

Newsletter

June 2012

EPA Region 4 Includes: Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi

Partnership for Sustainable Communities— Three Years and Going Strong!!

This month marks the **3rd Anniversary of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities** (PSC). Collaboration between HUD, DOT and EPA. Based on the number of projects now underway, the local and state agencies and community groups involved and the interest in the groups' priorities, it has been a great success so far.

Since June 16, 2009, the PSC's birthday, the agencies have provided \$3.5 billion dollars in assistance to over 700 communities across the nation. As of April 2012, PSC agencies have received 7700+ applications for assistance, requesting \$102 billion. Seven hundred and forty-four projects have been funded in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Besides the project funding, several other improvements in interagency collaboration have been achieved. For example, all three agencies are jointly developing programs and reviewing grant applications, as well as working to ensure that projects meet multiple community goals with each investment. A capacity-building network was established by HUD

and EPA in 2011 to help grant and assistance recipients exchange ideas on successful strategies, emerging tools and public engagement plans. The National Sustainable Communities Learning Network was launched by HUD in March 2012 to facilitate peer-to-peer learning among HUD and EPA grantees and technical assistance recipients.

A White House event is planned for June 28 to celebrate the investments made in communities throughout the country by the PSC agencies, and to elicit input from Mayors, business leaders and other stakeholders. EPA Region 4 Administrator Gwen Keyes Fleming will represent EPA at the event and lead a discussion with a panel of mayors and business leaders about the impact of the Partnership in their communities.

In the Fall of 2011, the PSC more fully embraced the needs of rural communities by producing with its strong partner, USDA, a report called "Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities".

The inclusion of USDA as an "all but formal" partner offers the PSC the opportunity to work more closely with smaller and more rural communities that have unique challenges and needs compared to their more urban sisters. The Appalachian Regional Commission is a second collaborator in the eastern U.S. that focuses on rural communities. PSC agencies have also partnered with them in workshops in 2011-2012.

The Region 4 Partnership for Sustainable Communities continues to demonstrate to other areas, the power of strong collaboration, persistence and creativity in helping communities plan for and address their priorities. To date, the PSC agencies have funded over 50 planning, capital construction, brown-fields clean-up and workshop efforts in the eight southeastern states.

A PSC report on the first three years' results is being finalized and will be available online at www.sustainablecommunities.gov before June 28.

Special points of interest:

- 3rd Anniversary of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities
- FEMA and EPA work with North Carolina communities to reduce flooding impacts

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FEMA, EPA, NOAA, North Carolina Collaborate on Pilot Projects on Reducing Climate Impacts on Communities



The Port of Wilmington, NC along the Cape Fear River.



New Bern lies at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers.

While FEMA and EPA have partnered for years to help communities struck by natural disasters, the collaborative work was enhanced in 2010 when the two agencies signed a Memorandum of Agreement to coordinate more closely on both pre- and post-disaster planning and response. Greensburg, KS, impacted by an F-5 tornado in 2007, received joint pre-MOA assistance to facilitate their recovery, which has been remarkable. Communities in Iowa also received pre-MOA support in 2009 in visioning how they wanted to rebuild and considering ways in which they could decrease the likelihood of flooding impacts in the future.

It was after these successes that the MOA was developed in 2010 to facilitate cooperation in the future with fewer logistical challenges. As a result, the agencies are discussing post-disaster recovery efforts, preparing for community support in a more cooperative atmosphere and staff are becoming more familiar with each others' programs and priorities.

A new application of the MOA is being undertaken in North

Carolina where the State and the federal agencies are working in two pilot communities to evaluate increased threats of flooding and storm impacts that are expected to result from climate change.

The project in New Bern, NC will include an analysis of potential flooding by the Neuse and Trent Rivers, impacts to community assets, and identification of ways to avoid those effects. In response, EPA will examine New Bern's local plans and policy instruments—such as subdivision ordinances, design guidelines, and zoning—to identify and integrate land use and green infrastructure solutions that would help the city reduce or adapt to the impacts of climate change. In so doing, the risk to vulnerable populations within the Five Points neighborhoods will be reduced. New Bern also asked for help in establishing greater consistency between multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan and local plans and development codes and regulations. Community planners, federal partners and the North Carolina Department of Emergency Management will work with

city leaders and community members to achieve their mutual goals.

