

Land Use White Paper

The [Land Use Technical Report](#) provided an overview of land use trends and issues, and examined how land use issues affect and integrate with Michigan’s transportation system. Future transportation systems can have a positive or negative effect on Michigan’s landscape. The [Land Use Report White Paper](#) for the 2035 MI Transportation Plan provided general information on research and initiatives since the 2005-2030 MI Transportation Plan was completed. The purpose of this white paper is to identify significant changes to land use trends, research and initiatives since the 2035 MI Transportation Plan was completed.

Trends

There have been no major changes to land use policy recently, but there is change going on at the local level all over the state that requires collaboration in planning at a local and regional level. With the economy still recovering, and the push nationally and locally for “greener¹” cities, citizens are increasingly looking for:

- Alternative modes of transportation
- Clean/alternative energy sources
- Fresh/organic food sources and urban gardens
- Green infrastructure (rain gardens, pervious pavement, etc.)

To help meet this new demand, local governments are changing land use policies to allow activities that have not traditionally been allowed, such as urban agriculture. Local governments are also considering how to provide access for trucks and large equipment not typically used in an urban setting. Finally, local governments are considering land use policy changes that help ensure these goods will be accessible by all modes of transportation and that there are areas available to offer the items to the public, whether it be a food co-op, farmers market, or accessibility and/or opportunities in urban garden spaces.

There is a growing trend nationally of professionals and young adults moving to cities, urban centers, and downtowns that are walkable, provide mixed land uses and access to transportation options. This group is also likely to commute by other modes of transportation beyond the automobile, including public transportation, walking, and bicycling. Examples in Michigan include Bus Rapid Transit in Grand Rapids and the future M-1 Rail line between downtown and midtown Detroit. A link to Michigan and nationwide data can be found at: www.census.gov/censusexplorer/censusexplorer-commuting.html.

Research

The majority of research and information on land use within Michigan takes place at the [Land Policy Institute](#) (LPI) at Michigan State University (MSU). The LPI was founded in 2006 with a mission of helping to deliver a better quality of life in Michigan through science-based

¹ Green Cities: Urban Growth and the Environment By Matthew E. Kahn

solutions, strengthening the state's economy, and better protecting the environment in ways that are fair for all. Information regarding LPI, its partners, initiatives, land use types, updated coverage maps, effects on the economy, and future projections of land use can be found at www.landpolicy.msu.edu/.

Another resource for information on land use, specifically in urban areas, is the [Michigan Higher Education Land Policy Consortium](#) (MIHELP). It is the first statewide initiative of its kind as a multi-university, inter-disciplinary, public-private partnership designed to address the fundamental research and outreach void in urban and metropolitan issues in Michigan.

The [Planning and Zoning Center at MSU](#) (PZC) is a multi-disciplinary team of professionals devoted to research, education, and consultation on best practices for community planning and development. It works both independently and in cooperation with many other groups, both on and off campus, to build an economically, environmentally, and culturally sustainable Michigan.

PZC focuses on research and engages in outreach designed to improve land use decisions and coordination between governmental entities. PZC also maintains online information resources, develops decision support systems, and serves as an information/data clearinghouse to enhance city, village and township, county, regional and state planning efforts. Helping planning bodies and a wide range of professionals understand their options and arrive at optimal solutions within the policy context they operate in are key components of the research and outreach work of PZC at MSU.

The following are additional resources that offer programs, education and other activities regarding land use, land use policy, and education:

- The [Michigan Association of Planning](#) (MAP)
- The [Land Information Access Association](#) (LIAA)
- The [Michigan Municipal League](#) (MML)

Initiatives

The LPI created its Land Policy Research Program in 2007 to address the paradigm shift in society's pressing land use issues, the increased demand for new land uses, anticipating for future land use, and strategic growth² information in the realm of public policy. LPI also developed the People and Land Program to establish a permanent land use capacity at MSU to address land policy issues at the community, regional, and state levels.

The LPI Land Policy Research Program was created to generate timely, relevant and transformational research, by bridging the gap between science and practice, in land and place-based policy strategies that lead to prosperity. The LPI research team works with faculty at MSU and other higher education institutions to develop research approaches that address land policy challenges in the real world, in real time.

² Strategic growth combines well-known "smart growth" concepts with results-oriented, strategic planning that reaches goals effectively.

LPI works with a number of stakeholder groups outside of the university to ensure that the results of applied research projects are informative and actionable for practitioners, nonprofit organizations, and local, regional and state policymakers. While current projects fall under one of the LPI's three focus areas of Placemaking and Regional Prosperity, Land-based Resources, and Land and Planning, past projects have ranged in topic from Viable Agriculture to Urban Revitalization to the New Economy.

The State of Michigan's [Regional Prosperity Initiative](#) (RPI) is an innovative and collaborative effort to help improve regional coordination and strengthen the state's economic prosperity. The RPI is a voluntary competitive grant process first included in Gov. Rick Snyder's Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Executive Budget Recommendation to encourage local private, public and nonprofit partners to work together to create vibrant regional economies. The Legislature approved the recommended process and the RPI was signed into law as a part of the FY 2014 budget (59 PA 2013).

The governor has asked the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), as well as all state agencies, to organize their services in accordance with RPI regions to enhance coordination among departments, leverage efficiencies, and better serve customers.

Summary

While there have been no major changes in land use regulations or recent updates of statistical data since the *Land Use Technical Report* was completed in 2006, an abundance of resources and information is available to assist in making wise land use decisions. Efforts continue within our state and around the country to help integrate land use policy into all facets of decision-making. MDOT will continue to pursue and be a part of these collaborative efforts, working with other state agencies, local leaders, and the public to improve land use decision-making, as well as using the latest and most innovative tools to create a sustainable and efficient transportation system.

Additional Resources on Land Use:

- A [study](#) by the MSU Land Policy Institute describing drivers of economic performance with a base on land use types and availability in Michigan.
- A [study](#) completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on the relationship between freight and land use.
- All the [policy platforms](#) that have been adopted by the Michigan Association of Planning Board of Directors.
- The FHWA website that provides [Tools and Practices for Land Use Integration](#).
- The [National League of Cities, Sustainable Cities Institute](#) has a website that offers numerous tools for wide variety types of land use planning applications.