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Contact: Conan Smith
(734) 891-2241

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

FERNDALE – The Michigan Suburbs Alliance today welcomed the city of Berkley 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 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.”

Often bypassed by developers for easier development in outlying suburbs, Berkley and other built-out 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, decreasing populations, and changing demographics which 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, and Washtenaw counties.

Berkley, a community of almost 16,000, is nestled along the Woodward corridor north of Huntington Woods. The city offers an active downtown district, a walkable residential community, and is home to the annual Dream Cruise Parade. Berkley will work with the

Suburbs Alliance and its member cities to increase municipal collaboration, resource sharing, and redevelopment initiatives.

“I’m very pleased that the City of Berkley is joining the Alliance,” said Jane Bais-DiSessa, Berkley’s city manager. “I look forward to working with its members in identifying answers to issues that impact our region.”

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

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