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Mobile Home Park Resolved After 50 Years

Lawsuits and a development proposal for a mobile home park with nearly 500 units have been terminated under an agreement between Ann Arbor Township and J A Bloch & Company, a Michigan development company, and Sun Communities, a national real estate investment trust.

Litigation to force the use of 149 acres for a mobile home park dates to the mid 1970's, that resulted in a judgement in favor of the developer. Under this agreement, Washtenaw County Circuit Court has agreed to vacate that judgement.

The Township's population would have grown by 20-30% under the current proposal with no increase in property tax revenue to cover associated costs for public services. Under Michigan law, these housing units are built on a chassis, rather than a foundation, and are not subject to property taxes.

The Township's financial analysis estimated that the cost to current Township residents for public services for the proposed mobile home park residents would have exceeded \$500,000 annually.

The development proposal called for housing units costing between \$250,000 and \$350,000 on 149 acres not served by public water or sewer. In addition to loans needed to purchase mobile homes, also referred to as manufactured homes, residents are responsible for monthly rent and park fees, as well as gas, electricity and internet bills.

The Township evaluated the type of units proposed and did not consider them to be the type of affordable housing typical of a mobile home park. This project targeted households with annual incomes 50% higher than Ann Arbor's median income of \$95,000 for 2 people. With the recommended housing cost ratio of 30% of gross

income, an annual income of \$145,000 would be needed to cover an estimated \$2,400 monthly payment for a 20-year loan on a \$300,000 unit (with a 5% down payment), estimated monthly park fees of \$900, and \$300 estimated monthly fees for gas, electricity and internet. Standard mortgages and loans longer than 20 years typically are not available for units located on rented land.

The Township also considered other issues related to the ownership of these housing units. "It's difficult, expensive or outright impossible to move these homes and so residents are forced to tolerate escalating rents, arbitrary fees, lack of transparency in billing and failure to invest in the maintenance of park properties, all which contribute to their housing insecurity," testified University of Colorado Sociology Professor Esther Sullivan at a committee hearing of the Michigan Senate (as reported by Detroit Free Press in March 2024). A package of bills to address these issues was introduced in the Michigan Senate.

"The Township decision to enter into an agreement with the developers was reached after months of analysis and negotiations," said Township Supervisor Diane O'Connell. "While not easy, it has been one of the most important decisions we have deliberated for the future of our Township."

The agreement reached between the Township and J A Bloch & Company and Sun Communities includes the Township's purchase of the acreage for \$10 million, and the sellers or their successors disavowing any future interest in the property. No bonds or property tax increase are needed to fund the purchase.

The Township will be studying this site to determine future options for the acreage which contains natural features such as woodlands, wetlands and a stream. Land uses for this site will be consistent with the Township's land use goals and policies. Possible options include agricultural preservation and residential development.

Climate Resilience in Action: Engaging Our Community on Climate Resilience Priorities

On November 21st, Ann Arbor Township hosted a vibrant community engagement meeting focused on enhancing local climate resilience. Led by Supervisor Diane O'Connell and Climate Resilience Committee Chair Ben VanGessel, the evening brought together approximately 30 residents, local leaders, and subject matter experts to chart a sustainable path forward. Beth Gibbons, Washtenaw County's Resiliency Officer, provided invaluable insights into county-level initiatives, while Maggie Halpern, from the Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovations, and Lissa Spitz, from the Ann Arbor 2030 District, shared resources for practical and actionable solutions in the community.

The meeting highlighted information from the Township's recently completed climate report, explored ongoing county and township efforts, and invited community members to actively shape strategies for addressing climate impacts. Throughout the evening, interactive activities encouraged participants to share their thoughts, while capturing new ideas and questions.

Attendees responded to three key questions posed during the meeting:

- What would you like to learn more about?
- What climate actions are you ready to take?
- How might the township take action, and in what timeframe?

Four key insights from the discussions:

Advancing Renewable Energy and Sustainable Buildings:

Participants discussed topics such as geothermal heating, passive solar building designs, and incentives for energy-efficient home upgrades. In breakout discussions, ideas emerged for better use of federal and state grants, updating ordinances, and programs to require energy efficiency in multi-residential buildings.

Enhancing Transportation and Public Infrastructure:

Many attendees emphasized the importance of expanding public transit options and making the township more bike-friendly. Suggestions included installing EV charging stations in large parking areas and at multi-unit housing, supporting suburban transit programs, and using solar street lights. Ideas also highlighted the need to advocate for electrifying vehicles, machinery, and tools.

Preserving Natural Resources and Promoting Land Use Solutions:

Conservation themes were a recurring priority, with ideas ranging from planting native trees and resilient species to returning waterways to their natural paths. Participants suggested promoting rain gardens, addressing runoff issues through regenerative farming practices, and assisting HOAs with retention pond management. Group discussions underscored the value of preserving open land and local ecosystems as integral to climate resilience. Residents also reflected on their connection to Ann Arbor Township's natural beauty, expressing a collective desire to protect these spaces for future generations.

