



Legislation Text

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Public Hearing on Proposed Washtenaw Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority

On December 20, 2010, City Council passed a Resolution of Intent to evaluate the feasibility of creating a Corridor Improvement Authority for Washtenaw Avenue (see Resolution R10-0499, attached). City Council also scheduled a public hearing for March 7, 2011 to gain feedback on this proposal. The intent of this memo is to provide background information and summarize the status of the planning effort involved with the proposed Washtenaw Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA).

Background - In 2008, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners launched the Ann Arbor Regional Success Strategy initiative to develop “economic and quality of life assets in the region needed to succeed in the new economy.” One of the recommendations to come out of initiative is to transform Washtenaw Avenue into a “talent center” that can promote economic growth in the region. To accomplish this, the Strategy calls for redevelopment that will turn the Washtenaw Avenue corridor into a walkable, mixed-use transit corridor that provides an array of housing types and connects to employment and educational centers.

In 2009, a Washtenaw Avenue Joint Technical Team was formed, lead by Mandy Grewal, Pittsfield Township, and Dick Carlisle, President of Carlisle-Wortman Associates, Inc. With support from Anya Dale from the Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment (now called the Economic Development and Energy Development), the team initiated a planning effort to begin rethinking what is possible for Washtenaw Avenue between Stadium Boulevard in Ann Arbor and Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti. The goal was to work with the four communities (City of Ann Arbor, Pittsfield Township, Ypsilanti Township and the City of Ypsilanti) representing this predominately commercial stretch of the corridor to find ways to improve land uses, transportation systems and aesthetic impacts.

As a result of this effort, the Joint Technical Team produced a report called the Washtenaw Avenue Corridor Redevelopment Strategy (attached). The report includes recommendations to improve the corridor, including recommendations for land use, transportation, street design and inter-jurisdictional cooperation. One of the recommendations was for the four communities to form a CIA that could help implement a number of improvements to the corridor. CIA’s are enabled by Public Act 280, which gives them the ability to, among other things, form a tax increment financing district to fund future public improvements to the corridor. Possible improvements include, but are not limited to: developing long range plans, constructing street improvements, acquiring right-of-way, constructing public facilities, improving land and constructing buildings, and providing non-motorized and transit system improvements.

Recent Efforts - On December 20, 2010, City Council endorsed a Resolution of Intent to evaluate the feasibility of creating a multi-jurisdictional CIA for Washtenaw Avenue. The goal of the CIA would be to encourage public and private sector investment into this major mixed-use transportation corridor.

Since that time, Planning staff has formed an in-house advisory team with representatives from the City Financial Services Area, City Attorney's Office and the City's Systems Planning Unit to identify issues, raise/answer questions, and research case studies.

Staff also participates in a joint task force made up of representatives of all four jurisdictions along with staff from Washtenaw County, WATS, AATA, and MDOT. The intent of this inter-jurisdictional task force is to establish open and regular lines of communications, assist each community in planning public events, and discuss the process associated with developing a CIA.

To provide background information for the public, Planning staff has created a page on the Planning & Development Services website to provide members of the public with information on this planning effort. Staff is also in the process of creating a Frequently Asked Questions document to add to the webpage (see Website section, below).

Planning staff intends to compile its findings by the Spring of 2011 and provide Council with a summary at a future working session.

Public Outreach - Planning staff has organized two public informational meetings in an effort to raise awareness of this effort and to solicit public comment. The meetings were held on February 23, 2011 for businesses along the corridor and March 2, 2011 for residents who are interested in this effort. Public notice of the meetings and March 7, 2011 public hearing was provided in the following manner:

1. Letters were mailed by the Clerk's Office to all property owners and taxing authorities within the proposed improvement corridor informing them of the upcoming public hearing on March 7, 2011 and providing them with ways to obtain further information.
2. Planning staff mailed post cards to property owners within the corridor, businesses within the corridor, property owners within 300 feet of the corridor, registered neighborhood associations near the corridor, and other groups and institutions interested in planning issues, inviting them to attend one of the two informational meetings and the public hearing on March 7 at City Council, as well as providing ways to obtain further information.
3. Two legal notices of the public hearing on March 7, 2011 were posted in the Washtenaw Legal News.
4. An email notice was distributed to the approximately 1,100 subscribers of the Planning Updates notices that announced the public informational meetings and hearing as well as ways to get further information.
5. A webpage was established on the Planning page of the City's website providing more detailed information.
6. Twenty public hearing posters were posted within the proposed corridor between Stadium Boulevard and US-23 announcing the March 7 public hearing.
7. Announcements of the meetings and hearing were made at City Council and Planning Commission meetings.
8. A written announcement of the meetings and hearing was posted in the glass case on the first floor of City Hall.
9. Staff contacted reporters from the Ann Arbor Chronicle and Ann Arbor.com to inform them of the project and public meetings and hearing (Ann Arbor.com wrote an article about the effort for the February 13, 2011 edition).
10. Staff provided a press release regarding the informational meetings, public hearing, and

website.

11. CTN was notified of the public informational meetings and public hearing.

Website - A new page on the Planning & Development Services website has been created to provide information to members of the public on this issue (see <http://www.a2gov.org/government/communityservices/planninganddevelopment/planning/Pages/CorridorImprovementAuthorityProject.aspx>). The page includes a summary of the project, information on public meetings and the March 7 public hearing, and staff contact information. The site also includes the following links:

- Map of Corridor
- CIA Fact Sheet
- CIA Article in Planning and Zoning News
- Redevelopment Strategy (full report)
- Council Resolution of Intent
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation Summary of CIA's
- Public Act 280

PA280 Requirements - In researching the statutory requirements of PA280, staff has determined that the legislation does not explicitly allow for the creation of a multi-jurisdictional CIA. It may allow the jurisdictions to enter into an intergovernmental agreement after forming their own separate CIAs. Each CIA would have their own administrative structure and then would form a joint (or umbrella) committee to manage the comprehensive system. Members of the inter-jurisdictional task would prefer to have one CIA with appropriate representation from each jurisdiction. The task force has recommended that members work with the Michigan legislature to amend PA280 to allow for the creation of a multi-jurisdictional CIA and to structure the representation of the Board so that its size reflects the number of municipalities in the CIA.

Other CIA's in Michigan - A number of CIA's have been recently established in Michigan. They include:

- Independence Township: Sashabaw Road CIA. Includes acquisition of right-of-way, road widening, improvements to I-75 interchange, and streetscape improvements.
- Lansing/Lansing Township/East Lansing: Michigan Avenue CIA. Includes proposals to revitalize and beautify portions of Michigan Avenue.
- Village of Edwardsburg and Ontwa Township joint CIA. Includes proposals for infrastructure upgrades, streetscape improvements, and façade enhancement.
- City of Bridgman CIA: Streetscape improvements for two downtown streets.

Next Steps - Planning staff will collect public comment on the CIA concept and continue meeting with the in-house staff advisory committee as well as the inter-jurisdictional task force to gather information for City Council. It is staff's intent to provide as much information as possible so that Council can make an informed decision. Staff intends to arrange a Council working session later this year to provide a summary and to ask for direction.

Attachments: Resolution R10-0499 (December 20, 2010)

Washtenaw Avenue Corridor Redevelopment Strategy (2010)

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