

We're changing; your feedback will help
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In the coming weeks, your News will begin to focus more on local people, local issues and local events.

Some of the changes include more stories about local government, increasingly local flavor in sections such as our Food pages and more columns from our staff.

Over time, we'll add stories and columns by area residents, who will provide additional and varied views of our communities.

You'll continue to find a mix of local, state and national news in your newspaper, but our ongoing evolution puts us on a decidedly local path that we've discussed for years. It's what we do best.

Our strategy largely stems from challenges shared by newspapers across the country, which have one hand gripping printed pages and the other working in the digital, online world.

Typically, readership has never been higher when online and print readers are combined, and that is case for us and our online partner, Mlive.com.

Circulation of newspapers, however, is sagging as readership shifts to online, and that, too, is happening here.

During the last several years, we've transformed ourselves into an around-the-clock information company, and our staffers post stories and photos as well as video and audio clips on mlive.com/annarbornews/.

Gone is the once-a-day publication cycle that was triggered when we started our printing presses. We file our stories online as soon as possible, regularly update them and that gives you more options. You can read the newspaper, find us at Mlive.com or use both.

The Internet also gives you a chance to tap into hundreds of national and international news options whenever you want, and that buffet of options can't be matched in printed pages.

The timing of these changes is triggered by the recession, which is choking the economy and hurting our advertisers. Like newspapers across the country, we're looking for ways to balance expenses and revenue.

The two largest costs for newspapers are the salaries of employees and the price of newsprint. Projected price hikes for newsprint in the coming year are staggering. No newspaper is left untouched.

Large, metropolitan papers have trimmed staff with huge layoffs or buyouts, or both. Some of those layoffs have totaled in the hundreds.

Smaller papers have traveled the same path, but they have lost fewer staffers. We're trying to reduce costs with voluntary buyouts in some areas, some consolidation and fewer pages.

It's sad to watch talented employees leave, and it is a challenging time as we come to grips with the same economic forces that triggered downsizings by local companies and even institutions like the University of Michigan Health System.

While we'll have fewer pages as we move forward, our goal is to remain relevant and vital to our readers and to the communities we serve.

We want you to be part of our change and part of our future.

Let us know the types of local news you value and what additional local stories you'd like to see in your newspaper.

You can write to me at The Ann Arbor News, 340 East Huron St., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Or, you can reach me via e-mail at mynewspaper@annarbornews.com.

Ed Petykiewicz is editor of The Ann Arbor News