Partnership *for* Sustainable Communities

Five Years of Learning From Communities and Coordinating Federal Investments

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY REPORT

About the Partnership

On June 16, 2009, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Shaun Donovan, U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Ray LaHood, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson announced that they were forming the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. Since then, new leaders—HUD Secretary Julián Castro, DOT Secretary Anthony Foxx, and EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy—have affirmed their agencies' commitment to the Partnership. Using six guiding principles (below), the three agencies continue to coordinate investments and align policies to support communities that want to give Americans more housing choices, make transportation systems more efficient and reliable, reinforce existing investments, protect the environment, and support vibrant and healthy neighborhoods that attract businesses and jobs.

Partnership Guiding Principles

- Provide more transportation choices.
- Promote equitable, affordable housing.
- Increase economic competitiveness.
- Support existing communities.
- Leverage federal investment.
- Value communities and neighborhoods.

"The Partnership for Sustainable Communities is about achieving one goal: expanding opportunity for American families. HUD is proud to work with regions to cultivate and connect all the community assets needed to thrive, from jobs to transportation. Working with local leaders, I'm certain that the investments our agencies have made will enhance the health and wealth of communities for decades to come."

Secretary Julián Castro
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

"The Partnership is helping us align our transportation investments with the goals of providing affordable housing and preserving the environment. Together with HUD and EPA, we are making fundamental changes in how we work together to benefit all Americans and provide new Ladders of Opportunity for many."

Secretary Anthony Foxx
U.S. Department of Transportation

"Communities know better than anyone else what they need. Through the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, we at the federal level are organizing ourselves to give communities tools to address economic and environmental challenges in the way that works best for them."

Administrator Gina McCarthy
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES?

Sustainable communities have a variety of housing options, with homes near workplaces, schools, parks, stores, and amenities. Having these daily destinations close together allows people to walk, bike, take transit, or drive short distances, which can save them money while reducing pollution from vehicles. In sustainable communities, people can live closer to jobs or have easier access to more jobs in a wider region. This diversity of travel, housing, and employment options helps make communities more affordable, environmentally sustainable, and economically resilient. Rural, suburban, and urban places can all use sustainable communities strategies to create healthy, safe, walkable neighborhoods.

INTRODUCTION

Interagency collaboration through the Partnership for Sustainable Communities invests taxpayer money more efficiently and gets better results for communities. By sharing knowledge and coordinating investments in infrastructure, facilities, and services, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can meet multiple economic, environmental, and community objectives with each dollar spent.

Since 2009, HUD, DOT, and EPA have collaborated to ensure their policies and investments better serve American communities. Through these efforts, more than 1,000 communities in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico have received more than $4 billion in grants and technical assistance to help them grow and improve their quality of life.

This publication summarizes some significant policy changes and collaborations and how they have made a difference in communities over the past five years. The Partnership's work has driven not only HUD, DOT, and EPA, but also other federal agencies to make lasting policy changes that will use resources more effectively and improve how agencies work with communities for years to come. The publication also looks at critical issues facing our nation in the future and how the Partnership can help communities take advantage of opportunities and overcome challenges.

Many of our communities and housing options, built for a different time, are not what Americans want today. Research from the real estate industry shows that more people want to live in more convenient, walkable neighborhoods (Figure 1). A National Association of Realtors survey showed that half of Americans prefer a neighborhood with a variety of housing types, including multifamily and single-family homes; shops, restaurants, and amenities within walking distance; and nearby public transportation over a neighborhood with only single-family homes and few transportation options besides driving.[1] Walkable communities are particularly important to millennials,[2] who make up the largest percentage of the U.S. population; one research firm estimates that about 70 percent of them see walkability as "important" or "vital" when choosing a home.[3]

1 National Association of Realtors. "National Community Preference Survey." October 2013. p. 28. *www.realtor.org/sites/default/files/reports/2013/2013-community-preference-analysis-slides.pdf.*

2 Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are those born between 1981 and 1999.

3 Duggal, Melina. "Design Trends That Capture Generation Y." Presentation of RCLCO research. NAHB International Builders' Show, Jan. 12, 2011.

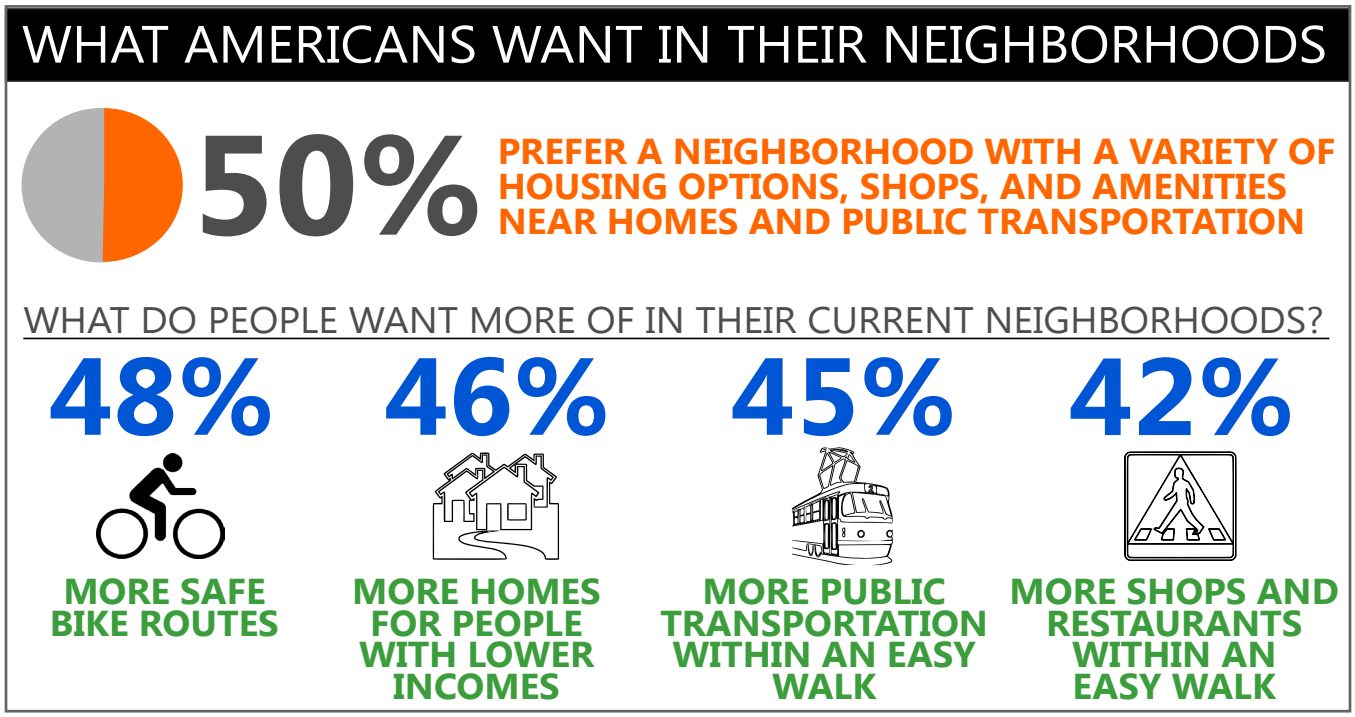


Figure 1: Many Americans prefer to live in more convenient, walkable neighborhoods. Source: National Association of Realtors 2013.

Since 2000, Americans have seen their combined costs for housing and transportation grow faster than household income (Figure 2). This trend disproportionately affects households at or below median income. Housing and transportation costs combined account for nearly half of total income for median-income households and an even greater share for moderate-income (between 50 to 100 percent of median income) households (Figure 3).[4]

The complex challenges in many struggling communities need comprehensive, integrated solutions. Safe, decent, and affordable housing; reliable transportation options; and a clean, healthy environment are fundamental to a person's ability to lift him- or herself into a better life. These resources are rungs on the "ladders of opportunity" that help lower-income Americans reach the middle class. The Partnership's work supports these ladders of opportunity in many ways. Making sure that low-income people have access to reliable and affordable transportation options lets them reach more education and job opportunities and gives businesses a larger pool of workers. Encouraging investment and revitalization in underserved neighborhoods can bring new, affordable homes while creating jobs constructing or repairing buildings and infrastructure. The community-driven solutions that Partnership investments support can help address environmental justice and social equity issues by giving everyone, including traditionally underrepresented groups, the chance to get involved in identifying environmental, economic, and social challenges; crafting a vision for the future; and implementing fair solutions.

