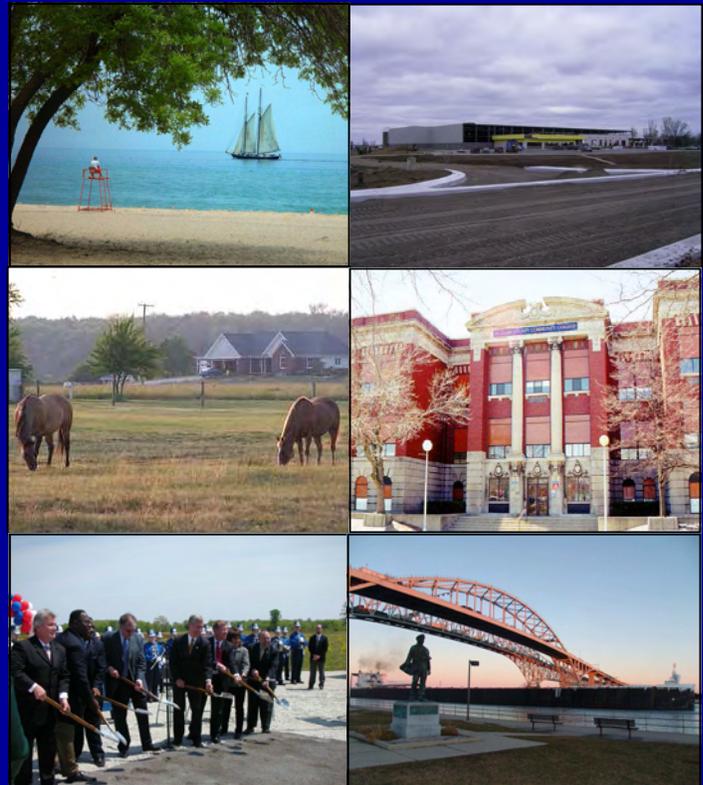
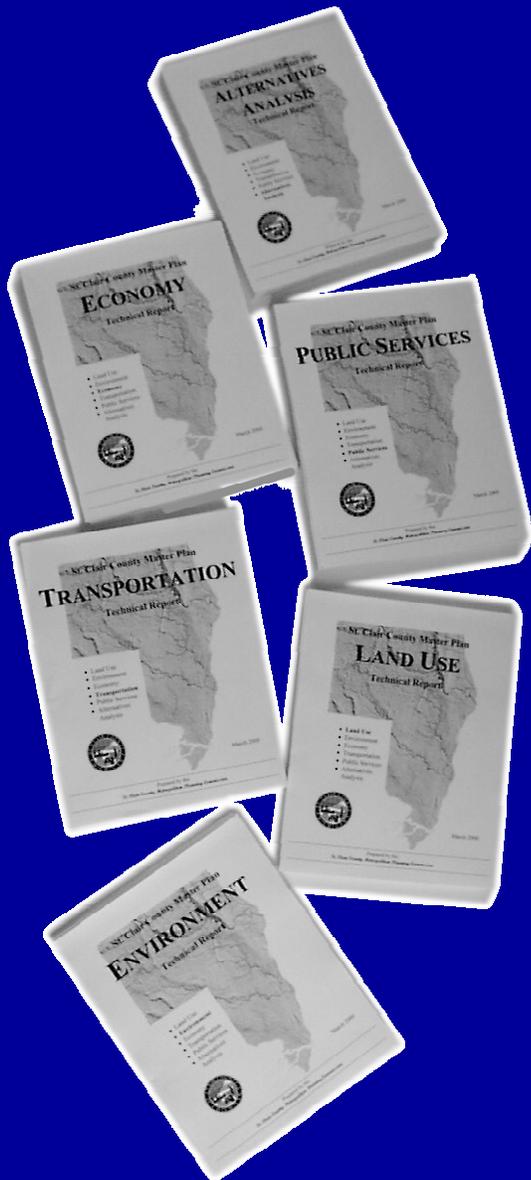




# ST. CLAIR COUNTY 2030 MASTER PLAN

## SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS



*Adopted by:*  
**St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission**  
June 17, 2009

*Endorsed by:*  
**St. Clair County Board of Commissioners**  
July 15, 2009



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## **ST. CLAIR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Wallace Evans, Chairman  
Jeff Bohm  
Howard Heidemann  
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Steven Simasko  
Pamela Wall

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Robert Sheehy, Secretary  
Charles Andrews  
Steve Cooper  
Dorothy DeBoyer  
Howard Heidemann  
Miles Hildebrand  
Tom Sass  
Lynne Secory  
Robert Tansky

## **MASTER PLAN CONTRIBUTORS**

St. Clair County Citizens  
St. Clair County Government Officials  
Bob Weir - Previous Master Plan Writer  
SCC Agricultural Preservation Board  
St. Clair County Water Quality Board  
St. Clair County Transportation Study  
MSU Urban Planning Partnerships - Practicum

## **ST. CLAIR COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING STAFF MEMBERS**

Bill Kauffman, AICP, Executive Director  
Geoffrey Donaldson, AICP, Senior Planner  
David Struck, AICP, Senior Planner  
Michael Latuszek, AICP, Senior Planner  
Kara Schrader, Planner I  
Trevor Floyd, GISP, GIS Analyst  
Lori Eschenburg, GIS Specialist  
Dale Fulton, Planning Office Manager  
Penny Guyette, Secretary

## **KEY PROJECT CONSULTANTS**

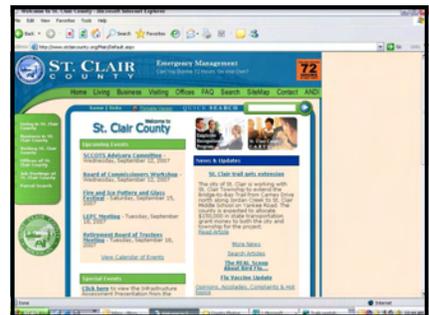
LSL Planning, Inc. - Royal Oak, MI  
*Coastal Zone Project*  
Community Research Services - Okemos, MI  
*Affordable Housing Strategic Plan*  
URS Corporation - Minneapolis, MN  
*Long Range Transportation Plan*



Stakeholders discuss the future of trails in St. Clair County



Children listen to an earth-friendly tune at the 2005 Earth Fair.



The St. Clair County Website links visitors to all County departments. Check it out at [www.stclaircounty.org](http://www.stclaircounty.org)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Land, along with water and air, are the primary resources upon which other natural resources, such as vegetation, forests, fish, and wildlife depend. Mineral resources are part of the land. Cultural, historical, and social resources are built on the land; so are manufacturing facilities, businesses, centers of trade and commerce, schools, parks, transportation services, and public utilities. We need land to build a house, plant a seed, dig a well, and earn a living.

Planning is the practice that manages how land is used in order to protect public safety, health, and well-being. Planning provides predictability and order amidst changes in land use patterns. Planning helps preserve resources while it encourages systematic growth in residential areas, educational opportunities, commerce and industry, and public service infrastructure.

The organization of this Master Plan Summary, then, follows a logical order.

- ☑ The first chapter deals with how land is used and how to manage changes in land use.
- ☑ Subsequent chapters focus on the environment, economic issues, transportation, and public facilities and services.
- ☑ The chapter on land use alternatives is devoted to how alternatives to the way St. Clair County land is used now, how it can be used into the future, and strategies through which change can be implemented.
- ☑ The implementation matrix summarizes the strategies necessary to achieve St. Clair County's preferred future, and clearly details what actions will be taken at what time and by whom.

The information in this Master Plan Summary provides an overview of key points, which are presented with statistical detail in larger and more comprehensive Technical Reports.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Master Plan Highlights and Introduction.....	Page 5
Land Use and Change Management.....	Page 11
Environment.....	Page 33
Economy.....	Page 55
Transportation.....	Page 99
Public Facilities and Services.....	Page 129
Alternatives for Future Land Use.....	Page 161
Glossary of Terms.....	Page 181
Appendix A: Implementation Matrix.....	Page 190
Appendix B: Plan Documentation.....	Page 194

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# MASTER PLAN HIGHLIGHTS & INTRODUCTION

## MASTER PLAN BACKGROUND

The vision, goals, and objectives offered in this Master Plan are the combined result of input from citizens and government officials - elected and appointed - from throughout St. Clair County. The historical information, statistics, and current trends presented in the Master Plan are the result of observation, research, and analysis performed by the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission, with the assistance of planning consultants. The Metropolitan Planning Commission is responsible for the overall compilation and content of the St. Clair County Master Plan.

## MASTER PLAN DOCUMENTS

The St. Clair County Master Plan consists of four documents or sets of documents:

- ☑ *Master Plan Technical Reports*, the main technical body of the Master Plan
- ☑ *Technical Report Map Book*, the full collection of maps used in the Technical Reports
- ☑ *Master Plan Summary*, this publication
- ☑ *Master Plan Implementation Matrix*, a concise action plan and implementation schedule

Six Technical Reports represent the main body of work that is the Master Plan. The Technical Reports contain detailed information on land use change management, the environment, the economy, transportation, and public facilities and services. They total more than 300 pages and contain a wealth of research data and analysis, as well as goals, objectives, and recommended policies based on current conditions and trends in St. Clair County. Some of the data in the Technical Reports is in the form of tables, charts, and maps. The Technical Reports and all maps are available upon request.

The Master Plan Summary (the book you are reading now) represents a broad overview of highlights from the Technical Reports, including findings, goals, and recommendations.

The Master Plan Implementation Matrix presents, in a concise format, a summary of key findings and provides an implementation matrix that details specific actions to be implemented, the approximate completion time, and what agency or agencies will be responsible for successful implementation.

## TO OBTAIN COPIES OF THE MASTER PLAN

Copies of the Master Plan, all its Technical Reports, maps and the other information presented in this document can be obtained by contacting the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission at **810-989-6950**. These documents can also be viewed online at <http://cis.stclaircounty.org>.

## PURPOSE OF MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan establishes planning goals that, if strived for, will help shape and direct the future of St. Clair County.

## MASTER PLAN PHILOSOPHY

The Master Plan advocates neither growth or no growth. Rather, the Master Plan advocates **managed growth and change** in order to preserve the rural character, unique features, and natural, cultural, and historic resources that make St. Clair County an attractive place to live, work and play.

## BENEFITS OF PLANNING

Once adopted, endorsed, and implemented, this Master Plan will:

- ☑ Affect and benefit collectively all citizens and governments - townships, villages, cities, and the county

## **MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVE**

To guide land use patterns toward efficient and effective use of public investment that preserves St. Clair County's rural character, fosters a high quality of life, promotes economic health, limits conflict between different land uses, and protects resources for future generations.

- ☑ Be in accord with the wishes of St. Clair County residents and consistent with appropriate regional, state, and federal policies
- ☑ Help citizens of St. Clair County use resources, including land, wisely
- ☑ Provide a countywide framework for local planning

## INTEGRATION OF OTHER PLANS

The contents of the Master Plan Technical Reports and the summary documents are supported by the findings and recommendations of other functional plans and programs that the county has completed and implemented. These county documents include:

- ☑ Hazard Mitigation Plan
- ☑ Master Recreation Plan 2007-2011
- ☑ Brownfield Redevelopment Plan
- ☑ Solid Waste Plan
- ☑ Annual Capital Improvement Program
- ☑ Facilities Master Plan
- ☑ Long Range Transportation Plan
- ☑ Affordable Housing Strategy 2006-2007
- ☑ Infrastructure Assessment and Planning Toolkit

The content of these documents is based on:

- ☑ The Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) staff's analysis of planning activities and development trends within St. Clair County
- ☑ Input and direction from citizens and government officials within St. Clair County
- ☑ Targeted input from the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners
- ☑ Information from planners and government officials within the Southeast Michigan region
- ☑ Expertise from planning consultants throughout Michigan
- ☑ Information found in planning documents created by other counties and communities within Michigan
- ☑ State and federal planning guidelines and laws

Input from citizens and local government officials has been a significant part of the Master Plan's development process.

## PRINCIPAL THEMES

The Master Plan is based on four principal themes expressed by many St. Clair County residents and local officials as being important:

- ☑ Revitalizing the county's economy,
- ☑ Improving the overall quality of life,
- ☑ Managing growth,
- ☑ Creating a sustainable countywide community.

**Revitalizing the county's economy** refers to the overall strategies necessary to promote, increase, and support sustainable economic development. This includes fostering entrepreneurial growth, facilitating industrial development, revitalizing downtowns, and creating high-skill, high-wage jobs.

**Improving the overall quality of life** refers to the subjective pleasure and convenience that citizens receive from recreational facilities, public services, private and nonprofit organizations, cultural opportunities, environmental resources, historic features, good jobs, and affordable housing.

**Managing growth** refers to the overall strategies necessary to allow development in a systematic and phased manner, preserve viable farmland and important open space, strengthen existing business and cultural centers, and offer a range of affordable public services and facilities.

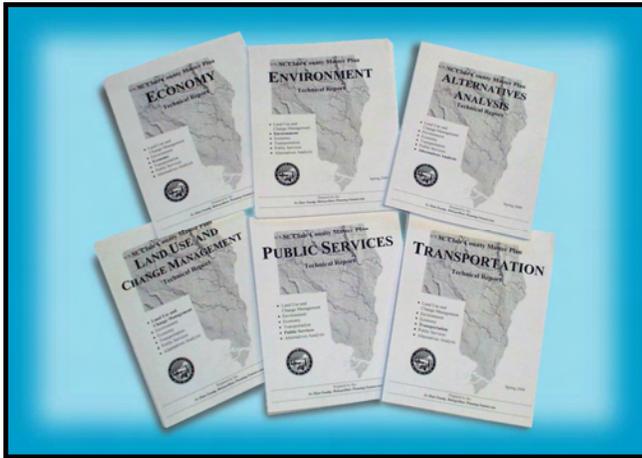
**Sustainability** refers to long-term growth as a result of the county's diverse and stable environment, economy, public services and facilities, and land use patterns.

## PRIMARY ISSUES

Using these four principal themes as a foundation, the Master Plan focuses on six primary issues:

- ☑ Land Use and Change Management
- ☑ Environment
- ☑ Economy
- ☑ Transportation

- ☑ Public Facilities and Services
- ☑ Alternatives for Future Land Use



The six primary issues are the titles of each of the Technical Reports and chapters within this Master Plan Summary.

## FUTURING PROCESS

Prior to setting out to update the 2000 Master Plan, staff from the Metropolitan Planning Commission met to discuss what may be some of the emerging local, regional and global trends that may have an impact on land use and economic change in St. Clair County over the next 20 years and beyond. The discussions ranged from the future of broadband Internet access to the evolution and deployment of alternative energies. We asked ourselves such questions as, “What if St. Clair County was to develop/connect to mass transit options to our nearest major metropolitan areas?” and, “What if the county’s auto-industry dependent economies were to be well-suited to a new emerging manufacturing process?” We looked at possible demographic trends that are not forecasted or expected. We looked at changes in housing demand that are not currently anticipated. From these “futures” sessions, we were able to break down some potential future trends into the following categories:

- ☑ Population loss/gains
- ☑ Energy costs
- ☑ Technological Industries
- ☑ Resource Base
- ☑ Transportation of both goods and people
- ☑ Shifts in manufacturing

These categories of potential future trends were taken into account during the update of the Master Plan Technical Reports and the Plan’s findings, goals and objectives reflect these wherever possible. While it is impossible to anticipate all that the future has to share, we have prepared this Plan to be nimble and flexible enough to address many of these potential future trends. Additionally, this document will be reviewed every five years, as required by state law. Unanticipated trends that emerge during the next five-year cycle can be addressed at that time.

## LAND USE ALTERNATIVES

The Master Plan also contains a Technical Report regarding Alternatives for Future Land Use, which explores various future land use plans in terms of near-term (5 years), mid-term (15 years), and long-term (25 years). The Technical Report also evaluates each land use plan’s ability to improve the quality of life for St. Clair County residents. The results of research and evaluation of those alternatives is summarized in the Alternatives for Future Land Use chapter.

## COLLABORATIVE ROLES

Attaining the goals of the Master Plan lies largely in the hands of citizens and local community officials, working in collaboration with the County Board of Commissioners, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, and other county government departments, and - in some cases - state and/or federal government officials.

In other words, county government cannot act alone, and - except in a few instances - does not have authority to mandate policies to local units of government.

## Cities and Villages

Michigan law grants greatest autonomy to cities and villages, which are enabled to develop planning documents, write zoning ordinances, and amend those documents without seeking advice or input from county, regional, or state review agencies, school boards or any other affected entity.



*Burtchville Township Hall*

### **Townships**

Townships have the same autonomous authority to develop planning documents and write zoning ordinances. However, they are required to submit those plans, ordinances, and amendments to a countywide planning authority (in St. Clair County, the Metropolitan Planning Commission) for review and comment. Recommendations made by the MPC are strictly advisory and the townships may choose to follow - or not follow - the recommendations.

### **Metropolitan Planning Commission**

In addition to reviewing township planning and zoning documents and amendments, the MPC could review the project plans of any community that seeks state or federal money to fund a development project. If a community seeks such money, they must submit their proposal to a regional clearinghouse review agency (in Southeast Michigan, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, or SEMCOG). SEMCOG extends information about the project to affected governments and school districts, which offer comments and suggestions. SEMCOG then bases its funding recommendation on input from those affected parties.

When presented with review opportunities, either directly or through SEMCOG, the Metropolitan Planning Commission will base its recommendation on the planning principles and concepts of the St. Clair County Master Plan, as well as the goals and objectives of the local community master plan.

If the policies within the local plan are consistent with

the principles of the St. Clair County Master Plan, the local planning document will serve as the primary local review guideline. If policies within the local master plan are inconsistent with the principles of the St. Clair County Master Plan, the MPC will evaluate the proposed amendment based on the planning commission's understanding of the local community's overall goals and overall countywide objectives.

### **County Government**

The Master Plan will more directly affect decisions and operations within some St. Clair County departments, including the Board of Commissioners. The MPC will conduct meetings with county officials in order to explain the St. Clair County Master Plan's contents and intentions.

The MPC will request the County Administrator to have county departments examine, and - in some cases - modify policies and practices to coincide with the Master Plan. Decisions regarding policies, practices, and corresponding implementation strategies will be up to individual departments.

### **AN EVOLUTIONARY DOCUMENT**

The Master Plan has a life expectancy of about 25 years, from 2008 to 2035. During that time, the MPC will review and update the Technical Reports and the Master Plan Summary every five years, as required by the State of Michigan. All reports will be updated as necessary, based on new information, statistics, land



*St. Clair County Administration Building in Port Huron*

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use patterns, growth requirements, and emerging trends. The last Master Plan was adopted by the MPC and endorsed by the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners in the Spring of 2000.



*A historical glimpse at Port Huron*

## ST. CLAIR COUNTY HISTORY

### A SPECIAL PLACE - THEN AND NOW

The first inhabitants of the area in and around what is now St. Clair County were Native Americans. Peoples of many nations held ceremonies and buried their dead along the banks of the great Huron waters and the river into which it flows. They hunted game from expansive woodlands, fished from rivers and streams, and honored the land and water from which their sustenance came.