Engaging and Educating the Community:

Attendees expressed enthusiasm for educational events, such as workshops on pollinator-friendly yards and green infrastructure. They also called for township-led programs to serve as models for other communities and emphasized ongoing education efforts to inform residents about sustainable practices and infrastructure development.

The Climate Resilience Committee hopes to continue the conversation in 2025 with additional engagement meetings and surveys to ensure all voices are heard.

Stay tuned for more opportunities to get involved! For more information on the recent Climate Report and the Township's Climate Resilience Committee, visit <https://aatwp.org/township-government/boards-and-commissions/climate/>. If you are interested in joining the Township's Climate Resilience Committee, please contact Diane O'Connell at supervisor@aatwp.org.

Thank You for Your Input!

Communication Survey Results

A big thank you to everyone who participated in the communication survey that was distributed last Fall! With 245 responses, your feedback is helping us enhance communication and services for residents.

What We Learned

Most of you feel connected to the township and appreciate staying informed, particularly through our newsletter, which remains the go-to source for updates. Email newsletters were the top choice for receiving information, followed by printed materials and our website. Many of you also emphasized the importance of timely updates for public safety, emergency alerts, and infrastructure projects.

When it comes to communication frequency, the majority prefer monthly or quarterly updates, with a focus on actionable and relevant information.

How We Can Improve

We received important suggestions from you for improvement related to the following areas:

- A more user-friendly website with timely updates and easier navigation
- Expanded communication channels, such as text alerts for urgent news
- Early and more readily accessible notification of new developments and public meetings

Looking Ahead

We will use your input to guide improvements to our communication system. Some changes will take time to implement and we encourage you to stay engaged:

- Visit the township website regularly for updates and meeting schedules (<https://aatwp.org>).
- Subscribe to the public notices list for timely news (<https://tinyurl.com/aatwppublicnotices>).

Reach out directly to township staff with questions or concerns by calling (734) 663-3418, emailing clerk@aatwp.org, or stopping by during our regular office hours (Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm).

Your voice matters, and we're grateful for your input. Together, we'll continue to strengthen communication and connection in Ann Arbor Charter Township!

What Our Local Farms are Up to This Winter

This month, Seeley Farm is turning on the heat in their propagation greenhouse to get vegetable seeds, flower seeds, and bulbs growing for the new season. This allows them to have cold hardy garden plants available for sale in their farmstand in early April when they open for the season.

They start the year off with hardy flowers like pansies, sweet peas, and sweet alyssum, and herbs like thyme, parsley and oregano. Below is a picture of the greenhouse filling up with plants.



Seeley Farm

Green Things Farm's CSA memberships are posted and available for purchase at greenthingsfarmcollective.com. And, while we might be in the thick of winter, Green Things Farm Stand spring opening is right around the corner. You'll be able to get organic vegetables, seedlings for your garden, as well as plenty of other local goodies.



Green Things Farm

Supervisor
Diane O'Connell

Clerk
Rena Basch

Treasurer
Carlene Colvin-Garcia

Board of Trustees
John Allison
Della DiPietro
Eric Kaldjian
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Winter Road Maintenance: What to Expect

Roads are maintained by the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) which is tasked with clearing snow and ice for roads to be passable. In its 'Winter Maintenance Level of Service Policy', the WCRC lays out which roads will receive winter maintenance according to a 4-Level priority structure. This structure is organized according to how much traffic volume there is on a given road. Roads with the highest volume are assigned maintenance crews and vehicles first.

What Gets Plowed First?

- **Priority 1:** Paved County Roads, I-94, US-23, M-14, US-12 between I-94 & M-52
- **Priority 2:** M-52, M-153, M-17, BR-12, US-12 between I-94 & Ecorse Road
- **Priority 3:** Subdivision Roads
- **Priority 4:** Gravel Roads
- Roads in Homeowner Associations (HOA) within the township are cleared by private companies contracted by the HOA.

The WCRC focuses on keeping high-volume roads clear to ensure emergency vehicles and essential

traffic can travel safely. After priority 1 and 2 routes are cleared, crews will move on to subdivision roads then gravel roads. If another snowstorm hits, they will return to priority 1 and 2 roads first. If you live on a less-traveled road, don't be surprised if it takes longer to see a plow.

According to the Policy, the WCRC clears snow and ice on priority 1 and 2 roads down to the bare pavement, while priority 3 and 4 roads are cleared to a thin cover of snow. During conditions of extreme packed ice on gravel roads, the WCRC Superintendent of Maintenance and the Director of Operations must authorize the "application of abrasives" on intersections, hills and curves.

If you notice a road issue, whether related to snow or something else, you can report it in a few easy ways:

Online: Visit the WCRC website to report problems: <https://www.wcroads.org/residents/report-an-issue/>

Phone: Call (734) 761-1500 to speak with someone directly.

App: Download the WCRC Fix It app for quick reporting.