

SEMCOG OKs plan to halt urban sprawl

By Tim Richard
staff writer

After months of delay, a regional planning agency has approved the Big Four's policies to put the brakes on urban sprawl and steer business investment into older cities.

"This has been a difficult issue," said John Amberger, executive director of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

SEMCOG's executive committee had stalled action for four months until suburban counties were satisfied that they wouldn't be hurt by anti-growth sentiment. But last week, meeting in the historic Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills, the 40-member executive committee adopted a supportive resolution without dissent.

The BIG FOUR are Wayne County executive Edward McNamara, Oakland executive Daniel Murphy, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and Macomb County board chair Mark Steenburgh.

Their policy statement is intended

to guide the state Commerce and Transportation departments in efforts to bring an international trade center to Detroit.

It visualizes policies of preserving older neighborhoods and cities with an infrastructure (roads, water, bridges, sewers) already in place and slow expansion into farm fields.

"SEMCOG has developed reasonable ways of managing growth," said Amberger, referring to its road and sewer policies as "brakes" on uncontrolled sprawl.

"This adds a steering wheel — to steer development back to older areas."

THE SEVEN-COUNTY panel's decision was a victory for Murphy, the only member of the Big Four to attend SEMCOG meetings.

Murphy had to put out a brush-fire of opposition within the ranks of his own Oakland County Republicans and south nervous Macomb County commissioners.

He was helped by the Oakland

County Community Growth Alliance, which gave 22-1 support to a resolution supporting the Big Four's policies.

SEMCOG made a formal finding that the Big Four's plans are consistent with SEMCOG's own.

A MINOR FLAP developed when Oakland County Commissioner Larry Pernick, D-Southfield, charged SEMCOG was violating its own principles by making an Auburn Hills route eligible for federal aid.

"There aren't any more people in the region. All we're going to do is dissipate federal dollars," said Pernick.

On a 20-6 vote, he won a month's delay to study Auburn Hills' request to add Lake Angelus and Harmon roads to the Federal Aid Urban System (FAUS), making that route eligible for U.S. grants. The SEMCOG executive committee is due to meet Sept. 22.

Auburn Hills is a 10-year-old city north and east of the old city of Pontiac.

The Angelus-Harmon route would serve a projected shopping mall of two-million square feet and The Palace, a sports arena.

PERNICK, HOWEVER, foresaw the development as draining jobs and investment from Southfield and other south end cities.

"This decision has never surfaced in any elected body that I know of," he said. "I don't know who's pushing the buttons."

Bob Slattery, spokesman for the Oakland County Road Commission, said funds for the road widening are available under a demonstration grant that won't drain money from other communities. "This is additional funds for Oakland County that are there now," Slattery said.

SEMCOG staff member Carmine Palombo added that Angelus-Harmon route should be routinely approved because it meets all FAUS road criteria — for example, it connects other federal aid routes, serves as a collector street and serves a major land use.

Blood centers to open on holiday

The American Red Cross will open five blood donor centers Sunday, Sept. 3, in an effort to obtain more blood.

The Bloomfield, Ann Arbor, Livonia, Roseville and Southgate centers will be open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

All Red Cross donor centers will be open 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 2.

"There is an urgent need for Type O, negative and positive blood. But all blood types are needed,"

— Bob Batcher

Locations of the donor centers open on Sunday of the Labor Day weekend are: Ann Arbor, 3725 Packard Road; Bloomfield, 2388 Franklin, corner of Square Lake Road; Livonia, 29891 W. Six Mile in the rear of the Bell Creek Office Plaza; Roseville, 17955 E. 11 Mile, and Southgate at 19170 Eureka.

Call 494-2800 for an appointment to donate blood on either Saturday or Sunday of the Labor Day holiday. The calling center is open weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. and Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Appointments are not mandatory. Walk-in donors are always welcome, Batcher said.

Blood donations increased for several weeks after a plea last month but have dropped in the past week, Batcher said. Collections for the balance of August and the first two

weeks in September were projected on the low side. Donations, he said, return to normal about the second week in September.

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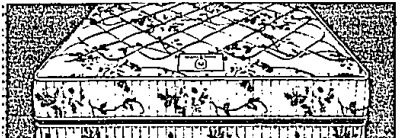
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