The area's recorded history began in 1679 when an expedition led by French explorers Robert Cavellier de La Salle and Pére Louis Hennepin navigated what later became known as the St. Clair River. As a result of their exploits, the French claimed ownership of vast lands surrounding the Great Lakes and soon established missions and trading posts in the region. In 1686, the French explorer Sieur Daniel Greysolon Duluth built forts, including the oldest in Michigan – Fort St. Joseph – at the mouth of Lake Huron, near the present site of Port Huron.

In 1764, after the British took dominion of the region, Patrick Sinclair built a fort, a mill, houses, and barns on 24,000 acres of land where the Pine River flows into the St. Clair River. Only a few settlers came to the area until twenty years later, after the treaty that ended the Revolutionary War was signed by the United States of America and Great Britain.

In 1820, Lewis Cass, governor of the Northwest Territory, declared the area to be St. Clair County, named after the county's first and largest village. The county's first census reported 79 residents. The first county jail (1821), first post office (1826), first county courthouse (1827), first newspaper (1834), first brick yard, first river ferry, and first salt mine were all in the village of St. Clair.

In the late 1820's, Ward's Point or Newport (later Marine City) became the second village established in the county. Algonac became the third village, organized in 1836. Prior to 1850, these three downriver settlements were the fastest growing communities in the county.

The first settlers in the area of old Fort St. Joseph came about 1790 and named the settlement Desmond. In 1814, this became the site of Fort Gratiot, which garrisoned troops. By 1830, the community had only 377 people. In 1837, the same year that Michigan became a state, the community changed its name to Port Huron. By 1840, the community grew to 1,113 people. It was organized as a village in 1849, and L. M. Mason was its first village president.

Port Huron became a city in 1857. By 1870, it was the largest community in the county. Its industries included seven sawmills, four shipyards, three breweries, two dry docks, and a soap factory. Port Huron became the County seat in 1871, after a legal battle with the city of St. Clair. The city-county building was erected in 1873.

Between 1850 and 1900, over 70 small communities in St. Clair County, most of them inland, became officially recognized settlements. Many had a post office and a school, and all sported some kind of commercial trade and at least one church. Many people around these settlements worked a family farm.

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This trend toward settlement living was in keeping with Michigan's and the Midwest's economy, which was heavily based on agriculture and extraction of natural resources, such as lumber and minerals. Laborers not directly involved with harvesting crops, cutting trees, or mining were employed in related transport or processing industries. Proximity to a railroad was a dominant factor in determining quality of life and economic development.

In contrast, since the start of the twentieth century, most of St. Clair County's growth has occurred in five waterfront communities and four rural cities and villages. Many rural communities away from the waterfront were abandoned. St. Clair County hamlets and villages such as Tara's Halls, Brockway, Fargo, Blaine, Abbotsford, and Lamb became either much smaller entities or disappeared completely.

This growth away from agricultural areas was spurred by dwindling lumber and mineral resources in the late 1800s, and the advancement of manufacturing technologies and facilities within city centers that offered a glut of high-paying jobs. Even though many families continued to farm their fields, St. Clair County's economy throughout the first half of the 1900s shifted from being resource-based to manufacturing-based.

After World War II, the population shift changed direction as people began to move from declining central cities to more attractive suburbs. In St. Clair County, development spread a few miles inland and had a large impact on how land was used, where and how people lived, and provision of public services. People measured quality of life on availability of schools, streets, waste removal systems, safe drinking water, hospitals, and police and fire protection.

Today, people are moving back to the rural areas, the result of another shift in the economy and lifestyle. Manufacturing processes are less centralized. Computer technologies and transportation/automotive improvements have facilitated mobility so people can live farther away from their jobs. Technology, globalization and the outsourcing of jobs are changing



*Downtown Capac in western St. Clair County*

the industrial world. As a result, many industrial firms are able to increase production while decreasing manpower. This trend is changing the economy of Southeast Michigan - an economy that has for years been dependant on the automotive industry. The region is currently transitioning from a manufacturing-based economy to a knowledge-based, service economy.

# 3 ECONOMY



## HIGHLIGHTS

This Economy chapter demonstrates that we are linked financially. Prosperity for one person or one group of people can, and should, mean prosperity for all. Economic conditions also affect how we use the land on which we build homes, conduct commerce, and farm.

## INTRODUCTION

Unlike the situation with land use change - in which the power to alter conditions and trends rests in the hands of local units of government - St. Clair County's Board of Commissioners, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, and a variety of business, labor, and community organizations can take a leadership role to influence and impact positive economic growth within our community.

## ECONOMY, PEOPLE, AND LAND USE

The economy of a region, county, or community depends on many factors, all of which are related to:

- ☑ Population characteristics, including age, average income, and other factors.
- ☑ Business, industry, and commerce centers.
- ☑ The workforce, whether employed or unemployed, and educational and training opportunities.
- ☑ Special or unique characteristics that attract new residents, workers, and tourists.
- ☑ Trade among residents and trade with other communities, even with Canada and Mexico.

Likewise, economic activity impacts land use in a variety of ways:

- ☑ Populations move to follow employment opportunities.
- ☑ Different industries affect the type and capacity of public services and facilities.
- ☑ Industries have specific site and location requirements.
- ☑ Site development alters the physical landscape around the site.
- ☑ Businesses either fail, maintain, or grow, depending on market evolution.

Industrial development also affects land use indirectly due to the need for secondary service industries and workforce housing.

## ECONOMIC HISTORY

In the late 1800s, St. Clair County was an area of agriculture, lumbering, and mining. People worked on family farms, lumber mills, quarries, or in businesses



*Historic view of downtown St. Clair.*

that provided goods or transported products to other markets.

Technology, the Industrial Revolution, and the reward of high-paying jobs brought people to the cities in the early 1900s. These people also lived near their work, often relying on public transportation to get between home and job.

The end of World War II brought a proliferation of automobiles, which allowed people to commute from new near-city suburbs to established in-town industrial centers. These suburbs were like a middle ground between cities and farms, offering some semblance of country life as well as city conveniences and culture.

The continued proliferation of automobiles in the form of multiple-car families, improved highways, and computer and communication technologies allow people to live farther from their work. Roughly 37% of St. Clair County workers travel across the County line for work. It is not uncommon for workers in the County to work in the Metro Detroit area and have a home in rural St. Clair County.

## ECONOMIC FACTORS

This chapter explores trends and projections in the following economic factors:

- ☑ Population
- ☑ Income
- ☑ Education
- ☑ Workforce
- ☑ Workforce mobility

- ☑ Employers
- ☑ Employment and unemployment
- ☑ Employment by sector
- ☑ Agriculture
- ☑ Tourism
- ☑ Border economics
- ☑ Employment land
- ☑ Housing

Because economic issues exist both within St. Clair County and beyond its borders to other states and countries, the information in this chapter examines the county's economy within itself, and also makes comparisons between St. Clair County and neighboring counties in Southeast Michigan. Statewide data is also presented.

## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The economic goals desired by St. Clair County residents are:

1. Cooperatively manage economic change within the county.
2. Provide leadership to pursue countywide economic goals and, thus, provide sustained and stable economic growth.
3. Preserve agriculture as an economic component.
4. Ensure that a full range of opportunities for advanced education and training will be available and accessible.
5. Cultivate and promote an appealing environment for business development in St. Clair County by maintaining and improving the regional quality of life.
6. Strengthen work or worker supports to promote employment retention and career advancement.
7. Encourage and assist people and agencies to provide affordable housing opportunities.
8. Preserve historical sites and cultural centers as economic components.
9. Improve St. Clair County's Broadband Internet infrastructure so we can attract and retain 21st Century jobs and better compete in the knowledge economy.

Goals and strategies for maintaining a healthy, sustainable countywide economy are addressed in more depth near the end of this chapter.

## FUNDING

This chapter closes with general information about federal, state, and local opportunities for funding economic development programs in both urban and rural areas. In addition, the Metropolitan Planning Commission can provide an up-to-date list of funding programs.

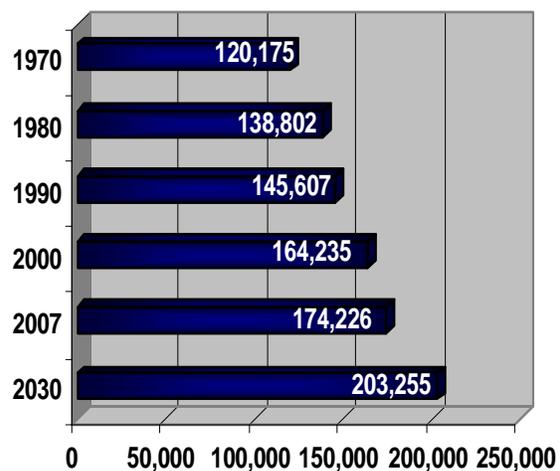
## POPULATION

**Population** refers to the number of people who reside within a specified geographic or governmental area, such as within a township, city, village, county, or state. Population is different than **workforce**, which refers to the portion of residents who are 16 years of age or older and able to work, whether employed or unemployed.

### Population Trends

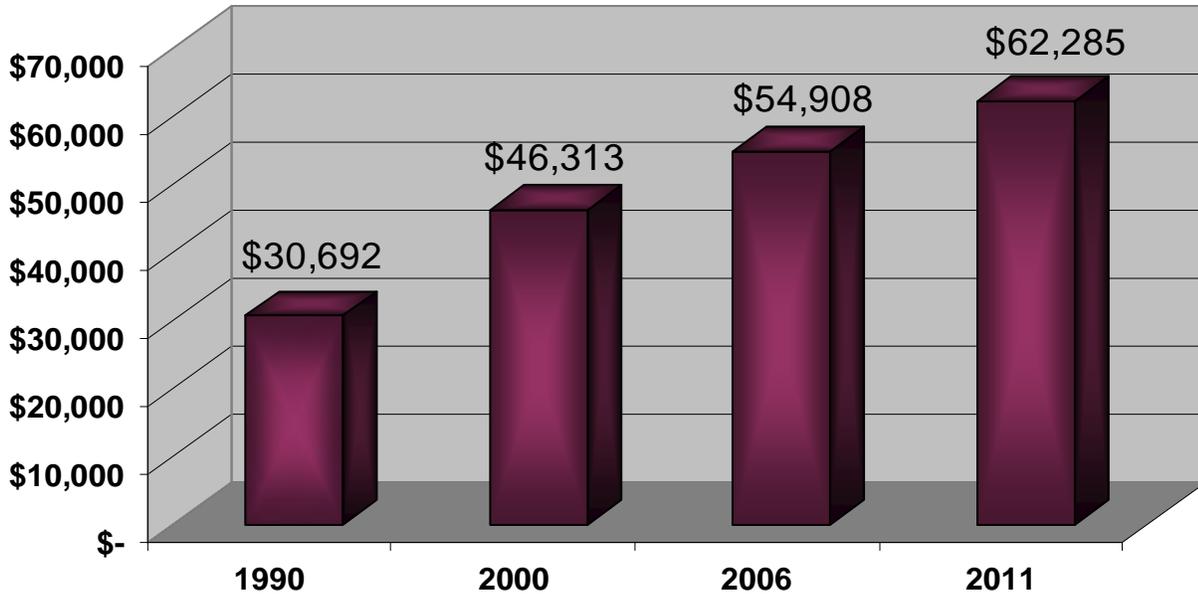
Between 1990 and 2000, Michigan's population grew by 643,147, or 7%. This placed Michigan as the eighth most populous state in the nation.

### St. Clair County Population 1970-2007 & 2030 Projection



Source: SEMCOG

## St. Clair County Median Household Income 1990 to 2006 & 2011 Projection



Source: US Census Bureau, 2000; ESRI

During the same period, St. Clair County's population grew by 18,628, or nearly 13%. St. Clair County's population was 145,607 in 1990 and it grew to 164,235 in 2000.

Between 1990 and 2000, the only area in the county to lose population was the city of Port Huron. There, the 2000 Census figure was approximately 1,400 persons less than it was in 1990. On the other hand, five townships (Columbus, Fort Gratiot, Ira, Kimball and St. Clair) accounted for about 40% of the increase in the county's population during that decade.

### Population Growth Projection

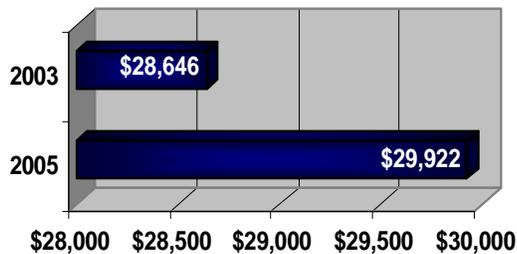
The May 2007 SEMCOG estimate of the population for St. Clair County is 174,226. This represents a 6% increase over the 2000 population of 164,235. SEMCOG projects that by 2030, the county's population will grow to 203,255 – a 24% increase from its population in 2000. Population growth is expected in every St. Clair County community by 2030, with the exception of the city of Port Huron, which is projected to experience a 9% decrease in population.

### INCOME

**Income** refers to the money earned by individuals in the population, either through employment or from government assistance, such as pensions, social security, welfare, child support, etc. **Personal income** refers to money earned by individuals, either through employment or from other sources. **Transfer payments** refers to income received by a person for which that person has not rendered direct services, such as liability payments, corporate gifts, and insurance benefits. **Government supported transfer payments** refers to income a person receives from the government, such as workers compensation, social security, Medicaid reimbursements, veterans benefits, unemployment compensation, and food stamps.

Knowing the population's income helps determine the community's standard of living, ability to support individuals and families, spending capacity to stimulate additional jobs and economic growth, and housing opportunities for which the community should plan.

## Per Capita Personal Income, St. Clair County



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor & Statistics

### Income Trends

In 2003, the *per capita personal income* in St. Clair County was \$28,646, which ranked as the 14th highest in Michigan. This represented a 15.7% increase in per capita personal income between 1993 and 2003 (adjusted for inflation). In 2005, the per capita personal income in the county was \$29,922, which ranked 17th in the state.

Four townships had *median household incomes* over \$60,000 - China, Riley, Berlin and Columbus Townships. At the other end of the spectrum, the lowest household incomes were concentrated in the cities of Yale, Marine City and Port Huron. There, the median income level was below approximately \$41,000. These statistics point to the relatively large differences between the county's more urbanized areas and the suburban townships that surround them.

All of the County's block groups that had a less than \$35,000 median income in 2006 are located in the city of Port Huron.

### **WAGE DISPARITIES**

About 59% of the workers in the county were employed in industries that did not manage to increase wages at a faster pace than inflation.

### Income Projections

By 2011, it is expected that incomes in the County's minor civil divisions (MCDs) will increase between two and 4% per year on average. These changes will move the city of St. Clair into the top three in terms of income, behind Riley and Columbus Townships. All of these places are projected to have median incomes over \$78,200 by that year. The three lowest median income levels will be found in Burtchville Township, Marine City and Port Huron. It is worth noting that the difference between median incomes in Port Huron and the next lowest area are expected to increase, as they have in all of the years studied. In 1990, the difference between Marine City's and Port Huron's medians was about \$5,900; by 2011, the difference between them is expected to be over \$13,600.

### Poverty Trends

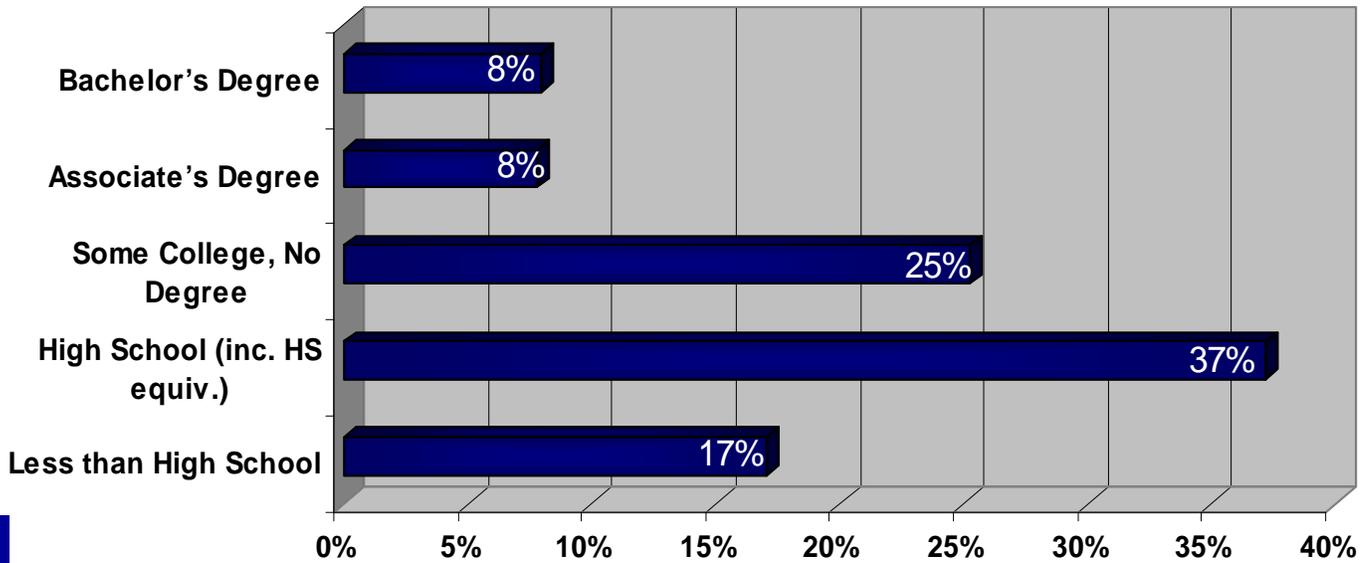
Persons in poverty have less capability to obtain the shelter that they need, in terms of either size or location, and have less ability to inject money into the local economy.

In terms of the broadest measure of poverty available (the overall percentage of persons that have incomes lower than the poverty line), the city of Port Huron has the largest concentration of poverty in the county. At 16.9% of the population, its rate is double that of the county's, and over ten times that of the MCD with the least amount of poverty measured (Casco Township). Other areas with comparatively high rates are the city of Algonac, Ira Township, Marine City and Brockway Township. The lowest levels of poverty are in Casco, Greenwood and China Townships.

Poverty among children is a significant issue in a number of townships and cities in the county. Port Huron again leads in this indicator, with nearly 22% of related children in poverty. However, four other areas also have figures over ten percent - Brockway, Berlin and Ira Townships, as well as the city of Algonac.

Among senior citizens in poverty, the pattern changes slightly, in that the area with the largest percentage is not Port Huron, but Memphis (at 18.3%), followed by

## St. Clair County Education Completion For Persons 25 Years of Age or Older, 2000



Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

Marine City (16.1%), Algonac (15.2%), and Port Huron and Riley Townships (both at 14.2%).

### EDUCATION

**Education** refers to formal schooling, either through private academies, public schools, colleges, universities, and technical or trade schools. Knowing the educational level of St. Clair County residents helps determine the educational facilities and training required to meet desired economic growth.

