

# SEMCOG REGIONAL UPDATE

A BIWEEKLY PUBLICATION OF SEMCOG, THE SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Vol. 12, No. 26

December 17, 2007

## Upcoming SEMCOG Universities focus on topics relevant to local elected officials

**Battling Foreclosures: What can elected officials do?** — Wednesday, January 30, 2008, 9 a.m.-noon (registration begins at 8:30 a.m.), SEMCOG Ambassador Room (third floor of Buhl Building, 535 Griswold, Detroit). With housing foreclosures growing daily in Southeast Michigan, local governments are left to address the impact of foreclosed homes, displaced residents, and limited resources. Understanding the significant impact foreclosures and the resulting vacancies have on neighborhood vitality is essential for local officials, as they identify actions to assist in tackling some of the effects. This SEMCOG University aims to educate local officials on policies and programs being implemented by certain communities and the need to advocate for policies to help reverse the rising trend of foreclosures in Southeast Michigan. **Get nutty, go native: The benefits of native landscaping** — Thursday, February 7, 2008, 9 a.m.-noon (registration begins at 8:30 a.m.), SEMCOG Ambassador Room (third floor of Buhl Building, 535 Griswold, Detroit). At the request of our members who attended the Phase II Landscaping Workshop series in 2006, SEMCOG has developed this workshop to address the benefits and design specifications of using native plants in municipal landscapes. The keynote speaker will be Bill Schneider of Wildtype native plant nursery. He will discuss design schematics, proper maintenance activities, and how to select and purchase native plants responsibly. Three communities will discuss their experiences with incorporating native plants into municipal landscapes.

**Let's get physical: The benefits of promoting active communities** — Wednesday, February 20, 2008, 4-6:30 p.m. Local elected officials can impact the quality of life for residents by promoting physically active communities. Representatives from three Southeast Michigan communities who have received awards for excellence in this initiative will share their best practices. Sarah Panken of the Michigan Fitness Foundation will also be on hand to describe how local elected officials can make changes to their policies, promotion strategies, and the physical design of their communities to make it easier for community residents to be physically active. Please watch upcoming issues of *Regional Update* for information on the location of this workshop.

SEMCOG University workshops are free-of-charge for SEMCOG members and partners; there is a \$75 charge for nonmember local governments. Seating is limited. You can register online at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org) via the SEMCOG Calendar. *Contact: Amanda Polanco, SEMCOG U Registrar, to RSVP.*

## View highlights of Executive Committee on SEMCOG's Web site

Highlights of SEMCOG's December 7 Executive Committee can now be viewed on SEMCOG's Web site. From the home page, link to News & Notices in the upper bar, then look for the link in the right column. Highlights include a presentation from Ted Wahby, Macomb County Treasurer, and Jerry Moffit Macomb County Chief Deputy Director, on the foreclosure problem in Michigan and how their county has addressed the tax foreclosure component of this issue. *Contact: Sue Stetler, SEMCOG Communications Director.*

## CEDAC continues its focus on county economic development on January 11

SEMCOG's Community and Economic Development Advisory Committee (CEDAC) will focus on the role of counties in addressing economic hardships facing Southeast Michigan at its January 11, 2007 meeting. Dave Tyler, Deputy Director of Wayne County's Department of Economic Development, will present the county's economic development strategy including plans for the Aerotropolis project. In addition, Mark Denson from the Detroit Regional Chamber will speak on the economic impact of the Auto Show and other major events going on this year in the region.

Please note that this CEDAC meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. and take place at the Wayne County building located at 600 Randolph in Detroit. *Contact: Naheed Huq, SEMCOG Community and Economic Development Manager.*

## SEMCOG promotes state gas tax increase

SEMCOG will continue to press the issue of road funding in 2008. Given the current state of Southeast Michigan's transportation needs and the precipitous decline in funds available, we must find additional revenue to fund our roads and transit. Additional information on this issue can be found at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org), under Planning Issues and in the Winter 2007 issue of *SEMscope*. Additional copies are available upon

