Appendix D:
Additional Information

freep/news/religion

MOTOR CITY JOURNAL: Archdiocese is launching campaign against sprawl
October 19, 2001
BY BILL McGRaw
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The anti-sprawl movement has a new friend—one with lots of money, political sway and power.

The 1.5 million-member Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit is launching a long-term campaign to educate the public and lobby officials about the growing inequity among southeast Michigan cities.

Archdiocesan officials, priests, nuns, lay people and anti-sprawl experts spent two days this week at Sacred Heart Sanctuary, laying plans for a statewide political movement to promote more balanced growth.

"This could be a watershed year. It could lead to a tremendous victory in our lives," said Bill O'Hearn, a conference leader.

"We are going to kick some butt," proclaimed Ann Serra, the archdiocesan's point person on the issue, as she discussed plans for lobbying and building political coalitions.

Participating described sprawl as a moral issue. They see Detroit and many of the nearby suburbs, facing growing poverty, abandonment and declining services, plus racial and social isolation. Meanwhile, distant suburbia are gobbling up acres of land and the number of newsmen is dwindling.

And all this is happening in an era when southeast Michigan has had little overall population growth.

"This is a region growing against itself," said John Poisson, a nationally known expert on sprawl, told the conference.

Catholics are by far the largest denomination in metro Detroit, making up one-third of the population.カードINAL ALFRED O'LEARY has used the archdiocese's political clout and financial resources in such recent public issues as banning assisted suicide and approving school vouchers. In statewide votes, the church's position wins every time and loses every time.

The church getting involved in sprawl could be a breakthrough," said Deacon Wheeler, executive director of the Detroit Branch National Association for the Advancement of Catholic People, who attended part of the conference.

While public-opinion polls and a growing number of ballot proposals indicate sprawl has become a concern to many Americans, it is a complicated issue and one whose mental significance is more difficult to define than, say, assisted suicide or abortion.

Many Catholics have chosen to buy homes in subdivisions or freshly paved roadbeds. Coincidentally, one of Msgr. O'Leary's golfing buddies is a Bill Ford, the founder of the Rosefield Hills-based firm that is the nation's biggest home builder.

Msgr. O'Leary has spoken about the imbalance between the growing edges of metro Detroit and the shrinking city, and he gave his blessing to this year's conference. But he is viewed as unlikely to make sprawl a regional crusade.

"I don't see the cardinal going after developers or after people who live on the fringe and say, 'Somehow you've ruined.'" said Tim Popovich, the archdiocese's director of Christian services.

The church certainly has felt the downside of sprawl.

Catholics have made up a large part of the white flight that has helped Detroit's population since 1950. Today, 1 of 3 Catholics in southeast Michigan live in the suburbs.

In the late 1980s, the archdiocese closed 15 churches with the city limits. Today, Msgr. O'Leary rates funds to keep open the remaining Catholic schools for Detroit's mostly non-Catholic population.

The church's presence in outer suburbs is growing.

In Rochester Hills, the cardinal recently dedicated Holy Family Regional School's South Campus, the first phase of a five-site, 11-school expansion and renovation in Oakland County. There are plans to build St. Maximillian Kolbe Catholic Church on 25 Mile in fast-growing Macomb Township.

The archdiocese's immediate anti-sprawl agenda includes pressuring local and state officials to move more than 100 regional transit authority, advocating solutions to its 12 churches and joining with leaders of other denominations, locally and across the state, to speak out on the issue.

Of course, a number of Catholics and non-Catholics don't see sprawl as important. Some say they believe limiting growth is an anti-American and a restraint on freedom.

"Well, sprawl also gives Macomb County residents the freedom to have pellucid water in Lake St. Clair," O'Leary said. "People should be free, but with backed-up sewers, bad sewers and overcrowded schools, they are not free.

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Ypsilanti needs to get rid of its 1-way streets

One-way streets are great for moving lots of traffic through an area quickly. That’s exactly why it is so important for Ypsilanti to get rid of some of the city’s mono-directional throughfares.

Most of the attention has been focused on West Cross Street. Just last week, city officials and community members met with consultants to talk about revitalizing the Cross Street area near the Eastern Michigan University campus.

One of the keys to that effort is returning that portion of Cross Street to two-way traffic. There’s no way for the businesses in that area to thrive with three lanes of traffic whizzing by and no on-street parking.

But Cross Street is not the only one-way street that needs reconsideration. There is no need for three lanes of one-way traffic on Huron and Hamilton streets. All those streets do is make it easy for people to have quick access through Ypsilanti with barely the need to slow down on their way to or from the expressway. And then there’s the confusion caused by the one-way sections of Adams and Pearl streets in the downtown area. Adams is one way for just one block, alongside the Ypsilanti District Library. Pearl, one block north of Michigan Avenue, has one-way traffic, for no apparent reason, from Huron west to Hamilton.

