

WINTER 2016

Semscope

A quarterly publication of SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

EMBRACING THE COLD

Winter festivals are enjoyable, profitable




SEMCOG

SEMCOG

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments
1001 Woodward Avenue, Suite 1400
Detroit, Michigan 48226-1904
313-961-4266 • Fax 313-961-4869
www.semcog.org

 facebook.com/SEMCOG  twitter.com/SEMCOG

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 linkedin.com/company/semcog

Cover photo:

One of the reasons we live in Michigan is to enjoy all four seasons. This issue of *Semscope* focuses on placemaking as a component of SEMCOG's economic development strategy. To celebrate our diverse region, many communities have winter festivals as a way to embrace the cold weather. We feature four such events in this issue. The cover photo was taken at the Winter Blast in downtown Detroit on February 14, 2016.

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Please direct any questions about this publication to Sue Stetler, 313-324-3428 or stetler@semcog.org

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Photo courtesy of Oakland County



Commentary

Jeff Jenks
SEMCOG Chairperson
Commissioner,
Huntington Woods

The importance of place

Southeast Michigan is diverse in many ways. Not only in the people, but in the places that make up this region. It is as diverse as the agricultural landscape in portions of Livingston, St. Clair, Monroe, and Washtenaw Counties. It has mature neighborhoods like those in Grosse Pointe, Eastpointe, and my hometown of Huntington Woods. It also features newer neighborhoods in Canton Township, Macomb Township, and Novi. It has small towns like Northville, Brighton, and Farmington, and major employment centers in Dearborn, Southfield, and Warren. It includes communities that host major universities such as Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Rochester. In addition, there are those communities that host county government – Monroe, Port Huron, Howell, Mt. Clemens, and Pontiac. And, all are part of this major metropolitan area anchored by Detroit.

In short, we are a region of many places. There is a place for everyone in Southeast Michigan.

The diversity of places is an asset to build on and is recognized in our economic development strategy. Quality of place is an important consideration in people deciding where to live and businesses deciding where to locate. Quality places also include amenities such as cultural, entertainment, and outdoor recreation activities. They are key components in attracting visitors. Elected officials from local governments and school districts play a critical role in placemaking by delivering services such as education, public infrastructure, and transportation connections.

Our region is unique in its ability to embrace all four seasons, which is a very important part of this place. We can boast about summers of boating and fishing on the water. Just as significant is winter fun and being able to skate or play hockey on that same water. In Huntington Woods, we are proud to be home to the Detroit Zoo, where you can enjoy wildlife almost every day in a variety of seasonal settings.

This issue of *Semscope* highlights some of the events that help us get outside and enjoy a cold day. Activities like these strengthen quality of place, one of the key factors for business start-ups as well as for attracting and retaining knowledge workers. That is why quality of place is an important component of SEMCOG's economic development strategy, *Partnering for Prosperity*. This issue includes a short article on that strategy, with more details to come in future issues.

SEMCOG plan will improve region's economy



As this graphic shows, *Partnering for Prosperity* employs a comprehensive approach to grow the regional economy and jobs. It is comprehensive in both the scope of its set of interrelated strategies and in its focus on regional collaboration to advance them. It will take the efforts of many public, private, educational, and nonprofit organizations to carry out the actions set forth in these strategies. All of these efforts are necessary to improve and benefit Southeast Michigan's economy and its residents.

The 11 broad-based economic development strategies are centered around three major elements – community assets, business climate, and talent and innovation. These are all important factors in growing investment, businesses, and jobs.

These 11 strategies and their associated action steps reflect Southeast Michigan's current and future needs, and identify opportunities for building on the region's strengths and assets and addressing the challenges. The strategies are devised to support an array of economic development efforts by a variety of organizations at the regional, subregional, and local level.

Partnering for Prosperity is available for review and download on SEMCOG's website – www.semco.org, where it will be highlighted on the home page. SEMCOG is happy to present and discuss the economic development strategy with organizations and groups in Southeast Michigan. Call SEMCOG's Information Center to discuss.

SEMCOG will be pleased to present its economic development strategy for approval at the February Executive Committee Meeting. Approval of the plan, called *Partnering for Prosperity*, is the culmination of a year's effort of extensive public and stakeholder input including a survey, public forums, and county meetings; SEMCOG and Metropolitan Affairs Coalition (MAC) meeting sessions; research and data analysis; and guidance by the Economic Development Task Force.

"*Partnering for Prosperity* charts a path for us to work together to benefit our regional economy, our local communities, and our residents," said Westland Mayor, William Wild, one of the co-chairs of the Economic Development Task Force.