### Education Trends

There are three indicators of educational attainment in St. Clair County. The first is the percentage of the population that has earned at most a 9th grade education. Mussey Township (highest), had over 7% of persons over the age of 24 falling into this category. Other areas with percentages significantly higher than the county's average (at 4.2%) are the city of Yale and Berlin Township. The lowest levels tend to be in the southern portion of the county, such as St. Clair Township, the city of St. Clair, and Casco Township.

The second indicator is the percentage of persons



Students meet their parents at Washington Elementary School in Marysville.

that have at most a high school diploma or equivalent. Overall, nearly 83% of county residents over the age of 24 have at least this much formal education, which ranks 43rd out of Michigan's 83 counties. The lowest value in this regard was the city of Yale, where 76.3% had only a high school diploma. The highest was again in the county's southern region, where St. Clair Township had almost 90% of its adult residents fall into this category.

## Civilian Workforce 2000 - 2006

### State and Neighboring Region

	2000	2002	2004	2006
<b>Michigan</b>	<b>4,292,000</b>	<b>4,583,000</b>	<b>4,745,000</b>	<b>4,879,000</b>
<b>Lapeer</b>	<b>45,933</b>	<b>45,765</b>	<b>45,105</b>	<b>44,967</b>
<b>Macomb</b>	<b>433,912</b>	<b>426,456</b>	<b>422,334</b>	<b>421,446</b>
<b>Oakland</b>	<b>675,896</b>	<b>652,571</b>	<b>637,759</b>	<b>630,690</b>
<b>St. Clair</b>	<b>87,071</b>	<b>85,761</b>	<b>84,937</b>	<b>84,186</b>
<b>Sanilac</b>	<b>21,933</b>	<b>21,620</b>	<b>21,947</b>	<b>23,009</b>
<b>Wayne</b>	<b>952,300</b>	<b>925,997</b>	<b>909,070</b>	<b>894,058</b>

Source: Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth, 2007

The final indicator is the percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher. This figure varied slightly more than the others, from a low of 5.7% in Kenocsee Township to a high of nearly 22% in Fort Gratiot Township. Overall, the county's figure is 12.6%, which ranks 55th out of Michigan's 83 counties.

The St. Clair County Community College (SC4) University Center is an educational center that houses four-year degree programs and courses offered by several universities. Located in Port Huron, on SC4's campus in the Citizens First Michigan Technical Education Center (M-TEC), the SC4 University Center offers you the convenience of completing a bachelor's or master's degree close to home or online.

Other educational opportunities available at the SC4 lead to associate degrees in nearly forty different areas of study (most are considered occupational programs). The college also offers certificate programs in approximately eighteen different areas.

Baker College also offers bachelors, masters and business programs at its facilities in Port Huron Township.

Some county residents also attend classes offered by Macomb Community College or at online schools across the nation.

### ST. CLAIR COUNTY WORKFORCE

**Workforce** refers to residents who are 16 years of age or older and able to work, whether employed or unemployed. These are the number of people available to fill jobs. An effective workforce is necessary for economic strength, growth, stability, and competitiveness.

### Workforce Trends

Statewide, the workforce actually grew in size, with an increase of 587,000 persons – or nearly 14%. Within the region the relative size of the workforce has been steadily decreasing since 2000, with the exception of Sanilac County, which experienced a 5% increase in the size of its workforce. St. Clair County's workforce shrunk by 2,885, or 3%, from 2000 to 2006. In neighboring Macomb County, the workforce also decreased by 3% during the same time period. Wayne County experienced the biggest decrease in workforce during that six year span, losing just over 6% of its workforce.

St. Clair County's employment has, for the most part, relied on manufacturing in the past, with a focus on the automotive and plastics industries.

Employment trends in the county have followed the patterns of the larger state economy for the last few years. Manufacturing layoffs in the automotive industry as well as job losses in construction and retail trade contributed to the high unemployment rate in the area's economy and have acted to increase unemployment in St. Clair County as well.

The level of educational attainment in St. Clair County must increase in order to attract new economy companies to the area. The county can no longer afford to rely on the manufacturing sector to provide jobs, which makes earning a bachelor's degree even more important than ever.

Nearly 40% of St. Clair County residents only have a high school diploma. Over 17% of the population did not graduate from high school. There are a higher percentage of residents with only a high school diploma found within the Southeast region of Michigan. The rest of the region has a significantly higher percentage of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher. In St. Clair County, only 13% have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 25% for the region.

Workforce and education must be aligned with economic development goals. In order to align there must be an understanding of the requirements of industries in the region. The knowledge, skills and education required by industry in order to successfully compete must also be understood. Educational opportunities must be expanded to meet these needs. Building career pathways requires good information, ongoing assessment and certification of skills, and access to learning opportunities. In order to ensure that individuals have the skills necessary to advance, partnerships with business and education must be built within the workforce development system.

The higher education institutions in St. Clair County are the most important assets the County has in developing the concentration of talent needed to be

successful in this knowledge-based economy. St. Clair County residents must heighten their value for instilling the love of learning at a young age. As important as a higher education is, it is important to insist on a quality K-12+2 education for the competitive necessity to ensure that all children get a quality education. A common pattern seen across the country is that most children from households with college-educated adults attend good K-12 schools, get a four-year degree and then pursue advanced degrees. Ultimately, what St. Clair County needs are schools that prepare students for the changing economy, schools that give students the best chance to take advantage of the many options that the shifting global economy will provide.

## WORKFORCE MOBILITY

**Workforce mobility** refers to the workforce's ability to commute to work, both within and outside of St. Clair County.

### Workforce Mobility Trends

A significant portion of St. Clair County's workforce commutes to their jobs outside of the county each day. In 1980, slightly more than 21 percent of the entire workforce, or 13,600 persons, commuted outside of the county for work. This was balanced against only 2,500 persons coming into the county. By 1990, those commuting out of St. Clair County had increased to 30



*Interstate 94 and Interstate 69 are major commuter routes in St. Clair County.*

percent or 21,200 persons. Those coming into the county totaled 4,900, significantly more than in 1980.

According to the 2000 Census, over 63% of St. Clair County workers that live within the county also work in St. Clair County. The percentage (37%) of the workforce that travel to jobs outside St. Clair County is higher than the state average of people who work outside their home county. Throughout Michigan, roughly 71% of the workforce work in their county of residence. Most of the St. Clair County residents who are leaving the county to work are commuting to jobs in Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne counties.

If we look at other counties that data has been provided for, we see that in 2000, Livingston (58%), Monroe (48%), and Macomb (41%) counties had a larger proportion than St. Clair County (37%) of their work force leaving for work.

Residents of St. Clair County tend to leave for work earlier than the state average, which means that the morning peak hours are earlier than in most counties. Therefore, roads are generally more congested in the morning rush hours than in the evening return home hours.

For residents who work within the county, the amount of time it takes to get to work is less than the state average. This is due to the relative compactness of employment centers in Port Huron, Marysville, and St. Clair. Metropolitan areas with high job compactness have lower commuting times because it is difficult to design a high-speed transportation network for dispersed jobs. Nearly 45% of the workers who live in the county and do not work at home, travel twenty minutes or less to get to work.

Over 60% travel one-half hour or less to get to work. Nationally, according to Census 2000 data, Americans spent nearly 26 minutes commuting to their jobs in 2000, up from 22 minutes in 1990. Nearly 83% of all Michigan residents commute alone to work. Urban sprawl is contributing to longer commute times and increasingly congested road networks. This is attributed to a large number of users trying to utilize the same transportation network in dense areas,

slowing everyone down. However, sprawl is not the only cause of congestion. Commuters in rural, low-density communities have more empty space to traverse to reach their destinations. The Texas Transportation Institute estimates the cost of congestion to be around \$63 billion from time delay and wasted fuel.

Ninety-four percent of St. Clair County workers commute via private automobile. This is comparable to the state average. Nearly 84% of county commuters travel alone to and from work. Just over 10% carpool, most of these with only one other person. Six percent of the workers either get to work by some other means or work at home.

### Workforce Mobility Projections

Commuting within St. Clair County will likely increase as centers of population increase in the southern and western parts of the County, while centers of employment remain mostly unchanged except for a slight shift southward. In 2030, St. Clair County's population will be concentrated in Port Huron, Marysville, and the townships of Fort Gratiot, Kimball, Port Huron, and Clay. In contrast, the employment centers will be in Port Huron, St. Clair, Marysville and the townships of China, East China, and Ira. Lack of public transportation between these residential and employment areas may make it difficult for some residents to access jobs that are available.

Inter-county commuting is likely to increase as well due to a sagging economy and the transition from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-based economy. Large centers of employment will continue to exist in Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne Counties, while St. Clair County residents will be among those competing for available jobs in those areas.

### EMPLOYERS IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY

**Employer** refers to individual companies, nonprofit organizations, governmental institutions, public institutions, and schools that hire members of the workforce to perform jobs over a period of time. Employer is different than **industry**, which refers to the type of business, such as automotive or plastics, in which an employer engages.

## TOP 10 EMPLOYERS IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY 2007

1. Port Huron Area School District (1,745)
2. Port Huron Hospital (1,315)
3. Detroit Edison (1,235)
4. County of St. Clair (985)
5. Mercy Hospital (880)
6. AT & T (725)
7. Schefenacker Vision Systems (649)
8. St. John River District Hospital (450)
9. Chrysler, LLC (440)
10. Blue Water Automotive Systems (400)

### Employer Trends

From 1995 to 2005, the number of employers within St. Clair County grew from 3,427 to 3,538, an increase of 3%.

St. Clair County's top employer is the Port Huron Area School District with 1,745 employees, followed by Port Huron Hospital, which employs 1,315 workers. St. Clair County government is also a major employer, employing 985.

The top 20 employers in St. Clair County include a mix of institutions, health care providers, manufacturing companies, and retail trade. In particular, between 2000 and 2007:

- ☑ The Port Huron Area School District added over 240 employees.
- ☑ Port Huron Hospital gained nearly 200 employees.
- ☑ Employment with Detroit Edison increase by over 300 employees.
- ☑ The closures of Collins & Aikman and Pine River Plastics in 2007 combined for a loss of almost 1,000 jobs – 55% of all plastics jobs in the County.
- ☑ Mueller Brass lost nearly 100 jobs.

Regionally, the automotive industry remains a major employer in Southeast Michigan. The Big Three

automakers have created a demand for educated and technically skilled workers, many of whom commute from St. Clair County.

However, as the automotive industry has begun to lag, automotive employers have had to cut jobs and move operations to other regions, even other states. Because the region is so dependent on the automotive industry, when it is struggling, the region's workforce is greatly affected. Economic diversification into knowledge-based and services-based jobs will require a more highly skilled and educated workforce.

### Employer Projections

St. Clair County's business and financial, educational, and governmental institutions will continue to be challenged to provide the jobs, workforce, technology, financing, and other resources needed to help industry remain competitive and to create growth. Moreover, our community can no longer rely on manufacturing to provide sustainable, high-paying jobs. The economy has become more knowledge-based and service-based and, thus, our workforce will need to be highly educated and technologically savvy.

Business growth improves with cooperative relationships between employers and a skilled workforce, the ability of business to reach markets, and the ability of workers to conveniently get to work. Living close to the job or having access to a bus line may become important factors to link employers and workers.



*Pine River Plastics (pictured) and Collins & Aikman both closed in 2006 - a loss of 990 jobs in St. Clair County.*

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

**Employment** refers to the number of jobs that are filled. Employment is different than workforce because one member of the workforce may hold more than one job or none at all.

**Unemployment** refers to people in the labor force who are not employed. These include people who are laid off and waiting to be recalled to work and people who are available for work, except for illness, and attempting to find work.

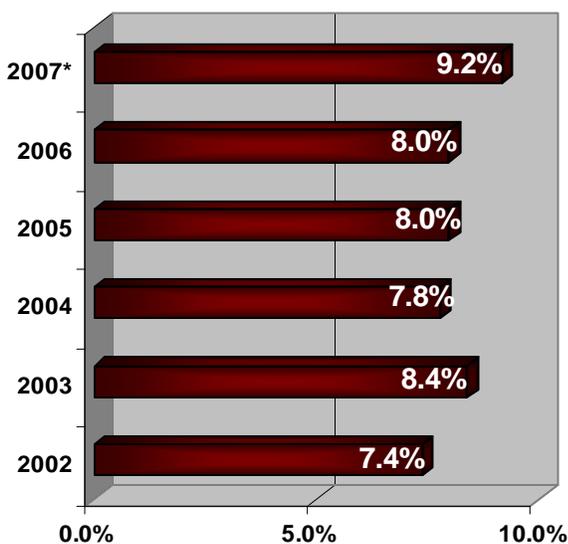
The number of unemployed people is a gauge of economic health. A lower unemployment rate is a sign of a good economy; however, an unemployment rate that is too low means a lack of qualified workers, which can limit expansion.

### Employment Trends

In 2000, roughly 96% of the workforce was employed. By 2005, that number had fallen to 92%. Employment trends in the county have, in large part, followed the fortunes of the larger state economy for the last few years. This is because of the large manufacturing

### St. Clair County Unemployment Rate

Percentages, 2002-2007



Source: Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth, Labor Market Information, 2007. \*Through June 2007.)

basis to the area's economy; the difficulties apparent in that segment of the economy have acted to increase unemployment in St. Clair County.

### Unemployment Trends

From 2002 to 2006, unemployment increased in every county throughout the region by an average of 0.75%. In 2006, St. Clair and Wayne Counties had the highest annual unemployment at 8.4%. The lowest unemployment rate at the end of 2006 was Oakland County, with a rate of 5.8%. All of the other counties in the region have higher unemployment rates than the figure for the state, which, at the end of 2006, was 6.9%. The unemployment rate in the city of Port Huron at the end of 2006 was 11.4%.

Between 2002 and 2006, St. Clair County's unemployment rate increased by 0.6%. As of June 2007, the unemployment number has climbed to 9.2%, an increase of 1.8% since 2002. St. Clair and Wayne Counties have the highest unemployment in the region.

The trends in employment patterns noted above have important consequences. The job loss that has taken place has meant a number of things. Lower incomes caused by joblessness have increased affordability pressures on households that were already spending a large percentage of their income on housing. Job loss also changes commuting patterns and therefore changes evaluations of residential neighborhoods.

### Employment and Unemployment Projections

Meeting the needs of employers that are adversely affected by a low unemployment rate should be a short-term priority for the public and private sectors. If the need for employees cannot be met locally, the county faces the possibility that employers may move operations to a location with a larger, more qualified workforce.

In the *St. Clair County Affordable Housing Strategy 2006-2007*, Community Research Services, LLC (CRS) projects that by 2010, the unemployment rate in St. Clair County will be approximately 6%. However,

focusing in on Port Huron, CRS projects that the city will have an unemployment rate of nearly 8%.

## EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

**Sector** refers to a distinct part of an economy, for example, the service sector, the manufacturing sector, the retail sector, the agricultural sector, the education sector, or the government sector. Sector is different than **industry**. For example, accounting is an industry within the service sector, clothing sales is an industry within the retail sector, automotive is an industry within the manufacturing sector, and dairy farming is an industry within the agricultural sector. Sector is also different from **employers**, which refers to specific companies.

## Employment by Sector Trends

Even though public school systems and St. Clair County government are among the highest individual employers in St. Clair County, the service sector is the County's highest employment sector, manufacturing is the second largest sector, and retail is the third largest sector. This was true in 2001 and in 2005.

The service sector had the largest employment growth between 2000 and 2007, increasing by roughly 47%. During that same time period, the County experienced drops in employment in agriculture, transportation, construction, and manufacturing.

## Manufacturing Employment

Total Employed, 2000 - 2005

	2000	2005	Change
Michigan	819,227	635,234	-183,993
Lapeer	6,170	5,038	-1,132
Macomb	92,137	66,632	-25,505
Oakland	92,278	62,589	-29,689
<b>St. Clair</b>	<b>12,958</b>	<b>10,124</b>	<b>-2,834</b>
Sanilac	4,589	3,094	-1,495
Wayne	130,254	97,037	-33,217

Source: County Business Patterns, U.S. Bureau of the Census

## Employment by Sector Projections

The service sector is expected to see the greatest growth in employment by 2030, with 8,028 new jobs projected. However, it is expected that there will be a continued decrease in manufacturing and retail jobs during the same time period.

## AGRICULTURE

When determining rural character, the term **agriculture** refers to lands that are both productive croplands and fallow fields - places where people driving country roads can see expanses of open land, dotted by farm houses, barns, silos, fences, and woodlots. The statistical data below relates to farms that are actually producing crops.

## Farming Trends

Farm income in 1990 for St. Clair County was reported to be approximately \$5.1 million. This is down considerably from 1980 farm income of \$14.1 million. In 2006, farm income for St. Clair County was approximately \$3.4 million, a decrease of roughly 33 percent since 1990.

Although over one-third of the total land area in St. Clair County is used for farming, farm employment is estimated to have accounted for slightly under one percent of total 2005 employment.

The number of farm laborers hired declined from nearly



A farm family in Avoca loads hay. Photo courtesy of John Preston of Avoca, 2007.



The Blue Water Farmers' Market has been going strong at the Riverview Plaza in St. Clair since 1984.

1,000 persons in 1992, to approximately 660 persons in 1997. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, there were 846 workers on 253 farms in St. Clair County, with an annual payroll of roughly \$3.9 million.

From 1997 to 2002, the market value of agricultural products sold in St. Clair County increased by 11.4%, from \$36.1 million to \$40.2 million. Despite this increase in sales, the average market value of products sold per farm decreased nearly 17%. A partial explanation for the decrease in per farm market value is due to the data reporting changes made by the Census of Agriculture in 2002, which resulted in an increase in the total number of farms in St. Clair County from 1997 to 2002. Within the County, that portion of total sales that can be attributed to crops increased from 77% in 1997 to 78% of total sales in 2002.

Within St. Clair County, the number of farms increased by nearly 34%, from 940 farms to 1,260 farms (due to changes in data reporting). Total acreage in farms increased from 162,887 acres in 1997 to 182,116 in 2002, a gain of 2.2%. At the same time crop land grew by two percent. Average farm sizes in St. Clair County dropped from 159 acres in 1997 to 145 acres in 2002.

The top three agricultural products (in terms of market value) in St. Clair County in 2006 were corn,

## Top 10 Agricultural Products in St. Clair County in 2002

1. Corn
2. Soybeans
3. Nursery/Greenhouse Crops
4. Dairy Products
5. Cattle, Calves
6. Other Livestock/Livestock Specialties
7. Vegetables, Melons, & Potatoes
8. Wheat
9. Hay, Silage, Field Seeds
10. Hogs/Pigs

soybeans, and nursery/greenhouse products.

From 1997 to 2002, St. Clair County experienced a 140.3% increase in total direct sales by farmers to individuals. This is clearly a growing market and has a strong association to value added products.

Direct marketing occurs when consumers purchase products from farmers rather than retailers or other indirect outlets. Sites and options for direct purchases of value added products include farms, farmers markets, roadside stands, seasonal u-pick operations, community supported agriculture, catalogs, and the internet, among others.

In St. Clair County, there are two major farmers markets, the Blue Water Farmer's Market and the Vantage Point Farmer's Market. The Blue Water Farmers Market is located in the city of St. Clair at Riverview Plaza and the Vantage Point Farmer's Market is located in the Desmond Landing development along the downtown Port Huron riverfront.