Fortunately, city officials generally agree that the community would be better served with these streets returning to two-way traffic.

Unfortunately, the state Department of Transportation has to be convinced before most of these streets can be changed. All the state really cares about is the safe and efficient flow of traffic.

For the most part, MDOT officials are amiable people. They live and die by the road construction season. They must be in heaven this summer. But what happens once you step up on the curb is not their concern.

City officials, however, have to worry about both the roads and the community that surrounds the roads. What good is it to have a smooth stretch of asphalt passing through an area where the businesses have failed or through a neighborhood where no one wants to live in the homes facing three lanes of traffic?

Thankfully, they are doing more than wringing their hands about it. Even after the state said no to the request to return Cross Street to two-way traffic, the city hired a consultant and met with neighbors in a renewed effort to make the state road goers see the error of their ways. The same consultant will develop a proposal to return Pearl and Adams to two-way traffic.

City officials also say they have not given up on the possibility of doing something to Hamilton and Huron streets between Michigan Avenue and I-94. Although funding to reduce those main traffic arteries from three lanes to two was turned down once, a second effort is still a possibility.

I use those roads several times a week as I wander back and forth between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. Even during what you would call rush hour, three lanes is overkill.

Ypsilanti is on a roll with roads right now. The median on Michigan Avenue has changed the feel of this major roadway through downtown. Work on the massive city road resizing project started Friday morning. The bridge on East Michigan Avenue is being rebuilt.

Let’s hope city officials can make a clean sweep of the roads by convincing state highway officials that a viable, thriving community is every bit as important as the safe and efficient flow of traffic.
Session to look at Cross Street
Future options for Ypsilanti corridor to be discussed

By MADALENE DICKO
ANN ARBOR NEWS

West Cross Street has seen better days. A local project is under way to change that.

Ypsilanti city administrators, along with officials from Eastern Michigan University and the Ann Arbor District Library, will meet Thursday to discuss future options for the area. The group will be looking at options for improving the street, possibly in the fall.

The area has been identified as a potential neighborhood for the Cross Street Improvement Plan. The project will focus on improving the area's pedestrian and bicycle access.

The project will be led by the city of Ypsilanti and the University of Michigan. The project will include public meetings and community engagement.

The project is expected to take place over the next two years. The city has already received funding for the project from the state of Michigan.

The area around Cross Street has seen some recent improvements, including the addition of new sidewalks and streetlights. However, the area still has potential for improvement.

The project will also focus on improving the area's bike infrastructure, including the addition of bike lanes and bike racks.

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Parking, crime rise as issues for Cross Street

Information meeting offers laundry list of items that need to be addressed there.

By MARIANNE RZEPKA

Crime, traffic, condemned housing and parking are all problems residents and business owners along West Cross Street want solved.

They were vocal during a Wednesday afternoon session – part of a study funded by the city and Eastern Michigan University to improve housing and businesses in the area.

A morning meeting brought together city administrators while the public was invited during the evening to make suggestions to consultants Hamilton Associates, a Detroit development firm, and Midwest Consulting of Ann Arbor.

Beth Barnes, who owns several rental houses in the area, said a big part of the problem is caused by landlords who don’t take care of their property.

“I’m a landlord. I should be on their side,” he said. But he pointed out one empty house that has become a “little house.” The city is taking legal action against landlord David Kircher for not fixing several of his houses that have been condemned.

Lack of parking is another serious problem, participants said. Sometimes students waiting to park in a lot near Pease Auditorium line up down West Cross Street waiting for available spaces and backing traffic. EMU officials are considering building a parking structure.

The issue of traffic is another serious problem, said Larry Wood, the university’s facilities manager.

The Rev. Edmund Erlichstahl, pastor of St. John the Baptist Church, said he had fewer cars parked in the church lot now that Cross Street Station bar is closed but people going into a nearby liquor store, as well as local residents, often park there.

Other issues addressed include more lighting, crosswalks and signs, as well as cleaning up sidewalks and adding trees and flowers. Participants said they wanted more police walking beats in the area, better areas for deliveries to stores and speed limits enforced.

This study follows an attempt last year by the city to get state approval to change West Cross Street from a one-way street to two-way. The state rejected it.

The city hired consultants to take a more thorough look at the area. The Cross Street district also includes Washburne Avenue, which is one-way eastbound, as well as North Huron and west to Oakwood Avenue.

This study’s results will go to the Cross Street Area Improvement Study Committee next week. Preliminary recommendations could come in September, possibly in another day-long session.

A complete traffic study will be done after EMU classes resume in September and a final report should be completed late this fall.

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