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Mature Suburbs Find Strength in Numbers *Rockwood Joins Suburbs Alliance*

FERNDALE – The Michigan Suburbs Alliance today welcomed the city of Rockwood into its coalition of older, built-out suburbs, marking an increased interest by local governments in working together to address shared challenges.

“Communities are finding that addressing many of 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.”

Often bypassed by developers for easier development in outlying suburbs, Rockwood and other older suburbs are struggling to raise revenue under the crippling interplay of Proposal A and the Headlee Amendment. Rising healthcare costs have hit them harder than younger suburbs because of their significantly larger retiree stock, and decreasing populations and changing demographics pose additional challenges for many of these cities. Intensifying their struggles are decreased state and federal funding and a stagnant economy. Many have been forced to sell city property, reduce essential services and even raise taxes.

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 the issues that they all face. The organization is working to facilitate regional collaboration, encourage the use of innovative redevelopment processes and reform public policy that affects mature communities. Its members spread across Wayne, Oakland, Macomb Washtenaw counties.

Rockwood, a community of about 3,400 in southern Wayne County, hopes to stimulate developer interest in the city by participating in the Suburbs Alliance’s Redevelopment Ready Communities program, one of the only programs in the country that certifies cities for incorporating expertly designed best practices into their redevelopment processes.

“We have an I-75 interchange. We have rail lines. We have available vacant land and industrial and commercial buildings,” said City Manager Gary Carey. “Rockwood is positioned for growth and looking forward to learning from the Suburbs Alliance on how to be business-friendly.”



michigan suburbs alliance

The Michigan Suburbs Alliance is currently working to build a metropolitan agenda for policy reform that integrates goals for mature suburbs with the best interests of the region. A draft agenda will be discussed at its annual meeting on May 19, 2006, which is open to the public. For details and to register, visit www.michigansuburbsalliance.org/media.htm.

More information about the how the Michigan Suburbs Alliance is working to make a more equitable, sustainable region can be found at www.michigansuburbsalliance.org.

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