### Farming Projections

The conversion of farmland to residential housing is expected to continue at a slower pace than in years past. St. Clair County is projected to lose an estimated 33,000 acres of farmland by 2030.

Based on Woods & Poole estimates, it is predicted that

in 2030 farm income in the county will reach \$3.58 million.

## TOURISM

**Tourism** industries include historical sites, rivers, lakes, parks, beaches, taverns, hotels and motels, campgrounds, family restaurants and other eateries, golf courses, specialty farms, retail shops that cater to souvenir and recreational items, and in St. Clair County, marinas.

The effect of tourism on a community's or county's economy is measured through a number of monetary indicators - taxes collected by hotels, restaurant sales, and some types of retail sales - and a more subjective list of recreational places and events that typically attract tourists.

### Tourism Trends

The state of Michigan is home to a \$17.5 billion tourism industry which employs 200,000 people and boosts the economic viability of all 83 counties. Much of this revenue comes from Michigan's working families who are taking fewer, but more frequent, vacations closer to their homes.

Within St. Clair County, it is estimated that in 1996 there was \$65.4 million spent in direct tourism expenditures.



*Algonac State Park in Clay Township offers campers with breathtaking views of the St. Clair River and is a good spot for watching freighters pass by.*

Most of St. Clair County's tourist attractions are along the eastern and southern coastline in the form of beaches, parks, and marinas. There are also a number of recreational areas inland, including regional parks and public and private golf courses. Local communities offer special events, such as festivals, parades, and annual or semi-annual dinners hosted by churches and service groups. There is also an increasing number of farms that are providing tourism opportunities in the form of corn mazes, farm tours, and "U-pick" operations.

### Tourism Projections

Historical features (heritage/cultural tourism), nature walks (eco-tourism), and visits to farms, Christmas tree plantations, and greenhouses (Agri-tourism) can be an attraction for all of these visitors, as well as St. Clair County residents.

Michigan's aging population is expected to create an increased number of retirees with a greater amount of disposable income and more time to travel. As a result, this segment of the population may require more hotel and motel rooms.

Working families are expected to continue to enjoy close-to-home state parks and campgrounds, state game and wildlife areas, recreational boating opportunities and community parks.

Revitalized traditional downtowns continue to draw in both residents and visitors from neighboring counties and Canada.

Both the aging population and working families are expected to want more scenic vistas along the county's coastline.

All of these tourism projections would require that land be designated for public enjoyment and that historical and cultural resources be open and available for tourist trade.

## BROADBAND AND THE ECONOMY

The prosperity of a community is now just as dependent on access to a dependable, high-quality

digital technology and telecommunications network as it was to rail or interstate system decades ago. A well-developed technology infrastructure is being used in many places to revitalize declining rural areas and provide added economic opportunity.

In 2003, a broadband study was conducted in St. Clair County. Major findings of that work include:

- ☑ **Affordability of high-speed services:** There are differences in access fees between rural and populated areas. In addition, high-speed services when available are more expensive than other regions in Michigan.
- ☑ **Lack of demand for high-speed services:** While the majority of households and businesses in the county use a connectivity service, over half of those surveyed saw no value in obtaining a high-speed alternative.
- ☑ **Clarity on the availability of high-speed services:** Some of the gaps in availability of high-speed connectivity services are perceived, not real.
- ☑ **Clarity on the benefits of high-speed service:** Marketing efforts have been based upon explaining the technology not the benefits. Future efforts should focus on explaining the potential benefits to a household or business.



*High-speed Internet access is critical to the future of St. Clair County. In order to attract high-tech employers, we must have the proper broadband infrastructure in place. Furthermore, high-speed internet will be a key component of educating our residents and retaining talented, college-educated workers.*

- ☑ **Policy issues that impact availability:** State and federal legislation and policy affect the availability and affordability of high-speed connectivity service. Ongoing education and lobbying efforts will be required to increase access to high-speed Internet services.

Most counties in Southeast Michigan are developing joint public/private broadband initiatives intended to facilitate broadband internet network accessibility by stimulating opportunities for economic growth and diversity.

All of these government sponsored wireless initiatives share common goals. They include:

- ☑ Providing an economic development tool to attract and retain businesses and jobs to the community;
- ☑ Creating wireless Internet network with low-cost or no-cost access to service and with no tax dollars;
- ☑ Establishing a tremendous asset for attracting and retaining businesses and for fostering job creation in local communities;
- ☑ Supporting a growing mobile workforce and elevate the technical knowledge of the current and future workforce;
- ☑ Continuing the transformation of government service provision and support the continued development of that county's "e-Government" services; and
- ☑ Reducing the "digital divide" in rural and urban areas and underserved population groups.

The local government and service provider roles are complementary when it comes to developing a wireless network. Accomplishing the aforementioned insights and the recommendations found at the end of this chapter are not only beneficial for boosting high-speed and broadband demand, it may increase productivity, which is critical for economic expansion and job creation.

## HOUSING

**Housing** or **housing units** refers to all buildings in which residents dwell - single-family dwellings, multiple-

family dwellings, owner-occupied houses, rental units, and manufactured homes or modular housing.

### Housing Trends

New residential construction countywide has decreased since 2000. Between 1988 and 1997, nearly 10,000 new residential units were constructed in St. Clair County. Between 2000 and 2006, there were a total of 5,865 new residential units constructed. Due to the negative economic trends that are currently at work in the state of Michigan, the housing market in southeastern Michigan has slowed considerably.

In 2000, there were 66,515 households in St. Clair County. By 2006, that number increased to 71,774 - an increase of 8%.

Overall, the county's homeownership rate is high, at just under 80%. In general, owner occupation is highest in the more rural sections of the County, while renting is a more common option in the cities and towns along the St. Clair River.

The county's owner-occupied stock was primarily built in the 1970s and before 1940. New construction



Many homes in St. Clair County - like this one at the South End of Port Huron - were constructed in the early 1900s.

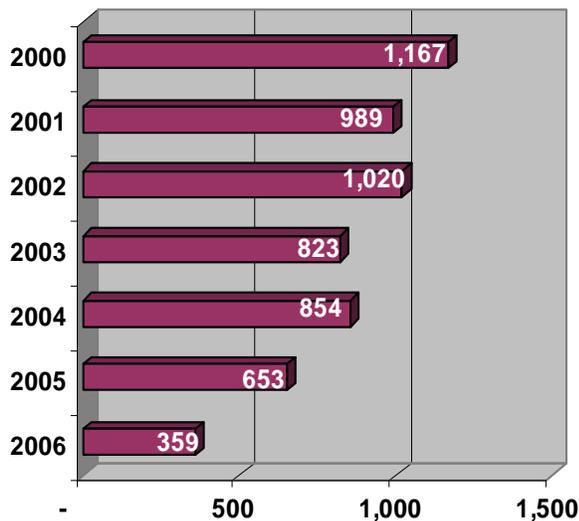
occurring after 1994 accounted for about 13% of the County's stock. The situation concerning the County's renter stock was similar, in that about 39% of rental units dated to either the 1970s or before 1940.

At the 2000 Census, about half of the County's owner stock was valued between \$80,000 and \$149,999. Information from the Eastern Thumb Association of REALTORS shows that the volume of sales has grown since 2001. That year, the Association recorded 655 sales, for an average price of \$141,743. The trend had been one of steady increases through 2004, when 1,478 units were sold, at an average price of \$158,998. Since that year, the number of sales has decreased.

In 2005, 1,446 units were sold, with the average sales prices at \$151,634. The most current data available covers March 2007; the year-on-year change since the same time in 2006 shows that sales are up about 25%, while the average sales price is down about 6%. While the use of averages makes the data susceptible to being overly influenced by large or small sale values, it is plain that the for-sale market in the County has lost ground over the last two years, with stagnant sales and a decrease in sales price.

The number of sites in manufactured home communities (parks) increased by 27% between 2000 and 2006, increasing from 5,829 sites to 5,989 sites.

### Building Permits Issued, St. Clair County 2000-2006



Source: SEMCOG, 2007.

## Residential Equalized Value, 2000-2006

Year	Residential SEV	Percentage of Total SEV
2000	\$3,232,546,301	61%
2001	\$3,597,084,752	62%
2002	\$3,963,247,697	62%
2003	\$4,236,291,363	63%
2004	\$4,490,834,960	64%
2005	\$4,748,425,166	61%
2006	\$5,053,480,633	62%

Source: Michigan Department of Treasury, State Tax Commission, 2007.

Between 2000 and 2006, the state equalized value (SEV) of all residential property increased by 56%. In 2006, the SEV of all residential property was \$5,053,480,633 - 62% of the total SEV in St. Clair County.

There is a growing disparity between the cost of housing and income sufficient to pay for housing. According to the U.S. Census, the number of households that were overburdened were paying more than 30% of their incomes toward housing costs was higher. In 2000, about 36% of renters (nearly 4,500 households) paid this level of their income towards shelter, and nearly 7,000 owner households (19% of the total) were included as well. A large number of households in the county were severely overburdened in 2000. This designation described about 19% of renters and about five percent of owners that year.

Countywide, these numbers increased dramatically since 2000, according to the American Community Survey. In 2005, about 6,900 renter households were overburdened, or just over half of all renters in the County. About 23% of renters (or about 3,200 renter

households) paid at least 50% of their incomes on shelter costs. Growth in overburden issues was also rampant among owners during this period; 15,000 owners paid more than 30% of their incomes, while nearly 5,300 paid over 50%. This works out to be an overburdened percentage of 28% for owner households, and a severely overburdened percentage of nearly 10%.

### Housing Projections

Countywide, about 380 units of rental housing affordable to households earning less than about \$42,000 need to be developed by 2011. Most of these are projected to be located in the Port Huron area, but a relatively large number (84) of new households in the downriver communities will earn that amount and need rental housing also.

There is also a growing need for affordable housing options for senior citizens and persons with special needs.

It is projected that by 2011, the county will have 75,451 households.

### BORDER ACTIVITY AND TRADE

In the context of this document, **border activity and trade** refers to commerce with our immediate international neighbor across the St. Clair River - Canada.

### International Trade Trends

There are a number of border crossings located throughout the County. Ferry connections serving pedestrians, automobiles, and limited commercial traffic are offered in both Algonac and Marine City. Customs and immigration offices are manned at these crossings. From a trade standpoint, the most significant border crossings in the county are located in Port Huron and include the Blue Water Bridge and a rail tunnel.

Port Huron is the second busiest border crossing with Canada after Detroit. In 2006, there were a total of 2,815,413 international crossings at Port Huron, 70% of which were passenger automobiles.

According to the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, in 2006, there were 4,518 westbound trains entering the United States through St. Clair County from Canada. Approximately 82 percent of all imported goods entering through Port Huron fall under the North American Free Trade Agreement – a total trade value of \$18.1 billion. The total trade value of imported goods entering the United States through Port Huron was \$22.1 billion in 2006.

The top five products crossing the Blue Water Bridge by value in 2006 were auto parts, U.S. goods being returned, new trucks, new automobiles, and furniture.

The top five products entering the United States via the Port Huron rail tunnel by value were new automobiles, new trucks, unwrought aluminum, auto parts, and polymers of ethylene in primary forms.

### International Trade Projections

Industrial policies, such as just-in-time inventory, specialized manufacturing, and cross-border component sourcing, as well as increased shipments of non-automotive goods, represents opportunities for economic expansion.

Additionally, the revitalization of St. Clair County's traditional downtowns, along with increased commercial development elsewhere in the region, will also draw consumers from Canada who will cross the border to purchase goods and services.



*In 2006, there were over 2.8 million international crossings in Port Huron - 70% of which were passenger automobiles crossing the Blue Water Bridge. Photo courtesy of Federal Highway Administration.*



*The new Keihin Corporation plant in Capac will produce approximately 680,000 Intake Manifold Assemblies and 200,000 HVAC systems for Honda vehicles annually. The facility is located near the intersection of Capac and Koehn Roads.*

### EMPLOYMENT LAND

**Employment land** refers to land on which people work. The term applies not only to people who work directly with the land, such as farmers, lumberjacks, and miners, but also to people who work within manufacturing facilities, retail stores, and office complexes. The amount of land per employee varies according to the job. A warehouse stock person, for example, requires more employment land than an office worker.

No matter how we employ the land - by tilling it or building on it - the land affects the economy and the economy affects the land.

Historically, our culture has viewed open spaces as optimal locations for new development. A growing number of people, however, are beginning to realize that continuous land consumption may not be a wise practice. More people are looking for ways to reuse land we have used before and to preserve land still in its natural, pristine condition. Therefore, our ability to accommodate both growth and preservation is essential to our economic health.

### Employment Land Trends

Approximately 16,476 acres (25 square miles) in St. Clair County were being used for employment land in

## ***ASSEMBLING LAND TO ATTRACT INDUSTRY & CREATE JOBS***

In 2007, St. Clair County began utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify areas with large tracts of land that could be assembled to provide adequate space for a large manufacturer to locate.

Officials also analyzed local plans, zoning ordinances and infrastructure capabilities in order to identify the most attractive locations. The county will be working with local units of government to facilitate land assembly and streamline development and permitting processes.

This process will also allow the county to identify areas to accommodate larger industrial parks, high-tech research parks, and certified business parks that will create new industry and provide new jobs.

industrial, commercial, service, and institutional sectors in the mid-2000s. This includes land that was once actively used but now sits vacant due to companies going out of business, moving, or downsizing their operations.

### **Employment Land Projections**

Projections for the number of employees in 2030 indicate that St. Clair County requires only 2,619 to 5,103 acres (4.7 to 8 square miles) for business, industry, and commerce. In 2000, St. Clair County already had 16,476 acres of employment land set aside. This is more than three times as much as what is projected to be needed in 2030.

However, observation shows that some of the used or abandoned land is not suitable for future business applications because of contamination, the presence of wetlands, or location.

Therefore, the Metropolitan Planning Commission recommends that an additional 400 to 800 acres be

set aside as employment land. This amount could be less if some of the unused industrial or commercial property were to be sold to, and utilized by, another business.

## **ECONOMY: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The following is a comprehensive list of significant findings from the Economy Technical Report:

### **Population**

- ☑ Changes in economic conditions and activity have, historically, caused shifts in population centers. These shifts impact land use patterns and the provision of public infrastructure and services.
- ☑ St. Clair County is undergoing a slow down in growth. While most communities in the county are projected to gain population by 2030, the City of Port Huron is projected to lose 9% of its population. We are also seeing a slow down in household growth as well as residential and non-residential development activity.
- ☑ During the period 1990 through 2000, St. Clair County's population grew by 12.8%.
- ☑ Anecdotal data indicates that most new residents to the county are coming from the metropolitan Detroit area. Many are from Macomb and Wayne counties with the majority being young families and a minority being older households at or near retirement.



*One of St. Clair County's greatest assets is its people. The county is home to many talented individuals with a deep passion for helping the county be a great place to live, work and play.*

## *THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY: WHERE DOES ST. CLAIR COUNTY FIT IN?*

Using the five Knowledge Economy Indicators below, here is how St. Clair County stacks up against the other counties in Michigan when it comes to being prepared to compete in the Knowledge Economy. Out of 83 total counties, St. Clair County is considered a “contender.”

INDICATOR	RANKING IN STATE**	RANKING CATEGORY
<b>Overall Index</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Contender</b>
<b>Knowledge Jobs</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Follower</b>
Information Technology Jobs	18	
Workforce Education	62	
Management & Professional Jobs	57	
<b>Digital Economy</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>Contender</b>
Internet Use	39	
Digital Government	12	
High-Speed Internet Access	66	
<b>Innovation Capacity</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Contender</b>
High-Tech Jobs	22	
Venture Capital	12	
Patents	3	
Engineers	83	
Bioscience Jobs	18	
<b>Globalization</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Leader</b>
Firms with Foreign Parents	7	
Exporting Firms	19	
<b>Economic Dynamism</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>Laggard</b>
Manufacturing Change	62	
Service Change	75	
Sole Proprietorship Change	31	

### Knowledge Jobs:

As knowledge and information continue to drive economic growth, providing knowledge jobs is increasingly critical to generating economic growth.

### Digital Economy:

New technologies facilitate the increasingly rapid communication of ideas and exchange of information. Economic development relies on effective uses of such technology by citizens, governments, and businesses.

### Innovation Capacity:

In a knowledge economy, the ability of communities to transform new ideas into economic opportunities for new firms and skilled workers is critical to continued vitality.

### Globalization:

To be competitive in the new economy, cities and regions must operate in the global economy.

### Economic Dynamism:

In an environment marked by rapid changes, adaptation to a changing environment is crucial. Such adaptation is often evidenced by “churn” in the workforce, as new jobs replace old jobs in the economy, and new enterprises form and aging enterprises transform themselves.

**Leader** = Ranks in top 20

**Contender** = Ranks between 21-40

**Follower** = Ranks between 41-60

**Laggard** = Ranks in the bottom 20

\*\* Ranking out of 83 total counties in Michigan

Source: LaMore, Rex L., Melcher, John, Supanich-Goldner, Faron, and Kyle Wilkes. *Michigan Knowledge Economy Index: A County-Level Assessment of Michigan's Knowledge Economy*, Michigan State University, Office of University Outreach and Engagement, Center for Community and Economic Development, May 2007.

## WHAT IS THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY?

Innovative high-tech industries and knowledge-based companies are changing the way we do business and redefining the forces that influence economic prosperity. The key component of the knowledge economy, which is also known as the New Economy, are knowledge workers who will fill the high-skills, high-wage jobs that will be used to measure our future prosperity. This new workforce is comprised of talented, highly-educated workers. **In order for St. Clair County to compete in this new economy, we must attract and retain college graduates who are innovative, versatile, and talented.** Like many other communities in the Midwest, St. Clair County must reverse the “Brain Drain” that is sending new graduates of Michigan colleges and universities to cities such as Chicago, Seattle and Boston.

This new workforce are seeking out vibrant, livable cities that offer diversity, entertainment, and an overall quality of life that suits their lifestyles. In the knowledge economy, potential workers are no longer going to where companies are; companies are going to where the talent is.

### KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY JOBS

Information Technology  
 Computer Systems Design  
 Software Developers  
 Architects  
 Engineers  
 Management Professionals  
 Life Sciences/Biosciences  
 Scientific Research and Development  
 Nanotechnology  
 Education & Training  
 Social Sciences  
 Telecommunications  
 Financial Services  
 Health Care Professionals  
 Data Processing  
 Attorneys  
 Alternative Energy Professionals  
 Homeland Security Professionals  
 Digital Media

### KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY JOBS

“In Michigan, the average knowledge economy wage is approximately \$61,000 per year, while the average wage for all occupations is just over \$37,000 per year. **Knowledge-based jobs earn approximately \$25,000 per year more in wages.**”

— Source: LaMore, Rex L., Melcher, John, Supanich-Goldner, Faron, and Kyle Wilkes. Michigan Knowledge Economy Index: A County-Level Assessment of Michigan's Knowledge Economy, Michigan State University, Office of University Outreach and Engagement, Center for Community and Economic Development, May 2007.



