

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE November 21, 2011

NEWS RELEASE

RUTGERS PROJECT IS RECIPIENT OF \$5 MILLION HUD SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES REGIONAL PLANNING GRANT

*Impacts 13 New Jersey counties and seeks to create jobs and improve housing, transportation,
and economic vitality of urban and rural regions*

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – The North Jersey Sustainable Communities Consortium, a project administered by the [Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy](#) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is the recipient of a \$5 million [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant](#) award.

In addition to the Bloustein School, a core group of consortium members are serving as the project team and will provide the organizational capacity and expertise necessary to complete the project. The team includes the [North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority \(NJTPA\)](#), [NJ TRANSIT](#), the [New Jersey Office of Planning Advocacy \(NJOPA\)](#), the [Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey \(HCDN-NJ\)](#), the [Municipal Land Use Center at The College of New Jersey \(MLUC\)](#), [NJ Future](#), the [New Jersey Regional Coalition \(NJRC\)](#), [PlanSmart NJ](#), and the [Regional Plan Association \(RPA\)](#).

The grant was announced as part of the 2011 Sustainable Communities Grants, whose goal is to help communities and regions improve their economic competitiveness by connecting housing with good jobs, quality schools and transportation. HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan and U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) were in New Brunswick on Monday, November 21 to announce the award.

“We are excited by the role Rutgers will play in helping the people of northern New Jersey—more than 6.5 million strong—to plan for a better future,” said Rutgers University President Richard L. McCormick at the press conference announcing the grant. “Rutgers takes very seriously its mission to serve the needs and advance the opportunities of our great state. We do so in myriad ways—from training teachers and social workers to providing law clinics to addressing obesity to supporting urban entrepreneurs to protecting our estuaries, and much more.”

The North Jersey Sustainable Communities Consortium grant will develop a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD) for the 13-county NJTPA region. The plan will use sustainability, transit system connectivity, and transit-oriented-development as the central framework for integrating plans, regulations, investments, and incentive programs at all levels of government to bring jobs and create additional economic development opportunities in the area.

“This grant will help our region—an area that is rapidly approaching build-out—take the next step in sustainability planning,” said Jon Carnegie, project coordinator for the Consortium and executive director of the Bloustein School’s [Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center](#). “The consortium will provide the framework for engaging a broad cross-section of citizens and representatives from the public, private and non-governmental sectors in a new and innovative process to create a shared plan for sustainable development that can be used to reshape state, regional, local and private-sector decision-making toward more sustainable outcomes,”

"The NJTPA region is the fifth largest metropolitan planning organization (MPO) in the nation and is both highly motivated and well positioned to take advantage of the opportunity provided by this grant program," said Union County Freeholder Daniel P. Sullivan, Chairman of the NJTPA board of directors. "New Jersey has long been a pioneer in sustainability planning and many of the jurisdictions in the region have developed plans and programs to promote sustainable communities. These efforts as well as important economic, environmental, and human assets, including the second largest seaport in the country and one of the most extensive and diverse transit systems in the nation, provide the region with a solid foundation on which to build a sustainable future."

The 13 counties in the NJTPA region include Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren.

“Our nation’s ability to compete in a global economy and create jobs is dependent upon how quickly and efficiently we can connect our workers and families to education and employment opportunities,” said HUD Secretary Donovan. “This year we are especially proud that we had a particular focus on funding proposals that included more chambers of commerce and economic development corporations as core partners. When half of the working families in the area spend 45% of income in housing and transportation costs alone, we know that we have a responsibility to fix that and to provide housing and transportation options that can improve their quality of life and economic stability,” he added.

At the press conference, President McCormick remarked that HUD’s substantial investment in this project demonstrates that Rutgers and the Bloustein School are leaders in developing innovative policies that can be a model for the country. He further noted the timeliness of the grant. “The Bloustein School is celebrating its 20th anniversary as one of the nation’s key centers for planning and public policy scholarship and analysis. Sustainability planning has always been a priority of the school, and in conjunction with the anniversary Bloustein will conduct a symposium on Planning Healthy, Sustainable Communities in April 2012. The symposium will showcase the university’s policy and applied research with focus on livability, economic competitiveness, and community—all of which are major components of the grant.”

More information about the grant announcement and HUD’s Sustainable Communities Awards may be found at www.hud.gov/news/.

Comments from project partners:

Diane Sterner, executive director of the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey

“Investing in homes and jobs in environmentally appropriate places with access to transit is the key to get New Jersey thriving again. Workers need jobs near homes they can afford and we’re thrilled to be part of a collaboration that works towards that goal.”

Peter Kasabach, executive director New Jersey Future

"This grant comes at a propitious time for New Jersey. The Governor’s newly proposed State Strategic Plan calls for targeted economic growth in places where existing infrastructure can support development and redevelopment. This grant affords us an opportunity to put this plan into action, supporting truly sustainable communities where residents enjoy a variety of transportation options, including walking or biking to shops or jobs, in safe and affordable neighborhoods."

Lucy Vandenberg, executive director PlanSmart NJ

“PlanSmart NJ has long been a leader in making connections between transportation, housing, and economic development to foster vibrant communities. Through this grant, we will have the opportunity to substantially broaden our impact, working to build healthy communities through genuine community engagement and outreach.”

Bob Yaro, president of Regional Plan Association, which is managing a parallel HUD-funded Sustainable Communities effort in New York and Connecticut

“We are thrilled to be a partner in this critical effort in New Jersey. Through our participation, we will help connect efforts on both sides of the Hudson River to benefit the entire tri-state region.”

Rev. David Ford, New Jersey Regional Coalition Board of Directors member and pastor of St. Matthew Baptist Church in Roselle

“New Jersey Regional Coalition looks forward to working with Rutgers University and the consortium partners in promoting sustainable development and social inclusion to restore north Jersey's economic vitality through this dynamic opportunity provided us by the Obama administration and HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan.”

Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey (D)

“We want to thank Secretary Donovan and the Obama administration for marshalling the combined wisdom and power of local elected officials and grassroots leaders through the New Jersey Regional Coalition in this important program to promote diversity and sustainable development in northern New Jersey.”

