



Grosse Pointe Woods' Path to Certification April 16, 2007

A charter member of the Suburbs Alliance since 2005, the City of Grosse Pointe Woods has long been an active, enthusiastic participant in developing solutions to the many challenges facing southeast Michigan's mature communities. For many years, Grosse Pointe Woods officials have independently evaluated the city's redevelopment processes and conducted efforts to create an open, efficient redevelopment climate. Upon entering the Redevelopment Ready Communities program in May 2006, the city was already practicing several of the best practices expounded by the Michigan Suburbs Alliance in the RRC Best Practices. With the Redevelopment Ready Communities evaluation process and technical assistance, the city has been able to enhance its redevelopment readiness and become even more developer-friendly.

RRC is an 8-step program that challenges cities to integrate a set of best practices into their redevelopment processes, ultimately creating a more attractive environment for redevelopment. To gain certification, cities must demonstrate achievement of these best practices through an evaluation by a team of consultants. At the heart of RRC is a commitment to creating a community-built vision for the city, permanently integrating public engagement into redevelopment processes, shaping efficient, open processes that reduce risks, costs and project timelines, and increasing communication and education about redevelopment opportunities within the community. Grosse Pointe Woods has internalized these values, evidenced below by the efforts the city made over the past ten months to achieve Redevelopment Ready Communities certification.

Grosse Pointe Woods entered the RRC program with three primary goals: elevate community involvement in local redevelopment efforts, enhance the predictability and efficiency of the redevelopment climate, and empower city staff and leadership to continue assessing and improving internal processes. The city has taken the following steps to achieve these goals:

- Sketches illustrating acceptable building materials and architectural façade treatments for redevelopment and new structures will be included in the city's design guidelines or zoning ordinance. Providing this information early on will ensure residents and developers begin the application process prepared, setting the stage for a smooth and timely approval. The design sketches are the result of technical planning assistance provided by the Redevelopment Ready Communities program.
- Grosse Pointe Woods leaders have integrated a strong public engagement component into redevelopment processes. Developers are encouraged to dialogue with adjacent neighbors about proposed projects prior to formally applying to the city. The city is working with potential investors to engage residents early in the project planning in order to determine the community's vision for redevelopment and mitigate opposition to site plan application approvals.
- The master plan, zoning ordinance, city maps, community profile and similar tools for development have been added to the city's website.
- The city newsletter recently started reporting information on economic development efforts within the city.
- Grosse Pointe Woods values ongoing training opportunities for elected and appointed officials. Departments have dedicated budgets for training and education. Staff recently attended workshops conducted by the Michigan Association of Planning and the Michigan Suburbs Alliance that focused on ways to streamline zoning regulations and create stronger redevelopment strategic plans. Educating city leaders reduces liability through risk management and ensures they are aware of current laws, trends and techniques.
- The city is working to link all departments to the BS&A Equalizer program, a permit tracking software tool. Through this system, all departments are able to access information on assessing, taxation, zoning, permitting activity and other important subjects and provide this information to potential investors and residents.