Winter placemaking: Don't freeze your assets

In recent years, placemaking has become a popular trend and buzzword. From SEMCOG's point of view, placemaking is all about maximizing community assets across Southeast Michigan to bring people together for positive experiences in public spaces and to spur economic development. Strengthening quality of place is an important strategy in SEMCOG's *Partnering for Prosperity: Economic Development Strategy in Southeast Michigan*.



Photo courtesy of Oakland County

During cold Michigan winters, there is a risk of public spaces going dormant as we might assume residents just want to bunker down and wait for spring. Years of experience running Warren's Cold Rush Festival have shown Warren Parks and Recreation Director Henry Bowman that the opposite is true. "People want to get outside, even in the middle of a blizzard," Bowman said.

Activities such as ice skating and an ice carving show bring people out in "every different type of weather, and years with the coldest weather are among the busiest," said Bowman.

Social cohesion, business activity, health, and wellness are year-round priorities for successful communities, and effective leaders recognize that maintaining a strong sense of place through the winter is essential. This is why Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson went to J. David VanderVeen, now Oakland County's Director of Central Services, years ago and asked him to help find a way to embrace the Michigan winter.



Photo courtesy of Oakland County

The solution they found was to collaborate with the City of Rochester on the Fire and Ice Festival, which just completed its ninth year. "We estimate that 55,000 came out," said VanderVeen, festival chairperson. "It's growing every year, and they come from all over. We polled one year and found that attendees came from 50 different cities." The festival features a long list of activities, including ice skating, tube sledding, a fireworks show, food from local restaurants, carriage rides, snow shoeing, an ice carving competition featuring culinary students from four local colleges, and the Brooksie Way Chill at the Mills 5K Run, which featured 830 runners.

To make an experience of this magnitude possible, "A lot of community-minded citizens and businesses sponsor the event," said VanderVeen. Local businesses are typically willing supporters of winter festival events as they attract spillover activity. Of Port Huron's 2016 Chilly Fest, Main Street-Port Huron's Kristi Hazard said, "We raised \$8,000 without even making a phone call. It's a quiet time of year, and this is a way to keep people downtown."

Fun and Philanthropic

Winter festivals also provide opportunities to do some good. At the 2016 Fire and Ice Festival in Rochester, Oakland County Animal Control and Pet Adoption Center adopted out seven dogs. At Detroit's Meridian Winter Blast, the price of admission is a donation of canned food items, a children's book, or \$2 that goes directly to Matrix Human Services. Organizers have also leveraged the event's popularity to raise funds in support of children affected by the Flint water crisis.

Fire and Ice also boasted 177 volunteers in 2016. This demonstrates the community-building strength of these events as residents take enjoyment not only from consuming entertainment, but chipping in to make it possible. These are just a few examples. Many communities throughout Southeast Michigan use winter festivals to make winter life more enjoyable and profitable.

While many people are drawn to the amenities available in robust downtowns, wider spaces and outdoor activities are also a big draw for Southeast Michiganders. Huron-Clinton Metroparks feature activities throughout the winter and offer a wide variety of opportunities for winter fun, such as ice fishing, cross-country skiing, ice skating, ice hockey, sledding, and even snowkiting, the winter equivalent of kite surfing.

Washtenaw County's Winter Fun Fest encourages residents to stay active with several weeks of programming. Activities include the Outdoor Board Game Olympics, winter botany, a class on building outdoor fires in winter, the Glow Disc Golf Tournament, the Ice Fishing Derby, a bike race, and trail hikes. To encourage sustained participation, the Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Commission distributes a Winter Fun Fest "PASSPORT."



Participants earn a stamp in each category of event type during the fest and win a t-shirt or tote bag when they collect all the stamps.

