

## Region Forward: Sustainable Implementation Strategy

### Key Questions:

**QUESTION:** *Region Forward* recommends: creating new Regional Activity Centers; creating regional implementation strategies to meet the region's goals and targets; and creating a baseline for the performance indicators and targets. *Which of these projects should be considered as part of the regional grant proposal?*

**QUESTION:** *How are local implementation projects selected as part of the grant process. Are local projects pre-populated using regional criteria for inclusion into the grant process? Are projects selected during grant implementation?*

**QUESTION:** *If projects are chosen up front and included in the grant what criteria do we use for selecting projects? By a new sustainable centers framework or use the existing Regional Activity Centers map? By identifying the barriers to implementing region forward? Other approaches?*

**QUESTION:** Should a public participation campaign be used to create a sense of public investment in where regional centers are located and how they are chosen? What would such a campaign look like?

### Background:

The timing could not be better. We believe HUD's Sustainable Communities Planning Grant can help the National Capital Region take the next step on a path toward growing exceptional sustainable communities with clean air and water, safe and healthy neighborhoods, resilient economies, and access to housing and transportation choices.

Our optimism is rooted in recent regional efforts to create a more sustainable future. The District of Columbia, suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia showcase some of the best examples of transit-oriented development in the nation. Area officials have also developed a Climate Change Plan that set regional greenhouse gas reduction goals. They initiated a Transportation Land-use Connections program to provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions to enhance projects that link transportation and land use. In addition, they worked together at the regional level and succeeded in winning a federal TIGER grant of nearly \$60 million to improve bus performance throughout region.

Building on this regional success and cooperation, area leaders recently approved Region Forward, a brand-new planning guide that has identified a comprehensive set of ambitious, regional goals, established performance targets and indicators to measure progress toward the goals, and inspired political consensus through a compact agreement for area governments. We live in a complex, tri-state area, home to the nation's capital and federal government, and regional cooperation isn't always easy. This makes Region Forward a significant accomplishment—underscored by the fact that the COG Board of Directors and over half of all local governments have energetically endorsed this new approach to tomorrow's challenges.

### Objectives

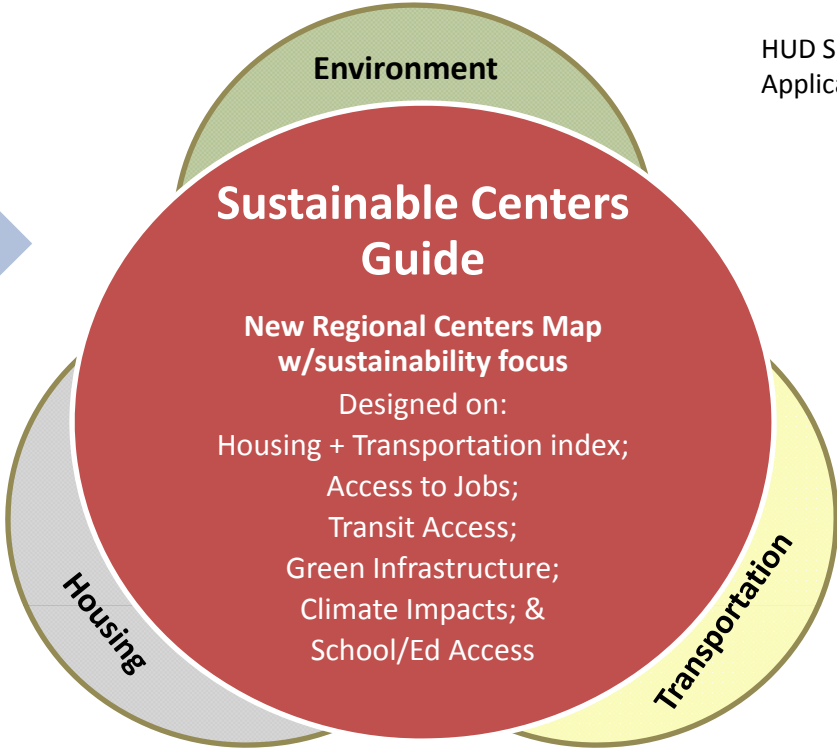
**Regional:** *Build on the regionally adopted goals and targets in Region Forward to update the regional activity centers using new sustainability principles and a public engagement campaign.*

**Local:** *Support local plans and programs that make Regional Centers successful.*

**Measure Results**  
Region Forward Baseline Analysis to measure regional performance using the targets and indicators in Region Forward

**Replicate Success**  
Study existing regional sustainable centers using the Household Travel Survey and other tools to develop implementation models

**Public Engagement**  
Engage the broader public when creating new Regional Sustainable Centers. Utilize new technology and electronic townhalls showing the tradeoffs around environmental, transportation and housing decisions. Include regional framework in local planning efforts.