**SEMCOG Regional Update**

request. *Contact: Sue Stetler, SEMCOG Communications Director.*

**SEMCOG's RideShare program hits the road**

On December 13, 2007, RideShare, along with SMART and Michivan, visited Delphi Corporation's R&D, engineering, and business operations center in Auburn Hills, to encourage and promote available carpool, vanpool, and transit options for employees. This year, Southeast Michigan commuters set record highs in ridesharing. Many of these commuters also benefited from the Guaranteed Ride Home Program, which reimburses taxi fare should an emergency arise during the workday and there is a need to get home in a hurry. SEMCOG will also promote the benefits of the RideShare program at the North American International Auto Show at Cobo Center on Wednesday, January 23, 2007. Stop by our booth to learn more about the program, along with information about traffic crashes, transportation careers, and driver safety. *Contact: Iris Steinberg, SEMCOG Senior Outreach Specialist.*

**MDEQ extends public comment period on draft Phase II stormwater permits**

At SEMCOG's request, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is extending the public comment period of the Phase II stormwater permits and will continue meeting with SEMCOG members on this issue. The public comment period will now end on January 31, 2008. SEMCOG has been facilitating a focus group of permittees to guide our advocacy with MDEQ in late December. *Contact: Chuck Hersey, SEMCOG Environment Manager.*

**MDOT seeks public comment on draft 2008-2012 transportation program**

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is seeking public comment on its draft 2008-2012 Five-Year Transportation Program. The Five-Year Transportation Program is a continuous, interactive dialogue with the

department's customers and stakeholders. It documents the road and public transportation projects MDOT will implement. The draft 2008-2012 Five-Year Transportation Program and comment form are available on the MDOT Web site at [www.michigan.gov/mdot5yearplan](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot5yearplan). *Contact: Bill Shreck, MDOT Director of Communications, 517-335-3084.*

**New SEMCOG members**

SEMCOG welcomes two new members. The Village of Wolverine Lake (Oakland County) and Kimball Township (St. Clair County) bring SEMCOG membership to 155. *Contact: Amy Malmer, SEMCOG Membership Manager.*

\* \* \* \* \*  
*Best wishes from SEMCOG for a safe and  
happy holiday season.*  
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SEMCOG is a regional planning partnership of governmental units serving 4.9 million people in the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan striving to enhance the region's quality of life. *Regional Update* is a publication of SEMCOG, financed through funds from state and federal grants and dues from member communities.

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Mayor, Walled Lake  
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2008

Vol. 13, No. 1

Special Issue: Equipping local government leaders for the future

## SEMCOG turns 40

### Local participation makes us strong

This year marks SEMCOG's 40<sup>th</sup> year. We believe that the Committee of 100 local leaders who created SEMCOG got the organizational vision right: *"We realize that our individual and collective destinies rest with the interdependent actions of the family of local governments which comprise our region.... We believe that cooperation must be fostered in two ways: by strengthening the abilities of local governments to meet individual local needs, and by developing a voluntary association (council) of local governments within our region to meet the broader common needs."*

Forty years later, SEMCOG is more relevant than ever. Membership is strong because members believe that the strength of local governments working together to solve problems is better than any one community going it alone. SEMCOG members have chosen to invest in themselves by investing in SEMCOG. By investing in SEMCOG, members receive technical assistance and extensive resources in areas that will help them do their local jobs — transportation, water quality protection, intergovernmental cooperation, and redevelopment — as well as individualized data analysis and training through free SEMCOG University workshops on topics of interest to local elected leaders and others.

Your participation in SEMCOG strengthens your membership. We encourage you to get involved. There are many ways — attend General Assembly meetings; become a member of an advisory council or task force; seek election to the Executive Committee.

We look forward to a great year and to welcoming you at a SEMCOG event soon! *Contact: Amy Malmer, SEMCOG Membership Manager.*

## SEMCOG membership costs less this year

SEMCOG is well aware of the fiscal challenges facing counties and local governments and the potential impact on SEMCOG membership. To keep membership in your budget, SEMCOG's Finance and Budget Committee, Executive Committee, and General Assembly adopted a membership dues freeze and reduction for 2008. Counties, who pay the majority of SEMCOG membership dues, will see, on average, a 5.3 percent dues reduction. Membership dues for local governments will be reduced an average of three percent.

