



Middle Tennessee Mayors Caucus | Cumberland Region Tomorrow | Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce

HUD Sustainable Communities: Middle Tennessee Application Framework Updated: September 7, 2011 | Application Due Date: September 28, 2011

Primary Goal

On June 21, 2011 the US Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD) released an advance notice of funding availability for the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program. The program includes \$67 million for planning grants for FY 2011 and is a follow-up to the approximately \$100 million awarded in FY 2010.

The program supports metropolitan and multi-jurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments. It is intended to serve as a catalyst for improving the coordination of federal, state, regional, and local planning, public policy, and decision-making processes to increase the effectiveness of public investment, the efficiency in the delivery of services, and the long-term sustainability of community development in the face of increasingly limited resources. The program places an emphasis on helping metropolitan regions, which serve as the engine for the national economy, identify strategies to grow and prosper in a way that is equitable, healthy, and environmentally and fiscally responsible.

If grant funding is awarded through HUD's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program, regional partners will work together to adopt a **shared vision for the future of Middle Tennessee** and a **regional comprehensive plan for growth and sustainable development**.

The effort is not intended to create an additional layer of planning or policy, but instead begins with the premise that the sharing of information and the integration of plans related to the individual elements of regional growth (e.g., transportation, housing, economic development, etc.) into a comprehensive strategy will benefit those interested in the long-term sustainability of Middle Tennessee.

The final products of this initiative will be endorsed by each participating public and private-sector partner for use in **shaping** their own respective **plans, policies, programs, projects, and service** in a way that supports the overall vision for the region.

Major Tasks

The application for Middle Tennessee includes six major tasks which build upon the collective work of key partner organizations over the last decade:

- 1. Communications Strategies & Coalition Building** – Building upon the regional consortium assembled to develop the application, the first task of the effort will be targeted at ensuring sufficient representation from interested stakeholders, citizens, and the business community -- particularly those who will be responsible for implementing any of the recommendations resulting from the initiative. Moreover, strategies will be developed to ensure thoughtful and intentional steps are taken to ensure traditionally underserved populations are at the table from the onset to afford them the opportunity to shape solutions that will most directly affect their community. Specific tasks include:
 - o Establish regional brand identity through the "Power of Ten" concept;

- o Develop central website and other communication materials;
- o Identify major media partners and recognizable spokespeople to provide a public face to the effort, taking advantage of the region’s celebrity resources;
- o Expand regional public and stakeholder contact lists;
- o Establish people-networking infrastructure with additional capacity to reach citizens through their local neighborhood opinion leaders;
- o Formalize a coalition governance structure to provide leadership and guidance to program administrators and task managers;
- o Establish the appropriate steering and technical committees to direct subsequent tasks.

2. **Regional Visioning & Strategic Planning**- Building upon the original CRT visioning project of 10+ years ago, and learning from successful visioning efforts in other major metropolitan regions (e.g., Envision Utah, Central Florida’s How Shall We Grow, Envision Central Texas, Chicago’s Plan 2040, etc.), the consortium will engage the community at-large in a major re-visioning effort to define preferences for future growth and quality-of-life factors. This time around, however, the effort will not conclude without the formal adoption of that shared vision by local and regional organizations – both public and private-sector. The regional visioning task will include the following elements:

- o **Baseline Data Collection & Trend Analysis** – Compile data to describe baseline conditions for land use, housing, transportation, jobs, water, utilities, energy consumption, etc.; forecast future population and employment growth and land development patterns based on trends; identify future demand for services, deficiencies in infrastructure, and impacts on the environment and natural and socio-cultural resources.
- o **Community Values Research** – Conduct primary and secondary research through random sample surveys, focus groups, and community-based outreach to identify and document core values to establish parameters for evaluating the effectiveness of the trends in growth and alternative scenarios, and to guide the development of a long-range vision for growth in Middle Tennessee.
- o **Visioning Guidelines, Goals, Objectives, and Measures of Effectiveness** – Translate community values into a set of guiding principles, goals, objectives for growth and development; establish a set of measures of effectiveness to evaluate the trade-offs associated with different scenarios for growth, and to track progress along the chosen path.
- o **Scenario Planning** – Develop and evaluate at least three “what if” growth scenarios to provide a comparative analysis of the trending or “business-as-usual” scenario. Scenario planning will allow the region to preview the benefits and costs associated with different choices related community development and will provide a foundation for the building of a preferred vision for growth and development.
- o **Adoption of a long-range Vision** – Compile local/regional values, guiding principles, goals & objectives, and preferences for future growth and development into a fully-illustrated and compelling Vision document that represents the area’s agreed upon intent to shape the future of Middle Tennessee. Coalition partners facilitate the adoption of the shared vision at the local and regional levels by both public agencies and private-sector organizations. The Vision will serve as guidance to those agencies and organizations as they develop their strategic plans.

