

AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS REPORT: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sustainable Communities Task Force has been a successful framework for fostering collaboration among the state agencies. Last year the N.C. departments of Administration, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Transportation and Environment and Natural Resources and the state Housing Finance Agency inventoried programs that have the potential to impact sustainable development. In this year's progress report, the agencies have focused on key initiatives that are concurrent and complimentary to the work of the Sustainable Communities Task Force:

- N.C. Department of Transportation's Complete Streets policy
- The Governor's Logistics Task Force
- N.C. Department of Health and Human Service's Healthy Environments Collaborative
- N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Sustainable Communities program – both supporting the Task Force and N.C.'s Regional Planning Grant applicants
- N.C. Department of Commerce's N.C. Tomorrow Fund
- N.C. Department of Commerce's N.C Sustainability Center

Together with the Sustainable Communities Task Force, the state agencies are working to ensure that N.C.'s population growth is accommodated in a manner that ensures the health of the economy, the environment and the people.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

Senate Bill 897 Section 13.5.(c) requires the N.C. departments of Administration (DOA), Commerce (Commerce), Health and Human Services (DHHS), Transportation (NCDOT) and Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to provide a report regarding each department's progress in implementing the sustainable development principles set forth in G.S. 143B-344.34(a). The report is due by Oct. 1 of each year to the chairs of the House Commerce, Small Business, and Entrepreneurship Committee and the Senate Commerce Committee and the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations.

As part of G.S. 143B-344.34, the General Assembly outlined principles as the foundation for sustainable development in North Carolina with the goal of ***healthy and equitable development without compromising natural systems and the needs of future generations of North Carolinians***. The principles are:

- (1) **Better transportation choices.** Offering safe, reliable and economical motorized and non-motorized transportation options to decrease household transportation costs, reduce dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.
- (2) **Equitable, affordable housing.** Encouraging the provision to North Carolina citizens of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities expanded location-, water-, and energy-efficient housing choices that increase mobility, decrease the impact on existing water and energy infrastructure, and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
- (3) **Enhanced economic competitiveness.** Expanding business access to markets and improving North Carolina's economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers.
- (4) **Support of existing communities.** Targeting public funds toward existing communities that are using strategies such as transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling to increase community revitalization, enhance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of public works investments, and protect rural landscapes.
- (5) **Coordination and leverage of state policies and investment.** Aligning state and local government policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration,

leverage funding and increase the accountability and effectiveness of government in planning for future growth.

- (6) **Recognize and support communities and neighborhoods.** Preserving and enhancing the unique characteristics of rural, urban and suburban communities by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods.

This report documents the progress that the departments of Administration, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Transportation and Environment and Natural Resources have made in implementing these sustainable development principles from July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. Although not required in the legislation, as a member of the Sustainable Communities Task Force (SCTF), the Housing Finance Agency is also participating in preparation and submittal of this report. The report focuses on the key initiatives and collaborative efforts that have been underway during the past year. Rather than submit separate reports, the agencies are submitting this coordinated report, reflecting the collaborative effort that is already underway. This report supplements the inventory of state programs that have some impact on sustainable development that was submitted as part of the agency progress report last year (October 2010).

BACKGROUND

The need for a more sustainable approach to development has been discussed in North Carolina for at least the last 10 years. An early effort was the N.C. Legislative Study Commission on Smart Growth, Growth Management and Development, which issued its findings and recommendations in fall 2001.

Established in May 2008, the Urban Growth and Infrastructure Legislative Study Commission considered some of the previous work and more recent studies. In addition for North Carolina's desire for more sustainable development, recent policy shifts at the federal level provide for significant financial incentives, primarily through an interagency partnership between the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Department of Transportation (DOT) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), for more sustainable planning. This collaboration, the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, is based on six livability principles that are roughly mirrored by North Carolina's sustainable development principles outlined above.

In response to the Urban Growth and Infrastructure Study Commission's work and to optimize North Carolina's likelihood of success in obtaining federal grant funding, the General Assembly passed legislation establishing the SCTF Force in Session Law 2010-31. Through the SCTF enabling legislation, the state now has a public-private interagency

collaboration that is designed to align programs statewide with the state's sustainable development principles, which in turn are aligned with significant new federal-level objectives (see <http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/>). The SCTF was established to provide technical and financial assistance to communities in North Carolina to help implement the sustainable development principles. The SCTF legislation established a fund within DENR with an initial appropriation of \$250,000.

