



P.O.Box 80102
Akron, OH 44308
(206) 279-4760

innerbelt@akroninnerbelt.org
<http://www.akroninnerbelt.org>

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CONTACT: John Dziurlaj

Electronic Mail: jnd5@uakron.edu
Website: <http://www.akroninnerbelt.org/>
Phone: (330) 714-8935
Fax: (206) 279-4760
P.O.Box 80102
Akron, OH 44308

Plusquellic's Plan Wrong on Innerbelt and Wrong for Akron

The Innerbelt is an important and much needed traffic reliever for Akron's Freeway system, said the Innerbelt Integration Initiative Wednesday.

The Innerbelt Integration Initiative is a group of concerned Akron-area citizens who have lobbied for the completion of the freeway since 2005.

"The Innerbelt was specifically designed to relieve congestion at the central interchange," said Chairman John Dziurlaj. "The mayor cannot judge the utility of a partially completed freeway any more than a critic can judge an unfinished work of art."

The Innerbelt was designed as part of a cross county freeway system, and was eventually slated to connect to Route 8. The forth phase, or final connection, never took place.

Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic announced Wednesday that the city plans to demolish part of the Innerbelt to free up land for development.

"This shows the lack of foresight by the city. The Innerbelt was not forced upon the City by some outside force. They proposed it, they paid for it, they built it - in the name of progress. Now a new administration sees fit to disassemble the workings of the past, in the name of progress," Dziurlaj said.

Dziurlaj also pointed out that the land in which the Innerbelt would traverse to reach route 8 is mostly government owned property.

The city is hoping to receive a \$5 million grant through the Ohio Job Ready Sites Program. Dziurlaj pointed out that many of the tenants the city hopes to lure to this new district already have locations in Akron such Theken Medical and Mempro.

"What we are seeing is a plan that does not grow the business sector, but rather consolidates Akron businesses in one place. I'm not sure if Theken Medical and Memprop are unhappy with their locations, after all, they consolidated their operations in Akron. What we are likely to see happening is another Main Place," Dziurlaj said.

Main Place, which opened in 1992 with a 360 guest reception, ultimately failed to find an anchor, and was eventually filled with tenants already located downtown rather than bringing in new businesses.

"We need to return to the Innerbelt project to bring Akron's infrastructure into the 21st century. Mistakes of the past, such as abandoning the project, ought not to become the hobgoblins that steal our future," Dziurlaj said.

Contact: John Dziurlaj (330) 714-8935
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