Michigan continues to lose recent college graduates to cities such as Chicago and Boston, which are vibrant, walkable, and diverse cities that are full of employment, recreation, and entertainment amenities.

## Income

- ☑ Personal and per capita income increased for St. Clair County residents during the 1980's. Increases in St. Clair were behind those of Lapeer, Macomb, and Oakland counties.
- ☑ Income trends in the county seem to underline the differences between the northern, southern and Port Huron areas of the county. Areas of increasing household income could also increase the demand for housing - not only in terms of the number of units demanded, but also the quality of those units. Again, these trends seem to mimic those at the national level, in that higher incomes tend to cluster in suburban or exurban areas, while central cities tend to lag.
- ☑ The amount of the lag between Port Huron's median income and that of the rest of the county's communities is expected to increase over the next five years.
- ☑ The patterns of poverty also point to an urban emphasis, in that the city of Port Huron, and other smaller cities along the St. Clair River, have relatively high overall poverty rates.

### ***COUNTY ECONOMIC FOCUS: THE WORKKEYS® SYSTEM***

WorkKeys is a job skills assessment system measuring real-world skills. This system:

- ☑ Connects work skills, training, and testing for education and employers.
- ☑ Makes it easier to meet the requirements of federal programs and legislation.
- ☑ Supports economic and workforce development programs.
- ☑ Is the basis for the National Career Readiness Certificate.

In 2009, St. Clair County will seek to work with partners such as SC4 to implement the WorkKeys System locally to ensure we have a well-trained and well-prepared workforce.

However, it is also true that many of the rural townships in the northern region of the county have higher rates of poverty than in the southern townships.

- ☑ Evidence from the "ES 202 program" also implies that wages are failing to keep up with the costs of inflation in many industries. As housing costs continue to increase, this situation could prove problematic for households near the bottom of the income distribution.
- ☑ About 59% of the workers in the county were employed in industries that did not manage to increase wages at a faster pace than inflation.
- ☑ Two industries (Construction and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation) had lower wages in 2005 than in 2000.
- ☑ The industries that gained the most in terms of average wage were the Information and Administrative and Waste Services sectors; each gained more than 35% in their average wage.

## Education

- ☑ Nearly 40% of St. Clair County residents have only a high school diploma. Over 17% of the population did not graduate from high school.
- ☑ Within the Southeast Michigan region, St. Clair County has a higher percentage of residents with only a high school diploma. The rest of the region has a significantly higher percentage of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher. In St. Clair County, only 13% have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 25% for the region.
- ☑ The level of educational attainment in St. Clair County must increase in order to attract "New Economy" companies to the area. The county can no longer afford to rely on the manufacturing sector to provide sufficient jobs, which makes earning a bachelor's degree more important than ever.
- ☑ There is a strong correlation between high incomes and high education levels, and, in general, higher incomes tend to be associated in turn with heightened demand for housing.



According to a 2008 report by Michigan Future Inc., Of the top 10 states in per-capita income rankings, eight of them are also in the top 10 for both concentration of knowledge-based industries and percentage of the population with a four-year degree.

- ☑ The western part of the county tends to have lower levels of educational attainment than the southern townships such as St. Clair Township, East China Township, Columbus Township, Casco Township, Ira Township, and Clay Township. In the city of Yale, 76.3% of its residents have only a high school diploma.

### St. Clair County Workforce

- ☑ St. Clair County's workforce shrunk by 2,885, or 3.3% from 2000 to 2006.
- ☑ Employers within the county appear to be concerned with two issues regarding the workforce: the size of the work force and the qualifications of workers available.
- ☑ St. Clair County's workforce increased by approximately 1,810 persons during the first six years of this decade. At the same time, the number of workers leaving the county every day for work elsewhere in the region has increased. Therefore, it appears that most of those residents that have recently moved, or are still moving into the county, may still be working outside of the county.
- ☑ Many employers struggle with poorly motivated employees, those lacking commitment, and a workforce not qualified for many positions.

### Workforce Mobility

- ☑ A significant portion of St. Clair County's workforce commutes to their jobs outside of the county each day. The percentage (37%) of the workforce that travel to jobs outside St. Clair County is higher than the state average of people who work outside their home county.
- ☑ Residents of St. Clair County tend to leave for work earlier than the state average, which means that the morning peak hours are earlier than in most counties.
- ☑ Nearly 45% of the workers who live in the county and do not work at home, travel twenty minutes or less to get to work.
- ☑ 94% of St. Clair County workers commute via private automobile. This is comparable to the

### **COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)**

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is the result of a local planning process designed to guide the economic growth of the region.

The CEDS process helps **create jobs, fosters more stable and diversified economies, and improves living conditions**. It provides a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of individuals, organizations, local governments, and private industry concerned with revitalizing the local and regional economy. The CEDS process is required for every region to qualify for U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) assistance under its public works, economic adjustment, and most planning programs

In 2008, St. Clair County will work in concert with various local stakeholders and economic development organizations to develop and implement a CEDS for St. Clair County.

state average. Nearly 84% of county commuters travel alone to and from work. Just over 10% carpool, most of these with only one other person.

- ☑ Projections for 2030 indicate that there will be some disparity between population centers, employment centers, and connections by way of public transit within the bounds of St. Clair County.

## Employment

- ☑ The top employer in St. Clair County is the Port Huron Area School District. The second largest employer is Port Huron Hospital.
- ☑ Together, the closures of Collins & Aikman and Pine River Plastics combined for a loss of almost 1,000 jobs – 55% of all plastics jobs in the county.
- ☑ The region's economy is directly connected to the massive changes occurring in the auto industry. As such, the regional economy is in dire need of additional diversification. In 2006, the "Big Three's" market share was 53%. SEMCOG predicts that number to fall below 50% by 2008. The region's economy is 6.8 times more concentrated in auto manufacturing than the national economy.
- ☑ Despite the continued reliance on the automotive industry within this region, the industry itself is more stable due to diversification. The automotive industry has become less reliant on automotive manufacturing.



*The Port Huron Area School District is the largest employer in St. Clair County, employing 1,745 people in 2007.*

- ☑ The success of the regional economy depends on whether further diversification takes place and calls for large-scale investment in a more highly-skilled and more educated workforce and focusing more on expansion of the knowledge-based economy.

## Unemployment

- ☑ From 2002 to 2006, unemployment increased in every county throughout the region by an average of 0.75%. As of June 2007, the unemployment number has climbed to 9.2%, an increase of 1.8% since 2002. St. Clair and Wayne Counties have the highest unemployment in the region.
- ☑ According to SEMCOG, Southeast Michigan has lost 128,000 jobs since 2000 and will not begin to gain jobs until 2010.
- ☑ Employment trends in the county have followed the fortunes of the larger state economy for the last few years, in large part. This is because of the manufacturing basis to the area's economy; the difficulties apparent in that segment of the economy have acted to increase unemployment in St. Clair County.
- ☑ The job loss that has taken place has meant a number of things, from lower incomes (caused by joblessness), to increased affordability pressures on households that were already spending a large percentage of their income on housing, to changing commuting patterns and therefore changing valuations of residential neighborhoods.

## Employment by Sector

- ☑ The highest sector of employment in St. Clair County, in 2006, is services with 41.5% of total employment.
- ☑ The second and third place rankings in employment for St. Clair County in 2006 were the manufacturing and retail sectors.
- ☑ In 2006, the sectors with the highest weekly wage in St. Clair County were Utilities (\$1,643 per week) and Wholesale Trade (\$1,043 per week). The lowest weekly wage was in the

### ***THE B.E.S.T. OF ST. CLAIR COUNTY***

The Business and Entrepreneurial Support Team (B.E.S.T.) of St. Clair County was **formed to develop mechanisms that will create a more positive climate for entrepreneurship throughout the region.** B.E.S.T., along with its partners, is working to create a countywide alliance that brings together a network of entrepreneurs and business service providers to share ideas and resources. To that end, the Team is also working to ensure the necessary infrastructure for entrepreneurial support is in place so that St. Clair County is THE place for entrepreneurs to thrive.

B.E.S.T. expects to unveil a new web-based clearinghouse for entrepreneurial and business support resources that will serve as a “one-stop shop” for prospective and existing business owners in St. Clair County.

Accommodation and Food Services sector (\$200 per week).

- ☑ Four sectors, mainly in the larger Services group, grew by over 10% during 2000 - 2005. These included the Educational Services, Administrative and Waste Services, Health Care/Social Assistance, and Professional and Technical Services. These industries account for about 25% of the jobs in the county and about 92% of all employment gains during this period.
- ☑ The two highest-wage industrial sectors, Wholesale Trade and Utilities, had only minor gains in employment.
- ☑ The largest employment center in the county is the Port Huron area. This includes areas in both the city and surrounding communities, such as Fort Gratiot, Kimball and Port Huron Townships.

### **Service Sector**

- ☑ In St. Clair County, service sector jobs comprise over one third of all employment opportunities.
- ☑ The majority of service jobs were in health and social services, accommodation and food services, administrative and waste services, repair and maintenance services, and civic/social services.
- ☑ The number of service establishments in St. Clair County increased 4.4% between 2000 and 2005 – equaling the growth rate in service establishments across the state of Michigan.
- ☑ Service sector jobs in St. Clair County grew by 8.1% between 2000 and 2005, which is second in the region and higher than the statewide average of 7.3%.
- ☑ St. Clair is expected to add service sector jobs at a rate of 31%, ranking the county second behind Lapeer. Oakland and Macomb Counties are projected to see a 25.3% and 27% increase in service employment, respectively, by 2030.
- ☑ Average annual pay for workers in the largest five service sector subclasses is at or near the lowest pay for comparable positions elsewhere in the region.
- ☑ There are nearly 4,150 jobs in the “Food Service and Drinking Places” subclass, with an average annual payroll per employee of \$10,017.

### **Manufacturing Sector**

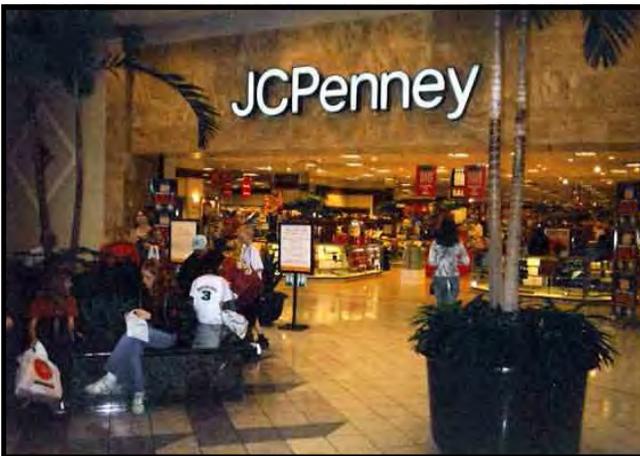
- ☑ In 2006, 21.5% of all jobs in the county were manufacturing jobs.
- ☑ During the first half of the 2000's, manufacturing establishments and manufacturing jobs in St. Clair decreased by 9.4%, in line with the statewide loss of 10%. St. Clair County ranked 4th in the region with 259 manufacturing establishments.
- ☑ In St. Clair County, the average pay per manufacturing employee grew by 16.2%, which is double the rate of the State (8%). Only Lapeer County (17.6%) had a higher growth

rate in terms of average pay per manufacturing employee from 2000 to 2005.

- ☑ Average annual pay per employee in major manufacturing subclasses was lower in St. Clair than pay for similar positions in urbanized counties. Pay, however, was generally higher in St. Clair County than it was in Lapeer and Sanilac.
- ☑ In St. Clair County, the three manufacturing subclasses with the greatest number of employees were also the lowest paying subclasses.

### Retail Sector

- ☑ Retail jobs in St. Clair County represent about 17% of all employment opportunities in the county.
- ☑ Projections for the region foresee the largest percentage of retail employment growth occurring in Lapeer County, 1.4%, with St. Clair County expected to lose nearly 6% between 2007 and 2030.
- ☑ Within the region, the county with the greatest number of additional retail establishments was Macomb County with 42 new establishments. St. Clair and Sanilac Counties were the only other counties in the region that gained retail establishments, adding 17 establishments and 1 establishment respectively.



*Between 2000 and 2005, St. Clair County lost 706 retail jobs - a loss of 8.7%.*

- ☑ Proportionally, the greatest change in the number of retail establishments occurred in St. Clair County, with 2.9% more in 2005 than in 2000.
- ☑ Within St. Clair County, the number of retail establishments went from 585 to 602, an increase of 17. St. Clair County followed the State and regional trend with losses in establishments with between 20 and 99 employees and growth in smaller establishments employing less than 20 people.
- ☑ In 1995, there were 797,021 retail employees in Michigan. By 2000, that number had drastically decreased by 32% to 544,525 – a loss of nearly 252,500 retail employees. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of retail employees statewide continued to fall, losing over 45,400 employees - a loss of 8.3%.
- ☑ Between 2000 and 2005, St. Clair County lost 706 retail jobs - a loss of 8.7%.
- ☑ In 2000, the average annual payroll per employee in St. Clair County was \$18,540, which was the third lowest in the region. In 2005, that number went up by 8.2%. However, in that same year, St. Clair County's average annual payroll per employee in the retail sector was only slightly higher than the lowest in the region, which was Sanilac County.
- ☑ In general, St. Clair County average annual payroll per employee in these retail subclasses was higher than the State average and generally on par with other counties within the region, with the payroll for some subclasses being lower than the urbanized areas and others higher than the urbanized areas.

### Agricultural Economics

- ☑ In 1978, St. Clair County had 1,316 farms with an annual market production value of \$29.3 million. By 2002, the number of farms in St. Clair County dropped to 1,260 with an increased annual agricultural market production value to \$40.2 million (this increase does not reflect inflation). This indicates, on average, a nearly \$4,000 increase in the

## **ST. CLAIR COUNTY AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION BOARD**

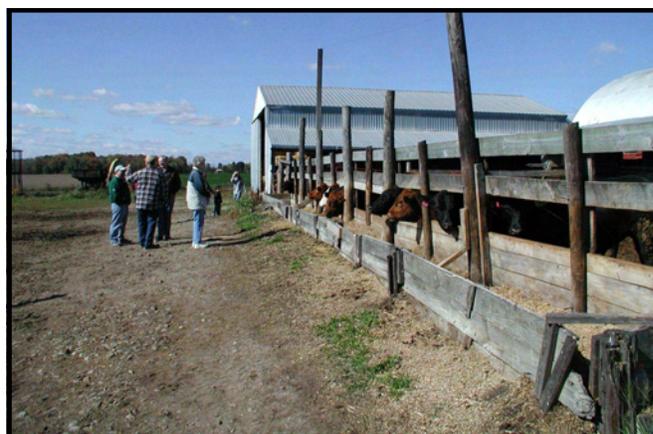
The Agricultural Preservation Board was formally created by the BOC in 2004 to direct and manage the county's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program. Additionally, the Ag Board works with local units of government on planning and zoning issues associated with farmland and open space preservation. By preserving farmland and open space in appropriate locations, communities can better direct growth to locations with existing infrastructure, which will help revitalize the county's downtowns and commercial centers.

The Ag Board also engages in outreach activities to inform citizens about the importance of agriculture to the region's economy. Farming is a business and in many of our rural townships, it is the primary economic driver. Examples of outreach activities by the Ag Board include an annual Fall Farm Tour and a quarterly newsletter.

- ☑ Farm income in St. Clair County has declined from \$14.1 million in 1980 to \$3.4 million in 2006.
- ☑ Between 1997 and 2002, the market value of agricultural products sold in St. Clair County increased by 11.4%, from \$36.1 million to \$40.2 million.
- ☑ Within St. Clair County, farms with net operating gains (profits) decreased significantly from 46% in 1997 to 26.3% in 2002. In 2002, there were 332 farms with a profit in St. Clair County, with an average profit of \$28,699 per farm. In contrast, there were 929 farms with a net operating loss in 2002, with an average net loss of \$11,458 per farm. In 1997, there were 503 farms with net losses and 435 farms with a profit.
- ☑ On average, each farm in St. Clair County had production expenses increase by almost \$5,400 from 1997 to 2002.
- ☑ Between 1997 and 2002, the number of farms in the county increased by nearly 34%, from 940 farms to 1,260 farms (due to changes in data reporting). Total acreage in farms increased from 162,887 acres in 1997 to 182,116 in 2002, a gain of 11.8%. At the same time, crop land grew by 2%. Average farm sizes in St. Clair County dropped from 159 acres in 1997 to 145 acres in 2002.
- ☑ In 2002, the top three agricultural products produced in St. Clair County were corn, soybeans, and nursery/greenhouse products.

market value of agricultural production per farm within the county, even though there was a decrease in the total number of farms.

- ☑ Although over one-third of the total land area in St. Clair County is used for farming, farm employment is estimated to have accounted for slightly under one percent of total 2005 employment.
- ☑ The number of farm laborers hired declined from nearly 1,000 persons in 1992 to approximately 660 persons in 1997.
- ☑ According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, there were 846 workers on farms in St. Clair County, with an annual payroll of roughly \$3.9 million.



*People of all ages, from St. Clair County and beyond, enjoy the annual Fall Farm Tour. In the picture above, a family tours the Northrup Farm in Brockway Township*



*St. Clair County has an abundance of beautiful golf courses that draw in golfers from across Michigan.*

## Tourism

- ☑ The impact of tourism on a given area is normally measured through tourism indicators. In addition to directly measuring taxes collected on hotel rooms, sales in restaurants and sales in some types of retail businesses provide us with indications of the economic impact of tourism. Another measure involves a tally of “marketable” tourism and recreational opportunities.
- ☑ Within Michigan, tourism is the number three industry (behind manufacturing and agriculture). Expenditures within St. Clair County have totaled more than \$65 million annually. Tourism is big business for the State and St. Clair County.
- ☑ Trends in tourism and travel are constantly changing. Currently, travelers tend to take shorter trips to destinations closer to home, and they are taking more frequent trips. At the same time, travelers have been pursuing opportunities that bring them closer to nature; educate or inform them about natural and historic features; and provide the chance to pick, harvest or interact in some other fashion with local agricultural activities. All of these trends place St. Clair County in a very advantageous position.
- ☑ St. Clair County is located within easy driving distance of the state’s largest population center. Transportation facilities make travel to and within the county, convenient and safe.

Sufficient support businesses, such as lodging and restaurants exist. Natural features, which comprise up to sixty percent of the State’s tourism base, abound in St. Clair County.

- ☑ Efforts should be made to more fully understand the potential for eco, heritage/cultural, and Agri-tourism in St. Clair County. At the same time, those cultural or natural features which hold that potential should be protected from land use activities and changes that could adversely affect those assets.
- ☑ Demographic characteristics, such as aging, level of education, income, family size, etc., influence decisions and habits pertinent to travel spending, tourism activities, and recreational needs.
- ☑ The state’s aging population will mean fewer demands for campgrounds and more demands for hotel and motel rooms. Additionally, an aging population will find cultural, historical, and scenic based recreational opportunities of more importance than physically demanding activity.