A second pilot is being initiated in Wilmington, NC which is already seeing impacts from sea level rise along its coast and is concerned about the impacts. The project will use the iRISK tool that the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management (NC DEM) is developing under their Sea level Rise Risk Management Study to identify risks, and model associated financial impacts to the infrastructure system. Using the results of the modeling exercise, strategies will be identified to safeguard infrastructure and to use land use planning to reduce vulnerabilities. This project has the potential to incorporate new risk and vulnerability information that could alter the path of infrastructure planning and implementation to affect a preferred, lower risk outcome.

Through this project, NCDDEM, EPA, NOAA and FEMA will be able to apply the iRISK tool in a local context and demonstrate how the tool can be used to inform and develop land use strategies that can improve resilience to sea level rise.





Focus area in Montgomery, AL

EPA's Greening America's Capitals Projects in Montgomery and Jackson

EPA's Greening America's Capitals program seeks to provide design support to capital cities interested in new approaches to transportation, stormwater treatment, increasing green space, enhancing economic strength, creating a greater sense of community and related activities. Using design experts, EPA and its team work with mayors and community representatives to reinvigorate a defined area of the city in a way that fits community goals and priori-

ties.

The community input phases of the projects in Region 4 have been completed. Draft designs have been provided to the City of Montgomery for the eastern end of the National Historic Civil Rights Trail as it winds along Oak and Jeff Davis Streets to the Capital. Included in the proposed enhancements are changes to landscaping, building facades, intersections, neighborhood roadways to accommodate bicycles and

other improvements to the business district in the area. The Jackson, MS project began in late March, but the draft designs are nearing completion and in review by EPA staff. Once approved by the Mayors and their staffs, the design reports will be finalized for both locations and the communities will begin seeking funding to implement the community improvements. In each case, having included local, state and federal partners in the design phase will be a plus.

MACON'S MAYOR MEETS WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS TO DISCUSS REVITALIZATION



Mayor Robert Reichert

Mayor Robert Reichert of Macon invited HUD, DOT and EPA to visit his city on March 26, 2012 to hear his vision for a revitalized downtown that would offer a more human-scale and walkable experience, transit along the business/entertainment/living route and an economy that creates opportunity for everyone. The Mayor provided an overview of Macon and the Second Street Project, which

was followed by a presentation from his consultants on the approach and key elements of the plan. HUD, EPA and FTA representatives then reviewed relevant grants and technical assistance opportunities with the Mayor and his team. A van tour of the area provided a better sense of context. The goals and plans presented would establish a central core that demonstrates sus-

tainable design and development.

To achieve his goals, Mayor Reichert's will: expand public engagement, improve the business environment, connect public green spaces with Ocmulgee River walk, and make Second Street the center of Macon's community. His long term goal is to make Macon the hub of central GA and beyond.

EPA Office of Research and Development to do Community Research

EPA's new community-related research program began in October 2011. The Sustainable and Healthy Community Research Program has begun to develop projects and to engage with communities through Regional representa-

tives. Projects that are in development include those that were identified in last year's Listening Sessions held in seven locations across the nation.

Research project pre-

proposals were submitted by EPA Regions on May 11. Those that make the cut will be asked to submit fully developed proposals by the end of June. A total of \$700K will be invested to complete these research projects.



Atlanta Planning Celebration for Partnership in August

A celebration of partnership accomplishments in Atlanta is being planned for August 29, 2012 and will include a sustainability workshop. The federal agencies involved in the Partnership for Sustainable Communities have collaborated on a number of projects in Atlanta since 2009. Begun as a pilot location for the new collaboration, the effort in Atlanta started in the Pittsburg and surrounding neighborhoods included in the City's Neighborhood Planning Unit V, and has now ex-

tended into the Proctor Creek watershed including the Vine City and English Avenue neighborhoods. Funding has been invested in healthy housing (HUD), identifying contamination at brownfields sites (EPA), training local residents in lead removal and green renovations (EPA and City) and other projects.

Now, the City is considering how to approach the restoration of the Proctor Creek Watershed, with technical assistance and possible grant funding from federal partners.

