

MEDIA ALERT

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For immediate release

Region to Plan for Jobs and Growth with \$4.9 Million Sustainable Communities Grant

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG) officials said the award of a \$4.9 million federal HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant will accelerate work underway that links strategic planning for growing the economy and jobs with a comprehensive plan for sustainable regional growth.

"This grant enables us to marshal needed resources and aggressively move ahead in an effort that "hardwires" business growth strategies into a plan for regional growth," CCOG Chairperson and City of Albemarle Council member Martha Sue Hall said.

The Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG) was awarded a \$4.9 million grant on November 21 to support a broad bi-state regional planning effort to grow the economy and jobs, control cost of government and improve quality of life. By leveraging nearly \$5 million of federal HUD Sustainability grant funds with more than \$3 million private and public sector resources, CCOG and its regional partners are beginning an ongoing cooperative regional process extending past the life of the grant.

The Charlotte region's aggressive strategic approach helped it capture the third largest grant nationally and the largest for North Carolina. The grant was one of 28 awarded nationwide as part of the 2011 Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD officials announced the grant award at a press conference in Charlotte at which US Representative Mel Watt, Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners Chairperson Jennifer Roberts, City of Charlotte Mayor Pro-Tem Patrick Cannon, and City of Albemarle Councilperson and Centralina Board Chairperson Hall also offered remarks.

"This is the beginning of a process to create a sustainable and resilient region for us, for our children and grandchildren," City of Charlotte Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Cannon said.

The HUD grant is one element of an extensive, collaborative, region-wide planning effort that is getting underway to engage local governments and regional businesses, non-profits and residents, to ensure the region grows in a way that is sustainable and resilient.

"The challenges and opportunities we face are large," said Congressman Watt, of North Carolina's 12th District. "There are people throughout our region that are struggling with job losses, and there are small and large communities challenged by the loss of businesses and industry. At the same we are faced with the challenge of how to grow and expand to meet the needs of a regional population that is expected to double in the next 20-30 years."

"It's the job of local governments, working together in a regional context with businesses, non-profits and the citizens of this region, to find solutions to these challenges," said Hall.

Business and job growth strategies will be "hardwired" into community and regional planning. The process will develop strategies to improve the region's competitiveness by connecting housing, jobs, transportation, education and workforce training, while enhancing the quality of life and securing a healthy environment for the future.

Key elements of this effort include:

- HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant award of \$4.9 million to develop a Regional Sustainable Development Plan.
- NC Tomorrow which integrates regional Community and Economic Development Strategies into the nation's first-ever statewide Community Economic Development Strategy Plan (funded by the U.S. Economic Development Agency and North Carolina Department of Commerce).
- The Catalytic Projects for Sustainable Regional Revitalization work that helps communities prioritize industrial areas in need of revitalization (funded by the North Carolina Sustainable Communities Initiative and CCOG operating funds).
- Plugging in from the Mountains to the Sea, regional participation in a statewide program to enhance electric vehicle infrastructure (funded by a \$500,000 U.S. Department of Energy grant with \$114,000 in additional matching funds).
- North Carolina Department of Transportation Mobility Management project to develop strategies to enhance regional coordination of local transportation services for the elderly and the disabled.

"Our growth is occurring on a regional basis and we need a strategic plan to guide that growth so that it is sustainable and sensible. This integrated planning effort will build on the foundation of the shared CONNECT Vision, and will take us to the next level," said Jennifer Roberts, Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners Chairperson. "It will develop a process for working together across jurisdictional borders to ensure our region has a vibrant and resilient future and continues to compete internationally."

The process will be based on inclusivity and using established, effective private-public partnerships to engage the full diversity of the region in citizen-based engagement. More than 100 private and public sector partners of the CONNECT Consortium are already involved in and supporting work to develop solutions to local and regional problems through this regional effort. Organizations interested in this process are invited to participate in the Consortium.

More information will be provided about the regional planning public engagement process and opportunities in the coming months.

The CONNECT Consortium planning area links officials and business leaders in the ten North Carolina and four South Carolina counties, covering the region served by Centralina CCOG and Catawba Regional COG.

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