### ***THE DOWNTOWN SUMMIT***

Beginning in 2008, a group of stakeholders from the county, local downtown development authorities, tourism agencies, chambers of commerce, city governments, economic development agencies, and non-profit organizations convened a series of “Downtown Summits” to focus on issues specific to downtowns in St. Clair County and to devise a strategy for full-scale downtown revitalization. When fully developed, this strategy will include:

- ☑ Collaboration among communities
- ☑ Regional marketing and promotions
- ☑ Centralized support for small businesses and entrepreneurs.
- ☑ Funding opportunities
- ☑ Initiatives to make St. Clair County downtowns more vibrant and livable.

- ☑ Busier households result in shorter but more frequent trips. Most of these trips are closer to home.
- ☑ It has been estimated that direct tourism expenditures in 1996 for St. Clair County totaled \$65.4 million.
- ☑ Most recreational and tourism opportunities in the county are resource based. Some of these opportunities include scenic vistas along the County’s coastline, State Parks and campgrounds, State Game and Wildlife Areas, local community parks of regional significance, and recreational boating.
- ☑ Agri-tourism opportunities, such as “U-Pick” industries, farm tours, corn mazes and Christmas tree farming, exist within the county and there is the potential for more opportunities.
- ☑ Land use decisions which adversely affect unique natural features, water resources, historic sites, and agricultural lands will have a similar effect on the tourism industry.
- ☑ St. Clair County’s proximity to a large concentration of population and its unique cultural, historical, and natural features represent significant potential for expansion of the tourism industry.



The Blue Water Bridge is connected to Interstate 94 and 69, as well as Highway 402 in Ontario. In Ontario these highways provide direct connections to Hamilton, Niagara, Buffalo, Toronto and beyond. In the U.S., I-94 connects the crossing with Detroit, Chicago and beyond (56 miles to Detroit, 335 miles to Chicago), I-69 connects to Flint, Lansing, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis and beyond.

### Border Activity and Trade

- ☑ According to the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, in 2006, there were 4,518 westbound trains entering the United States through St. Clair County from Canada.
- ☑ Approximately 82% of all imported goods entering through Port Huron fall under the North American Free Trade Agreement – a

total trade value of \$18.1 billion. The total trade value of all imported goods entering the United States through Port Huron was \$22.1 billion in 2006.

- ☑ In 2006, the top five products crossing the Blue Water Bridge by value were auto parts, U.S. goods being returned, new trucks, new automobiles, and furniture.
- ☑ In 2006, the top five products entering the United States via the Port Huron rail tunnel by value were new automobiles, new trucks, unwrought aluminum, auto parts, and polymers of ethylene in primary forms.
- ☑ In St. Clair County, a great deal of the traffic is related to automobile traffic. This traffic is affected by perceptions of crossing delays, weather, annual travel cycles, monetary exchange rates, and spending opportunities.

## Border Crossing Rankings, Southeast Michigan and Canada 2006

Location	Automobile Crossing		Bus Crossing		Truck Crossing		Total Crossing	
	Rank	Volume	Rank	Volume	Rank	Volume	Rank	Volume
Detroit	1	5,634,179	1	36,457	1	1,770,008	1	7,440,644
Port Huron	2	1,975,745	4	3,751	2	835,927	2	2,815,423
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,609,924</b>		<b>38,208</b>		<b>2,605,935</b>		<b>10,254,067</b>

Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2007

### ***ALTERNATIVE ENERGY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ST. CLAIR COUNTY***

In 2007, SC4 began offering a certificate program in Alternative Energy Technology, which is intended for persons who wish to develop a working knowledge of alternative energy power generation and delivery systems. Alternative Energy systems include but are not limited to:

- Wind Energy
- Water Turbine Energy
- Corn-based Ethanol
- Cellulosic Ethanol
- Photovoltaic Power
- Passive Solar Energy
- Hydrogen-fueled Systems

The Economic Development Alliance (EDA) of St. Clair County is also beginning to explore Alternative Energy opportunities for the county through meetings with various companies and government officials.

Alternative Energy has been a focal point of Governor Granholm's "State of the State" address for the past three years.

#### **Linking Land Use and the Economy**

- St. Clair County's economy remains tied to land resources, although in a nontraditional sense. Now that resource is in the land itself (availability, accessibility, improvements to the land, historical and natural features, etc.).
- Changes to the economy have impacts on land use patterns. The ability to anticipate and identify these changes is the foundation of a community plan.
- A number of tools exist that will assist in identifying this link between land use and the economy.
- The ability to anticipate land use change resulting from economic change involves knowledge of existing and projected employment, existing employment land area, and an understanding and use of employee/area ratios.

- The amount of land needed to support a given job varies with the tasks involved in completing that job. Employee/area ratios are based on this concept.
- Based on the 2000 SEMCOG land use/land cover data, it is estimated that existing employment land area covers a total of 16,476 acres.

#### **St. Clair County Employment Projections**

- Understanding employment projections is fundamental to establishing a link to land use change.
- Between 2005 and 2030, SEMCOG projects an increase in employment of 33%, which represents 10,781 jobs. SEMCOG is projecting a 3.5% loss in manufacturing jobs and a 26% loss in wholesale trade jobs.
- MDOT's REMI forecast projects an

### ***THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE OF ST. CLAIR COUNTY***

The EDA of St. Clair County has as its primary mission the creation and retention of new jobs to assure the long-term financial viability of the St. Clair County area. Working with both the public and private sectors, the EDA aggressively pursues a wide variety of economic development opportunities for the long-term success of St. Clair County. Services include:

- Business Attraction Marketing
- Business Retention & Expansion
- Export Assistance
- Small Business & Technology Development Center
- Foreign Trade Zone Services

In 2007, the EDA began investigating the feasibility of developing a large-scale, regional business incubator in St. Clair County. It is currently garnering input from entrepreneurs and other stakeholders to determine specific needs.

employment increase of 10.3% or 7,017 jobs by 2030. Decreases are expected across numerous sectors including manufacturing, retail trade, farming, and transportation/utilities.

- ☑ *Woods & Poole Economics* predicts an employment increase of 31.6% or 21,955 jobs. *Woods and Poole* foresees declines in farm and manufacturing employment.
- ☑ Anticipated land area needs for 2030 employment are estimated at 2,619 to 5,103 acres, which appears to be far below the existing employment land area of 16,476 acres.
- ☑ By applying the employee/area ratios to the projected employment gains expected by 2030, we come up with a range of 160 to 1,090 additional acres of employment land needed by 2030 to support employment growth. This is actually a relatively small amount of land, approximately 1.7 square miles in area.

### Economic Sustainability Concepts

- ☑ Sustainable Planning is an ongoing comprehensive planning effort.
- ☑ Sustainable Planning is inclusive, involving community residents, businesses, interest groups, and surrounding communities or agencies that may share interest in the community.
- ☑ Economic Sustainability fosters economic vitality while protecting natural, cultural, and historical resources. Economic sustainability creates a diversified local economy built on the unique local advantages that the community may possess.

### Single-Family Housing

- ☑ The owner-occupation percentage in the county and its communities, already high, has likely grown higher since the 2000 Census, since mortgage rates and new financial mechanisms have allowed less-affluent households to obtain market-rate for-sale

### ***HOUSING REHABILITATION***

Since the early 1990's, the county has offered housing rehabilitation assistance to low-income homeowners through the MPC. Funds needed to operate this program have come from Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) received from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).

**In total, the county has assisted over 230 homeowners with rehabilitation or emergency repairs.** Every community in the county has had recipient homeowners.

**During that time period, the county has brought in over \$2.5 million in state and federal grant money for housing rehabilitation programs.**

housing. This trend has affected the growth in housing demand in the county, especially in the more rural areas where the household counts are growing most rapidly.

- ☑ The situation regarding the number of housing units in structures is common to many places, in that single-family dwellings predominate in rural areas, and more urban locales generally have higher rates of multi-family housing. If rental housing is to be developed in more transitional areas (such as the southern townships slated for further residential development according to the county's recent master plan), it is likely that a non-traditional project would be popular. That depends on other indicators of a healthy rental market continuing to exist. This type of complex would probably resemble a for-sale subdivision, in that it would mimic surrounding homeowner units closely, and could be built in a scattered-site configuration. However, if this is contemplated, issues surrounding the price of land and the availability of services will need to be fully investigated.



Many of the homes in the urban communities were built over 50 years ago and create interesting neighborhoods with many different housing styles and designs. For that reason, most communities in the county have a unique character with homes that do not all look the same.

- ☑ Depending on its condition, the fact that a significant proportion of the county's housing stock is aged could prove beneficial from an affordability standpoint. As older stock tends to be more affordable, a plentiful supply of this type of housing should exist in most areas of the county. This is especially so in the cities along the St. Clair River. However, it is also true that older housing generally needs more upkeep, and perhaps some refurbishment to make way for modern amenities and floor plans.
- ☑ The size differential between owner and rental housing, as measured by the number of bedrooms per unit, is interesting, and might point to another need of the market. As rental households tend to be larger than owner households, increasing the supply of three-bedroom apartments in some portions of the county might prove effective in increasing demand for rental units.
- ☑ While the incidence of substandard dwellings is low among owner-occupied units, some areas of the county have very high rates of overcrowding in the rental portion of the housing market. Increasing the supply of safe and modern three bedroom apartments would likely help reduce overcrowding.
- ☑ The current state of the single-family housing market in the county is not particularly

healthy, as measured by sales information, the number and pricing of listings, and the trends in building permits. The data regarding building permits is most troubling, as that is seen as a leading indicator of housing activity in the near term. The decreasing number of existing homes that have been sold in the county is also worthy of attention. The major cause of this situation is linked tightly to the overall economic picture in the county, which has already been discussed. As the manufacturing sector continues to lag, and increases in income remain modest, demand for housing will likely continue to be relatively low.

- ☑ This situation is further exacerbated by the recent increases in foreclosures and bankruptcies in the county. Although the magnitude of the problem is still relatively small (only in a few outlying townships does the

### ***RENTAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM***

In 2008, St. Clair County began a new housing rehabilitation program for rental units above street level retail in traditional downtowns, such as Capac, Yale, and Marine City.

The primary emphasis of the Rental Rehabilitation Program is to **provide safe and affordable rental housing to lower income residents** in St. Clair County.

Landlords get the opportunity to make additional income on space that is currently being underutilized or is uninhabitable.

The downtown benefits by having people living in the downtown, which **helps the local economy, generates spending and creates customers for shops and restaurants.**

Residents benefit by having additional options for affordable housing close to shopping and other services.

## ***AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY***

In 2007, St. Clair County worked with the consulting firm Community Research Services, Inc. (CRS) to develop the *St. Clair County Affordable Housing Strategy 2006-2007*. The data and findings of that study were used to develop the housing sections of this Master Plan.

The resulting goals, objectives, and action plan of the Affordable Housing Strategy will be used to direct how the county and its housing services partners allocate reserve housing funds from the federal government to fill identified gaps in a sustainable manner.

foreclosure/bankruptcy percentage approach two percent of all owner-occupied units), it could be a signal of further slow demand for housing as households continue to have problems meeting the financial demands of homeownership.

- ☑ One interesting pattern in the pricing of houses currently for sale is the lack of “affordable” listings (those between \$75,000 and \$125,000) in townships that border Macomb County. This could be a signal that housing demand from Macomb County is starting to influence the housing markets of these townships.
- ☑ Finally, the pattern of new construction of housing units (even though the pace of permits has decreased by about 35% over the last few years) reinforces the idea that interest in housing development is increasing in the rural townships north and west of the city of Port Huron. This again is contrary to this Master Plan’s goals of preserving farmland and protecting rural character. However, it should also be noted that another pattern of increase, more related to the increased settlement of the townships surrounding the city of Port Huron, is taking place at the same time. This could affect both

land and housing prices in those areas as well, if the trend continues.

## **Special Needs Housing**

- ☑ The issues surrounding special needs housing point to a need for more of this type of housing. In the senior end of this segment, costs for assisted living are much higher than what most seniors in the county could afford. This is especially true for the length of stay that is common in these projects. The lack of coverage for these costs from federal or other sources compounds this difficulty. However, Medicaid and others are starting to become involved in the assisted living model and MSHDA’s pilot program for affordable assisted living solutions is encouraging.
- ☑ Homeless shelter and service providers point to trends that make it difficult to place clients into permanent housing. The lack of safe and affordable housing in many portions of the county. The Section 8 voucher program in the county frequently has long waiting lists and there is a lack of new vouchers being sought or given. There are also some bureaucratic issues that stand in the way of more streamlined service provision, such as the definition of “homeless” or the rules regulating when a person is eligible for services.



*According to the State of Michigan, about 1,600 persons in Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, Genesee, Lapeer and St. Clair counties were homeless in 2006. Of these, about one fifth were persons in families, while over 10% were chronically homeless.*

## HOMELESSNESS

In St. Clair County:

- ☑ The Salvation Army served 3,839 persons in 2006,
- ☑ Mid-City Nutrition served about 1,250 per week in 2006 and its mobile food operations served 225 tons of food.
- ☑ The Pathway Shelter in Port Huron helps 60 people at any given time and manages 48 supportive housing units.
- ☑ Mother Hill's House also serves about 60 persons at any given time.
- ☑ In 2007, Safe Horizon provided shelter to 535 people. Of those, 149 were children and 76 were families.

- ☑ There is also a trend in the service provision community to engage problems of homelessness more directly, rather than concentrate on expanding shelter spaces. An emphasis on service provision tied to housing opportunities (the shelter plus care ideal) and the expansion of transitional and supportive housing alternatives that are affordable to clients is an important key to ending the homelessness problem in the county.
- ☑ It is likely that some upward movement in the number of persons with worst-case housing problems has occurred after the 2000 Census information utilized for this report. This is due to the change in economic conditions that happened after that Census was complete. This is especially important because most of the worst-case needs in the county involved severe shelter overburden, which is directly tied to both the price for shelter set by the local market and the ability of a household to earn enough money to afford shelter costs. With the high unemployment rate in the county, and the effects of the continuing recession in the state's manufacturing economy, the earning potential of many households has fallen.
- ☑ The disabled in the county are a relatively

large group, especially in the city of Port Huron. In this regard, the provision of housing that meets their physical needs, as well as a level of service provision appropriate to these needs, is important to develop. As the housing stock in the city is relatively old, retrofitting of units to make them barrier-free should be an important focus.

## Affordable Housing and Affordability

- ☑ Two trends in social factors that tend to shape major aspects of housing markets (criminality and school quality) seem to work in favor of a number of communities in the county. Crimes in general across the county have declined by a large amount, mostly due to a drastic decrease in nuisance crimes. Also, most school districts in the county have scores that are at or above state averages for the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test, as well as graduation rates. In general, this should put most areas in the county in a good competitive position when it comes to attracting residents. However, the areas that seem to do less well in these statistics (including the city of Port Huron) might have continued problems in attracting residents.



*Multifamily housing is an important segment of the overall housing market in St. Clair County. It fulfills a number of purposes, such as providing affordable shelter for households with generally lower levels of income, and providing units for households undergoing change (marital status, decreased household size, changes in income level, age, etc.). As such, it is important for communities to maintain adequate supplies of this housing to meet demand.*

- ☑ The estimates of housing needs for 2011 show that a large proportion of new households will be in need of affordable housing, priced to incomes less than 60% of the area median income. A large proportion of those households will likely come to reside in Port Huron and Port Huron Township, where data from 2000 indicate that a large number of households were already struggling with severe overburden in that year. This situation points to an urgent need for more safe, modern and affordable housing in the city, as well as in surrounding townships.
- ☑ It is important to remember that these estimates depend on economic conditions staying as they are, or at least not deteriorating very much. If this happens, and unemployment rises, it is likely that the number of new households might not be as large. However, it is also likely that more of the households currently resident in the county would need housing aid of some type, due to declining incomes.
- ☑ This last point is underscored by the data concerning overburden. The numbers of households that pay over 30% and 50% of their incomes on housing have grown dramatically over the last five years, in part because of the depressed economic conditions in the county's high-wage manufacturing sector. Given this information, and keeping in mind that the largest group of households that have worst-case housing needs are severely overburdened, attempts must be made to support the ability of low and moderate income households to obtain and maintain shelter.

## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

### ECONOMY

We, as citizens and government officials, can affect current economic trends with agreed-upon goals and strategies.

The following pages present:

- ☑ Goals that St. Clair County citizens have identified as being important.
- ☑ Background information that helps to place those goals into a context.
- ☑ Strategies that, if implemented, can lead us to the desired goals.

The economic goals desired by St. Clair County residents are:

1. Cooperatively manage economic change within the County.
2. Provide leadership to pursue countywide economic goals and, thus, provide sustained and stable economic growth.
3. Preserve agriculture as an economic component.
4. Ensure that a full range of opportunities for advanced education and training will be available and accessible.
5. Cultivate and promote an appealing environment for business development in St. Clair County by maintaining and improving the regional quality of life.
6. Strengthen work or worker supports to promote employment retention and career advancement.
7. Encourage and assist people and agencies to provide affordable housing opportunities.
8. Preserve historical sites and cultural centers as economic components.
9. Improve St. Clair County's Broadband Internet infrastructure so we can attract and retain 21st Century jobs and better compete in the knowledge economy.

### GOAL #1

#### Cooperatively manage economic change within the county

In order to effectively manage economic change in the county and enhance the overall quality of life for our citizens, it will take cooperation and coordination among government officials, businesses, institutions, and county residents. In the end, we are all in this together.

Key to the overall success of the county's economy is the realization by all stakeholders, regardless of where they live or work, that the success of Port Huron benefits the rural townships in the county. In the same way, the success of the rural townships will benefit the urban areas along the coast. In short, our unique interplay between urban and rural communities is one of our strengths - it proves that we are, in fact, one community.

*To cooperatively manage economic change within the County:*

- ☑ The County Board and MPC will improve relations with those agencies within the county that are involved in stimulating economic change.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC will improve their awareness of economic issues and track county economic measures.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC will work to improve local community and public awareness of the connection between economic change, land use impacts (good and bad), and community costs.
- ☑ The MPC will increase local communities' knowledge of community development tools available for managing economic change.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC will work with economic development agencies, local communities, the general public and community leaders to develop solutions to the problems and effects of economic change.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC will take a more proactive role on existing economic development boards and committees on which they serve.
- ☑ The County Board will establish an ad hoc task force to identify economic issues of county-wide significance and develop both direction and potential solutions.
- ☑ The County Board will issue an annual report on the county economy.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC will establish and sponsor an annual symposium on economic issues of special concern to the county.
- ☑ In an effort to coordinate goals and activity,

the County Board will become actively involved in county and regional economic development agencies, boards, and authorities advocating county priorities.

## GOAL #2

### Provide leadership to pursue countywide economic goals and, thus, provide sustained and stable economic growth

Every company has a goal and a right to make a profit. Likewise, every person who owns, manages, or works within a business has a responsibility to contribute toward the company's profitability and, thus, earn a wage. While some businesses within the county may compete with each other for customers, each has a vested interest in the economic success of all businesses and workers. Cooperation and collaboration bring greater revenue and greater profits for all.

The St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and the Metropolitan Planning Commission are vital participants in the county's overall economic health. So are any persons or organizations that promote commerce within a community or the county.



