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INFORMATION:

Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant

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City staff has been working with the Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG) on the region's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant application. The intent to apply was endorsed by a resolution adopted by the City Council on June 27, 2011. The grant application, which encompasses a regional planning approach and economic development strategy effort across 14 counties (10 in North Carolina, 4 in South Carolina), is being developed by a multi-agency work group that includes other local governments, non-profits, and the business community.

The federal program between HUD, EPA and USDOT is in its second year; the grant application submitted by CCOG in 2010 (*City Council Resolution adopted July 26, 2010*) was unfunded. However, the application yielded "Preferred Sustainability Status," which has allowed the City to receive bonus points in at least two grant applications thus far this year, and will help in the 2011 application process.

The Charlotte region's application is primarily focused on the creation of locational economic development strategies aligned with local workforce skills and available infrastructure. Among scope elements, a critical component of the application is to link the economic development planning with land use, transportation, housing, and environmental planning through a regional "Blueprinting" process conducted in partnership with the Urban Land Institute and Lee Institute. The City of Charlotte will also benefit from new funding/financing tools for redevelopment. The region's Travel Demand Modeling program and process will be greatly enhanced by the data provided through the Blueprinting process, and it will help the City in long-range transportation planning. And the City should see an increased level of collaboration and predictability in working with regional neighbors, based on a shared framework for regional growth and development.

A required pre-application was submitted on August 25 and included an estimated federal share of \$4.3 million for the work effort, matched by an estimated \$1.6 million in local, state and donated funds. The City of Charlotte has committed an estimate of \$273,344 in total CDOT, Planning, E&PM, and N&BS staff activities across the three-year life of the grant, if it is awarded. It is expected that some City staff planning and analysis work will be eligible for reimbursement through the grant itself. As with the 2010 application, no cash matching funds are being requested from the City or required for this grant application.

CCOG staff continue to refine the budget, obtain commitment for additional matching amount from across the region, and refine the final application, which is expected to be due late September (HUD has not announced the final submittal date).

Campaign Signs on State Maintained Roads

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In August 2011, the NC General Assembly enacted into law Senate Bill 315 which permits the placement of campaign signs on state maintained roads. The new legislation takes precedence over the City's local sign ordinance with respect to state maintained roads. This means that political signs are permitted on state maintained roads with the following restrictions:

- (1) No sign shall be permitted in the right-of-way of a fully controlled access highway (i.e. I-77, I-85, I-277, I-485, etc.)
- (2) No sign shall be closer than three feet from the edge of the pavement of the road
- (3) No sign shall obscure motorist visibility at an intersection
- (4) No sign shall be higher than 42 inches above the edge of the pavement of the road
- (5) No sign shall be larger than 864 square inches
- (6) No sign shall obscure or replace another sign

The new law applies only to "campaign" or "political" signs and does not include any other type of sign. The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) will be enforcing these new regulations. The time frame for permitted political signs on state maintained roads begins on October 1, 2011 and ends on the tenth day after the primary or general election. Questions about placement of political signs on state roads can be directed to Lewis Mitchell at NCDOT (704-596-6900).

The City's Code Enforcement Division will continue to enforce Charlotte's sign ordinance for all other sign categories and on City maintained streets.

A map listing by specific location for state maintained roads may be accessed via <http://virtualcharlotte/> utilizing the transportation and state maintained streets layers.