

# EDITORIAL PAGE

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## In Our Opinion

# No pain means a gain

**B**eyond location, location, location, real estate developers go where land costs are low. But they also are lured where there are fewer headaches.

As Hazel Park city officials are discovering – and hopefully more communities will do the same – lessening the barriers to develop can quickly translate into new homes and new job opportunities for residents.

As you may recall, Hazel Park was one of six metro Detroit communities chosen in February for the Michigan Suburbs Alliance's Redevelopment Ready certification program. The designation is meant to expedite site plan and planning processes and signal to developers that inner-ring suburbs have dealt with issues that typically impeded redevelopment.

The other cities were South-

field, Eastpointe, River Rouge, Taylor and Ypsilanti.

Nothing changes overnight, but enough had changed in the eyes of Michael Furnari that he sought one of the last vacant parcels in Hazel Park for a five-building condominium project. Furnari and city officials already have worked out a development agreement as well as landscaping and parking plans.

(See *Oakland Business Review*, May 5-11.)

These are the types of matters that in many communities would trip up a project. But Hazel Park and the Michigan Suburbs Alliance's program is easing the process without giving up control of the community.

"We are trying to create a development-friendly atmosphere without sacrificing design and charac-

ter elements that citizens support," said Conan Smith, executive director of the Ferndale-based alliance.

If Oakland County, the region, the state and the country are to bring some sanity to development – call it "sprawl," if you wish – developers and citizens in general also must dive seriously into the issues paralyzing older communities. It is in those cities that much of the infrastructure already exists – no muss, no fuss about whether a township will extend sewer and water to farmland-turned-development-hotspot.

We applaud the Michigan Suburbs Alliance for undertaking Redevelopment Ready program, and Hazel Park for seeing the opportunity presented by the program. We will be watching for more signs of progress.

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