*The St. Clair County Board of Commissioners will take a leadership role in implementing economic development initiatives and identifying appropriate partnerships for successful economic revitalization.*

## ***DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY***

A Downtown Development Authorities (DDA) promotes economic development through business attraction/retention programs and works to foster investment within a DDA district. It strives to increase a community's tax base and strengthen the local economy, while maintaining those qualities which make the community a desirable place to live and work.

The following communities in St. Clair County have DDA's: Algonac, Capac, Port Huron, Port Huron Township, St. Clair and Yale.

*To provide leadership to pursue countywide economic goals and, thus, provide sustained and stable economic growth:*

- ☑ The MPC will increase its knowledge of existing and emerging technologies which can affect economic change at the community level.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC will work with appropriate public and quasi-public agencies to facilitate the availability and application of technology which can impact local and county economies.
- ☑ The MPC will work with local communities to advance their awareness of emerging technology and how it could impact the economy.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC will increase their awareness of the goals and priorities of existing economic development agencies at the county, regional, and State level.
- ☑ The MPC will work with economic development agencies at the state and county level to identify current locational requirements and priorities needed to support base industry.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC, with the assistance of appropriate agencies and public agencies, will develop a thorough

understanding of the county's economic assets. The County Board and MPC will then work to protect and enhance these assets.

- ☑ The MPC will complete and maintain an inventory of registered historic sites and unique natural features, and share that information with appropriate agencies.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC will increase local community and general public awareness of the potential for and impact of tourism on the county.
- ☑ The MPC will expand public and local community awareness of economic opportunities and assets of the county.

### **GOAL #3**

#### **Preserve agriculture as an economic component**

Agriculture has been a strong economic component throughout St. Clair County's history.

Farms create jobs and produce revenue for county residents and grow crops consumed within the county and around the world. Local orchards and truck farms are especially popular because of the local character they provide and the produce they bring to local community farmers' markets.

Agri-business in St. Clair County is, and can continue to be, an important economic factor that creates jobs, generates income, produces support industries, and is a potential for tourism.



*Farms and orchards can be large or small businesses in many communities. They also provide wonderful opportunities for increased tourism.*

Additionally, agriculture offers a number of opportunities for the emerging alternative energy industry in the form of ethanol, biodiesel, wind farms and other alternative energy sources.

*To help preserve agriculture as an economic component:*

- ☑ The MPC will identify those areas of the county where agricultural businesses can be sustained over the long-term.
- ☑ The MPC will, in cooperation with appropriate agencies, increase public awareness of the value that agricultural businesses play in the county's economy and in defining the character of their community and our county.
- ☑ The MPC will assist local communities in developing tools to protect and advance agricultural businesses.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC will assist in the establishment of a citizen based effort to preserve the agricultural economy in the county.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC will work to strengthen the connections between the agricultural community and the urbanized areas of the county.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC, along with appropriate agencies, will increase and support opportunities for sustained, value-added farming.
- ☑ The County Board and MPC, in cooperation with appropriate agencies, will increase and promote agricultural tourism opportunities within the county.

## GOAL #4

### **Ensure that a full range of opportunities for advanced education and training will be available and accessible**

Educators, employers and workers are like three-legged runners in a long race. Educators and employers are responsible for initially training workers, employers and workers are responsible for applying their basic education, getting additional work-related



*The Workforce Training Institute at the Citizens First M-Tec Center at St. Clair County Community College is a one-stop resource for business and industry training in the Blue Water Area.*

training and continuing on-the-job training. All groups must work together so that workers can continue life-long learning and move effortlessly and successfully from entry-level jobs to higher-level jobs. As with the other goals, county government is in a leadership position.

*To ensure that a full range of opportunities for advanced education and training will be available and accessible, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and the Metropolitan Planning Commission must:*

- ☑ Work with educators to learn more about workforce educational opportunities that exist within the county.
- ☑ Work with businesses and industrial companies to learn more about educational requirements that would help them and the labor force.
- ☑ Bring together educators, business leaders, labor unions, and economic development agencies to share information, identify needs, develop opportunities for improvements and solutions, and to implement strategies.
- ☑ Involve local government officials - especially those who make land use decisions - so they will better understand the need to retain (or improve) St. Clair County's rural character, public utility and transportation services, and quality of life as a stimulus for attracting and keeping highly skilled workers.

- ☑ Work with economic development professionals to implement strategies to help residents who commute to skilled jobs in neighboring counties find comparable employment within St. Clair County.
- ☑ Work with partners to enhance and encourage continual improvements to regional K-12 and post-secondary education.
- ☑ Encourage educators to continually upgrade and update their knowledge base and skills.
- ☑ Advocate for connections to be made between the components of the education system and with the existing and emerging skill demands of the workplace
- ☑ Encourage the establishment of entrepreneurial curriculums in area schools and colleges.
- ☑ Identify and monitor the skills, education, and/or experience requirements of employees desired by targeted “New Economy” growth companies on a regular basis.
- ☑ Identify, monitor and quantify the labor pool requirements of existing employers in the service area on a regular basis to determine the skills, education and or experience levels necessary to meet expected job growth.



*Having a vibrant community adds to the overall quality of life here in St. Clair County, which will attract innovative and talented workers. Photo by Trevor Floyd.*

- ☑ Support the advancement in the quality and availability of training and retraining opportunities for area residents, especially displaced workers.
- ☑ Encourage greater access to continuous learning by building partnerships with business and education and ensuring that individuals have the literacy skills necessary to advance.
- ☑ Encourage and support the expansion of the research capacity of area institutions of higher education.

**LOCAL ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT**

In 2007, a number of localized entrepreneurial support programs were created in many St. Clair County communities to provide support and resources for small business owners or aspiring entrepreneurs. These efforts include:

- ☑ The St. Clair DDA’s “Come to St. Clair” program, which aimed at finding small businesses that support the community’s effort to create a unique shopping and business experience in the St. Clair Downtown Development District.
- ☑ The City of St. Clair’s Entrepreneurial Support Committee.
- ☑ Marine City’s “Creating Entrepreneurial Communities” Team, which provides networking and is exploring a possible local business incubator.

**GOAL #5**

**Cultivate and promote an appealing environment for business development in St. Clair County by maintaining and improving the regional quality of life**

One of the most important indicators of a successful community is the quality of life in the region, especially to knowledge workers whose skills provide job opportunities in many parts of the country. To be a magnet for a skilled workforce, and an incubator of job creation in a globalized world, St. Clair County must have a high quality of life to compete. By enhancing or creating physical assets, developing human assets, and enhancing mobility within the region, the region can compete for quality jobs to retain the educated, skilled, and entrepreneurial talent.

To cultivate and promote an appealing environment for business development in St. Clair County by maintaining and improving the regional quality of life, we must:

- ☑ Maintain and improve a diverse economic and cultural setting and a high quality of life in the region in order to attract and retain prospective knowledge workers, and desirable businesses and industries.
- ☑ Cultivate and promote County attractions in order to stimulate awareness that St. Clair County is a great place to live, work, and play and enhance business attraction efforts.
- ☑ Encourage the preservation of each community's desirable uniqueness.
- ☑ Enhance, utilize and improve the region's natural resources in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- ☑ Promote freshwater resources as an economic development driver.
- ☑ Maintain and improve recreational opportunities throughout the region.
- ☑ Expand and encourage environmentally and socially sustainable business practices.
- ☑ Enhance and encourage downtowns as

commercial, cultural, and entertainment centers that attract a diverse and multigenerational population.

- ☑ Encourage downtowns to be made more "walkable" for improved pedestrian access.
- ☑ Support zoning regulation changes, where needed, in order to promote more residential development and redevelopment in downtowns.
- ☑ Encourage people to congregate in downtowns through special events, festivals and attractions, such as farmers' markets and sidewalk cafés.
- ☑ Enhance and encourage mixed use development in areas that encourage a vibrant and sustainable commercial environment.
- ☑ Enhance and encourage infill and/or the redevelopment of existing commercial sites.
- ☑ Encourage the reuse of brownfield properties.

**COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF ST. CLAIR COUNTY**

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County is a non-profit organization with a mission of servicing charitable needs and improving the quality of life by responding to changing and emerging community needs through community stewardship and grant programs throughout the county.

The Community Foundation also has a "Small Business Incentives Fund" that is intended to provide small business incentives targeting storefronts in downtown Port Huron. These business incentives may be made in the form of low interest, or zero interest loans, or as partially forgivable loans based on long-term performance goals and objectives.

**GOAL #6**

**Strengthen work or worker supports to promote employment retention and career advancement.**

Workforce training programs have historically focused on providing services to the unemployed. But in today's competitive job market, individual business success and regional economic vitality is more often dependent on enhancing the skills and knowledge of the current workforce. Information on the skill requirements of jobs is increasingly critical to a rapidly changing workplace. It has been discovered that in order to develop a skilled workforce a culture must be built that values and invests in life-long learning, and ensure the education and training providers are prepared to deliver it.

To strengthen work or worker supports to promote employment retention and career advancement, we must:

- ☑ Enhance and encourage the retention and expansion of existing businesses.
- ☑ Support the delivery of retention and expansion services including financing, site selection, and market diversification.

- ☑ Encourage incubator space and shared facilities.
- ☑ Identify and promote sources of venture capital investment and other early stage business financing.
- ☑ Assist at-risk businesses with employment, training, and education programs that develop the skills of their management and workers.
- ☑ Nurture and enhance the establishment and growth of entrepreneurial ventures.
- ☑ Increase the availability of support services and educational opportunities for new and emerging entrepreneurs.
- ☑ Encourage the establishment of “knowledge economy” businesses.
- ☑ Focus resources on implementing a targeted industry recruitment program to attract new business investment and locations.
- ☑ Encourage the development of a business expansion program to assist existing businesses with expansion plans.
- ☑ Dedicate resources for research and forecasting to project future workforce requirements and education and training needs for both existing and emerging businesses.
- ☑ Enhance and encourage the location and expansion of health care related businesses throughout the region.
- ☑ Maintain and expand tourism related business opportunities.
- ☑ Encourage the establishment of “elder friendly” businesses.

## GOAL #7

### Encourage and assist people and agencies to provide affordable housing opportunities

People, regardless of their educational level or job skill, want and require a decent place to live. Because St. Clair County has a diversified income structure, housing opportunities must also be diversified and suitable to the needs of people within that income range.

St. Clair County government, itself, cannot provide housing opportunities, but the county can take a leadership role in helping people and agencies who are involved with housing to meet this goal.

*To encourage and assist people and agencies to provide housing opportunities for all income groups, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and the Metropolitan Planning Commission must:*

- ☑ Work with public and nonprofit housing agencies, realtors, and builders to develop an understanding of housing issues that face county residents. Then encourage these groups to develop solutions to current housing problems.
- ☑ Work with banks and home financing institutions to provide appropriate loans for all citizens.
- ☑ Work with appropriate county agencies and local units of government to make sure housing is safe and sanitary.
- ☑ Work throughout the county to promote the connection between good housing and economic health.
- ☑ Work with local communities to increase awareness of the connection between housing and economic change.
- ☑ Work with appropriate agencies to increase housing opportunities near job centers.

## GOAL #8

### Preserve historical sites and cultural centers as economic components

Business does not only mean the corner gas station or grocery, the traditional downtown department store, or the shops within a shopping mall. Business is any place that residents and visitors spend money. Such places include museums, historical landmarks, and cultural centers. These places also generate business as people buy gas, stock up on grocery items, and make purchases at stores they may pass on the way to the historical or cultural attraction.

*To preserve these sites, the St. Clair County Board of*



The Fort Gratiot Lighthouse is the oldest surviving lighthouse in Michigan and was the first lighthouse on Lake Huron. It is named for Fort Gratiot, a military outpost that was located south of the lighthouse.

Commissioners and the Metropolitan Planning Commission must:

- Complete an inventory of cultural centers and registered historical sites within the county and increase public awareness of the economic value these centers and sites create for the county's economy.
- Promote these sites to both county residents and potential tourists from around the region, across the state, and Canada.

## GOAL #9

**Improve St. Clair County's broadband Internet infrastructure so we can attract and retain 21st Century jobs and better compete in the knowledge economy.**

A well-developed technology infrastructure is being used in many places to revitalize declining rural areas and provide added economic opportunity. The rapid pace of technological change continues to transform our society in how and where we work and in our personal lives. In addition, the technology infrastructure needed to fuel our economy and make our lifestyles possible will impact our physical environment.

Economic opportunity gaps exist between people and

## BROADBAND ACCESS & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"Many rural communities across the country are struggling to remain competitive. By harnessing new technologies, we can create new opportunities, improving the way businesses - especially farms - operate, and reverse this trend."

*Heath Shuler, D-NC*

*Chairman, U.S. House Subcommittee on Rural & Urban Entrepreneurship, May 2007*

communities who are afforded the use of information technology and those who are not. Now, more than ever, unequal availability of technology excludes many from maximizing economic advantage. The term "digital divide" is used to refer to this gap between those who have access to information and communication tools, and those who do not. Access to high-speed broadband service is the key distinguishing characteristic between those on either side of the divide. In areas underserved by broadband wireless networks can be an effective strategy for addressing the digital divide. They can offer affordable access to



*High-speed, wireless Internet access must be available in every community in St. Clair County in order for the county to attract high-tech employers, train and retain a technology-savvy workforce, and to enhance communication networks both locally and around the world. Broadband also has applications for first responders and in emergency response situations.*

the Internet while building community and strengthening the local economy.

*To Improve St. Clair County's broadband Internet infrastructure so we can attract and retain 21st Century jobs and better compete in the knowledge economy, we must:*

- ☑ Promote and support economic development in the form of research, technology, and telecommunications in order to create new jobs, bring new wealth, and improve the quality of life for all residents.
- ☑ Encourage, improve, and make affordable the use of advanced telecommunications and computer networks for economic development and job creation.
- ☑ Communicate with and educate citizens that basic community services and economic vitality are increasingly dependent on

broadband telecommunication services.

- ☑ Support and promote the recruiting and retaining of qualified information technology professionals by providing access to broadband telecommunication services that allow them to live and create business in the community.
- ☑ Increase the community's stock of technology-ready sites and buildings, designed with sufficient flexibility to allow easy integration of new telecommunications and technological advancements in the future.
- ☑ Promote the integration of a minimum level of telecommunications/technology readiness into new developments, as well as projects involving the redevelopment or adaptive reuse of an existing site or building.

## FUNDING

### ECONOMY

Funding for economic development activities is available from federal, state, or local sources. This money may be applied to a broad-range of projects in both urban and rural areas.

### FEDERAL FUNDING

The U.S. Department of Commerce's (DOC) Economic Development Administration (EDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and U.S. Department of the Interior are the primary sources for federal economic development funds. These agencies offer money for projects that:

- ☑ Provide public facilities in rural areas to improve business expansion.
- ☑ Redevelop brownfields.
- ☑ Provide housing for low-income to moderate-income residents.
- ☑ Expand job opportunities for persons of low-income to moderate-income.
- ☑ Protect rivers and landscapes.
- ☑ Establish trails and outdoor recreational facilities.
- ☑ Identify and preserve areas as natural

### GOVERNMENT-LEAD BROADBAND INITIATIVES

There are several Michigan counties which are developing joint public/private initiatives and creating opportunities that will facilitate advancement of a wireless broadband Internet network.

The most advanced is *Wireless Oakland*. There are several additional communities and counties in Michigan that are taking Oakland County's lead and seeking to transform their community. Macomb, Genesee and Ottawa Counties are not far behind the *Wireless Oakland* effort, as well as some smaller jurisdictions.

**St. Clair County's vision for broadband internet access should include broadband accessibility to all areas of the County.** Broadband accessibility can be an economic stimulus and should be prioritized accordingly.



In the 2004, the state of Michigan awarded its first round of “Cool Cities” grants to 20 cities, including Port Huron. The grants help fund specific projects and make an additional funding toolbox available to designated communities.

- landmarks and historic properties.
- Conduct maritime heritage activities.
- Provide training for displaced workers.

Projects funded by the EDA must be consistent with a countywide comprehensive economic development plan.

## STATE FUNDING

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, administered by several state agencies, the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) oversee economic development funding within Michigan. Program emphasis is likely to change from year-to-year. However, the emphasis of these programs in the early 2000s has been:

- Job creation.
- Housing rehabilitation.
- Infrastructure improvements.
- Brownfield cleanup or redevelopment
- Downtown revitalization and creation of vibrant communities, or “Cool Cities.”
- Tourism.
- Farmland preservation.

## LOCAL FUNDING

Local funds may come from general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, special assessments, special millages, or from local authorities such as a Downtown Development Authority (DDA), a Local Development Financing Authority (LDFA), a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA), a Principal Shopping District (PSD), or an Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

DDA funds are generally used to eliminate deterioration and promote growth in business districts. LDFA funds are used to improve or establish public facilities and services in manufacturing, agricultural processing, or high-technology districts in order to prevent unemployment and promote growth. BRA funds are used to clean up or environmentally rehabilitate contaminated sites. PSD funds are used to develop or redevelop a principal shopping area. EDC funds help alleviate or prevent conditions of unemployment and assist industrial and commercial enterprises.

Funding from local sources can often be matched with monies available from federal and state agencies.



St. Clair County, its partnering agencies, and its citizens must promote all of the exceptional recreational, community, and tourism activities it has to offer in order to facilitate economic development. The county's high quality of life is more important now than ever.

# 5 PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES



## HIGHLIGHTS

This chapter on Public Facilities and Services weaves another thread into the tapestry of St. Clair County life. It also makes strong statements about what St. Clair County residents, county government, and local government officials have done - or not done - and need to do regarding public facilities and services. This chapter asks tough questions that relate back to the earlier chapters, especially in regard to how we can and should use our land, manage change, and protect the environment.

## INTRODUCTION

**Public services** refers to services provided by agencies. Common public services are schools, community water supplies, sewage disposal, roadway systems, electric and gas utilities, and police and fire protection.

**Public facilities** refers to the structures, equipment, or improvements needed to support delivery of public services. These include physical properties, such as school buildings, roads and bridges, water and sewer pipes, water filtration plants, wastewater treatment plants, utility poles and lines, communication towers and police and fire stations.

Collectively, public facilities and services also refers to the governmental systems that are established, either through public vote or administrative decision, to staff, operate, and maintain public operations. Most importantly, public facilities and services refers to the people - both government personnel and private employers and employees - who perform daily public service jobs.

Public facility and service issues are closely related to the county's long-range Capital Improvement Program (CIP), middle-range Strategic Plan, and Annual Operating Budget. Thus, there is also a close link between this Master Plan and the county government's overall operational plan, especially the CIP.

**Infrastructure** refers to the fundamental facilities that serve a county, community, or service area. Infrastructure facilities include such items as transportation systems, power plants, water and sewer systems, and schools. The word, infrastructure, is commonly used to mean all public facilities and services. Infrastructure also refers to the collective services needed to support businesses within a particular industry. For example, the agriculture industry requires an infrastructure of farm implement dealers, grain elevators, veterinarians, etc.

Public facilities and services are closely related to many issues that appear within this Master Plan,

including development patterns and population growth, quality of life, land use and environment, and transportation.