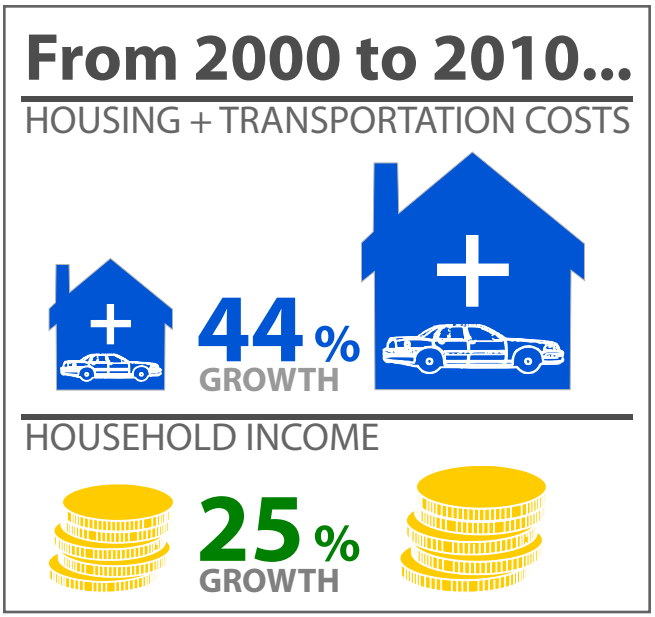


Figure 2: From 2000 to 2010, combined housing and transportation costs rose more than household income. Source: Hickey 2012.

4 Hickey, Robert, et al. *Losing Ground: The Struggle of Moderate-Income Households to Afford the Rising Costs of Housing and Transportation.* The Center for Housing Policy and the Center for Neighborhood Technology. 2012. *www.nhc.org/media/files/LosingGround_10_2012.pdf.*

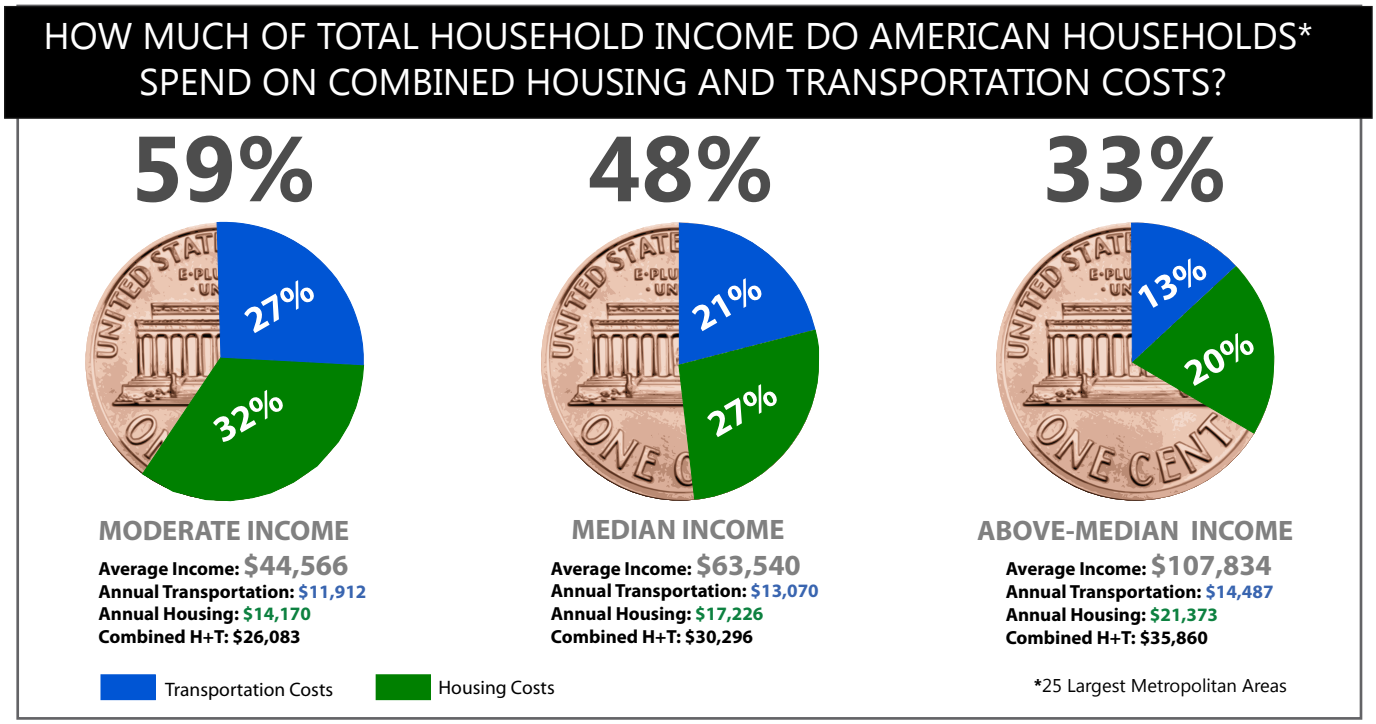


Figure 3: Combined housing and transportation costs make up a larger percentage of household income for lower-income households. Source: Hickey 2012.

Americans want new choices—and both the public and private sectors have roles in meeting this demand. Builders and developers need the freedom to provide the diversity of homes and neighborhoods that Americans want, and communities need more flexibility and support from the federal government. The Partnership is responding by reducing barriers and changing programs to make sure they support what communities want. For example, several agency programs now regularly consult each other before making decisions on place-based grant and technical assistance awards. This coordination helps to align federal investments in housing, transportation, and environmental protection to fund projects identified through community-driven planning processes. It helps to reduce duplication across programs and deliver multiple benefits from single investments. Sharing expertise and information across the three agencies helps the federal government make better-informed decisions, use scarce resources more effectively, and leverage investments across agencies so that taxpayer dollars pay dividends for years to come.

The Partnership has demonstrated the value of collaboration, serving as a model for other interagency efforts that also aim to help communities prosper. Other federal partnerships, such as the Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative;[5] the Urban Waters Federal Partnership;[6] and America's Great Outdoors,[7] share the Partnership's place-based focus and close coordination. All of these efforts are grounded in the belief that taxpayers benefit when federal investments are coordinated, and that federal efforts can be improved through strong stakeholder engagement.

Achieving the meaningful, lasting change that the Partnership strives to attain is challenging, but in times of limited resources, it is critical to eliminate redundancies, make the most of our resources, and ensure federal investments achieve multiple benefits for communities. When the federal government coordinates its efforts and shares its know-how across agencies, everyone wins: households save money; communities can use their limited resources more efficiently and better compete for jobs and talent; and our land, air, and water are better protected and preserved.

5 The Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative coordinates federal programs and investments to spark economic growth in distressed areas and improve cooperation among community organizations, local leadership, and the federal government. For more information, see: HUD. "Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative (SC2)." *www.huduser.org/portal/sc2/home.html.* Accessed Jun. 4, 2014.

6 The Urban Waters Federal Partnership helps urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, reconnect with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts. For more information, see: EPA. "Urban Waters Federal Partnership." *www.urbanwaters.gov.* Accessed Jun. 4, 2014.

7 America's Great Outdoors supports community-led, grassroots conservation initiatives by reworking inefficient policies and making the federal government a better partner with states, tribes, and local communities. For more information, see: U.S. Department of the Interior. "America's Great Outdoors." *www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/index.cfm.* Accessed Jun. 4, 2014.