3. **A Comprehensive Plan for Sustainable Development** - Following the adoption of the shared vision, regional partners will work together to identify a cohesive set of actions that should be taken by federal, state, and local government agencies, regional organizations, resource management agencies, the business community, non-profit organizations, and individual citizens in order to assist in the implementation of that vision over a period of time.

The early stages in the development of the regional comprehensive plan are intended to focus on the integration of the great work already underway in the region and the incorporation of best practices from peer communities across the nation.

One of the primary objectives of the effort will be to help reduce the burden associated with inter-agency and multijurisdictional collaboration and information sharing. Careful consideration should be made to determine how to accomplish this task without creating another layer of policy and planning which could further disconnect those most in need of or directly involved in the implementation of community plans and programs. Ultimately, however, the plan represents more than an assemblage of strategies and action items; it represents a commitment by stakeholders to do their part in helping to create the shared vision.

Proposed Elements of a Regional Comprehensive Plan:

- o **Regional Green Print & Open Space Plan** – Create a comprehensive plan of action to reduce the region’s impact on the natural environment. The plan will include strategies targeted at curtailing energy consumption, air and water pollution, and the disruptive impact to prime agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas, or areas of natural or historical significance. The effort will expand upon the Davidson County Open Space Plan recently developed by Mayor’s Office and The Land Trust for Tennessee.
- o **Regional Workforce & Economic Development Plan** – Align the efforts of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Nashville Regional Council, the South Central Development District, the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, and other local economic development initiatives with a broader regional vision for growth. This includes an emphasis on pursuing strategies that ensure a sustainable jobs and housing balance, developing and training a diverse workforce suitable for the area’s targeted industries, minimizing the negative impacts of economic growth and prosperity on environmentally sensitive or prime agricultural lands and other natural resources, ensuring that economic development initiatives are appropriately coordinated with public and private infrastructure investments and are consistent with urban/rural land use policies.
- o **Regional Housing & Neighborhood Development Plan** – Develop a regional housing plan to provide an inventory of stock, a forecast of needs, analysis of anticipated market changes and resulting deficiencies, an assessment of fair housing opportunities, an evaluation of current policies and practices, and the establishment of goals & objectives, performance targets, and strategies to ensure adequate housing choices for range of income levels and household types.
- o **Regional Transportation & General Land Use Plan** – Integrate and update the existing regional transportation plans to ensure that planned and programmed investments support the implementation of the long-range vision, and incorporate solutions that improve housing and employment opportunities and respect the stated preferences for minimizing the region’s impact on the environment.
- o **Regional Water Resources & Utilities Plan** – Develop a regional plan to ensure continued access to clean water and other utility services. The planning effort will include a regional inventory of

assets and consumption, analysis of future demand and deficiencies, evaluation of existing delivery processes and mechanisms, and the development of strategies to improve coordination across the region between water and utility departments and among water/ utility planning activities and other efforts aimed at planning for growth and infrastructure expansion.

Universal issues addressed by major elements of the comprehensive plan:

- o Arts & Culture;
- o Poverty & Socioeconomic Inequity;
- o Fair and Affordable Housing;
- o Access to Healthy Food;
- o Active Living and Personal Health;
- o Energy Conservation; and
- o Climate Change.

