

# OPINION

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## Let's not do it for Ann Arbor's good

Be very skeptical.

That's the best advice I can give to the Ypsilanti Visitors and Convention Bureau about a proposal to combine operations with the Ann Arbor bureau.

Not a lot is being said publicly about this idea, which is not new, other than a group of Ann Arbor people is exploring the possibility of creating a countywide entity to promote all the communities in the county, and they have contacted Ypsilanti people who run the other visitors and convention bureau.

As it stands now, both Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor have chamber-affiliated visitors and convention bureaus. The bureaus are financed by a 2-percent hotel/motel room tax in the county. The county keeps 5 percent. Of the remainder, Ann Arbor gets 75 percent and Ypsilanti gets 25 percent. Each does whatever it wants with its share of the money.

The merger would pool the money and create one agency to promote all of Washtenaw County. Washtenaw County will be identified in the new promotional materials as "that area around, but not nearly as good as, Ann Arbor."

The larger, more efficient bureau would be more effective for both Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti and would bring

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more tourists into Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, this story goes. I have no doubt it would greatly benefit Ann Arbor, but that Ypsilanti part kind of has me worried.

To quote someone famous, "That'll be the day" when Ann Arbor promotes Ypsilanti as a place anyone wants to go.

And make no mistake about it, Ann Arbor will want control of the action if there is going to be a combined bureau.

Our area will be lucky to get the crumbs of tourism promotion if Ann Arbor has a say in how the money gets spent.

I know a few Ann Arbor people personally, and I like them, but their prejudice against Ypsilanti oozes out of their pores. They make no bones about expressing their belief that Yp-

silanti is a place for the lower life forms of the county.

I can't see how allowing that particular mentality to influence how we promote our area is going to do anything but harm our efforts in favor of concentrating on the idea that Ann Arbor is the center of the universe and repository of all things good in western civilization, despite the fact that it is so close geographically to such a backward place as Ypsilanti.

Now that this idea has surfaced, proponents are of course going to say, "Oh, heck no. We love Ypsi, and we're going to promote it to pieces."

Ann Arbor will promote itself to the detriment of Ypsilanti, and turning over our share of tourism dollars to the control of Ann Arbor will only give Ann Arbor more power to polish its own image and ignore as much as possible Ypsilanti's wishes.

If we choose to do this, we should make absolutely certain that the agreement that brings this bigger, better convention bureau into being says very prominently: "At least 25 percent of all revenues expended by this bureau will be spent solely at the discretion of the representatives of the Ypsilanti area."

(Melchior is managing editor of The Ypsilanti Press.)