Examples of Competitive Grant and Technical Assistance Programs Developed and Reviewed Jointly by the Partnership Agencies

Program	Year	Lead Agency	Number of Applicants	Total Funding Requested	Number Selected	Total Funding Issued
TIGER Capital Grants	2009-2013	DOT	4,605	$112.6 billion	270	$3.5 billion
FTA[8] Livability and Alternative Analysis	2010-2011	DOT	722	$4.3 billion	165	$494 million
Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants	2010-2012	HUD	84	$860 million	9	$231.6 million
Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants	2010-2011	HUD	416	$674 million	74	$165.1 million
HUD Community Challenge / TIGER Planning Grants	2010	HUD & DOT	766	$1.3 billion[9]	61	$68 million
Transportation, Community, and System Preservation Program	2011	DOT	715	$1.4 billion	65	$56.7 million
Community Challenge Grants	2011	HUD	267	$408 million	27	$28.6 million
Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants	2010-2013	HUD	314	$75 million	56	$16.9 million
Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grants	2010 & 2013	EPA	239	$42.9 million	43	$8 million
Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities	2011-2013	EPA	1,029	$15.4 million	224	$3.3 million
Smart Growth Implementation Assistance[10]	2009-2013	EPA	542	$31.5 million	48	$1.5 million
Greening America's Capitals	2010-2013	EPA	77	$6.1 million	19	$1.5 million
Partnership Brownfields Pilots	2012	EPA	25[11]	$2.5 million	5	$0.5 million
Totals			**9,801**	**$121.7 billion**	**1,066**	**$4.6 billion**

8 FTA stands for Federal Transit Administration.

9 This figure represents only funding requested from HUD.

10 The Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program began in 2005 but became a Partnership program in 2009. The figures here are only for projects conducted under the Partnership. The dollar figures are an estimate of Office of Sustainable Communities funding only and do not include any additional EPA or other federal funds.

11 Projects were nominated by EPA regions.

LISTENING AND COLLABORATING TO BETTER MEET COMMUNITIES' NEEDS

By working together and listening to the needs of communities, states, regional entities, and tribes, the Partnership agencies have begun to change the way they work to make more efficient and meaningful investments. These changes will let the agencies more effectively help communities grow in ways that support residents, local economies, and regional ecosystems. While some of the changes described below reflect the actions of only one agency, they were informed by the close coordination across agencies made possible by the Partnership. The agency changes fall into three general categories:

- Increasing flexibility and removing barriers.
- Leveraging federal and local know-how.
- Delivering multiple benefits from single investments.

Increasing Flexibility and Removing Barriers

To make it easier for communities to implement their own visions for growth, the Partnership agencies made programs and guidance more flexible. The agencies also removed barriers that could inhibit developers from investing in communities.

Clarifying Bicycle and Pedestrian Guidelines

In addition to promoting physical activity, encouraging walking and biking helps reduce pollution from vehicles and provides inexpensive transportation options that are particularly important for low-income people. Narrow interpretations of national design guidelines prevented communities from implementing connected bicycle and pedestrian networks, despite new design resources that demonstrated their viability and benefits. On August 20, 2013, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), part of DOT, signaled the agency's support for a flexible approach to pedestrian and bicycle facility design in a memorandum[12] designating specific resources that can inform the design of safe, comfortable pedestrian and bicycle facilities that fit their community context.[13] The memorandum also highlights buffered and colored bike lanes (Figure 4) as successful examples of innovative treatments that have been introduced, in part, through the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*[15] experimentation process. The endorsement received supportive feedback from the bicycle and pedestrian community, as well as stakeholder groups involved in sustainability work. For instance, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is incorporating the design flexibility memo in its own guidance. By clarifying its support for well-designed, well-connected bicycle and pedestrian facilities, DOT gave local transportation officials greater certainty and more flexibility to connect bicycle and pedestrian networks and craft plans that meet their communities' goals.

Photo courtesy of EPA

Figure 4: Separated, clearly marked bike lanes protect bicyclists and can encourage people to bike. A survey found that 80 percent of residents in the neighborhood around this bike lane, on 15th Street, NW, in Washington, D.C., thought it was a "valuable asset." [14]

12 FHWA. "Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Design Flexibility." Aug. 20, 2013. *www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/design_guidance/design_flexibility.cfm.*

13 The memo designates the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials' *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities* and *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities* as the primary national resources for pedestrian and bicycle facility design and also highlights the National Association of City Transportation Officials' *Urban Bikeway Design Guide* and the Institute of Transportation Engineers' *Designing Urban Walkable Thoroughfares.* Links to all these resources can be found in the FHWA memo in the previous footnote.

14 Kittelson & Associates, et al. *District Department of Transportation Bicycle Facility Evaluation: Summary of Evaluation and Recommendations.* District Department of Transportation. 2012.

15 FHWA. *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.* May 2012. *http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov.* The manual, which FHWA has administered since 1971, is a compilation of national standards for all traffic control devices, including road markings, highway signs, and traffic signals.

Making it Easier to Use Hazard Mitigation Funds on Brownfield Sites

EPA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) worked together to resolve a longstanding obstacle facing communities that wanted to redevelop their brownfield properties. This policy issue first came to light while trying to identify Partnership project opportunities in EPA's Great Lakes region. FEMA's policies had previously been so strict that any contamination would render a property that was otherwise suitable for reuse ineligible for FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program,[16] even if the state environmental protection agency had already cleared the property through its own cleanup program. EPA and FEMA's different definitions of "clean" created an obstacle to site reuse and had a chilling effect for state emergency management agencies interested in working on brownfield sites, an issue these state agencies had highlighted for years. EPA's involvement provided the additional support necessary for FEMA to change its contamination policy. FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance Guidance update, released July 12, 2013, includes a new Hazardous Materials policy that aligns FEMA and EPA perspectives on contamination.[17] This FEMA policy update removes a longtime obstacle to brownfield communities accessing FEMA Hazard Mitigation grants and provides more resources to communities seeking to reuse former brownfield properties.

16 The program "provides grants to states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration." See: FEMA. "Hazard Mitigation Grant Program." *www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-grant-program.* Accessed May 29, 2014.

17 FEMA. *Addendum to the Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance.* 2013. *www.fema.gov/media-library-data/8b1146445c5833a6e5baf82cf1071a8f/FINAL_Addendum_082813_508.pdf.*

WHAT THE PARTNERSHIP MEANS TO US

Kalima Rose, *Senior Director, PolicyLink Center for Infrastructure Equity, PolicyLink*

PolicyLink (www.policylink.org), a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity, provides technical assistance to HUD and EPA grantees under the HUD and EPA Capacity Building for Sustainable Communities Program.

We help grantees incorporate social equity outcomes into their work. Regional planning organizations are usually not familiar with working with communities of color. We help them work with these communities in authentic ways and include their preferences in plans and implementation. I think providing technical assistance on equity has been a really enhanced aspect of the Partnership that has added a lot of value to the grantees.

For example, the Bay Area in California, the Twin Cities in Minnesota, and others used the funding to do research, public engagement, and design. They did a deep analysis of where the low-income communities are and their access to transit, affordable housing, middle-income jobs, and job training systems. Social equity issues were deeply examined. There is now a plan for implementing changes in these areas. In Eugene, Oregon, and New Orleans, Louisiana, they are developing transit. The bus lines don't run at the hours many low-income shift workers need them to, and the grantees are working to change that.

Having the Partnership agencies work together has been helpful. EPA, HUD, and DOT have been working together wherever possible to remove barriers and make access to the agencies seamless. For example, the HUD regional planning grant requires all grantees to do a fair housing equity assessment that includes data on both transportation and toxic exposure. DOT also requires civil rights assessments that differ from HUD's requirements. HUD and DOT have been talking about how they can combine the two so the grantee can meet both requirements with one submission. Meanwhile, HUD has also discussed with EPA how its environmental expertise and data can augment the toxic exposure analysis.