4. **Demonstration of Implementation Strategies** – In order to provide for the long-term sustainability of the plan, task 4 will provide a demonstration of training and technical resources that could serve as models for the implementation of the plan and accompanying strategies. The proposed tools and resources build upon previous quality growth work across the region:
- o **Reinvestment Readiness Toolbox** – Develop an easy-to-use chest of strategies and tools geared toward reinvesting in existing communities in a way that addresses social equity, healthy and active living, and neighborhood service needs. The toolbox will provide policy guidance, model codes and ordinances, design methodologies that support infill/redevelopment, rehabilitate/ re-use brownfield sites, adjoining arterials and inner-ring neighborhoods, and use of energy efficient building strategies that provide more energy efficient development.
 - o **Transit Oriented Development Toolbox** - Develop a set of customizable strategies and tools to implement new TOD opportunities, and to help improve the transit-friendliness of other developments. The toolbox will incorporate strategies to achieve housing and energy goals.
 - o **Physical Activity, Health, and Transportation Research** – Improve our understanding of the relationship between health and transportation through a major survey of socio-economic characteristics, home and work locations, personal travel behaviors, levels of physical activity, and general health traits of households throughout the entire region. Such data are rarely, if ever, collected together to allow for the meaningful analysis of the interrelated issues that are being addressed through the Sustainable Communities work program. The Nashville Area MPO, in a partnership with Vanderbilt University and GeoStats, has recently conducted a pilot-test of methodologies and has a significant share of the required funding in place.
 - o **Health Impact Assessment Toolbox** – Develop templates for local governments and regional planning organizations to assess the health impacts of various plans and programs including proposals for changes in the built environment. This effort will be coordinated with Nashville’s current Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant.
 - o **Local Comprehensive Planning Support** – Provide technical assistance and funding to local communities in need of resources to start or finish a comprehensive plan or to amend an existing plan to conform to the adopted regional vision. Technical assistance also will be provided to update zoning codes and land development regulations, where appropriate.

- o **Knowledge Sharing and Best Practice Training** – Develop a central clearinghouse for distributing best-practice information and related training programs to help with a broad array of objectives including decision-making processes for public facility site-selection (e.g., schools, libraries, etc.), design and implementation of complete streets policies and programs, promotion of context sensitive solutions, provisions for fair housing, programs for helping the homeless, and other important issues as they arise.
5. **Development of Long-Term Accountability Measures** - The project team will develop a set of performance measures that allow the region to track progress towards its stated vision and to compare and benchmark that progress against competitor regions across the nation. This task will involve the identification of measurable indicators, performance targets, a peer group, and the assignment of data collection and reporting responsibilities to the appropriate entities to carry-out. Specific products to come from this task include:
- o **Research & Data Collection Plans for Established Indicators** – Determine the specific set of performance measures to track over time, the most appropriate peers to benchmark against, and the most suitable organizations for collecting, compiling, and reporting indicators.
 - o **Annual State-of-the-Region Report Card** – Develop a standardized way of reporting indicators to the community in an interesting and meaningful way – using local media experts as a resource.
 - o **Regional Awards and Certification** – Develop an ongoing program to recognize and reward local communities, businesses, and regional partners that are promoting the vision through individual action.
6. **Establishment of Sustainable Partnerships and Ongoing Education** - Ultimately, for the effort to be successful, it must be sustained over the long-haul through the establishment and/or strengthening of regional partnerships and commitments. The regional consortium will work together to devise specific strategies to sustain the effort beyond the initial scope of work. The task could include the **evaluation of our current regional governance structure**, the **development of formal compacts** among agencies or jurisdictions to share resources and a commitment to fulfilling their respective roles in implementing the vision using the comprehensive plan. Additionally, the task could include the **development of a Regional Sustainable Development Academy** that would be responsible for creating a forum for an ongoing regional dialogue and funding for the **reinforcement of the vision/ plan** for the benefit of future leaders.

Application Team Organization

The application, due on September 28, 2011, will be submitted on behalf of partner organizations from across Middle Tennessee.

1. **Primary Applicant** – The **Nashville Area MPO** served as the primary applicant, holding ultimate responsibility for final editing and submission of a qualified application to HUD by the announced due date (September 28) and the administration of the grant contract and subcontracts.
2. **Leadership Organizations** – The application is being developed under the leadership of three existing regional partnerships in the area including the **Middle Tennessee Mayors Caucus**, **Cumberland Region Tomorrow**, and the **Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce** representing the public sector, non-profit quality growth advocacy, and local and regional economic development initiatives, respectively.

- 3. Regional Consortium** – The application is being drafted by a collaboration of individuals and organizations from across Middle Tennessee that play a role in shaping plans, policies, programs, or projects related to housing, transportation, economic development, health, education, equity issues, water and other utility infrastructure, the environment, urban design, and rural preservation.

Schedule

May 25: Annual Convening the Region Summit

July 15: FY 2010 Grant Debriefing/ FY 2011 Grant NOFA Preview

August 25: Pre-Application Deadline. Draft outline of full application sent out for review

August 31: Draft Consortium MOU sent out for review

September 9: Consortium MOU finalized

September 13: First draft of full application sent out for review

September 16: Regional stakeholder meeting to discuss draft application/ collect MOU signatures

September 16-23: Consortium signatures on MOU / Letters of Support

September 20: Second draft application sent out for review

September 23: Final draft application ready for final QC and submission

September 28: Full Application Deadline

For More Information

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