

# Business Roundtable Recommendations 1995

## Transportation Committee

Brent Bair, Chairperson

- Oakland County should support rail revitalization and take steps to enhance benefits of the abundant rail transportation facilities in Oakland County.
- Oakland County should strive to make the Oakland-Pontiac Airport a hub for business air transportation needs.
- Oakland County should support the establishment of an enhanced regional transportation system.
- Oakland County must reverse the damaging effects of road deterioration and congestion, and create the best road system in Michigan.

## Regulatory Assistance Committee

David Sowerby, Chairperson

- Create an easy-to-follow permits checklist to assist businesses.
- Develop a "One Stop Shop" permit system.
- Develop and disseminate counter arguments to the conclusions contained in SEMCOG's Regional Development Initiative.
- Add a Regulatory Information Section to the Computer Bulletin Board program to enable individuals and businesses to access the County database for information on regulatory issues.
- Ensure that environmental laws and regulations are based on sound science and economics.

## Foreign Trade and Exporting Committee (International Trade Committee)

Eric Mittelstadt, Chairperson

- Adopt a pro-active role in export development by establishing a separate segment of Oakland County Government within the Economic Development Department which deals with promoting and supporting export issues and opportunities for Oakland County based companies.
- Establish a foreign Free Port and Trade Zone within Oakland County. These tax-advantaged facilities generally include storage, re-packaging, inspection, exhibition, assembly, manufacturing, and other processing.
- Establish a Shared Foreign Sales Corporation of 25 or fewer unrelated exporter-shareholders, to reduce costs while obtaining the full tax benefit of an FSC.
- Explore collaborative efforts with local universities, colleges, chambers of commerce and other private industry and governmental organizations to promote educational seminars and presentations on export related topics.

## Technology Competitiveness Committee

Phil Trimble, chairperson

- Develop an electronic information network.
- Oakland County should either become a “node” in the Merit Network by providing hardware for high-speed links to the Merit Network, or assist Oakland University in upgrading its current Merit Network Links.
- Provide an electronic mail system for all County Businesses.
- Make Oakland County manufacturers aware of the services provided by the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center (MMTC) and similar service providers.
- Enter into a trial program to provide office space for an MMTC staff person.
- Provide 50% matching funds for an Oakland County staff position to market MMTC services and develop additional services and programs for Oakland County businesses.
- Establish a commission to review MMTC’s effectiveness in assisting Oakland County firms.
- Co-sponsor seminars and workshops with MMTC, Oakland Community College, Oakland University, Lawrence Technological University, and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers and other similar service providers.
- Develop a series of videotape lectures on key manufacturing topics.
- Establish an environment in which emerging technologies can more easily be “discovered” and/or applications derived.
- Take the lead in developing collaborations to seek major grants.
- Provide grant writing assistance to businesses seeking research and development grants.
- Publish a grants newsletter and/or Electronic Bulletin Board System on available grants for business.

## Finance and Venture Capital Committee

Paul Tobias, Chairperson

- Oakland County should attract an established and successful venture capital firm.
- Establish a County resource person, an economic development ombudsman, to create and maintain a database of financial intermediaries available for financing assistance.
- Enlist the aid of CEOs of large companies headquartered in Oakland County to help Oakland County as a business location.
- Oakland County should promote the formation of a Special Small Business Investment Company in Oakland County.
- Establish an ongoing finance and venture capital council to monitor and assist in the implementation of initiatives, recruitment, and the provision of a mechanism for business networking.

## Small Business Initiatives Committee

Jack Macauley, Chairperson

- The County should expand its efforts to prepare non-college bound students.

- The County should assist private entrepreneurs to develop a manufacturing incubator for job creation.
- The County should extend the retailing assistance planned for the Woodward Corridor to other downtown and retailing groups.
- The County should develop more resources and delivery activities for the thousands of small businesses within Oakland County.
- The County should develop multi-media communications for the Business Roundtable's recommendations.

## **Labor Force Preparedness Committee**

Terence Adderley, Chairperson

- An ongoing partnership of business, education, and government in Oakland County should be formed.
- A clear comprehensive summary of worker training programs should be compiled, kept current, and widely disseminated.
- Improved labor market information should be developed for use throughout Oakland County.
- "School-to-work" programs should reach every student in Oakland County.
- Transit providers should improve service to major employment centers in Oakland County.
- Address skill gaps and skill development needs
- Oakland County Government should assist business in recruiting outside our area to fill skilled labor shortages, which exist in Oakland County.
- A plan for developing a workforce with the skills necessary for jobs of the future should be prepared
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## **Higher Education Collaboration Committee**

Sandra Packard, Chairperson

- Establish the Oakland County Research and Development Consortium to link business and education.
- Form a CEO Collaboration Council to promote collaboration between business and education.
- Create a "Meadow Brook Seminar" to build a climate of collaboration among the Collaboration Council members.
- Create a Higher Education center for Technology Transfer.
- Create a county-wide database of private and public internships and work study opportunities for students.
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## **Utilities & Telecommunications Committee**

Alan Kiriluk, Chairperson

- Establish expertise at the County level to help interpret the Michigan Telecommunications Act for Oakland County.