The watershed has been impacted by sewer overflows, flooding in neighborhoods, garbage dumping and neglect. This degradation results in a lower quality of life for area residents and lowers water quality downstream in the Chattahoochee River, the major river in Atlanta. The "Hooch" eventually joins with the Flint River in Alabama and flows into the Apalachicola River in Florida. Park Pride, a local non-profit, has played a major role in enlisting assistance. More to come.



Community Garden at the Center for Working Families in the Pittsburg Neighborhood, Atlanta.

Building Blocks Workshops Underway in Region 4

EPA's Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities technical assistance workshops are underway in Region 4. These workshops, provided through a competitive process to communities whose leadership submits an application, include topics as different as Green Building, Walkability, Transit Oriented Development, Small and Rural Community Zoning Codes, and Complete Streets.

Thirteen communities in Region 4 were successful in applying for a workshop and will be receiving them/have received them between April and September. Some workshops are provided by EPA contractors and staff, however, a larger number are being given by EPA grantees: Smart Growth America, Projects for Public Spaces, and Global Green. These sustainability focused non-

profits were the recipient of grant funding through a new approach by EPA to increase the impact of the Building Blocks program. Many communities need the assistance from such workshops to engage the appropriate stakeholders and generate interest. Recipients include Daytona Beach, FL; Greer, SC; and Asheboro, NC. For more information on Building Blocks go to: www.epa.gov/



Roger Millar of Smart Growth America leads a TOD workshop in Greer, SC

Knoxville "Smaller Places" Conference a Success

The **Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC)** was awarded a HUD grant in 2011 to provide support to communities that had received grants from HUD in 2010 or 2011 as part of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities collaboration. One of

the support methods has been workshops on topics of interest to the new grantees that also foster networking among the participants.

The second such workshop was held in Knoxville on March 5-7, 2012 and brought

together 16 grantees from across the country to hear from experts, share challenges and make contacts with whom to discuss new approaches. Discussions included funding approaches, building partnerships, identifying local assets upon which

to build and how land use policies impact sustainability projects. A Sustainability Bootcamp was held for 2010 grantees in Boston, MA in 2011. Go to: [www.http://sustainablecommunitiesleadershipacademy.org](http://www.sustainablecommunitiesleadershipacademy.org)



HUD Updates and Program Announcements

FY 2011 Choice Neighborhoods Grant Awards

In January 2012, HUD awarded FY 2011 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants to 13 communities totaling \$3.6 million. "All across the country, local planners are serious about rolling up their sleeves to transform distressed neighborhoods into choice neighborhoods," said Secretary Shaun Donovan. "These communities can now begin the comprehensive planning needed to turn distressed housing and long-neglected neighborhoods into viable and sustainable mixed-income communities that support positive outcome for families."

The following communities in

Region 4 won awards:

- Housing Authority of the City of Meridian, MS -- \$242,500
- Opa-Locka Community Development Corporation, FL -- \$300,000
- Housing Authority of Savannah, GA -- \$300,000
- Housing Authority of the City of Wilson, NC -- \$200,000

HUD also has designated eight applications as "competitive runners-up" and has posted names of applicants, along with the grantees, on the partner.hud.gov website.

With support from HUD's Mississippi Field Office, the Gulf Coast Regional Planning grant is engaging, representatives from the Vietnamese and African American communities to ensure that these communities are fully represented in the planning process. In support of these public engagement activities, HUD is providing public housing and Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity data, as well as the use of its document translation services.

New Sustainability Officers are being identified in HUD offices to provide support to specific projects. This will enhance the collaboration.

DOT News

On March 27-28, 2012, FHWA-KY and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) co-hosted a FREE "Nature's Call to Action" conference, attracting a large (87 registered) variety of individuals from federal, state, and local governments, universities, high schools, and research institutions.

Day 1 focused on Systems - system preservation/asset management/risk assessment of infrastructure subject to natural and man-made disasters. Krista Mills, USHUD-KY, was one of the featured speakers. Also presenting were representatives from FEMA-R4, USACOE, the

State Climatologist, KYFEMA, KY Geological Survey, KY Department of Agriculture, KYTC Division of Bridge Preservation, Public Works.