Regional Component

**Demonstration Projects**  
*Focus on making regional centers successful*

- Amend Local Five Year Consolidated Plans or Action Plans w/Sustainable Centers Focus
- Pilot zoning code rewrite for mixed-income TOD center(s)
- Pilot Small Area Plan for a Regionally identified Sustainability Center(s)
- Live Near Your Work Program

Local Component

## 1. Regional Component

### Region Forward's Next Step Recommendations:

- **Update Regional Activity Centers**
- **Create a Baseline for Measuring Regional Performance**
- **Create Regional Implementation Strategies**

#### 1.1 Sustainable Centers Plan: *Updating Regional Activity Centers under a New Paradigm*

We need a regional initiative that focuses on making our Region's Activity Centers successful places. Regional Activity Centers are a logical focal point and first step towards implementing *Region Forward*. The Activity Center map is the primary growth management tool used in *Region Forward* and enhancing these places can provide local and regional benefits. Regional Centers are all unique and will require creative local initiatives that begin to enhance these centers. A Sustainable Centers plan should identify a menu of attributes that make a place sustainable and allow jurisdictions and communities to customize their center in way that allows them to create a path to a more sustainable place while building on local needs and characteristics unique to place.

Rethinking how we define and direct resources to Activity Centers is critical. Traditional Regional Activity Centers largely focus on jobs and to a lesser degree, households. Enhanced Regional Activity Centers should embrace concepts found in *Region Forward*, including improved accessibility through more housing and transportation choices, access to job and educational opportunities, climate and energy impacts, and links to amenities such as parks and walkable streets.

#### 1.2 Regional Public Engagement: *Building Wider Public Consensus*

We need greater public engagement to create long-lasting support for how Sustainable Centers are defined and supported. A successful Sustainable Centers guide or plan cannot be achieved in isolation from residents and other stakeholders that might be affected by identifying regional sustainable centers. The broader public must be invested in how the centers are chosen and the type of actions that provide local benefits to these places. The grant could help us reach beyond traditional stakeholders and conduct town hall events using new technology and visualization programs that show the consequences of various decisions and show the benefits of sustainable centers.

#### 1.3 Measure Results

We should provide the foundation for measuring regional progress. *Region Forward* provides a framework for beginning to evaluate regional performance and recommends preparing a baseline analysis as the foundation for reflecting on regional progress. Establishing locally-appropriate performance goals and measures is included in the advanced NOFA for how HUD would evaluate a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. If our region is to use *Region Forward* as a basis for creating a focused implementation strategy we should include work that would allow us to define *Region Forward* as a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development under HUD's requirements.

#### 1.4 Replicate Success

Our region already has successful places that are helping the region meet the goals and targets in *Region Forward*. A number of these places are part of our Regional Activity Centers. Part of their success is quantified through the Regional Household Travel Survey. The region should utilize this survey and other tools to better understand which actions and policies have been used to make these places successful and understand how they could be applied in other places around the region.

## 2. Local Component

### 2.1 Pilot Action in Regional Centers: *Focus on Making Regional Centers Successful, Sustainable Places*

We need to support local needs that address regional issues and serve to implement our regional vision. The implementation program at the local level should build on this fact and recognize that some jurisdictions are poised to take a lead with certain types of plans and programs that contribute to a local need while beginning to implement *Region Forward*. Each jurisdiction is different and can advance the goals and targets in *Region Forward* in their own unique way.

Implementation plans could come in the form of revising a number of local five year consolidated plans to include the regional perspective in *Region Forward*, create a live near your work program, mixed-income TOD strategies or policies, and piloting sustainability coding or stormwater regulations for certain regional centers. Implementation plans that occur as part of the local implementation action should include a regional perspective to frame efforts in the context of the regional vision. Detailed plans and programs could leverage local dollars, private or philanthropic resources to reflect clear regional consensus around these priorities. Execution plans and programs should also focus on priority places that are on the cusp of significant progress toward the regional implementation strategy and vision while demonstrating deliverables with a clear public benefit.

How are local projects selected? We should consider developing a process for selecting projects. Identifying the barriers to implementing the targets in *Region Forward* is one possible approach that should be considered. A process that allows jurisdictions to be creative while still using a regional framework would be ideal.