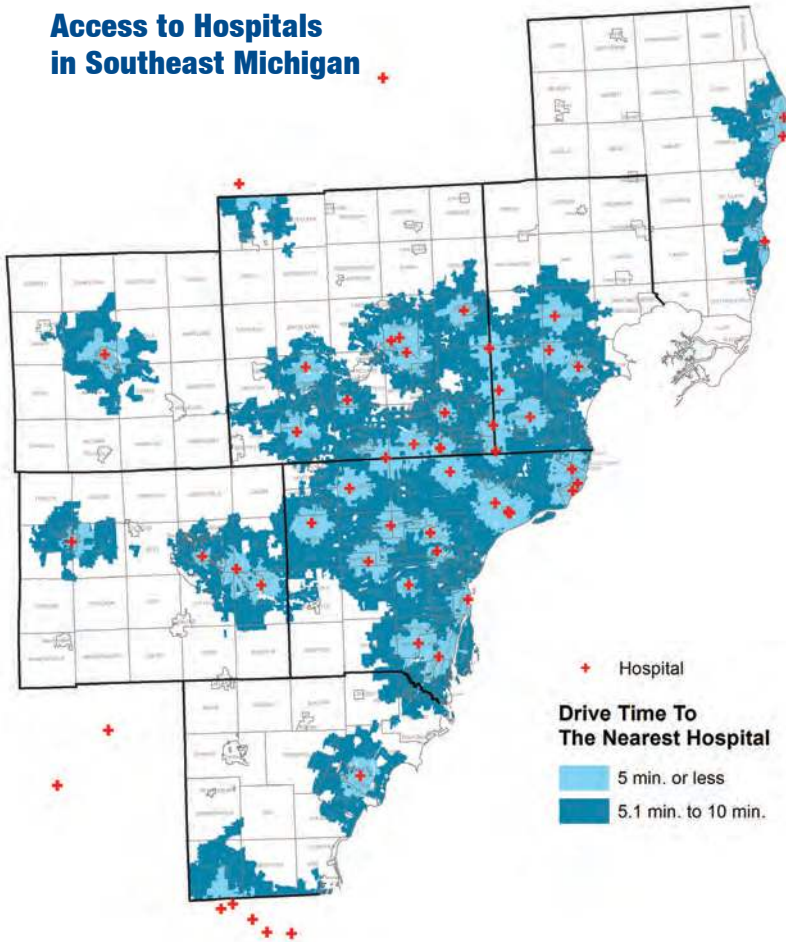
No matter the season, Southeast Michigan communities offer lots of places for residents to enjoy. Great public spaces are nearly as busy in winter as they are in summer, thanks to creative and exciting events year round.



Photo courtesy of T. Jarrett Photography

SEMCOG data and analysis to improve access in Southeast Michigan

Access to Hospitals in Southeast Michigan



Transportation is more than throughput. It is about economic development and all of those quality-of-life assets that make a region a great place to live, work, and play. In essence, it is about everything that SEMCOG works on every day.

Simply put, it's about how well does Southeast Michigan's transportation network connect people to the places they need to go. We may all have anecdotal answers, but never have we had factual data that can be used to make improvements.

To that end, the *Access to Core Services in Southeast Michigan* report was created to define and understand accessibility in the region, establish benchmarks, and set regional

policies to improve the ability of residents to reach needed core services. The policies were approved by SEMCOG's Executive Committee.

"This is a very important regional piece of work," noted Yousef Rabhi, Washtenaw County Commissioner who chaired the Access to Core Services Task Force. "It outlines the glaring gaps that must be addressed and identifies the people in the community who don't have access to core services. We also had the opportunity to engage directly with residents, hearing about their lived experiences, which complement and enhance the data."

Definitions

Accessibility is a key component of measuring how well our transportation system is functioning and serving the people using it. People use transportation not because they benefit from it directly, but because they wish to take part in activities elsewhere. This report measures accessibility across four modes of travel – cars, transit, walking, and biking. The report uses travel time to determine if a destination is accessible. For example, we may not all know the distance or how many miles our daily commute is, but we likely know how long it takes. When discussing accessibility, we are really talking about opportunity. By understanding and increasing accessibility, we are also increasing opportunity.

For this study, seven core services were selected and measured for accessibility. These services were selected because they are the major destinations that residents need to access on a regular basis, and they play vital roles in enhancing quality of life in the region:

- Fixed-route transit
- Jobs
- Health care facilities (hospitals, community health centers, urgent care facilities)
- Supermarkets
- Parks
- Schools
- Libraries



Benchmarks and gaps

With definitions in place, travel time benchmarks for each of the seven core services across each of the four modes of transportation were determined. The report features extensive analysis illustrated in tables and maps.

This analysis enabled us to see gaps in accessibility:

- Where in Southeast Michigan is access to core services low?
- How do accessibility challenges impact these key population groups – transit-dependent households, households in poverty, and households with seniors?

