

# THE PLAIN DEALER

## **Suburbs to seek Strickland's help Thursday, November 16, 2006**

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Columbus -- When Governor-elect Ted Strickland takes office in January, Ohio's older suburbs want to welcome him with ideas to help them rebuild.

About 50 officials and advocates for the inner-ring suburbs of Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati and Dayton gathered here Wednesday. They discussed ways to shore up crumbling roads, redevelop abandoned property and keep cities from using state-sanctioned tax breaks to pirate businesses from each other.

"We're going to try to take advantage of the change in power to see what kind of change we can effect," said Tom Moeller, city manager of Madeira, outside Cincinnati.

Leaders of the Ohio First Suburbs Consortium, made up of the four regional groups, felt neglected by outgoing Republican Gov. Bob Taft. They believe Strickland, a Democrat, will be more sensitive to the needs of major cities and older suburbs.

"We're excited," said Kimberly Gibson, who works with Columbus suburbs. "If you look at his urban agenda, it's a First Suburbs agenda."

Cuyahoga County Treasurer Jim Rokakis asked the suburbs to push for tougher state action on predatory lending, a factor in Ohio's nation-leading foreclosure rate. Officials also proposed changing state law to speed foreclosure of abandoned property and providing more state money for demolition.

Older suburbs, faced with shrinking budgets, want the state to repair roads in urban areas before building new ones in growing outer suburbs.

Moeller and Gibson said the state should pay to fix a larger number of main roads and not just limit spending to interstates and state routes. Gibson called for loosening a section of the state constitution that requires gas taxes to be spent on road work, excluding bus and rail projects.

Former State Rep. Gene Krebs advised the cities to take a conciliatory stand on the use of eminent domain for economic development. Krebs is head of Greater Ohio, a nonprofit group that promotes "intelligent land use."

Older suburbs say they need to take property through eminent domain because those cities have little open land for growth.

But the Ohio Supreme Court restricted the practice in July, and legislators are poised to add their own touches. Krebs said efforts to take land, if viewed as excessive, could provoke opponents to ask voters for a sweeping statewide ban.

Cleveland Heights Vice Mayor Ken Montlack, chairman of the Northeast Ohio First Suburbs Consortium, said policy recommendations will be quickly drafted and approved, so they are "ready to go in January."

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