- Implement remote electronic access to Oakland County information; become the “Networked County of America.”
- Establish a district office in Oakland County of the newly created Environmental Assistance Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
- Pursue the reorganization of the Detroit Water Board in order to form a truly representative regional advisory board that would participate in management of current infrastructure and planning of future requirements.
- Eliminate or significantly reduce the costs of utility relocations and utility rates for redevelopment areas.
- Establish a uniform permitting system and a standard plan for utility location within rights-of-way.

## Economic Development Programs Committee

Timothy Morris, Chairperson

### System Improvements

- Establish an organized account management approach to economic development services in Oakland County.
- Create a Countywide one-stop-shop for economic development services.
- Undertake training/information dissemination to improve the level of knowledge and skills of those involved in economic development.
- Create sales and service standards and establish corresponding tracking and benchmarking components.
- Create measures of customer satisfaction and capture this data from clients.
- Clarify relationships between the Michigan Jobs Commission, Michigan First, and Michigan International Trade Authority and integrate these state level activities with those of Oakland County Development and Planning Division.

### Marketing

- Establish a business ambassadors program for business outreach and county host activities.
- Investigate electronic marketing approaches and joint County/local initiatives for data base development.
- Extend the family of marketing material in a coherent comprehensive and crisp manner to better compete in the marketplace.
- Publish research and data as an adjunct to the pure marketing materials to maintain the “family” of materials.
- Showcase immediate successes and positive comparisons of Oakland in a monthly executive briefing suitable for direct mail and fax transmission to a target audience.
- Undertake research to investigate non-automotive recruitment targets, including defense conversion, medical technology, biological sciences, telecommunications, composite materials, and computer-related technologies.
- Develop packages that link together local, county, and state marketing materials in an organized fashion.

### Job Training

- Increase the amount of Section 107A School Aid Act funding from its current \$40 million level to \$80 million annually to support job training/upgrade grants to business.

- Advocate the consolidation of federal job training programs to focus on company needs and to achieve locally based objectives.

### Financing

- Investigate the SBA Microloan and Low-Doc Programs in conjunction with local banks to gauge their usefulness in Oakland County.
- Promote the expansion of BIDCO's and seek to interest private venture capital sources in pursuing Oakland County equity investment opportunities.
- Strengthen the SBA Detroit office and encourage its active support of small business financing initiatives, including the Section 504 loan program and export development program.
- Seek methods of bringing more consistency in the utilization and administration of tax-exempt private activity bonds (IDBs).
- Maintain P.A. 198 of 1974 but amend the statute to accomplish: consistent application, focused criteria, faster approval process, standardized clawback agreements, elimination of the anti-pirating provision, and expansion of the manufacturing definition to include administrative, technical, and R&D activities.
- Support the proposed Michigan Economic Growth Authority legislation, which would provide a refundable SBT credit on a formula basis in return for job creation and capital investment.

### Environmental Assistance

- Create a close working relationship with the new Environmental Assistance Division (EAD) of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). Advocate a metropolitan Detroit field office of EAD with programs and expertise oriented to this region of the state.
- Work with DNR, the banking and legal communities to develop less restrictive Type C closures. Continue with the codification of DNR regulations to make them less likely to staff interpretation and to streamline and shorten the various permit approval processes.
- Revise DNR regulations that hinder "brownfield" development opportunities and seek methods of spreading and/or reducing risk and liability, including covenants not to sue.
- Urge our 11 local two-year and four-year educational institutions to pursue all available technology development/transfer initiatives in close cooperation with our 2,700 manufacturing companies located in Oakland. In addition, pursue consortia approaches to technology transfer by developing joint programs.

### Community Redevelopment

- Support creation of a statewide community infrastructure fund, with grants and loans made on a competitive basis for job creation and capital investment projects.
- Create an alternative to the property tax as the basis of funding tax increment financing mechanisms (LDFA, DDA, TIFA).
- Create a mechanism to allow expedited land assembly and ownership by communities under strict guidelines and for specific redevelopment/job creation/capital investment purposes.
- Continue financial support by Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) of the Transportation Economic Development Fund, especially categories A, B, and C which benefit the most congested and highest economic potential areas of Michigan.
- Support the County Road Association's "Funding for the Future" proposal to upgrade the area's transportation system.

- Ensure that Oakland County and its constituent local communities are receiving their fair share of state and federal development and infrastructure funds passed through SEMCOG's Metropolitan Planning Organization review activities.