EPA, HUD, and DOT meet regularly and talk about what they've been learning from the grantees. If they hear a grantee wants to use both HUD and DOT funds on a project to build affordable housing and improve transit options, and HUD and DOT's local hiring rules conflict, DOT and HUD have worked together on waivers to allow the project to proceed.

Regulations often feel overwhelming to many grantees. DOT, EPA, HUD, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which also participates in the Partnership, have sent federal workers to help the grantees figure out regulations. For example, on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, they provided hands-on assistance to show the tribe how to access loan guarantees.

Broadening Criteria for Funding Transit Improvements

Public transit ridership is growing, rising 37 percent between 1995 and 2013, compared to a 20 percent increase in the U.S. population and a 23 percent rise in vehicle miles traveled.[18] As DOT's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) tries to help communities meet this demand, it has incorporated the Partnership's guiding principles into its programs. For example, FTA updated the New Starts program, one of DOT's largest competitive grant programs, to evaluate major transit projects on a broad set of criteria. FTA will take into account EPA's regional air quality designations and the dollar value of the anticipated benefits to human health, energy use, air quality (e.g., changes in total greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants), and safety (e.g., reductions in accidents and fatalities). The agency will also credit including economic development in local

Photo courtesy of city of Charlotte

Figure 5: The light rail in Charlotte, North Carolina, illustrates the economic benefits that public transit investment can bring. Between its opening in 2007 and 2011, the system's Blue Line saw development in the station areas that included 3,500 housing units, 218,000 square feet of office space, and 218,000 square feet of retail space.[19]

18 Press release. "Record 10.7 Billion Trips Taken On U.S. Public Transportation In 2013." American Public Transportation Association. Mar. 10, 2014. *www.apta.com/mediacenter/pressreleases/2014/Pages/140310_Ridership.aspx.*

19 Charlotte Area Transit System. *North Corridor Commuter Rail Project: Land Use and Economic Development Analysis.* 2011.

WHAT THE PARTNERSHIP MEANS TO US

Megan McConville, *Program Manager;* **Brett Schwartz,** *Program Manager;* and **Sara James,** *Community and Economic Resilience Fellow, National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation*

The NADO Research Foundation has received funding from HUD and EPA to serve as a capacity-building team supporting HUD and EPA grantees. The foundation has also received grants from FHWA.

As a membership organization representing the country's regional planning and economic development organizations, NADO's mission is to support economic and community development in rural and small town America. Our members are working to help their regions grow in ways that are sustainable and resilient by capitalizing on local assets and talent, investing in critical infrastructure, supporting regional economic development, and building vibrant communities. We have found that our member organizations who received funding through the Partnership agencies have been able to more effectively and efficiently leverage those resources into cross-cutting regional initiatives that address planning, transportation, workforce development, health services, and other key areas.

The Partnership has provided funding and technical assistance for small towns and rural regions to envision their own futures rather than let outside economic forces define who they are. Partnership-supported planning processes allow these communities to strategically pursue public and private funding instead of chasing dollars for one-off projects that may not advance their long-term goals. The Partnership has also created a peer network of regional and local leaders from rural places around the country who are implementing innovative community and economic development, downtown revitalization, public engagement, project financing, and other strategies. These leaders are strengthening their own work and sharing models with other communities, all while raising the bar for regional and local planning efforts in rural areas and small towns.

The Partnership has been critical in showing that smart growth strategies are not just for big cities or suburbs. While these strategies are often implemented in different ways in rural areas than in cities, they are improving the quality of life for residents, attracting businesses and families, and protecting the working lands in rural regions by fostering long-term, resilient growth.

plans as part of a New Starts application. Importantly, FTA will also consider the extent to which policies will maintain or increase affordable housing—the issue that initially spurred the collaboration between HUD and DOT that led to creating the Partnership. These significant changes came from more than two years of public outreach and encourage communities to connect proposed transportation improvements to housing, environmental, health, and economic outcomes. As a result, environmentally and economically sustainable projects are more likely to be successful in the competitive award process than projects that deliver only a single transportation-related benefit.

Giving Developers More Flexibility to Create Mixed-Use Buildings

Mixed-use development combines residential and retail uses so that homes are close to workplaces, stores, services, and community amenities. This type of land use creates complete neighborhoods where people can live, work, and play and lets people travel shorter distances to get to their daily activities, which makes walking and biking more appealing. Buildings in these neighborhoods often also contain a mix of uses, such as offices or residences above stores on the ground level (Figure 6). However, insurance, lending, or zoning restrictions can inadvertently (or explicitly) prohibit construction of mixed-use buildings. Partnership efforts led HUD's Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to lower one barrier to this type of construction in 2012 when it revised the percentage of commercial space allowed in primarily residential buildings. FHA raised this percentage cap from 25 percent to 35 percent, which gives developers and builders more flexibility to determine the right mix of commercial and residential uses for their projects while allowing them to stay eligible for an FHA-insured mortgage. A builder can ask FHA for an exception to raise the cap to a maximum of 50 percent. Before this rule change, developers often had to request a regulatory waiver or "build high to qualify," meaning they had to propose taller buildings that were out of scale with their settings to achieve a viable amount of commercial space in mixed-use buildings. With the change, developers can set an appropriate height and mix of uses based on the context in which the structure will be built, helping to preserve community character, and communities can more easily get mixed-use buildings that fit with their overall development goals.

Photo courtesy of Torti Gallas and Partners

Figure 6: Increasing the percentage of a building that can have offices and stores will allow more mixed-use buildings to be built, such as this new, traditional-style development in Rockville, Maryland.

Leveraging Federal and Local Know-how

The Partnership agencies work with all levels of government, from other federal agencies to municipalities, to share knowledge and tools. This collaboration helped expedite urgent recovery efforts, use federal facility investments to benefit communities, and engage communities with environmental justice concerns.

Working Together to Help Sandy Recovery Efforts[20]

When Superstorm Sandy hit in 2012, the planning efforts of two HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grantees, Together North Jersey and the New York-Connecticut Sustainable Communities Consortium, proved vital to the region's recovery. To respond to the recovery challenges and gaps in local communities' capacity, Together North Jersey modified local sub-grant programs to support community-driven recovery efforts in Hoboken, Jersey City, and Ocean County, New Jersey, which had been hit by storm surges of more than 14 feet (Figure 7). The *Hoboken Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan*,[21] created in partnership with Together North Jersey, provides cost-effective, long-term strategies for place-based, sustainable stormwater management and flood control. This plan also addresses the concepts in the Rebuild by Design *Resist, Delay, Store, Discharge* strategy for Hoboken,[22] which builds on EPA-funded technical assistance and other Partnership investments in the region.

Funded through the New York-Connecticut grant, the New York City Department of City Planning completed two climate resilience studies less than a month before Superstorm Sandy's landfall that helped the city respond quickly and strategically to widespread damage. The *Urban Waterfront Adaptive Strategies Study*[23] identified strategies that can make urban coastal areas more resilient to hazards associated with sea level rise, classified the type and magnitude of costs and benefits associated with each strategy, and established a framework through which communities can evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of different approaches for particular coastal geographies. This study informed

Photo courtesy of Flickr user accarrino

Figure 7: Although Superstorm Sandy caused particularly dramatic flooding in Hoboken, New Jersey, the low-lying city also sees its wastewater system overwhelmed by storms on average five times per month. The resilience strategy that the city developed with the help of Together North Jersey should help reduce that regular flooding, as well as help protect against more severe storms.

A Stronger, More Resilient New York,[24] New York City's long-term rebuilding and resilience plan developed in response to Superstorm Sandy. *Designing for Flood Risk*[25] focused on preparing buildings to withstand coastal flooding while ensuring they also support walkable neighborhoods and everyday quality of life.

Had these grantees not been collaborating long before Superstorm Sandy made landfall, recovery would have looked very different. This suite of resources can benefit other communities across the country planning for extreme weather or trying to find more economically and environmentally sustainable ways to rebuild after a disaster.

