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Highland Park Becomes 29th Suburbs Alliance Member *Municipal Coalition Focuses on Regionalism, Redevelopment*

FERNDALE – The City of Highland Park became the 29th 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.”

Highland Park 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.

Surrounded by Detroit, Highland Park is a community of approximately 17,000 rich in heritage. It is the birthplace of the Model T, mass production and the first paved mile of highway. City officials will work with the Suburbs Alliance and its member communities to address the fiscal challenges threatening established cities.

“After learning about the Suburbs Alliance, I felt the City of Highland Park needed to be a member of this organization,” said Highland Park Mayor Titus McClary. “Being a part of the Suburbs Alliance will assist us in working with the State of Michigan to secure funding that is sorely needed.”

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

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