## Appendix:

### Sample Targets found in Region Forward & Their Potential Barriers

*Identifying the Barriers towards achieving Region Forward's Targets will help shape which local actions should be considered.*

#### Land Use:

- 1. Target: Beginning in 2012, capture 75% of the square footage of new commercial construction and 50% of new households in Regional Activity Centers**
  - a) **Potential Barrier:** The majority of Regional Activity Centers use employment as the primary criterion and thus capture commercial areas like suburban office campuses where little housing is located or planned.
  - b) **Potential Barrier:** Centers that have been identified at the local level in a Jurisdiction's General Plan or Comprehensive Plan do not always match the Regional Activity Center geography.
  - c) **Potential Barrier:** Mixed-use zoning is not always prevalent in Regional Activity Centers
  
- 2. Target: Beginning in 2012, the region will maintain more than 450,000 acres of agriculture land in farms.**
  - a) **Potential Barrier:** Zoning regulations discourage continued farms and food operations
  - b) **Potential Barrier:** Land subdivision regulations discourage continued farm operations
  - c) **Potential Barrier:** Not enough demand for locally produced food
  
- 3. Target: By 2020, the housing and transportation costs in Regional Activity Centers will not exceed 45 percent of area median income**
  - a) **Potential Barrier:** Forty-Five Percent (26 out of the 58) existing Regional Activity Centers have no transit access
  - b) **Potential Barrier:** Activity Centers with transit access and housing have higher than average housing costs.
  
- 4. Target: Beginning in 2012, at least 80% of new or preserved affordable units will be located in Regional Activity Centers**
  - a) **Potential Barrier:** Land costs higher in Regional Activity Centers and serve to drive up the amount needed to subsidize affordable housing
  - b) **Potential Barrier:** Jurisdictional Five Year Consolidated Plans prepared for HUD do not always include a regional perspective or utilize a Regional Activity Center framework to improve access to transit, jobs and other opportunities.

## Advanced NOFA Language describing Category 1, 2 and 3 Funding:

**Category 1: Regional Plans for Sustainable Development.** Funds would support stakeholder-driven visioning and scenario planning exercises that will address and harmonize plans for the location, scale and type of housing, education and job centers; identify appropriate transportation and water infrastructure; and proactively consider risks from disasters and climate change. Applicants would be expected to identify a set of locally-appropriate performance metrics that are consistent with the Partnership's Livability Principles, as well as the Partnership's own metrics, and then measure the outcomes of proposed growth/reinvestment scenarios against those metrics. Funding in this category would support data analysis, urban design and outreach efforts to achieve broad consensus among groups, citizens, and decision-makers for a single vision/scenario and to have that plan adopted by all appropriate regional governmental bodies.

**Category 2: Detailed Execution Plans and Programs.** Funds in this category would support the preparation and adoption of detailed plans and programs to implement an adopted integrated regional sustainable vision. Because implementation needs will vary significantly from region to region depending on the goals of a sustainable plan and the gaps that exist, the funds from this category would likely support a wide range of implementation activities but still be measured against the common and consistent metrics and outcome goals highlighted in the previous section. For example, inter-jurisdictional affordable and fair housing strategies, regional transportation investment programs, corridor transit-oriented development plans, sector or area plans, land banking and acquisition strategies, revenue sharing strategies, economic development strategies, plans to improve access to community amenities, and other specific activities that help ensure that the goals of the regional vision are implemented. Regional coalitions would be eligible to apply for this category on the basis of demonstrating the adoption of a regional vision that is substantially consistent with the Livability Principles, program goals and metrics identified in the published NOFA.

**Category 3: Implementation Incentives.** Recognizing that those regions that have already fully embraced sustainable regional planning provide important models to the nation, the Partnership is considering ways in which the Program can reward and incent further action by cutting edge regions.

First, HUD is evaluating the extent to which applicants that have an adopted Regional Sustainable Development Plan and appropriate implementation programs in place could be pre-certified as having met HUD, DOT, and EPA's criteria for sustainability and livability factors in other discretionary federal funding programs.

Second, HUD is considering providing a limited number of grants to complete a financing package for projects that would accelerate the implementation of a Regional Sustainable Development Plan. As envisioned, this category would support pre-development costs, capital costs for a regionally significant development or infrastructure investment, or land acquisition investments. We are considering how to make best use of new federal dollars in the context of existing programs and their requirements—and also in the context of innovative practices in the field. Applicants would need to demonstrate that they have in place an adopted regional vision that is substantially consistent with the Livability Principles, metrics identified in the published NOFA to measure performance, and have commitments from affected participating partners to initiate implementation efforts, but have funding gaps that could be closed within the grant limits for this program.