SPOTLIGHT ON REBUILD BY DESIGN

Rebuild by Design (*www.rebuildbydesign.org*), initiated by HUD and the Presidential Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, aims to connect innovative research and design teams with Sandy-affected communities to help them rebuild in more resilient and economically and environmentally healthy ways.

20 For a longer version of this story, please see the case study on the Partnership's website at *www.sustainablecommunities.gov/studies.html.*

21 Together North Jersey. Hoboken Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan. 2013. *http://togethernorthjersey.com/?grid-portfolio=hoboken-green-infrastructure-strategic-plan.*

22 OMA et al. "Resist, Delay, Store, Discharge: A Comprehensive Strategy for Hoboken." Rebuild by Design. *www.rebuildbydesign.org/project/oma-final-proposal.* Accessed Jun. 30, 2014.

23 NYC Planning. *Urban Waterfront Adaptive Strategies.* 2013. *www.sustainablenyct.org/news/UWAS_Draft_lowres.pdf.*

24 City of New York. *A Stronger, More Resilient New York.* 2013. *www.nyc.gov/html/sirr/html/report/report.shtml.*

25 NYC Planning. *Designing for Flood Risk.* 2013. *www.sustainablenyct.org/news/NYCDCP_DESIGNING%20FOR%20FLOOD%20RISK_DRAFT-LOW.pdf.*

Siting Federal Buildings to Benefit Communities and Workers

The Partnership has helped the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), the agency responsible for leasing thousands of federal buildings around the country, better analyze its facility siting decisions. Government buildings can have a tremendous impact on a community. A federal facility located in a walkable, central area with easy access to public transit, jobs, stores, and services allows workers and visitors to drive less, which reduces their emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. It can also provide customers for nearby businesses and spur private investment by demonstrating a public commitment to the neighborhood that can make private investors feel more confident about investing in the area. The Partnership worked with GSA to develop instructions on facility siting that accompanied Executive Order 13514, which requires the federal government to operate "high performance sustainable buildings in sustainable locations."[26] As a result of this engagement, EPA worked with GSA to create a tool for comparing federal facility sites: the Smart Location Index. The index is a composite indicator that helps GSA compare the neighborhood locations of existing or proposed federal facilities based on several criteria that support the Partnership's principles, including the ease of access by public transit, walkability, and proximity to the regional workforce. Evaluating facilities on these criteria helps GSA procure and retain buildings that improve workers' transportation choices and reduce travel-related pollution.

26 *Executive Order 13514— Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance.* Federal Register, Vol. 74, No. 194. Oct. 8, 2009. *www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2009-10-08/pdf/E9-24518.pdf.*

WHAT THE PARTNERSHIP MEANS TO US

Kathy Nothstine, *Program Director, National Association of Counties*

The National Association of Counties (www.naco.org), the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States, has received Partnership funding under the HUD and EPA Capacity Building for Sustainable Communities Program.

The Partnership has helped communities of all types and sizes—regions, counties, municipalities. I think one of the biggest benefits of the Partnership has been in encouraging and inspiring communities to think about their long-term future and engage in community dialogue around what it is they really like about their community and what they value. What are their assets? Why are they there? Why do they care about this place, and what can be done to improve it? For instance, in the Region 5 Development Commission in Minnesota, HUD grantees heard from middle-aged and elderly people about how they want their region to be a place where their kids can grow up and stay.

I see the benefit of having HUD, DOT, and EPA working together. Although USDA is not an official partner, it was really cool how EPA and USDA worked together and brought in the Appalachian Regional Commission to do training forums and work with communities on technical assistance. It has been a good way to work with some really small, rural communities that would never have known about the Partnership otherwise. As one example, the small town of Brownsville, Pennsylvania, used some of the Partnership's materials to engage in community dialogues on the future of its downtown.

Through the HUD planning grants and challenge grants, so many places across the country have embarked on regional planning efforts. The grantees have brought together so many different partners that might not have gotten together if they hadn't had this impetus. I think communities have begun to see the value of getting the input of everybody at the table. They see when planning and investments are made in a vacuum and know that, without that input, they risk not being as successful. I think communities have seen that when they have not just buy-in, but also meaningful input from the beginning from different parts of the community—people who live there and work there—they will have a better outcome.

One example is the New River Valley District Commission in Virginia. When they first launched their regional planning project, they got a lot of questions and pushback from people who were fearful about the federal government's role and private property rights. They became a success story because the staff running the grant worked so hard to build partnerships and explain to people what their goals were and work with the community to work through their fears.

As part of a larger GSA effort to trim costs and reduce its building footprint by consolidating offices, the agency evaluated its leased facility in Fairfax, Virginia, a suburb with limited transit access about 15 miles west of its headquarters in Crystal City, an inner-suburban neighborhood with several transit options (Figure 8). Running both facilities through the Smart Location Index gave GSA a side-by-side comparison that showed that the headquarters building has much better access to transportation options and is more centrally located for the workforce. The index gives GSA a powerful, quantitative tool that allows the agency to more easily identify opportunities to improve environmental performance and enhance community benefits. GSA can now bring sustainable location factors into the conversation alongside core business considerations.

Image courtesy of GSA and Google Maps

Figure 8: The Smart Location Index shows the differences between two sites that might appear similar on paper. At the Crystal City location, 42 percent of employees drive alone and 46 percent take transit, while at the Fairfax location, 89 percent of employees drive alone and 7 percent take transit. Commuters to Fairfax also have commutes that are on average more than 10 miles longer than those going to Crystal City, and they are more likely to run daytime errands using a car. All of these factors give the Fairfax office a higher greenhouse gas emissions rate per employee than the Crystal City office.

SPOTLIGHT ON REGIONAL ROUNDTABLES

In 2013 and 2014, the Partnership held 21 regional roundtable discussions around the country to share lessons learned by communities and to engage stakeholders to help shape future Partnership efforts. Federal, state, and local officials; tribal representatives; business leaders; nonprofit and philanthropic partners; community representatives; and members of the public came together to discuss how federal policies and programs could best support local efforts to build resilient, prosperous communities. The events strengthened relationships between local and federal officials, increased collaboration among federal agencies, and helped jumpstart local projects.

Photo courtesy of Township of Toms River

In Toms River, New Jersey, a roundtable of local, state, and federal representatives discussed impediments to revitalizing the Toms River downtown and how revitalization could spur redevelopment elsewhere in the area. They emphasized that state, county, and federal agencies needed to work together with the township to remove barriers to redevelopment.

Roundtable participants emphasized:

- The value of making collaborative, interagency approaches the new way of doing business.
- The many benefits that a single project or investment can achieve.
- Support for federal agencies' efforts to streamline and harmonize their requirements and regulations.
- The need to support projects designed for rural communities.
- The importance of public and private partnerships to catalyze redevelopment, create jobs, and improve transportation choices.
- Communities' needs for better data sources and analytical tools.

Promoting Meaningful Engagement for Communities With Environmental Justice Concerns

Creating healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities is a federal government priority. Environmental justice plays a key role in an integrated effort that addresses housing, environment, transportation, and health issues together. From the beginning of the Partnership, EPA has worked closely with HUD, DOT, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to integrate environmental justice into the Partnership's work and to integrate the Partnership's principles into environmental justice efforts. The agencies developed a one-stop shopping guide for EPA, HUD, DOT, and CDC resources on sustainable communities and environmental justice.[27] The guide has information and links on a variety of topics to help communities with environmental justice concerns learn about their role in addressing long-standing environmental and health challenges and revitalizing neighborhoods.