## Development Patterns and Population Growth

Development patterns and population growth significantly affect:

- ☑ The public facilities and services requested or demanded by citizens and business owners.
- ☑ The public facilities a community can afford.
- ☑ The public services that government can provide.

Planned communities can provide public facilities and services more efficiently and effectively than unplanned communities. People who live in planned communities are generally more appreciative of their government officials and the public services and facilities that those officials provide.

## Quality of Life

The quality of public facilities and services also has a significant impact on the quality of life and the economy within a community. Specifically, the quality of public

### ***PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES ST. CLAIR COUNTY***

- ☑ Water, sewer, and solid waste disposal systems
- ☑ Electricity and gas utilities
- ☑ Communications utilities
- ☑ Health care facilities
- ☑ Education systems
- ☑ Police and fire services
- ☑ Emergency medical systems
- ☑ Recreational facilities
- ☑ Municipal, state and federal facilities and services
- ☑ County facilities and services



*Installation of high-pressure gas transmission lines near the St. Clair River. Similar pipelines crisscross the county.*

facilities and services helps determine:

- ☑ If current residents and businesses continue to live and be located in St. Clair County.
- ☑ If new residents and businesses move into the county.
- ☑ If tourists come to visit and return for subsequent visits.
- ☑ If businesses are attracted to the county.

## Land Use and Environment

Government buildings, utility poles, sewer and water lines, etc. all take up space. Determining how and where these are located and built is a land use decision. The quality of the construction, especially in regard to underground lines, can have a significant positive or negative environmental impact. For example, the decision to place power lines on poles or bury them underground affects the visual scenery within the county. Therefore, public facilities and services are directly related to land use and the environment.

## Transportation

Public facilities and services are also related to transportation issues in that many public facilities, such as sewer, water, and power lines are constructed within road or railroad rights-of-way. Police, fire, and emergency medical teams can reach their destinations more easily and more quickly if there are quality roads to take them there.

## HISTORY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY

Public facilities have been provided in little pockets where necessary and when demanded by the people who live and work within those areas. For example, additional sewer and water needs are topics of contentious discussions. Schools have generally been built according to population growth.

But there has been little organized planning for future public facilities and services across the county on a comprehensive basis. This lack of organized planning creates important questions:

- ☑ Will public facilities and services follow development and be provided only where people settle?
- ☑ Or, will provision of public services be used as a tool to help guide growth to the most suitable or appropriate locations?

The first question describes the pattern of the past. But unplanned development and settlement patterns can lead to inefficiencies and artificially high costs when public services are eventually provided. Prior to installation of those public services, negative impacts can occur - and have been seen - in the form of pollution, lost open space and farmland, lost recreational opportunities, and decreased quality of life.



*A public road in rural St. Clair County.*

An affirmative answer to the second question can lead to patterns for a more successful future. An affirmative answer also leads to two more questions:

- Do local communities want to continue a go-it-alone attitude regarding provision of public services?
- Or, do local communities want to share public facilities and services when and where practical?

The first question describes the pattern of the past. A go-it-alone attitude is often praised as “The American Way,” synonymous with freedom and independence. In some ways, it is. But this attitude towards public facilities and services can lead to duplication of services and consequently higher costs.

Fortunately, Americans also know how to cooperate, communicate and take advantage of large-scale economic opportunities, which are the result of an affirmative answer to the second question. Many St. Clair County residents are now looking to county leaders, *working in conjunction with local leaders*, to oversee some public services and create needed infrastructures systems.

## PUBLIC FACILITY ISSUES

While St. Clair County has been adhering to the patterns of the past, some significant issues have begun to surface in the form of serious concerns - if not already damaging negative impact - on our environment, our economy, and our health.

A growing lack of safe, potable water is a problem, and inadequate water supplies are a way of life for many rural St. Clair County residents.

Proper disposal and treatment of sewage is another problem. Serious surface water contamination, caused by untreated sewage running directly into county drains, is also occurring in St. Clair County.

If not addressed and corrected - preferably in a cooperative, countywide manner - the children of today’s generation may want to know why the health of their children is imperiled or why they have to raise



*Ira Township Library on Meldrum Road in Fair Haven.*

and spend large amounts of public money (taxes) on remedial projects. The next two or three generations may want to know why we did not do more.

## PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES TOPICS

This chapter summarizes and assesses all of the public facilities and services that exist within St. Clair County and makes recommendations for changes and expansion, then recommends policies to guide those changes. The topics covered are:

- Water, sewer, and solid waste disposal systems
- Electricity, gas, and communication utilities
- Health care facilities and educational systems
- Police, fire, and emergency medical services
- Municipal, state, and federal facilities and services
- Recreational facilities
- County facilities and services

## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The public facilities and services goals desired by St. Clair County residents are:

1. Plan public facilities and services to direct growth toward areas suitable for high-density development.
2. Provide public facilities and services efficiently and cost-effectively.
3. Cooperate and partner with other agencies and governmental units to gain common benefits.
4. Improve surface water and protect groundwater quality.

5. Plan parks and open space for a growing population.
6. Implement the “Incremental Improvement” strategy recommended by the St. Clair County Facilities Master Plan

Goals and strategies through which people and government can work together to create an infrastructure that economically and efficiently meets the needs of current and future residents are addressed in more depth near the end of this chapter.

## FUNDING

This chapter closes with general information regarding federal, state and local opportunities for funding of public facilities and services in both rural and urban settings. In addition, the Metropolitan Planning Commission can provide an up-to-date listing of funding programs.

## WATER, SEWER, AND SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

All citizens, businesses and governmental units are responsible for:

- Maintaining the quality of drinking water
- Properly disposing of sewage and solid waste
- Draining stormwater in an environmentally-friendly manner

Local communities need to seriously address the issues of water supply and sewage disposal. Trends in commercial and residential development indicate that permissive attitudes do little to ensure the quality of potable water or to safeguard public health in the future.

### Water Systems

**Water systems** refers to both private wells that pump water directly from groundwater sources and public lines that convey water from public water treatment and purifying facilities. Water drawn from Lake Huron, the St. Clair River, and Lake St. Clair is part of the water system within St. Clair County. Lake Huron water is also pumped to Detroit, Flint, and other metropolitan centers outside of St. Clair County.

## *PUBLIC WATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY*

Algonac  
Capac\*  
China  
East China Township  
Ira Township  
Marine City  
Marysville  
Memphis\*  
Port Huron  
St. Clair

**Water treatment and purifying facilities** refer to a community structure for mechanically filtering and chemically treating water, then testing it for harmful biological organisms before pumping that water to citizens' homes.

Pure drinking water is vital to life. Yet, water available to some St. Clair County residents is inadequate, and some alternative approach to either development trends or water supply is necessary to meet the needs of future populations.

Specifically, many wells in St. Clair County are either unproductive because of insufficient groundwater supplies or have poor quality because of brine, methane gas contamination, or other quality issues.

The islands at the southern end of the county have very limited access to public water, and island residents make special provisions to attain potable water.

Fortunately, there is little well water contamination from nitrates or bacteria in St. Clair County because, even through those elements exist in surface soil, clay layers between the surface and well heads inhibit leaching to the depths that wells are drilled.

Eleven public water treatment systems serve 20

distribution systems within St. Clair County. Eight of these systems draw water from Lake Huron, the St. Clair River, or Lake St. Clair. Three inland communities rely on large public wells.

Some of the water pumped from Lake Huron passes through county-owned water distribution pipes.

In general, demand for water is low relative to capacity in all systems. Only Clay Township, whose water is supplied by the city of Algonac, has a demand greater than 50% of capacity. Many other communities have significant unused water capacity, including Yale, Clyde Township, Burtchville Township, East China Township, and Memphis. These communities are using less than 25% of their available water capacity.

The St. Clair County Health Department issues well drilling permits and monitors well permits for schools, restaurants, churches, and similar establishments.

## Sanitary Sewer Systems

**Sewage** refers to unwanted liquid waste, either human waste (“black water”), household drain water (“gray water”), industrial sludge, or stormwater runoff.

**Sanitary sewer system** refers to the method of disposing of sewage. Sanitary sewer systems can either be private on-site septic systems or public facilities that include drainage tubes and a wastewater treatment plant or open pit lagoon.

**Point source pollution** refers to pollution that flows into a watercourse from an easily identifiable single source or point, such as a drainpipe from an industrial complex or a sewage system.

**Nonpoint source pollution** refers to pollution that flows into a watercourse from any number of sources that are not easily identifiable. These points may be hidden by natural surroundings or visible only during certain times of the year or under certain conditions. Examples of nonpoint source pollution include sewage leaching from underground septic systems, fertilizers



*The Algonac Regional Wastewater Facility is owned by the county DPW.*

and pesticides running off agricultural fields and urban lawns, *E coli* contamination of streams from livestock manure or wild animal feces, and oil from roadways.

## Sewage Problems

The soils, groundwater, and surface water of St. Clair County do not have adequate capability to handle large volumes of sewage waste.

Yet, in the past, many people and businesses simply dumped sewage into the nearest stream. This, of course, proved to be an environmental problem. Direct discharge pipes (point source pollution) from businesses and most residences have since been disconnected in favor of a more sanitary and healthy means of disposing of that waste.

However, there continues to be an immediate need for improved treatment of wastes in communities, as evidenced by serious contamination of surface waters and untreated sewage running directly into county drains.

In some parts of the county, septic systems continue to leach sewage into the soil. This sewage then seeps into county streams and drains at many hard-to-identify points, creating health and environmental problems.

The islands at the south end of the county are a health department concern because there are no public sewer facilities and groundwater is so high that many homes are built on stilts.

Septic Systems

Private homes and small businesses in much of St. Clair County are served by septic systems, which are either:

- In-ground systems, placed below the ground's natural existing grade, or
- Mound systems, placed on a bed of sand on top of the existing grade and covered with additional fill.

In-ground systems do not work well in much of St. Clair County because most soils in the county are clay-based and cannot absorb liquids fast enough to avoid the possibility of nonpoint source pollution.

Mound systems require more space than in-ground systems, including space for additional mounds after the first mound becomes full and loses its functionality. Mound systems usually have a life span of five to 30 years, depending on the volume of wastewater fed into them.

Municipal Systems

Because lack of proper sewage treatment could limit development within St. Clair County, commercial and industrial centers and medium to high-density residential developments require an alternative method of disposing of liquid waste. The most common methods are:

- Passive treatment methods, usually lagoons, that feature an "open pond" of sewage and biological treatment.
- Active treatment methods that feature more complicated mechanical, chemical, and biological treatment.

Lagoon systems are more common in small communities, mobile home parks, and a few larger communities. They require a large amount of space and have low capital outlays and operational costs. However, they are often objectionable because of unpleasant odors and eventual discharge of the treated liquid.

There are nine municipal wastewater treatment systems in St. Clair County serving 16 collection

***PUBLIC SEWAGE TREATMENT & COLLECTION SYSTEMS***

Algonac/Ira/Clay  
 Capac  
 East China Township  
 Marine City  
 Marysville  
 Memphis  
 Port Huron  
 St. Clair  
 Yale

systems. Most of these are in the more highly developed area along the eastern and southern coast.

Demand for sanitary sewer varies widely across the communities in St. Clair County. Demand is higher than for water for most communities. Several communities are experiencing sewer demands greater than 75% of their capacities. These communities include St. Clair, the Village of Capac, St. Clair Township, Port Huron Township, and Algonac. At the same time, several communities have significant excess sewer capacity, including Yale and Marine City. These cities are using less than 20% of their available sewer capacities.

Permits and Inspections

The County Health Department is responsible for permit review of proposed public and private sewage disposal systems.

There is an immediate need for improved treatment of wastes in several of the small villages in St. Clair County. There is serious contamination of surface waters where untreated sewage runs directly into county drains. The Village of Emmett is in the process of constructing a lagoon system to eradicate threats to public health.

The St. Clair County Health Department, Environmental Health Division, is responsible for septic system permit review. The office has averaged about 680 permit applications per year dating back to 2000. The office

estimates that about 410 septic systems are built each year.

Most of St. Clair County is unsuitable for in-ground drain fields. The soils or high water table simply cannot handle the quantity of wastewater typical of a single-family home. There are many old systems already in place and there is a potential for these to be contaminating surface waters. Permit applications for new, in-ground drain fields cannot be approved for most areas.

## Stormwater Systems

**Stormwater** refers to liquid runoff from rain and snowmelt. **Stormwater system** refers to a series of connected drains and streams that facilitate appropriate movement of stormwater from fields, lowlands, and roadways in both rural and urban areas.

**Drain** refers to a dredged ditch. In some cases, these ditches have been dug along the edges of farm fields. In other cases, natural meandering streams have been channelized and straightened to create a drain. Most drains are a recognized entity, designated by public vote and maintained by county government at taxpayer expense. Within villages and rural areas,

open ditches run parallel to roadways along the front of residential property.

Without proper drainage, most agricultural fields in St. Clair County could not be successfully farmed and, in much of the county, houses and businesses could not be built without suffering water damage.

In addition, construction development, especially of impervious concrete parking lots, has unnaturally created additional areas where flooding could occur, even after a small amount of precipitation.

The stormwater drainage system within St. Clair County consists of 373 county drains and 28 inter-county drains that extend for 842 miles. About two-thirds of St. Clair County has designated drainage districts, which means they have a formal mechanism for funding drain maintenance. Natural drains that are undesignated have no mechanism for drain maintenance.

The St. Clair County Drain Commissioner is responsible for maintaining the stormwater drainage system in order to adequately drain land for productive use and to prevent flooding. The volume of requested drainage projects indicates that the Office of the Drain Commissioner is understaffed, both with office personnel and field workers. Therefore, drain improvement projects are performed by private contractors.

Controversy exists regarding whether full-scale dredging or natural stream restoration is the proper method for achieving drain improvements.

## Combined Sewer Systems and Illegal Hookups

**Combined sewer system** refers to municipal sewer systems that are designed to carry both wastewater and stormwater in the same pipes. This is an archaic system that easily overfills after large, or even moderate, amounts of precipitation have fallen, thus causing untreated raw sewage to overwhelm treatment facilities and to be discharged into streams and rivers.



*Stormwater runoff is generated from impervious areas such as paved streets, parking lots, sidewalks, driveways, and rooftops. As stormwater flows over driveways, lawns, and sidewalks, it picks up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants. Photo courtesy of St. Clair County Health Department.*

Historically, many communities in St. Clair County, as well as around the state and country, had combined sewer systems. Most communities in St. Clair County have since constructed separate systems so that stormwater and wastewater are not mixed.

Port Huron has been working on a \$186 million sewer separation project since 1998. Over the past nine years, Port Huron has spent \$135 million on the project. As of March 2007, it had installed 105 miles of new sewers, replaced 45 miles of water lines, rebuilt 58 miles of streets and reduced the number of sewage-overflow sites from 19 to six. The area served by combined sewers has been cut from about 2,400 to 500 acres.

There are an indeterminate number of illegal hookups from private homes and businesses to stormwater systems. The result is raw sewage being discharged into drains, lakes and streams. These can be detected by dyes and infrared aerial photography. Enforcement takes place as staff time permits.

## Landfills and Solid Waste Facilities

**Solid Waste** refers to non-liquid waste materials generated by residents, businesses, and public agencies. Solid waste materials include such items as household garbage, construction and demolition debris, manufacturing scrap, packaging and shipping



*Most solid waste collection in the county is contracted to private haulers.*

materials, junk mail and office paper, newspapers, cans, aluminum, plastics, tires, batteries, and so on. Many of these materials are recyclable and should be recycled so as not to unnecessarily fill landfills. Yard waste, grass clippings, and leaves are also solid waste materials, however by Michigan law, these cannot be placed in a sanitary landfill.

**Sanitary landfill** refers to a tract of land developed, designed, and operated for the disposal of solid waste in a manner consistent with governmentally established criteria. Sanitary landfills are classified as either Type II or Type III.

Sanitary landfills in St. Clair County have sufficient capacity to adequately handle solid wastes at this time. However, the period of time before landfills become full can be extended by greater efforts to reduce, recycle, and reuse.

There are two landfills currently licensed in St. Clair County. These are the Smiths Creek Landfill and the Range Road Detroit Edison Property. The Smiths Creek Landfill is a Type II landfill, which is a municipal solid waste landfill. The Range Road Detroit Edison Property is a Type III landfill, which accepts fly ash from power generating plants operated by Detroit Edison. A transfer facility owned by Richfield Management is the only other currently licensed solid waste facility.

Smiths Creek Landfill opened in 1967 and is scheduled to close in approximately 2045. Currently, the proposed



*Construction of leachate collection and management system at the Smiths Creek Landfill. Photo courtesy of St. Clair County Environmental Services Department.*

end use plan for Smiths Creek Landfill is an open space planted with mostly native vegetation for erosion control. The ultimate goal is to use the area as a regional park. The Landfill receives an average of 2,500 cubic yards of waste per day, and is currently permitted to receive an additional 5,200,000 cubic yards.

The county is currently in the process of constructing a bioreactor facility that will allow the Landfill to use waste from residential septic tanks to speed up the decomposition process. This method will extend the life of the landfill, reduce the amount of needed space, decompose trash more efficiently and produce methane gas that can be sold. According to research, a wet landfill decomposes quicker than a dry landfill. By pumping septic liquid into the landfill, the micro-organisms work 10 times faster to settle the landfill, which increases the decomposition rate dramatically.

Power plants in St. Clair County generate about 200,000 tons of fly ash each year. Capacity at the Detroit Edison Range Road facility is 18,750,000 cubic yards. Due to increased volumes of ash being received, this capacity is estimated to permit use of the facility for another 75 years. In 2004, the Range Road facility disposed of 283,457 cubic yards of waste. In that same year, it was calculated that the facility has 79 years of remaining capacity.

Minimal recycling occurs within the county through a combination of a few drop-off bins and limited pickup services.

The St. Clair County Solid Waste Management Plan was approved by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) in May 2001. In 2007, the Plan was amended to allow for the importation of septage for the new bioreactor from contiguous counties. That amendment was approved by the County Board of Commissioner in June 2007. At present, the amendment is out to the local units of government for municipal review. From there, the county will seek final approval from the DEQ.

Note: The Environment chapter contains more

information about sanitary landfills within St. Clair County.

## ELECTRICAL, GAS, AND COMMUNICATIONS UTILITIES

Electric power, natural gas, and communication links within St. Clair County are sufficient to support current development and population growth.

Electrical and telephone service exists everywhere in the county. In St. Clair County, DTE provides energy to 70,000 residential customers and 7,500 commercial customers.

Natural gas is available via underground pipe in the more developed areas. Propane gas tanks also are readily available. Additionally, cable television is provided in the more developed areas.

In the future, more people who are investing in large houses on large rural lots may seek extension of natural gas and cable television lines. At present, many potential customers are underserved, as service is not available.

## HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

Health care facilities and educational systems are related because they both:

- Help measure quality of life
- Affect population growth and where people live
- Have significant land use and traffic impacts

One measurement of quality of life is accessibility to a wide-range of health care facilities and services. Education is another measurement of quality of life because good educational programs help young people become knowledgeable participants in society and better able to compete for jobs. Good educational programs also help adults continue with education and enrichment courses.

Quality health care facilities and educational systems help retain current residents and attract new residents.