The report's extensive analysis resulted in the following quantitative benchmarks:

- 20 percent of transit-dependent households are beyond a 30-minute walk to fixed-route transit; 35 percent are beyond a 10-minute walk. Bus availability and frequency of service is often a challenge.
- 22 percent of the region's jobs are accessible within a 90-minute, fixed-route transit trip.
- 40 percent of households in poverty are beyond a 30-minute transit trip to a supermarket; 22 percent are beyond a 30-minute walk.
- 65 percent of households with seniors are beyond a 30-minute transit trip to any health care facility; nearly half are beyond a 30-minute walk.
- 87 percent of transit-dependent households are beyond a 30-minute transit trip to a large, regional park; 38 percent are beyond a 10-minute walk to either a public park or school.

Regional policies

How can SEMCOG, communities, and regional stakeholders begin to address and improve the existing challenges in accessibility?

Ten regional policies were designed to address three core objectives to improve accessibility:

- Improve and expand **transportation** options to safely and efficiently connect people and places
- Better align the **location of core services** to meet the needs and demands of residents
- Enhance coordination and planning to decrease barriers to accessing both transportation modes and desired destinations

Next steps

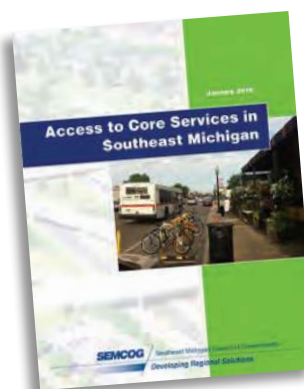
These measures and policies will be incorporated into a number of SEMCOG planning efforts, such as the Regional Transportation Plan. These policies will also be used to help guide SEMCOG technical assistance and assessment services, as well as educational outreach and advocacy initiatives.

In order to address identified local gaps and challenges, the accessibility data and maps will be made available through SEMCOG's website so that they can assist in planning and decision making at both the regional and local levels.

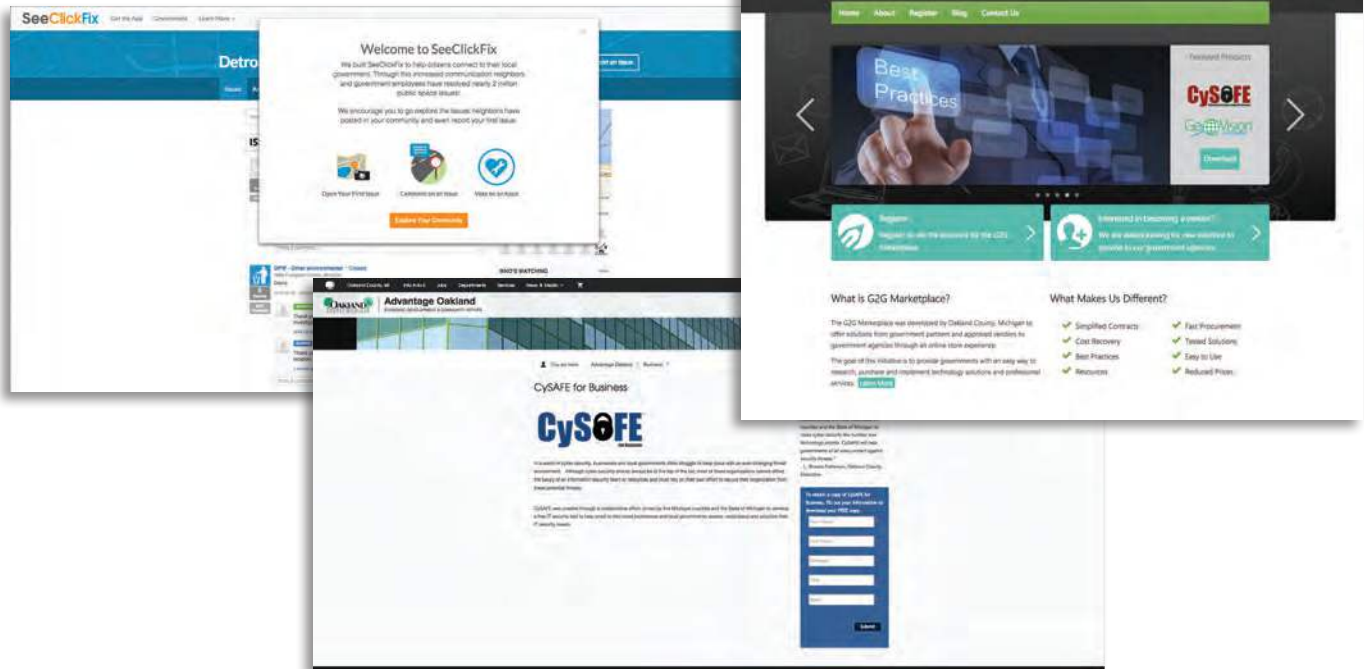
With the recent DDOT expansion of service on Woodward, Gratiot, and Grand River to 24-hour service, access to core services will improve. This is a great example of how the measures and recommendations can be used. SEMCOG will also work with the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and transit providers in the region to use these measures in their planning efforts.

