



Eats & Drinks  
 -- Restaurants  
 -- Wine Report  
 Books  
 CD Reviews  
 Escapes  
 Casino Guide  
 Michigan's Best  
 Living  
 Lifestyle  
 Homestyle  
 Fitness  
 Forums  
 News Talk  
 Autos Talk  
 Wings Talk  
 Lions Talk  
 Pistons Talk  
 Tigers Talk  
 Big 10 Talk  
 High Schools  
 Movie Talk  
 Tech Talk

through the approval process," RRC's project director Jim Townsend said. "No one is saying we're trying to bypass public debate, but it makes sense to get people on the same page when it comes to development."

The communities hope to eliminate prolonged debates that can arise over building heights and zoning changes. Public hearings can sometimes last past midnight as residents and public officials wrestle over adding liquor licenses or approving environmental cleanup efforts.

Older communities say they are often at a disadvantage when competing for development with new municipalities that can offer clear land, or greenfield sites. Building on cornfields can save developers time and money because they can avoid pollution problems left behind in long-standing municipalities.

The program began last summer as an initiative of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance, a nonprofit group in Ferndale that provides older suburbs in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and Monroe counties with a single voice in dealing with regional and state issues such as revenue sharing, land use or finance.

The program is being funded by two grants — \$50,000 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and \$75,000 from the Troy-based Kellogg Foundation's People and Land Program.

By the fall, the RRC plans to deliver standards that the 24 communities can adopt to complete development projects more quickly. The standards would include time frames for providing developers with site-plan approvals, zoning changes or building permits.

Once the standards are tested in areas around the region, a formal certification program will be adopted early next year.

"The RRC program will impact every phase of development, from what kind of land is available for condos or stores, what the acreage is, zoning, and other requirements," said Tom Barwin, Ferndale's city manager. "We want to provide the information to developers up front so they don't have to do the traditional drive-around approach."

Fred Zorn Jr., Taylor's director of economic development, said his city hopes to help other cities spur development. The city recently cleared the way for the development of Midtown Taylor, a collection of 74 brownstone condos and nearby stores now under construction at Goddard and Pardee roads. The city bought the land for the project from out-of-state owners and then sold it to a private developer. The roughly \$15 million project will be completed this summer.

"One thing RRC will help communities do is be more pro-active,"

Dearborn Heights  
 Hamtramck  
 Inkster  
 Lincoln Park  
 Melvindale  
 River Rouge  
 Southgate  
 Taylor

#### Macomb County

Center Line  
 Eastpointe  
 Roseville  
 St. Clair Shores  
 Warren

#### Oakland County

Ferndale  
 Hazel Park  
 Huntington Woods  
 Pleasant Ridge  
 Oak Park  
 Royal Oak  
 Southfield

#### Washtenaw County

Ypsilanti

#### Monroe County

Monroe

Source: Michigan Suburbs Alliance,  
 Ferndale

- ▶ [Comment on this story](#)
- ▶ [Send this story to a friend](#)
- ▶ [Get Home Delivery](#)

#### lofts, shops

- [Tourism in Michigan on rebound](#)
- [Deep discounts attract Summit Sports customers](#)
- [Bush aide touts trade deals](#)
- [Banks battle fake money](#)
- [Northwest pilots consider airline's cost-cutting request](#)
- [Organized labor struggles to stay alive](#)
- [Pickle firm seasoned with success](#)
- [More states start to tax online sales](#)
- [Marketers shun older generation](#)
- [Retailing briefs](#)
- [Champion declines, but Noble posts gain](#)
- [Investors fear rally is over](#)
- [Metro/State Briefs](#)
- [National Briefs](#)
- [World Briefs](#)
- [People on the move](#)

#### Sections for this date

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

Select index 

Copyright © 2004  
 The Detroit News.

Use of this site indicates your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) (updated 12/19/2002).

Zorn said. "As part of Midtown Taylor, we tore down old retail buildings and installed decorative lighting, street upgrades and other improvements."

The RRC program will require that communities list potential development areas via informational packets and on the Internet. Cities also would be required to pre-approve prospective building sites with their residents ahead of time so that developers aren't caught in the middle of angry public debates. Developers welcome the changes.

"Sometimes you can get in the middle of a public squabble that slows down your project," said Mark Wilcox, vice president of development for The Garrison Co., a general contractor in Farmington Hills. "The RRC program sounds promising. We're trying to build two stories above a retail strip in downtown Northville, but the project has been bogged down by community politics."

*You can reach R.J. King at (313) 222-2504 or [rjking@detnews.com](mailto:rjking@detnews.com).*

[▶ Previous Story](#)   [▶ Next Story](#)