## Legislative Advocacy Committee

Bruce McIntyre, Chairperson

### Single Business Tax

- Continue to support efforts that seek a suitable replacement for the Single Business Tax.
- Remove FICA and other compensation from SBT calculations.
- Lower tax rate: think of Business Tax reduction as an ongoing process.
- Avoid industry specific changes, i.e. make changes across-the-board.
- Reconsider the apportionment formula.
- Eliminate "cliffs," i.e. points where a minor increase in the tax base creates a hefty increase in taxes.
- Eliminate \$95,000 owners compensation limit.
- Simplify tax analysis and preparation.
- Simplify tax system to aid business decision-making.

### Unemployment Insurance

- Reinstate the waiting week.
- Revise the misconduct definition.
- Eliminate automatic benefit indexing permanently.
- Permanently reduce minimum UI tax to .5% for employers who have had no benefit charges in the past five years.
- Repeal the alternative earnings qualifier.
- Change the credit week definition to 30 X the state minimum wage (currently 20 X the state minimum wage).
- Calculate benefits at 65% of after-tax earnings (currently 70%).

### Workers Compensation

- Maintain a positive competitive Workers' Compensation marketplace through continued rate adequacy and controlled health care spending including small business access to affordable Workers' Compensation insurance.
- Develop and promote outreach programs aimed at educating small business owners on both how our Workers' Compensation program works, as well as how to manage Workers' Compensation costs through implementation of safety programs, emphasis on return to work and case management.
- Support continued cost containment and efficiency measures within the Michigan Department of Labor to maintain cost levels below the national average.
- Ensure an ongoing program of accurately monitoring the Workers' Compensation system.
- Institute appropriate measures to discourage employee fraud, and to encourage employee responsibility and awareness.
- The terms "stress" and "disability" are in need of definitional refinement. These issues may be resolved by pending Michigan Supreme Court cases.
- The provision of lifetime benefits should be reviewed relative to a cap based on number of weeks of benefit (pre 1965 = 500 week cap).

- The concept of making Workers' Compensation part of collective bargaining agreements should be explored, retraining, return to work, and partial disability.
- Encourage alternative dispute resolution.
- Explore the cost/benefits of changing from "0" waiting period to "1" week.
- Establish standards that permit and encourage, to applicable groups, self-insurance programs including proper regulatory controls.
- Limit liability claims to injuries that are clearly related to the work environment and to actual job performance.

#### Health Care Reform

- Support reform that relies principally on market-based health care services, rather than a government-imposed global budget.
- Oppose mandates that require employers to pay for coverage. If universal coverage is mandated, it should be the individual's responsibility to obtain coverage.
- Individual users should take some financial responsibility for their own health care, possibly through the implementation of a national Medical IRA program.
- If employers choose to pay for a portion of health benefits for employees, the cost should be tax deductible to the employer.
- The ability to obtain coverage should be guaranteed, regardless of prior medical history.
- Support reform of claims processing by standardization and reduction of paperwork.
- Support portability of health care benefits.
- States should be allowed to implement innovative Medicaid reforms by creating a streamlined – fast track Medicaid waiver process.

#### Organization

- Establish an Oakland Business Consortium as a non-profit civic organization, which will focus on economic development, physical development and public policy issues.

## Quality of Life Committee

Michael Webster, Chairperson

#### Communications

- New and advanced forms of communication technology should be explored in order to achieve the most effective delivery systems possible.

#### Mature Community Rehabilitation and Preservation

- Mature housing rehabilitation, preservation and the consolidation of various community development groups within the county is an ongoing priority and vital to the county's continuing development and growth.
- Low-income housing is an issue that must continue to be a priority of Oakland County Government.
- The county government is encouraged to work closely with the DDA's, overlay districts and beautification projects to coordinate their efforts and consolidate all the private and public resources that affect the county at large.
- The County Executive's office should appoint a racial and ethnic coalition to begin bridging the gap between social and racial groups, to break down barriers of prejudice and mistrust, and to create a new understanding of the need to work together to improve the quality of life in the county for all citizens.

#### Health and Lifestyle Education

- Identify health risk behaviors that are intrinsic to Oakland County, specific communities and/or individual populations.
- Develop Comprehensive education programs designed to address the identified health risk behaviors.
- Identify locations to serve as education dissemination points such as: shopping malls, senior citizen centers, human service agencies and churches.

#### **Arts and Entertainment**

- Create a self-help kit for groups and individuals that seek to put on an event in the county.
- Develop a county-level clearinghouse for all area events at the county level.

#### **Recreation**

- Provide Oakland County residents with easy access to a network of paved bike paths throughout the county.
- Ensure that bike paths in the County support family recreational activities and the needs of bicycle commuters.
- Develop a bike path network that connects with state, regional, county and local parks and other recreational centers.