Read the report

Access to Core Services in Southeast Michigan is available on SEMCOG's website – www.semco.org. For a while, it will be highlighted on the home page for viewing and downloading.



Governments get it done with technology



Technology is critical for governments because it makes their operations more efficient and improves communication with residents. Many communities in Southeast Michigan have invested in interactive websites that allow for online permitting and bill payments as well as timely information on meetings, events, and services. Many are also increasing social media and mobile technology presence as a resource for residents. But what are the opportunities to really use technology to enhance public services, communicate with residents, and improve government operations? SEMCOG's member governments are leaders in sharing technology for mutual benefit and are at the forefront of government technology.

Technology is particularly critical in public safety. Technologies such as NextGen 911 and First Net are essential tools for most public safety departments, they improve services, communication, and connectivity. Next Generation 911 (NextGen911) is an internet-based system that allows digital information (voice, photos, videos, text messages) to flow seamlessly from the public through the 911 network directly to emergency responders. A major challenge of these systems is cost, but by sharing technology with other public safety department, costs can be reduced.

Controlling cyber threats

We have all heard about the threat of cyber security in compromising credit cards, identity theft, and corporate stability, but what does it mean for local governments? Cyber security focuses on protecting computers, networks, programs, and data from unauthorized users or attacks.

Information Technology (IT) leaders from Livingston, Monroe, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties, plus the State of Michigan collaborated on a tool to help local governments improve their cyber security efforts. The Cyber Security Assessment for Everyone (CySafe) is a free IT security assessment tool that provides local governments with a benchmark for comparing readiness across organizations. Ed Winfield, Wayne County Chief Information Officer, says, "CySafe allows local governments to understand their current cyber security status and helps them prioritize activities for making improvements. Elected officials can use this to raise awareness of their cyber security risks and what needs to be done to provide heightened protection of their information and computer assets."

Collaborating on technology investment

While some technology is expensive, costs can be controlled through collaboration with other governments. In fact, collaborating on public safety technology can make the system even more effective because of the interconnectivity it affords. Government procurement efforts such as Oakland County's G2G Marketplace allow communities to make purchases at a lower pre-negotiated price, taking advantage of economies of scale and shared administrative costs.

Phil Bertolini, Oakland County Chief Information Officer, says, "The goal of this initiative is to provide governments with an easy way to research, purchase, and implement technology solutions by working together as a collective force to provide better solutions and services to their citizens without spending time and money to duplicate the effort."

Oakland County's G2G Cloud Solutions is another initiative that improves government services by sharing technology at little or no cost. Over the counter payments and online payments are provided free to local government, allowing them to process credit card payments for services and permits. They pay only a convenience fee for the transactions, but receive back 50 percent of this at the end of the year.

As technology changes, government collaboration makes it easier to keep up with the changes.

Broadband

A key aspect of delivering technology to residents is broadband – or high-speed Internet access – delivered through DSL, cable, fiber, mobile, satellite, or fixed-wireless technology. Critical to just about every element of 21st Century life, broadband is generally provided by the private sector in Michigan, but governments also need this important infrastructure. Collaboration with the private sector provides opportunities for developing the fastest and most reliable networks in as much of the region as possible.

Southeast Michigan's educational institutions are helping to develop an IT workforce that can help governments provide efficient services and also help grow Southeast Michigan's technology industry further.

"The goal of this initiative is to provide governments with an easy way to research, purchase, and implement technology solutions by working together as a collective force to provide better solutions and services to their citizens without spending time and money to duplicate the effort."

- Phil Bertolini, Oakland County Chief Information Officer

Mobile apps

Mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets depend on mobile applications (apps) – software programs that allow you to perform a particular task. By having community websites and applications available on a mobile device, residents can conduct government business at their convenience (the Plowz & Mowz story on page 10 is an example). In designing an app, Jim Taylor, from Oakland County suggests that, "If at all possible, start your design from a Mobile First perspective to make it much easier to scale up to larger screens and use web-based HTML 5 and/or responsive design for mobile applications."

