

Clinton turns to Toledo to help map urban plans

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Toledo neighborhood activists continue to play a pivotal role in shaping President Clinton's urban agenda, as evidenced by their high profiles at a meeting this week of advocates and administration aides.

The meeting, which took place Monday in Washington, followed a May 4 announcement by the President that he would send an Economic Empowerment Act to Congress.

That legislation, which administration aides say was influenced by proposals Toledoans outlined at a January roundtable session with the Clinton transition team, is being portrayed as a departure from the approaches of the Reagan and Bush administrations to big cities.

"They've done what we've asked them to do," Dave Beckwith, a research associate at the University of Toledo Urban Affairs Center, said of the Clinton camp.

"They've articulated a vision of America as a community and recognized that some parts of that community are in trouble. They've adopted a comprehensive, community-based strategy to rebuild communities from the bottom up. And

they've recognized the key role community groups can play. That's the fundamental strategy that we asked for in January."

Christopher Hyland, a political director during the transition who continues to advise the Clinton camp, credited Mr. Beckwith and former Toledo Councilman Peter Ujvagi with playing key roles in organizing the January "Roundtable on Neighborhoods in America" meeting in Little Rock. With Mr. Ujvagi and Sue Wuest, of the UT Urban Affairs Center, Mr. Beckwith wrote a report on the meeting that

Monday Mr. Beckwith was co-chairman of the follow-up session, which took place at the National Neighborhood Coalition's office in Washington. There, he introduced presentations about the report, including one by Pamela Martin Turner, director of Toledo's Brown-Dorr-Collingwood Revitalization Corp.

In addition to Mr. Beckwith and Ms. Turner, the 50 neighborhood activists who participated in Monday's session were three other Toledoans: Ms. Wuest; Ted Ligibel, a veteran advocate of historic preser-

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Urban plans

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vation; and Mary Clare Rietz, executive director of the Neighborhoods in Partnership coalition.

Taking it all in was Bruce Reed, who served as issues director for the Clinton campaign and is now an assistant to the President for domestic policy. Also present were administration aides who are helping develop the President's proposed National Service Program and representatives of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"Neighborhoods and communities are at the heart of Bill Clinton's vision for America. We intend to make these themes the core of our domestic policy," Mr. Reed reportedly told the group.

Those words were well received by the activists, whose report suggested that the President:

► "Articulate a vision of America as a community, and recognize the urgent need to come together to rebuild our communities that are threatened: in the inner-city neighborhoods, poor rural communities, the barrio, reservations, public housing projects, and ethnic and minority neighborhoods."

► "Adopt a comprehensive community-based strategy to revitalize America from the bottom up."

► "Recognize the key role of community-based organizations in carrying out that strategy."

Much of the meeting involved a discussion of the Economic Empowerment Act, which would identify 110 communities for targeted aid from the federal government. A centerpiece for the administration's urban strategy, it was outlined by Mr. Clinton in a teleconference last week with the mayors of New York, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Chicago, and York, Pa.

"Our proposal provides targeted investment incentives to draw investment dollars into distressed ur-

Highlights of proposal

PLAN: The federal government will select 100 "enterprise communities" for targeted aid. Red tape that restricts development will be relaxed, and grants for job training, day care, housing, and other services will be awarded to these communities. Ten additional "empowerment zones" will be designated, and will receive more benefits, including tax credits for businesses.

PARTICIPANTS: Sixty-five of the "enterprise communities" will be in cities, 30 in rural areas, and 5 on Native American reservations. Six "empowerment zones" will be in urban areas, three in rural areas, and one on a reservation.

STRATEGY: Areas with high poverty and unemployment will compete to be part of the program. A board consisting of Clinton cabinet members will select communities on the basis of whether revitalization plans involve neighborhood groups, businesses, and government officials.

PROPOSED BUDGET: \$8.1 billion.

PROCESS: The plan, which was developed by the Clinton administration must be approved by Congress before it can be implemented.

ban and rural communities," the President told the mayors. "We're going to streamline regulations, rules and paperwork."

The emphasis by Mr. Clinton and Mr. Reed on streamlining regulations, the need for coordinated strategies, and particularly on grass-roots activism were all mentioned in the report written by Mr. Beckwith, Mr. Ujvagi, and Ms. Wuest.

"They've already taken initiatives that show they are following the suggestions we gave them in January," Mr. Beckwith said.