This guide proved helpful in Grundy County, Tennessee, a rural region where 28 percent of residents live in poverty, including 45 percent of its children (more than twice the national average). More than four out of five children in Grundy County schools are considered economically disadvantaged, and almost half live in single-parent households. Health issues include many of the chronic conditions associated with poverty, including diabetes and obesity. The county's residents wanted to improve their health, environment, sustainability, and resilience. EPA's Office of Environmental Justice convened participants representing local, state, regional, and federal government; community leaders; academic institutions; health care organizations; and more. This effort aligns with the Appalachian Regional Commission's program in Tennessee, which supports Grundy County's community-driven work to develop local solutions to complicated health and economic problems. One result of this convening was new activity, led by a team of community leaders, academic institutions, and nonprofit organizations, to turn the former Grundy County High School building (Figure 9) into the South Cumberland Learning and Development Center. This center will be a hub to serve the region's residents through lifelong learning programs for adults and youth that prepare them for jobs, improve their health, and offer educational opportunities. It will also improve community connections through locally supported activities and partnerships. Connected to this effort is the revitalization of the Mountain Goat Trail, a former railroad line crossing several counties. This walking and biking trail offers not just recreation but a new way to make connections among the Cumberland Plateau communities and a catalyst for economic growth around natural areas.

Photo courtesy of Emily C. Partin

Figure 9: The former Grundy County High School is being redeveloped into a community education center to improve residents' health, education, and job prospects.

27 EPA. "Environmental Justice Equals Healthy, Sustainable, and Equitable Communities." http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/sustainability/index.html. Accessed Jun. 18, 2014.

Delivering Multiple Benefits From Single Investments

The Partnership helps communities make investments that not only construct buildings and infrastructure, but also bring environmental and economic benefits and engage residents in shaping their community's future. Making sure that every dollar spent brings multiple benefits uses limited funds wisely and effectively.

Helping Communities Create Inclusive and Equitable Places

In its Sustainable Communities Regional Planning and Community Challenge grant programs, HUD created incentives for authentic and energetic community engagement and inclusive governance processes. Helping grant recipients reach all segments of the population means that the plans will offer a more comprehensive and holistic vision for growth and encourage deeper and more lasting investment in the plan. To apply for the grant, regional applicants had to put together a consortium representing diverse community interests to share in the project's governance and decision-making. To help communities create open and inclusive planning efforts, HUD required grantees to dedicate 5 to 10 percent of their HUD budgets to engage populations not typically involved in municipal planning. HUD also required all of its regional grantees to complete a framework for communities to evaluate and address regional barriers to housing and jobs. Together, these efforts help set the stage for stakeholders and residents of all income levels to be more involved in local land use decision-making, even after the grant period ends.

For example, the Mid-America Regional Council in the Kansas City region convened a delegation of faith-

SPOTLIGHT ON TOOLS FOR COMMUNITIES

In partnership with DOT, HUD incorporated transportation data such as Amtrak and transit lines and stations as a map layer in **CPD Maps** (*http://egis.hud.gov/cpdmaps*), a web-based mapping tool that helps states and local governments plan the use of HUD formula block grants, including Community Development Block Grants. It helps communities better visualize how transit access can affect affordable housing locations and other investments. The city of Los Angeles, in releasing its first Transit-Oriented Consolidated Plan, noted that these tools enabled a more collaborative, citizen-driven process rooted in data.[28] As a result, Los Angeles and other communities that use CPD Maps are better positioned to invest in housing and transportation that reduce costs to households and make neighborhoods more economically vibrant. CPD Maps also displays the boundaries of Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants, which enhances planning by showing the grantees' locations in the context of other demographic and investment data.

HUD and DOT collaborated to create the **Location Affordability Portal** (*www.locationaffordability.info)* to help consumers, researchers, and policy-makers better understand how transportation costs affect housing affordability. The portal features two tools—My Transportation Costs Calculator and the Location Affordability Index—as well as downloadable housing and transportation cost data at the neighborhood level, covering 94 percent of the U.S. population. This collaboration marks the first time that robust, standardized data on housing and transportation costs have been available at a national scale to help families make more informed decisions about where to live and work and help policy-makers make more sustainable investments.

The **Sustainable Communities Hot Report** (*http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/TheDataWeb_HotReport2/EPA2/EPA_HomePage2.hrml*) uses various data from the U.S. Census Bureau to give community leaders and residents a quick and easy way to determine how well their community is performing on indicators related to transportation, housing, economic development, income, and equity. Users can view charts, tables, and maps showing their community's trends over time and can compare their community's performance to peer communities.

USDA's **Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass** (*www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF_COMPASS*) is an online resource that provides quick access to information about USDA's programs and investments in local foods. The tool includes a map that notes relevant Partnership investments, such as a TIGER grant for Detroit's Eastern Market; an EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Grant in Missoula, Montana, to add space for a café and community kitchen; and HUD Regional Planning grantee plans that address local foods.

28 City of Los Angeles Department of Housing and Community Development. *City of Los Angeles Five-Year Transit-Oriented Consolidated Plan and 39th (2013-2014) Program Year Action Plan.* 2013. *http://cdd.lacity.org/home_report_39ConPlan.html.*

Photo courtesy of Mid America Regional Council

Figure 10: The Equity Summit for the Kansas City metropolitan area brought together local partners to help the region advance social equity issues. The meeting concluded with a commitment to form a regional equity network.

based organizations, community groups, the Urban League, Hispanic organizations, and others working on social justice and inclusion for its 2010 regional planning effort. This group evolved into a new nonprofit organization, the Kansas City Regional Equity Network, which went on to host an Equity Summit in 2013 (Figure 10) and develop an Equity Profile for the region. The organization and its work help the regional council adjust its policies and processes to ensure that transportation allocations and other funding decisions use criteria that help more people in the area access well-paying jobs, schools, and other opportunities.

WHAT THE PARTNERSHIP MEANS TO US

Dexter Muller, *Senior Vice President, Community Development, Greater Memphis Chamber*

The area around our airport is about 50 square miles, the size of a pretty good city and 20 percent of the city of Memphis. The airport is the largest economic generator in the state and the largest cargo airport in North America. It has a huge impact on the local economy. One in four jobs in our region is attributed to the airport in one way or another. But we've got a race car as an airport, and a Pinto as the neighborhood around it. The infrastructure and neighborhoods around the airport are aging.

We were always working on problems, but we never created a vision for the area, so we weren't going to make any revolutionary changes. That's what the master plan allowed us to do. HUD provided a $1.2 million grant, plus an $800,000 match. The Chamber contributed $50,000 in cash and 900 volunteer hours from our staff and consultants. The city put in $300,000 in cash and other in-kind services. This made a community effort out of it. Had it not been for the HUD grant, I don't know that we would have ever been able to come up with the money to do it.

Since we were awarded the grant, there has been over $300 million in investment in this Airport City area and 4,000 jobs. That didn't all take place because of the plan, but the plan points out opportunities, and it's already beginning to happen. The work we are doing creates jobs and strengthens the economy. The plan and the corporation show people there is opportunity. There is a lot of blight in this area, so people have to be convinced that the government isn't going to step back. There has been a lot of public involvement in the master plan process. With full implementation of the plan, we anticipate creation of 15,000 direct jobs over the first 20 years.

I think the federal partnership helped in numerous ways. We are an incubator for a lot of the principles that the administration is working on. Memphis is a small enough town where you can execute plans and make a difference, and it's big enough to have relevance to the nation. Because of our geographic location and infrastructure and socioeconomic positioning, we are a good test case to try things and then take them to the nation if they work.

The Memphis region got a sustainability grant from HUD for the Greenprint that has advanced the greenways and corridors as well as promoted commercial revitalization and neighborhood development. The Broad Street corridor area (which is in midtown north of Airport City) lay dormant without plans for revitalization. The Shelby County Office of Sustainability, in partnership with the Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team, identified the area for planning. They took back the neighborhood, and they did it with very small amounts of money. Those are good grassroots urban tactics that have a lot of application around the country. The grant helped us put a lot of these things together.

Another component of the Greenprint planning was advanced by a DOT TIGER grant. The Main to Main project will connect downtown Memphis with Arkansas and also construct a bike and pedestrian way across the Harahan Bridge over the Mississippi River. Once it's completed, it will cross the river into Crittenden County.

We certainly are supporters of the Partnership, which is breaking down silos and looking at how things piece together between departments. These issues are important to job creation and building cities. It's not just tree huggers that care about protecting the environment; businesses recognize the importance of the sustainability principles of environment, green initiatives, and urban revitalization.