The City of Detroit and several communities in the region are using See Click Fix – for engaging residents in improving their communities. The Improve Detroit app allows Detroiters to report running water, potholes, damaged street signs, and other problems that affect neighborhoods. Residents choose the problem from a menu and can upload a photo. This information is processed by the appropriate department. From there, the individual can track progress and is also notified as the issue is addressed. The Improve Detroit app also lets Detroiters pay their water bills from their smart phones. The Park Detroit app allows individuals to find and pay for city-owned parking, and the DPD Connect app allows two-way communications between the Detroit Police Department and citizens.

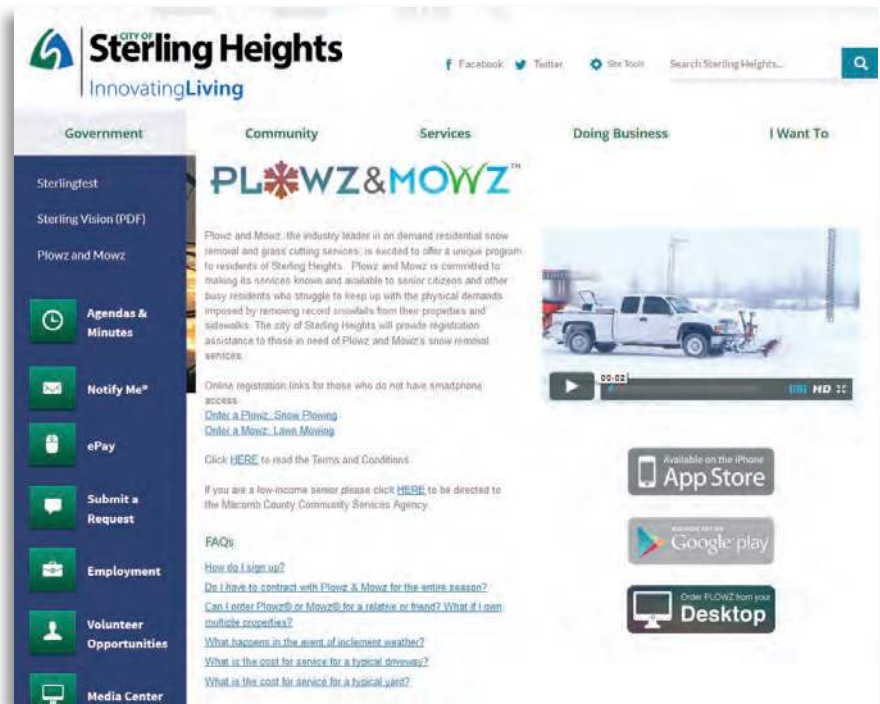
Personal convenience meets public problem-solving

The diversity of community types in the SEMCOG region often means that the challenges faced by each city, township, and village are unique. However, the seasons we share impose similar issues on us all. Every spring and summer, Southeast Michigan's beautiful lawns and gardens grow quickly and require consistent care. Brilliant fall colors eventually become fallen leaves that must be raked. We are also blanketed with snow each winter which, while beautiful, also must be addressed.

For various reasons, residents struggle at times to keep up with yard work or snow shoveling. Travel, work and family commitments, and health issues all might take temporary priority over home maintenance for individual households. For local governments, however, the upkeep of residential properties is always a major concern.

This is why the City of Sterling Heights has adopted an innovative approach for its residents to obtain on-demand snow plowing, lawn mowing, and leaf removal service through "Plowz & Mowz." Plowz & Mowz links residents with approved contractors online through a desktop computer or a free, downloadable app for mobile devices. Sterling Heights' cost estimates for residents are \$30 for a lawn mowing and \$35 for a snow removal.

"The City of Sterling Heights is constantly seeking innovative ways to make life easier for our residents, and the technology provided by Plowz & Mowz is exactly the type of service we know our residents can use," said Mayor Michael C. Taylor. "Whether it's a snow plow order for a busy family, two working adults, or someone elderly or disabled, being able to order home maintenance at the touch of a button is an incredible advancement."



According to Plowz & Mowz, more than 800 app downloads and registrations have been made with a Sterling Heights address since the launch in September. The city's Community Relations Department handles all inquiries and helps coordinate service for those without internet access.

"With revenue sources that are still at risk, cities must continue to think creatively about service delivery," City Manager Mark Vanderpool said. "Public/private collaboration can pay off in big ways by creating unique opportunities for companies like Plowz & Mowz and cities across the country."

At a time when on-demand services are increasingly available and preferred, Sterling Heights is showing that local governments can use this trend to the benefit of their residents.

