



ABSTRACT

June 30, 2010

Sustainable Communities Initiative

A federal partnership initiative of US HUD, DOT, and EPA

On June 16 2009, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a new partnership to regionally coordinate federal housing, environmental protection, and transportation planning and investment. Federal funding to support this effort is being provided under HUD's Sustainable Communities Planning Grants Program.

In the past, the absence of a regional, collaborative partnership and shared vision for Southeast Florida has left our region at a competitive disadvantage when we seek to access needed state and federal resources. Envision Utah, One Bay (Tampa), Portland Metro 2040, Denver Metro Vision 2040, Sacramento Area Blueprint (2004), and Myregion.org (Orlando) are examples of regions that have well established multi-sector partnerships and regional strategies for quality communities and growth. While progress has been made in many issue areas, including transportation, water supply, and climate change planning with the recent signing of the four-county Regional Compact, these examples are the exception rather than the rule. We must do better if we are to build a prosperous and sustainable region and access the resources Southeast Florida needs to move ahead.

The Southeast Florida region includes Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties. Together this seven-county Region represents the 5th largest metropolitan area in the country. These seven counties, though diverse, have much in common including a shared history, environment and watershed, economic interdependence, transportation system, and recreational, social and cultural activities. This seven county area is classified as "Southeast Florida" by Enterprise Florida, and defined as the "Southeast Region" in the Strategic Intermodal Plan of the Florida Department of Transportation.

A key component of the Sustainable Communities Initiative is the development of a "Regional Plan for Sustainable Development" for regions that lack a cohesive, integrated regional "vision" across issue areas and jurisdictional boundaries. In Southeast Florida, significant resources, time and effort have been invested in planning throughout the years. There are existing regional relationships and partnerships that can be strengthened and expanded. The challenge is to integrate these partnerships and efforts across issue areas and jurisdictional lines and reach agreement on the critical infrastructure investments needed to move the region forward.

The U.S. HUD's Sustainable Communities Initiative is the region's best opportunity to access up to \$5 million to articulate and develop consensus around a "Regional Vision" and "Regional Plan for Sustainable Development." It is expected that this Plan will: 1) serve as the framework for future federal investment; 2) support the efforts of individual counties, municipalities and other regional partners whose plans and projects further the implementation of the regional Vision and Plan; and 3) put the Southeast Florida Region in the best position possible to capture federal funds for critical infrastructure projects designed to improve the region's sustainability.

The South Florida Regional Planning Council and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council are coordinating the development of a comprehensive joint application for Sustainable Communities Initiative funding on behalf of the Southeast Florida Regional Partnership. The Partnership represents a broad-based group of regional stakeholders, including but not limited to, water resource, housing, human services, environmental and transportation agencies and organizations; community-based organizations; health care organizations and funders; local governments; non-profits; academia and research institutions; and private sector organizations.

Several organizational and working meetings of the regional stakeholders have occurred and will be held throughout the summer. Necessary pre-application work has been performed by the Councils that will assist in preparing and submitting a complete application on time. The Councils have requested from its partners letters and resolutions of support and, where appropriate, the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding to memorialize the regional partnership. These documents will accompany the application. The HUD Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), the federal guidance document outlining the components of successful applications, was published on June 24, 2010. The application is due on August 23rd.

Link to HUD NOFA: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/grants/nofa10/scrpg.cfm>

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