Encouraging More Sustainable Water Infrastructure Investments

Since 2010, EPA has worked through two avenues to incorporate the Partnership's guiding principles into programs that implement provisions of the Clean Water Act. On a national scale, EPA has included the Partnership principles in guidance to states on how to implement State Revolving Fund (SRF) Programs—programs established under the Clean Water Act to provide low-cost loans for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure and other projects to improve water quality. As a result, this guidance now emphasizes the importance of funding more sustainable projects, such as those that repair, replace, and upgrade infrastructure serving existing communities rather than expanding infrastructure to accommodate growth.

EPA has also provided technical assistance to states that want to change their water infrastructure (or SRF-funded) programs to be more supportive of projects that help build sustainable communities. In Maryland, for example, EPA worked with state water officials to modify the criteria they use to determine eligibility and rank projects for available funding. As part of this assistance, Maryland modified its criteria for ranking projects to be more consistent with the Partnership principles, giving applicants to the program additional points for projects that benefit the needs of existing communities—which includes projects that serve brownfield sites, projects near transit stations, and projects in HUD-designated Community Legacy Areas. Frostburg, Maryland, received these extra points and was awarded a $1,645,000 low-interest loan to replace storm and sewer lines on Paul Street, three blocks from Frostburg State University and a short walk to Main Street (Figure 11). This project will help Frostburg revitalize its historic downtown, enabling new housing and economic growth along its commercial corridor.

Photo courtesy of Flickr user josepha

Figure 11: Frostburg's Main Street is next to residential neighborhoods and Frostburg State University. The new SRF selection criteria helped the city get funding for a project that will encourage growth nearby, putting new homes within walking distance of jobs, stores, and restaurants.

Building Innovation Into Grant Programs

The Partnership agencies have tried to use common-sense approaches to make several grant and technical assistance programs better respond to communities' needs. For example, many of the three agencies' programs have evolved to consider housing, transportation, and environmental protection comprehensively—mirroring how these elements are linked in communities—and to evaluate proposals based on how well they will achieve multiple benefits from individual investments. Using a competitive process, as DOT's TIGER program does, rather than formula funding spurs creative, comprehensive projects and leads to additional local and private investment.

Grant and technical assistance programs in all three agencies have incorporated language to encourage projects that support the Partnership's guiding principles, align with a local or regional integrated planning process, and engage community residents, including historically underrepresented and overburdened populations, in planning and implementation. This language helps make sure that investments from across the federal government—irrespective of agency—are grounded in and reinforce the common concepts of sustainability, long-term planning, and citizen involvement. Projects that are

rooted in these concepts are more likely to deliver multiple benefits, consider environmental and fiscal impacts, and reflect residents' needs and desires. Programs that have used this language include:

- In EPA: Brownfield Area-Wide Planning, Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup grants; Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving grants; Urban Waters grants; Tribal General Assistance Program (GAP) funds; and the Smart Growth Implementation Assistance, Greening America's Capitals, and Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities technical assistance programs.
- In DOT: TIGER, Urban Circulator, and Bus & Bus Facilities Livability grants.
- In HUD: Sustainable Communities Regional Planning and Community Challenge grants.

These programs have a tremendous impact across the country. For example, nearly 40 percent of Americans live in a community that has benefited from one or more of the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning and Community Challenge grants. These two programs alone represent a $240 million federal investment in local planning efforts that was matched with $253 million in private investment and local funds. Over time, this investment will spur many hundreds of millions of dollars in new growth.

In addition to using this language in the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning and Community Challenge grants, HUD incorporates into its core programs sustainable planning principles that emphasize holistic, interdisciplinary planning processes with deep public involvement to help ensure that its investments consider not only housing, but also transportation,

WHAT THE PARTNERSHIP MEANS TO US

Nick Tilsen, *Executive Director, Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation*

Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit organization in the Thunder Valley community of the Porcupine District on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, received a HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant.

The Lakota people have always been warriors, "fighting for our future." Thanks to the HUD grant, we have developed a tribally approved regional plan for the Pine Ridge Reservation to define that future. The Oyaté Omniciye Oglala Lakota Planning Project created a consortium of practitioners on the Pine Ridge Reservation to take control of our lives and our future. "Oyate Omniciyé" in the Lakota language means *circle meetings of the people*.

There is extreme poverty on the Pine Ridge Reservation. More than 40,000 people live here, and 50 percent of our residents are under 25 years old. The planning process allowed us to connect and convene with each other, including our children in the process. We created a vision for our future, staying true to our culture and language. The plan was adopted by the tribe in October 2012, thus becoming tribal law.

The plan has already helped bring $8 million from DOT's TIGER grant program. With this money, we will be able to pave an east-west road connecting communities. This road is also a route to bring supplies into the reservation and take locally made goods out; paving it will save residents time and money.

In 2013, the South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition was created. The stakeholders include tribal representatives, federal and state agencies, nonprofits, our local community development financial institutions, lenders, housing developers, and the South Dakota governor's office. We are educating our people on the value of becoming a homeowner. This is important, as Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation is now implementing the Model Communities Initiative in our Oglala Lakota Regional Plan. Thunder Valley has embarked on a historic journey to build Pine Ridges, a mixed-income, mixed-use development that will create 31 single-family homes, 24 rental townhomes, and 45 rental apartments. In addition, there will be a youth shelter, a community facility called the Empowerment Center, 30,000 square feet of retail development, a business incubator, a 12,000-square-foot commercial greenhouse, and 30,000 square feet of light industrial space. This project shows what the future of rural Native American communities could look like and could be a model for sustainable affordable housing and poverty reduction. Phase 1 of the development is set to break ground in late 2014 or early 2015. The best part about the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant has been that this is the Oglala Lakota People's plan for our future.

economic development, the environment, and social equity. In fiscal year 2014, HUD included in its document that governs all Notices of Funding Availability for discretionary grant programs[29] bonus points for:

- Pursuing community economic development that creates jobs for low-income people and/or supports small and disadvantaged businesses.
- Including transportation options, reducing transportation costs, and enhancing access to community amenities. To receive this bonus point, HUD grant applicants must demonstrate that grantee activities—e.g., planning, construction, or providing services such as housing counseling—are within easy walking distance of important services and amenities, such as grocery stores, social services, cultural facilities, parks, and schools, and/or are served by conveniently located public transportation with frequent service.
- Energy-efficiency activities.

These bonus points have the potential to influence more than $500 million in HUD community development and housing funding each year.

Each of the three agencies has designated in at least some grant programs special consideration for applicants that have received a Partnership grant tied to the same project area and can show that the grant for which they are applying will further benefit the area. HUD, for example, calls it "Preferred Sustainability Status" and awards it to HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning and Community Challenge grantees and high-scoring applicants. This designation can make it easier for localities and regions to get funding to implement plans funded by previous federal grants, allowing them to build on earlier investments. While EPA and DOT do not use Preferred Sustainability Status, they leverage existing federal investments and programs through the Partnership as appropriate in relevant grant programs.

29 HUD. "General Section to the Department's Fiscal Year 2014 NOFAs for Discretionary Programs." Feb. 2014. *http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=2014-gensec.pdf.*

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The climate is changing. The economy is changing. The American population is changing. All these changes affect where and how we build our neighborhoods, cities, and regions. Many of these changes—such as new weather extremes, shifting economic bases, and growing demand for walkable places—can present unfamiliar challenges to communities. They need resources, guidance, and innovative solutions to make the most of opportunities and mitigate any harm. The Partnership will continue to help communities find ways to cope with the changing climate, encourage new investment and economic growth that benefits all residents, and support rural areas and local food systems. Every investment, program, and policy can be a chance to make a community more resilient and prepared for whatever the future holds.