Concurrent and complementary to the activities of the SCTF, state agencies are working together on key initiatives that support sustainable development across the state. This report summarizes these collaborative efforts. The state agencies recognize the necessity to prepare for and respond to the needs of our state's growing population while ensuring the health of North Carolina's economy, environments and people.

KEY INITIATIVES

Complete Streets

NCDOT adopted a "Complete Streets" policy in July 2009. The policy directs NCDOT to consider and incorporate several modes of transportation when building new projects or making improvements to existing infrastructure. Under the new policy, NCDOT will collaborate with cities, towns and communities during the planning and design phases of projects. Together, they will decide how to provide the transportation options needed to serve the community and complement the context of the area.

Complete streets are designed to be safe and comfortable for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists and individuals of all ages and capabilities. These streets generally include sidewalks, bicycle lanes, transit stops, appropriate street widths and speeds, and are well-integrated with surrounding land uses. Complete Street design elements that emphasize safety, mobility and accessibility for multiple modes may include crosswalks, bus lanes, landscaping, lighting, signaling systems and adequate separation between sidewalks and streets. For the previous 50 years, streets have generally been designed to serve one mode, motor vehicles and often have been designed without sidewalks or bike facilities. In contrast, Complete Streets are intended to serve people using all modes.

NCDOT, in its role as stewards over the transportation infrastructure, is committed to:

- providing an efficient multi-modal transportation network in North Carolina such that the access, mobility and safety needs of motorists, transit users, bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities are safely accommodated;
- caring for the built and natural environments by promoting sustainable development practices that minimize impacts on natural resources, historic, businesses, residents, scenic and other community values, while also recognizing that transportation improvements have significant potential to

contribute to local, regional and statewide quality of life and economic development objectives;

- working in partnership with local government agencies, interest groups and the public to plan, fund, design, construct and manage complete street networks that sustain mobility while accommodating walking, biking and transit opportunities safely.

This policy requires that NCDOT's planners and designers will consider and incorporate multimodal alternatives in the design and improvement of all appropriate transportation projects within a growth area of a town or city unless exceptional circumstances exist. Routine maintenance projects may be excluded from this requirement if an appropriate source of funding is not available.

Implementation of the Complete Streets policy will help create sustainable communities throughout North Carolina. The benefits of Complete Streets include:

- Making it easier for travelers to get where they need to go;
- Encouraging the use of alternative forms of transportation;
- Building more sustainable communities;
- Increasing connectivity between neighborhoods, streets and transit systems; and
- Improving safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

NCDOT is currently developing planning and design guidelines to support this policy in collaboration with representatives from federal, state, regional and local entities. These planning and design guidelines will not only be distributed throughout NCDOT, but also to local governments to aid as they work with us NCDOT to create Complete Streets in their communities. Final approval of the guidelines is anticipated in spring 2012. Training for Complete Streets will then be developed and delivered to transportation planners and designers across the state.

Transportation, quality of life and economic development are all undeniably connected through well-planned, well-designed and context-sensitive transportation solutions. Complete Streets is a tool that can be leveraged to develop sustainable communities through the provision of better transportation choices and support of existing neighborhoods.

For more information, see <http://www.nccompletestreets.org/index.asp>.

Governor's Logistics Task Force

Established by Executive Order 32 in December 2009 to recognize the economic implications of transportation and other infrastructure investments, the Governor's Logistics Task Force responds to the need for a "strategic plan to maximize existing assets and prioritize new investments so that North Carolina gains a competitive advantage and emerges as a leader in transportation logistics."

The mission of the Task Force is to strategically create jobs and recruit industry by developing an efficient and cost-effective vision plan for the seamless movement of people, goods and information throughout North Carolina. The goals of the Task Force are to:

- Assess the existing resources and project future needs of the state's multimodal transportation systems (aviation, highway, rail and transit), as well as water, sewer and broadband capabilities;
- Investigate reductions or transfer of functions from existing governance structures to aid efficiency and avoid duplication;
- Identify the regional programs and infrastructure that support industries vital to the state's long term economic viability;
- Explore public-private partnerships in transportation and economic development that support the overall plan; and
- Recommend short, medium and long-range plans to the governor and General Assembly that will integrate their operation seamlessly and manage state funds more strategically.