Day 2 focused on the Individual - reducing our carbon footprint/livability. Shana Baker, FHWA-HQ was one of the featured speakers. Also presenting were FHWA-KY, KYTC Administration, KY Department of Public Health, KY Environmental Education Council, KY Division for Air Quality, KYTC Division of Planning, and KYTC Transportation Delivery. Exhibitors included the American Red Cross, the Kentucky Division

for Air Quality, Kentucky Geological Survey, and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet.

FHWA Georgia Division led a workshop on February 28, titled *Transitioning to Sustainability*. The workshop's 30 participants included representatives from EPA, FTA, HRSA, GDOT, and several of the State's MPOs. The central concept of the workshop was that by considering the bigger picture when planning development, costs can be reduced, impacts lessened and communities improved.

North Carolina HUD Grantees Convened in January

HUD's North Carolina Field Office conducted a convening meeting of the Office of Sustainable Housing Communities' North Carolina grantees, including the DOT Tiger II grantees, as well as representatives from the State of North Carolina's Sustainable Communities Task Force, and a representative

from the Environmental Protection Agency. Staff from HUD's Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities and local office program directors and staff offered technical expertise and guidance on HUD programs in North Carolina to a total of 33 meeting participants. A follow-up meeting is planned for

later this year. The state includes planning grant recipients in the following areas: Asheville, Greensboro, Wilmington and Charlotte. Each of the grantee consortia includes five to 12 counties around these larger cities. Priorities include



Land of Sky and the City of Knoxville Hold Community Forums for HUD Planning Grants

Land of Sky Regional Council in Western North Carolina and the City of Knoxville (and consortia members) have been holding community meetings over the past few months to gather input on the goals and objectives of their HUD Regional Planning Grant projects.

The Plan East Tennessee (PlanET) partnership in the Knoxville region includes 15 cities, four towns and five counties. PlanET has held two rounds of community outreach, in mid-November 2011 and again in late April 2012. Participants were asked to share their perceptions of strengths and challenges presently facing their communities, looking at topics like job growth, housing, transportation, clean environment, and community

health. Each two-hour forum engaged participants in small-group activities, using teamwork software and a public polling tool, called Brainstorm Anywhere. Group members were able to toss ideas around for discussion and evaluation and shared those ideas with the larger gathering, all in real time. The forums provide an opportunity for community members to have a voice in the long-term success of the region. Sessions were held in each of the five counties comprising the region, and all residents were welcome to attend.

The Land of Sky held its first round of community meetings in May, one in each of the five counties in the Region. Representatives of the

eight workgroups and staff from organizations involved in the Planning effort offered an "open house" style format that provided participants with information on objectives and goals developed by the workgroups. They were able to provide feedback and offer other suggestions, as well as learn more about the Region and its assets. A second round of community outreach is planned for the fall following analysis of results from the initial forums.

Community outreach and input are significant elements in all of the HUD Regional Planning grant projects, to encourage engagement of many perspectives.

EPA News and Updates

EPA has recently awarded several **brownfields awards** to communities in Region 4 for community-wide assessments or cleanup and for their revolving loan funds. These 20 awards will go a long way toward fostering revitalization in the both small and large cities, including Greenville, Hickory, Wilson and Cooleemee, NC; Greenwood and Union County, SC; Brooksville and Casselberry, FL; and Talladega, AL, among others.

The **Urban Waters** program received 600 applications nationally for projects designed to plan for and implement improvements in water-

ways in cities. In Region 4, 95 eligible applications were received and five will be awarded. The recipients will be announced in mid- to late-June. Projects will receive funding of about \$50K-\$60K with the hope that additional resources can be identified from collaborators.

A college focused competition called "**Campus Rainworks Challenge**" has been announced by EPA. It is a new design competition that encourages student teams on college and university campuses across the country to develop innovative approaches to stormwater management. Stormwater is a major cause of water pollution in

urban areas in the U.S., impacting the health of people across the country as well as tens of thousands of miles of rivers, streams, and coastal shorelines, and hundreds of thousands of acres of lakes, reservoirs, and ponds. The competition will help raise awareness of green design and planning approaches at colleges and universities, and train the next generation of landscape architects, planners, and engineers in green infrastructure principles and design.

Registration for the Campus RainWorks Challenge opens September 4, and entries must be submitted by December 14, 2012 for consideration. Winners will be announced in April 2013.





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