We are at a point where it no longer makes sense to make these types of investments in infrastructure and communities without considering how they will affect and be affected by climate change. The President's Climate Action Plan[30] and executive order on preparing the United States for climate change[31] direct federal agencies to ensure their policies support climate-resilient investments by states, communities, and tribes and to develop tools and other assistance for communities. The Partnership's work is helping to achieve these aims in several ways. All of the Partnership's work to support more affordable, less-polluting travel and housing options also helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

Moreover, Partnership investments in planning increasingly consider strategies to help communities become more resilient to natural disasters and other impacts of climate change. For example, EPA is working with HUD, DOT, FEMA, and other federal agencies on technical assistance projects that will develop new strategies and tools communities can use to reduce their impact on the climate as well as prepare for the increasing extreme weather we are already seeing. Through the Partnership, DOT and EPA will support HUD's efforts to award nearly $1 billion to help communities plan and implement resilient disaster recovery approaches. This work will help demonstrate to all American communities how a resilience lens can be applied to public investments and decisions, and how new technologies and design approaches can not only help communities rebuild better, but also help them better withstand major environmental and economic shocks.

HUD, DOT, and EPA will continue to help communities make better informed and more strategic housing, transportation, and infrastructure investments that can provide ladders of opportunity to help residents improve their lives. For example, HUD is finalizing its Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule, which will ensure that affordable housing opportunities are considered on a regional basis and therefore are closer to regional job centers. DOT will coordinate that rule with its own work to promote connectivity and measure multimodal access in communities, including examining tools to improve the planning process and metrics to track connectivity between centers of employment, education, services, and residences. Together, these activities will help communities determine how their development patterns and transportation networks help or hinder access to affordable housing, job opportunities, and essential services. Other efforts will continue to focus on equipping communities with the tools they need to ensure that investments save households money, increase access to good jobs, and reduce inequity in our communities.

30 Executive Office of the President. *The President's Climate Action Plan.* 2013. *www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/image/president27sclimateactionplan.pdf.*

31 *Executive Order 13653—Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change.* Federal Register. Vol. 79, No. 215. Nov. 6, 2013. *www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-11-06/pdf/2013-26785.pdf.*

In their various programs working in communities, the Partnership agencies have seen rising interest in promoting local food sources. Many communities want to encourage locally grown food to support farmers, make healthy food more accessible, preserve their agricultural heritage, or spur revitalization. EPA, DOT, and USDA, along with the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Authority, launched the Local Foods, Local Places Program in 2014 to encourage more sustainable communities by promoting local foods. The technical assistance program will help communities create more economic opportunities for local farmers and businesses, make it easier for people to get local food, and use local food enterprises such as farmers' markets or community kitchens to revitalize main streets and downtowns. This program aims to find effective strategies that communities around the country will be able to use to spur local businesses, help people eat healthier, and bring new life to communities.

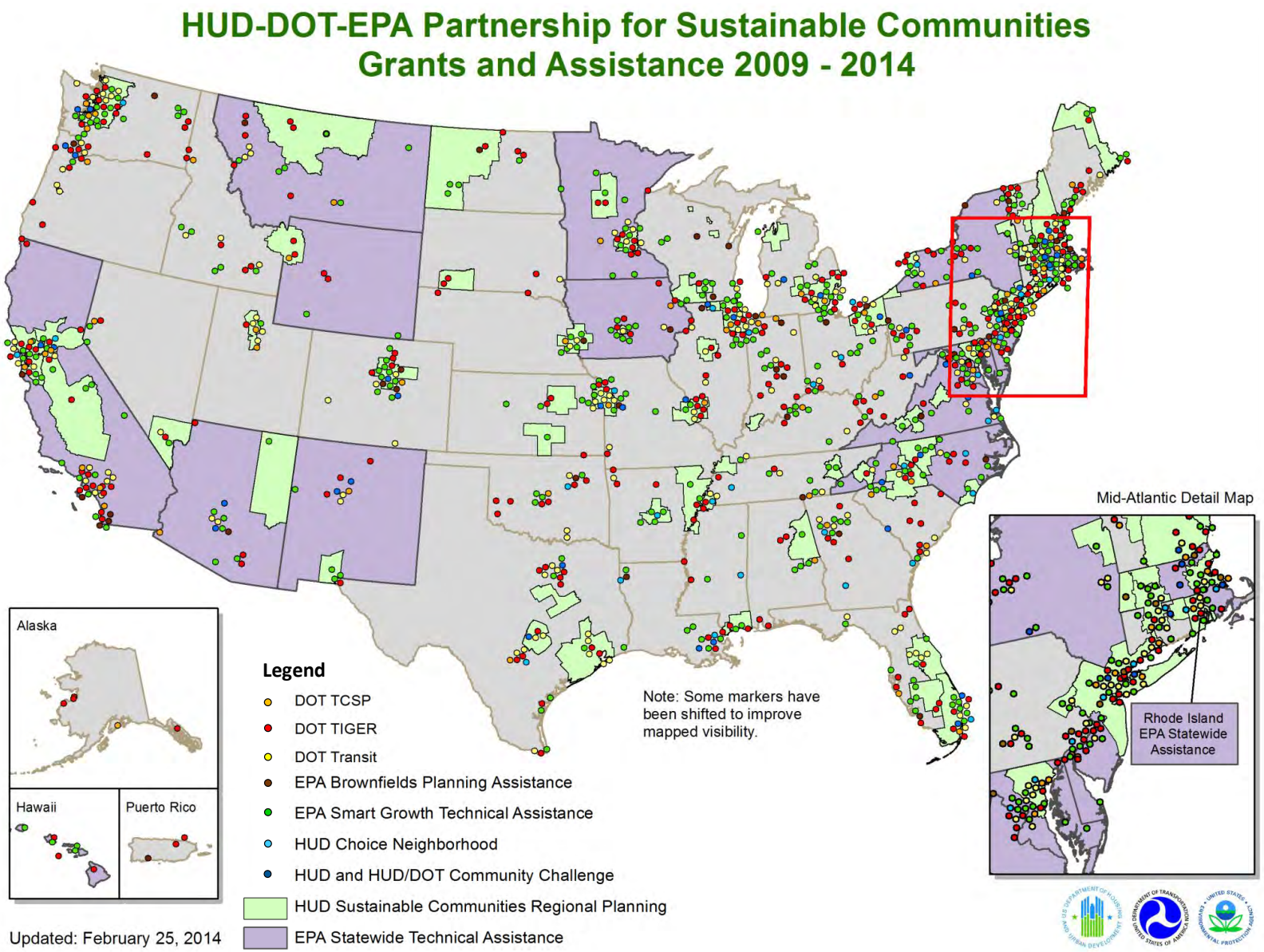
The Partnership is supporting implementation of a section of the 2014 Farm Bill[32] that authorizes USDA to set aside up to 10 percent of funds from certain Rural Development programs to support projects that help implement a region's strategic community and economic development plan. This new authority is consistent with the Partnership's principles and will ensure that federal investments made with this authority are aligned with communities' visions and plans for the future. Programs to which this new authority applies include grants, loans, and loan guarantees to support community facilities such as hospitals, health clinics, schools, and community centers; to build water and wastewater infrastructure; to support rural business development; and to increase economic development capacity. The Partnership agencies will support USDA by reaching out to communities that have regional plans that would be eligible for funding and by seeking to leverage other Partnership programs as USDA begins implementing this section of the Farm Bill in the coming years.

As the Partnership demonstrates, coordinated federal investments can and must deliver multiple benefits. The Partnership will continue to focus on ways to increase flexibility, align federal policies, and reduce barriers to help all communities—large and small, urban and rural—have a healthy and economically vibrant future.

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities' website has much more information, including case studies, announcements of application periods for grants and technical assistance, and tools and resources from the Partnership agencies.

www.sustainablecommunities.gov

32 *Agricultural Act of 2014*. Section 6025. Signed Feb. 7, 2014. *www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hr2642enr/pdf/BILLS-113hr2642enr.pdf.*



As of February 2014, the Partnership agencies have received more than 9,800 applications for assistance, requesting almost $122 billion. The Partnership has been able to fund 1,066 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico with approximately $4.6 billion, representing just over 10 percent of applications.

United States Environmental Protection Agency

Office of Sustainable Communities (1807T)
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