Plan, and local master plans.
- ☑ Develop these corridors and trails as alternative transit routes to connect various parts of the county.

## TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

The Metropolitan Planning commission has identified St. Clair County roads that:

- ☑ Are scheduled for improvements
- ☑ Need to be upgraded in order to meet demands for their use
- ☑ Should not be upgraded because that would contribute to premature land use change
- ☑ Need to be reclassified



Construction along Interstate 94 at Range Road.

## Recommendations

- ☑ Follow SCCOTS' recommendations.
- ☑ Maintain transportation facilities for all types where they will adequately serve the planned population densities.
- ☑ Prohibit transportation facilities that foster development above planned density levels, or are inconsistent with goals and intent of this plan.

## NOISE ZONES

Noise zones are areas near interstate highways, railways, and airports that are subject to inordinate and uncomfortable noise levels.

## Recommendations

- ☑ Direct residential development away from Noise Zones.
- ☑ Allow certain noisy commercial and industrial activities within Noise Zones.
- ☑ Create buffers between Noise Zones and residential areas.

## TRANSIT CORRIDOR

Between 2007 and 2020, the major employment center within St. Clair County is expected to shift from the Port Huron/Marysville area to the southern part of the county. However, the primary residential centers will remain in Port Huron and Marysville.

Therefore, a public transportation corridor will be desirable, if not necessary, to help people travel from their homes to places of employment and to regional shipping and educational centers. Buses would likely be the primary public vehicles on this corridor, but other forms of public or non-motorized transportation could also be possible.

## Recommendations

- ☑ Establish a transit corridor that connects the shoreline communities within St. Clair County.
- ☑ Construct express routes that would link Capac, Emmett, Memphis, Yale, and other settlement centers to this primary transit Corridor.

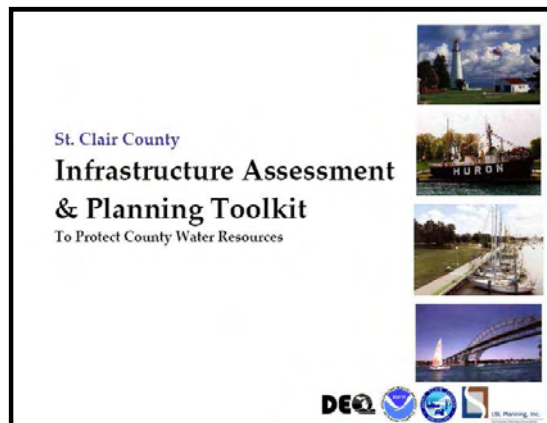
## INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Infrastructure needs will change as St. Clair County grows. This Master Plan is a valid attempt to manage that growth. Like any plan, it requires frequent adjustment in order to steer the county down the desired path. To that end, the Metropolitan Planning Commission will review and update the plan every five years, based on ever-changing current conditions and trends. As with the development of this plan, the review and revision process will require public input.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission will also work in close conjunction with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and the County Administrator/Controller on the development of the county's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP examines the county's infrastructure requirements, studies the effects of capital purchases on the county's ability to perform public services, and determines the capital expenditure required to fund those requirements.

## Recommendations

- ☑ Every five years, review and update the St. Clair County Master Plan as necessary.
- ☑ Update the St. Clair County Capital Improvement Program on an annual basis.
- ☑ Make sure that planned improvements and expansions of public facilities and services are consistent with both the Master Plan and the Capital Improvement Program.
- ☑ Work with local units of government to implement the recommendations of the 2007 St. Clair County *Infrastructure Assessment and Planning Toolkit to Protect Water Resources*.



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