Automotive industry transforms

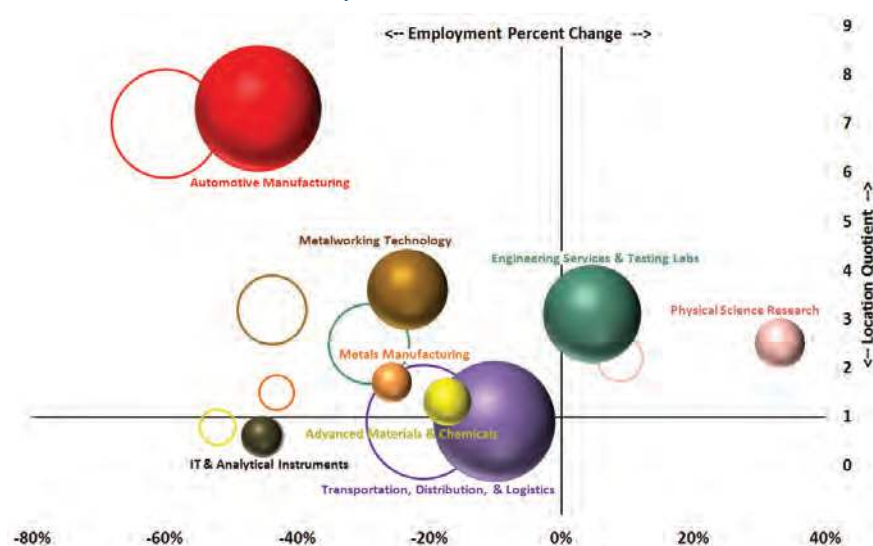
Southeast Michigan is the global hub of the automotive industry that is transforming to be more technology oriented. This can be seen in the advanced manufacturing process and its relationship to other industries. The chart below shows automotive manufacturing and closely related industries. Here, the horizontal axis represents percent change in employment; the vertical axis represents the location quotient, i.e., the concentration of these industries in the region. The size of the bubble is proportionate to number of jobs. Solid bubbles show where each industry was in 2014 relative to 2001; hollow bubbles show where each industry was in 2009 relative to 2001.

Automobile manufacturing and related industries:

Automobile manufacturing (in red) has the highest concentration with a location quotient greater than seven, meaning that it is about seven times more concentrated in our region than the U.S. average. It recovered 14 percentage points of employment since the end of 2009's "Great Recession," as we can see in the chart that the solid red bubble moved towards the positive direction from the hollow red bubble. But it is still down by more than 40 percent from 2001. Meanwhile, Engineering Services and Testing Labs has seen four percent growth since 2001, increasing its location quotient from 2.5 to 3.1. Physical Science Research has seen growth of 33 percent and increased its location quotient from 2.2 to 2.5. This reinforces the increasing importance of science and technology in our economy.

Within the automotive manufacturing industry, technology is playing an increasingly critical role in the "new" manufacturing process. When we look at the top occupations with the largest percent growth over the last three years within the automotive manufacturing in Michigan, six of the 12 fastest-growing occupations are technology-related (see table right). For example, there were 2,530 more computer-controlled machine tool operators for metal and plastic processing in 2014 than 2012. While this dataset is new and only a snapshot for the last three years, it provides evidence of how the automotive manufacturing is changing. It is more technologically advanced than ever.

Employment Percent Change, 2001-2014 and Location Quotients, 2014



Fastest-growing technology-related occupations in automotive manufacturing, 2012-2014, Michigan

SOC* Code	SOC* Title	Change 2012-14	Percent Change 2012-14
17-3023	Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technicians	430	614%
17-2072	Electronics Engineers, Except Computer	320	356%
51-4011	Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic	2,530	236%
15-1142	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	100	111%
17-2081	Environmental Engineers	40	100%
15-1121	Computer Systems Analysts	280	72%

* SOC - Standard Occupational Classification

Source: Occupational Employment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics

SEMCOG 2016 General Assembly meetings



MARCH 24TH

Engage in dynamic demonstrations and discussion on how advancing innovation and technology promote economic development.

*SEMCOG's Executive Committee Elections will be held. Congresswoman **Candice Miller** and Canton Township Supervisor **Phil LaJoy** will receive Regional Ambassador Awards.*



JUNE 23RD

Experience the beauty of a regional asset on the banks of the St. Clair River, and join us aboard the Huron Lady for a river tour and discussion of local projects that support the blue economy.

SEMCOG's 2016-2017 officers will be elected.