We hope that this action will allow you to remain a part of SEMCOG and the important, relevant work that we do to improve the quality of life for all of Southeast Michigan. *Contact: Kathleen Lomako, SEMCOG Deputy Executive Director.*

## Membership dues can now be paid electronically

SEMCOG is pleased to announce that members can now conveniently pay their dues electronically. Members will receive documentation about this process with the 2008 annual dues invoice. *Contact: Virginia Lickliter, Senior Accountant, SEMCOG Finance Office.*

## Membership drive kicks off in 2008

As part of SEMCOG's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 2008, we will begin a membership drive. The goal is to increase membership to 165. We ask member communities to help us target nonmember communities in Southeast Michigan and suggest ways to attract them. If you are interesting in helping with this membership drive, please call us. We'll send you a current membership map and discuss ways in which you can help. *Contact: Amy Malmer, SEMCOG Membership Manager.*

## SEMCOG's new Web site includes section for elected officials; welcomes participation

SEMCOG's new Web site continues to have all the great information and data that users loved from the old site, but is better organized and more user friendly. The new site includes a section specifically for SEMCOG elected officials, with information on membership benefits and quick links to the content and data you need. There you will also find interviews with elected officials; we've started that off with an interview with Governor Granholm. The new site also has some interactive features, where you can communicate with other communities (and with us) on the issues that are important to you. Look for the Members button in the left navigation bar on the home page of [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org) or in the top navigation bar of every page on the Web site. Please watch future issues of *Regional Update* for more information about the new Web site. We'll let you know when new things are added. We also invite your comments and/or suggestions about the new Web site. *Contact: Sue Stetler, SEMCOG Communications Director, SEMCOG Information Center.*

**SEMCOG University offers training geared especially to local elected leaders**

SEMCOG members can take advantage of a variety of training opportunities free-of-charge and close to home. We will continue to offer SEMCOG University classes, giving local member governments the knowledge to advance Southeast Michigan. This year, you will find workshop sessions held in a variety of locations throughout the region. The SEMCOG University schedule for the first half of 2008 is:

- January 30 — Battling Foreclosures: What can elected officials do?
- February 20 — Let's Get Physical: The benefits of promoting active communities.
- April 18 — Keeping Them Here: Millenials, Boomerangs, and Empty Nesters choose vibrant communities.
- April 24 — It's Easy Being Green: What can local governments do?
- May 13 — Fixing the Transportation Funding Crisis: The road to prosperity.

Please watch future issues of *Regional Update* for more information on workshop times and locations. *Contact: Amanda Polanco, SEMCOG U Registrar, to RSVP.*

**SEMCOG's Information Center ready to help members with their research needs**

In addition to its reference library and a myriad of data available on [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org), SEMCOG also employs a professional librarian who can help with members' customized research needs. For example, if you are thinking about a new ordinance for your community and want to see what other communities have similar ordinances, SEMCOG can help with this kind of ordinance research. Information on the topic you request can be delivered to your e-mail address next day. Our trained researchers will include ordinances from Michigan communities of similar size and characteristics as yours (nationwide ordinances can be included as well), sample ordinance language, and pertinent newsletter articles on the

ordinance topic. How else can we help you? *Contact: SEMCOG Information Center.*

**SEMCOG comes to you: Annual outreach meetings scheduled**

Each year there is an opportunity for SEMCOG members to gather in their home county. At these meetings, members learn about recent SEMCOG efforts to assist local decision makers. Members also have the opportunity to voice their top priority issues. And, because elections to the Executive Committee are held at these meetings, members have the chance to enhance involvement in SEMCOG.

The 2008 outreach meeting schedule is: Oakland County, April 8; Monroe County, April 10; Wayne County, April 17; St. Clair County, April 22; Washtenaw County, April 23; Macomb County, April 24; and Livingston County, April 29.

Please save these dates and watch future issues of *Regional Update* for more information including times and locations. *Contact: Amy Malmer, SEMCOG Membership Manager.*

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