

# Here's wish list for Eight Mile

By Wayne Peal  
staff writer

Given their preference, area residents would like to see more street lights and safer intersections along Eight Mile Road — and maybe light rail lines and underground parking, too.

Those were among suggestions made Jan. 22 during a public hearing on the future of the Eight Mile corridor.

Elected officials, municipal department heads and urban planners are already considering ways to revitalize the 13-community traffic belt. Wednesday night's meeting gave area residents a chance to do some planning of their own.

"THERE'S NOTHING that says you have to use the road as it is," said John Hapovich of Farmington Hills, a member of his city's planning commission.

While light rails and underground parking were among the more far-reaching proposals, residents also suggested improving traffic entrances, exits and turnarounds, adding street lights, improving drainage and reducing speeds along some sections of the road.

Suggestions will be included in an Eight Mile revitalization plan to be presented at future hearings this spring.

Long a barrier between communities, Eight Mile should instead be considered a "linear city" of its own, according to the revitalization plan's proponents.

Eight Mile connects houses, shopping malls, factories and offices from western suburbs to Lake St. Clair, said urban planner Albert Bogdan, who conducted Wednesday's meeting at the Farmington Hills city hall.

The corridor includes Northland Center, the State Fair Grounds and the Chrysler complex at Mound and Van Dyke roads.

But it also contains topless bars, abandoned buildings and aging neighborhoods.

Instead of being a multi-community showplace, Bogdan said Eight Mile is often shunned.

"IT'S THE front door for 13 communities, but some communities are treating it like it's the back door," said Bogdan, a member of Farmington Hills-based McKenna Associates.

Eight Mile use patterns are changing in the wake of the 1989 expansion of I-696. Daily traffic is down as much as 50 percent along some stretches and businesses are concerned, Bogdan said.

Longtime Farmington Hills resident George Roberts said he wished planners would, but remained skeptical about bringing all communities together.

"You're not going to get anything until the mayor of Livonia marries the daughter of the mayor of Farmington Hills," Roberts said. "Plan and simple, it's a turf battle. Farmington Hills goes its way, Livonia goes its way."

Wayne County Executive Edward McNamara, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, Oakland County Executive Daniel Murphy and representatives of all 13 communities — including Farmington, Farmington Hills, Redford and Southfield — have been at least peripherally involved in the revitalization plan.

The plan's success, Bogdan added, involves bringing Wayne, Oakland and Macomb communities together in a single coalition. The coalition would not only seek newly available federal road grants, but also conduct regional planning.

"Most communities have done planning, but almost no community has done any planning with any other community," he said. "If we put out a report and it goes on a shelf, then we've obviously failed."

Communities aren't the only ones involved. Jurisdiction varies among the state and counties over the road. Eight Mile is a state road through Macomb County, an Oakland County road to I-696 and a Wayne County road from western Livonia to the county line, Bogdan said.

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A showdown between two GOP congressional veterans is possible — and one between two Democrats probable — under redistricting plans issued last week by state Democratic and Republican party officials.

Oakland County would be a battlefield between Reps. William Broomfield, R-Birmingham and Carl Pursell, R-Plymouth under the Democratic reapportionment plan.

Sander Levin, D-Southfield, and Dennis Hertel, D-Harper Woods, would likely face each other under either plan.

All four said they will seek reelection this year.

State Republicans and Democrats released their U.S. congressional redistricting plans last week. Almost immediately, each party challenged the other in federal court.

"IT'S ALL up in the air at this point," said Broomfield aide Jack Sinclair. "The judges could adopt one plan they could adopt the other or they could draw a plan of their own."

A federal court ruling on district boundaries is expected by mid-March.

Population loss will cost Michigan two of its 18 congressional seats. While final district boundaries await a judicial ruling, two matters already appear clear.

• Broomfield's 18th District is gone.

• So is Levin's 17th. Of the two, Broomfield may have the easier time returning to Washington.

Under the Republican plan, the 35-year congressional veteran would retain his Birmingham/Bloomfield base in a key-shaped district that would also include Troy, Rochester,

Rochester Hills, Oakland Township and a portion of Lapeer County. In a curious move, the district would also start west to West Bloomfield.

"It's an interesting blip," said Oakland GOP executive director Jim LaVallee, acknowledging West Bloomfield as home base for GOP State Sen. David Hovington, long rumored as Broomfield's successor. A Hovington candidacy for the U.S. House isn't expected this year, LaVallee added.

The Democratic plan gives Broomfield two options: face Pursell in a district that includes Farmington and Birmingham, or face Dale Kildee, D-Flint in an Oakland/Genesee county district that includes Rochester and Rochester Hills, as well as Oakland and Orion townships.

Whatever the district, Broomfield will seek another term.

"Yes, he's running," Sinclair said. Pursell is also running and is already meeting with potential Oakland County constituents.

"I represented many of these communities in the state Legislature," Pursell said. "Many of these people are already familiar with me."

A showdown with Broomfield appears unlikely, Pursell added.

"ANYTHING COULD happen, but I know two of the three judges (reviewing the case) are Republicans," he said.

Levin said he expected the judges' decision to be based on fairness, not party politics.

To expect anything else flies in the face of a long judicial tradition in Michigan," he said.

But fairness, he said, might mean a showdown with Hertel.

"The Democratic plan was regrettable but responsible," he said. "We all knew going in that we'd have to give up a seat. But the Republican plan is just a blatantly political move."



ABOVE: Republican Reps. William Broomfield (left) and Carl Pursell (right) face off under the Democratic reapportionment plan. BELOW: Democratic Reps. Dennis Hertel (left) and Sander Levin are pitted against each other under both parties' designs.



## How redistricting plans affect your community

Here's where various Oakland County communities would find themselves under U.S. Congressional redistricting plans currently before a federal court panel.

- Beverly Hills: Current district 17th. New district: 14th, both plans.
- Bingham Farms: Current district 18th. New district: 14th, Democratic plan; 8th Republican plan.
- Farmington Hills: Current district 18th. New district: 2nd, Democratic plan.

plan; 8th Republican plan.

- Bloomfield Hills: Current district 18th. New district: 2nd, Democratic plan; 8th Republican plan.
- Bloomfield Township: Current district 18th. New district: 2nd, Democratic plan; 8th Republican plan.
- Farmington: Current district 18th. New district: 2nd, both plans.
- Farmington Hills: Current district 18th. New district: 2nd, both plans.

tract 18th New district 2nd, both plans.

- Franklin Village: Current district 18th. New district: 14th, Democratic plan; 8th Republican plan.
- Lathrup Village: Current district 17th. New district: 14th, both plans.
- Oakland Township: Current district 18th. New district: 7th, Democratic plan; 8th Republican plan.
- Rochester: Current district: 18th. New district: 7th, Democratic plan; 8th Republican plan.

18th. New district: 7th, Democratic plan; 8th Republican plan.

- Rochester Hills: Current district: 18th. New district: Split north/south between the 2nd and 7th, Democratic plan; 8th Republican plan.
- Troy: Current district 17th. New district: Split between the 12th and 14th, Democratic plan; 6th Republican plan.
- West Bloomfield: Current district 18th. New district: 14th, Democratic plan; 8th Republican plan.

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