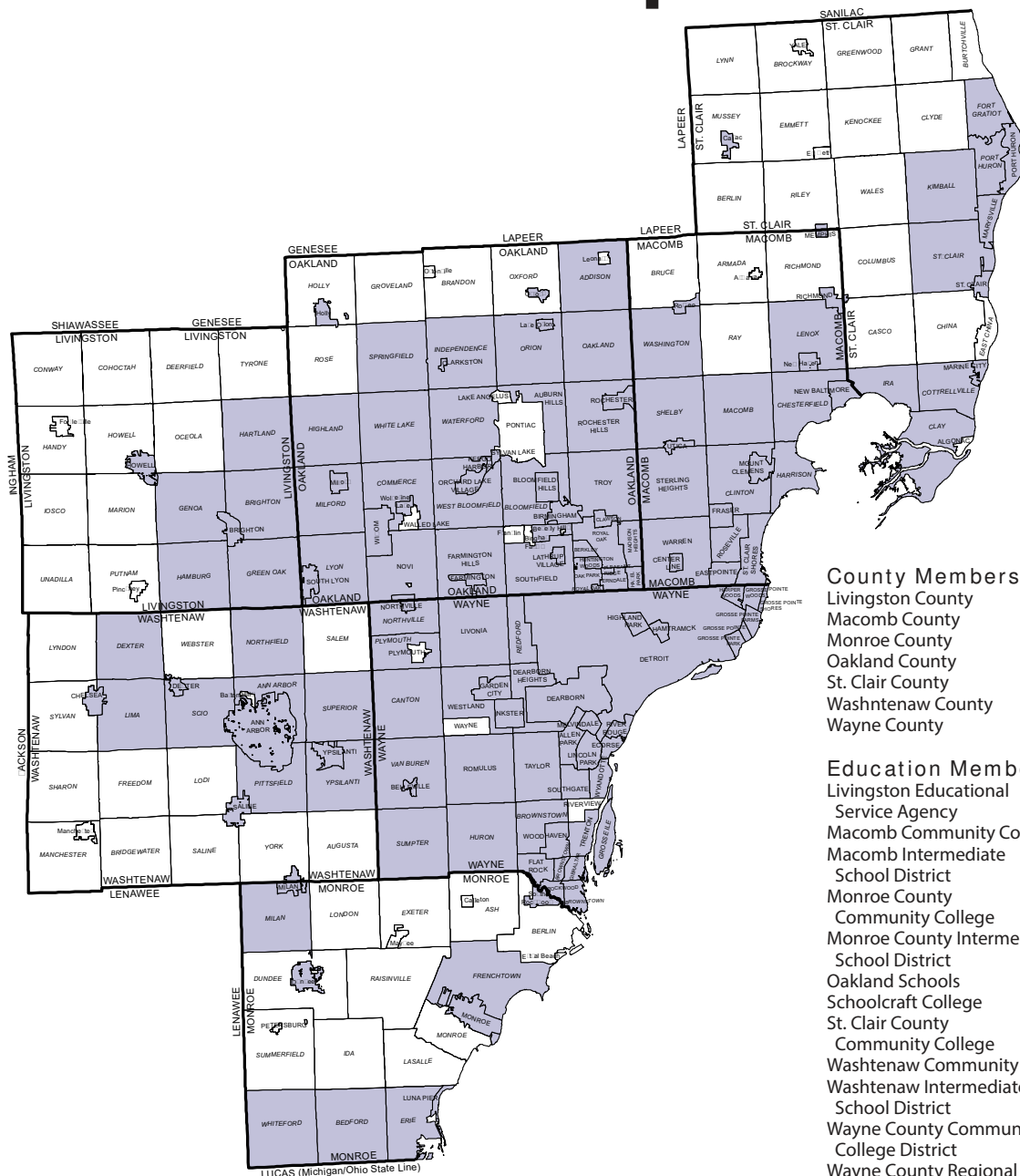
OCTOBER 13TH

Vision. Action. Progress.

Provide input on regional priorities, and expand your knowledge of tools and best practices that benefit your community.

This event will be held at the Michigan State University Management Education Center in Troy.

SEMCOG Membership



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 Washtenaw County
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1001 Woodward Avenue • Suite 1400
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SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, is the only organization in Southeast Michigan that brings together all governments to develop regional solutions for both now and in the future. SEMCOG:

- Promotes informed decision making to improve Southeast Michigan and its local governments by providing insightful data analysis and direct assistance to member governments;
- Promotes the efficient use of tax dollars for infrastructure investment and governmental effectiveness;
- Develops regional solutions that go beyond the boundaries of individual local governments; and
- Advocates on behalf of Southeast Michigan in Lansing and Washington