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Southgate Becomes 28th Suburbs Alliance Member *Municipal Coalition Focuses on Regionalism, Redevelopment*

FERNDALE – The City of Southgate became the 28th municipal member of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance this week, marking an increased interest by local governments in working together to address shared challenges.

“Communities are finding that addressing many of the issues they face requires reaching beyond their borders,” said Suburbs Alliance Executive Director Conan Smith. “The Suburbs Alliance offers cities a forum for initiating collaborative actions and finding allies among their neighbors.”

Southgate and other built-out cities throughout southeast Michigan are facing a unique set of challenges relatively new to suburban communities; among them, changing demographics, growing retiree costs, decreasing or stagnant populations, and perceptions that redevelopment is difficult and complex. In addition, the crippling interplay of Proposal A and the Headlee Amendment and repeated cuts to revenue sharing in recent years are making it even more challenging to maintain core city services and make ends meet. Many cities have been forced to sell city property, reduce essential services and even raise taxes. Nearly all mature communities are feeling the strain – even those that are successfully attracting new investment.

The Suburbs Alliance, a nonprofit organization founded in 2002, was created by a group of elected and appointed suburban leaders to give inner suburbs a means by which to organize around their shared challenges. The organization is working to facilitate regional collaboration, encourage the use of innovative redevelopment processes and reform public policies that affect mature communities. Its members span Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, and Washtenaw counties.

Located in the heart of Downriver, Southgate is a community of approximately 30,000. The city is almost completely built out. City officials will work with the Suburbs Alliance and its member communities to create innovative solutions to the development and fiscal challenges threatening established cities.

“Michigan suburbs today face daunting challenges, particularly inner-ring suburbs like Southgate, where development is approaching 100 percent,” said City Administrator Levon King. “Proposal A and the Headlee Amendment cap our revenues while our expenses, particularly insurance, health care and legacy costs, are not capped. We need to join forces with other suburbs to cope with these challenges and serve our citizens more effectively.”

More information about the Michigan Suburbs Alliance can be found at www.michigansuburbsalliance.org.

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