The activities of the four subcommittees of the Task Force include:

- Preparing an inventory and evaluation of existing transportation and commerce assets statewide;
- Estimating future demand for transportation facilities;
- Identifying best practices in transportation logistics from research outlets and other states;
- Proposing revisions to existing regulations and practices to improve the efficiency of the transportation network;
- Recommending innovative transportation and economic development strategies to support an integrated statewide logistics plan;
- Initiating the *Seven Portals Study*, a separate high-level initiative to identify potential sites within the state's seven economic development regions with the highest probability of success for development initiatives ("logistics villages"), based on infrastructure, state certification, water/sewer infrastructure, etc.,

- analyze the feasibility of placing an inland port facility in each of the seven economic development regions;
- Initiating the *Maritime Study*, a separate, high-level initiative to examine shipping patterns/economy and use existing infrastructure more effectively.

During the past the fiscal year, the Task force conducted 14 regional “educational” outreach sessions across the State to seek local input, guided the “7 Portals Economic Region Study” and initiated the “Commercial Maritime Strategies Study.”

The Task Force consists of the lieutenant governor, the governor’s senior advisor, cabinet secretaries, state senators and representatives, local elected officials and representatives from key industry and stakeholder groups.

As recommendations from the Task Force are implemented, the results will be better transportation choices, enhanced economic competitiveness and better coordination and leveraging of state policies and investment.

Healthy Environments Collaborative

The Healthy Environments Collaborative (HEC) is an interagency collaboration whose mission is to integrate and influence interdepartmental efforts to improve the health of North Carolina's people, environments and economy. The HEC’s vision includes a North Carolina where the government and its people work together to achieve healthy people, active environments and a strong economy to improve the quality of life for all North Carolinians. The focus of the HEC is where health, land use, transportation, environment and economics intersect. This overlap provides opportunities to coordinate efforts and leverage resources to provide the greatest benefit.

The HEC partnership is led by DHHS, NCDOT, DENR, and Commerce. They work closely with partners from University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill and N.C. State University.

The HEC meets regularly to share information and coordinate efforts. Major activities include the review of current policies for consistency within and between agencies and the development of coordinated, integrated future policies that promote healthy and sustainable environments.

During fiscal 2010-11, the HEC conducted a comprehensive analysis of state level policies. Through the analysis, 374 policies that directly or indirectly, and either positively or negatively, influence built environments for physical activity in DHHS, DOT, Commerce and DENR were inventoried. Interviews were then conducted with state and municipal teams. This policy analysis identified 190 policy issues. In FY 2011-12, the HEC will use the information from the policy analysis to define a process to promote physical activity through integrated land use and transportation planning.

The HEC supports sustainable communities through an emphasis on offering better transportation choices, coordination and leverage of state policies and investment, and recognizing and supporting communities and neighborhoods.

Interagency Collaborative Support for Regional Planning Grants Recipients

During the federal fiscal year 2010-11 the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities awarded \$98 million nationally to support more livable and sustainable communities. Two of the 45 nationwide awards were for N.C. regions: the Piedmont Triad Region received a grant of \$1.6 million for its *Sustainable Communities Planning Project* and the Land-of-Sky Regional Council received \$1.6 million for its *Western North Carolina Livable Communities Initiative*. These Regional Planning Grants will support development and execution of regional plans that integrate affordable housing with neighboring retail and business development. Many of the grants will leverage existing infrastructure and all reward local collaboration and innovation. Additionally, 29 regions nationwide received preferred status – three were from N.C. This preferred status will provide additional points in the scoring for future federal awards. The three N.C. regions with the preferred status are the Centralina Council of Governments, the Triangle J Council of Governments and the Eastern Region Council of Governments.

In support of the sustainable community initiatives, DENR, Commerce, and NCDOT each committed a minimum amount of \$10,000 for each of three years in leveraged resources for any successful regional sustainable development planning grant applicant within North Carolina. The assistance to the two regional grant recipients is being provided in the form of direct funding, in-kind contributions of staff time, and/or other assistance, depending on the needs of the grant recipients and the ability and capacity of the state agency. These letters of state-agency support were identified by the North Carolina regional grant applicants as a key factor in the success of their applications. In addition, the U.S. HUD's Director of the Office of Sustainable Communities noted North Carolina's state support of the regional applicants and the existence of the SCTF, further suggesting that they could serve as models for other states.

These three state agencies will continue to work with the Piedmont Triad Region and Land-of-Sky Council on their sustainable communities planning efforts over the next three years.

N.C. Sustainable Communities Task Force

The SCTF was established as part of Session Law 2010-31 (Article 7 of Chapter 143B of the General Statutes). The goal of this new initiative is healthy and equitable development without compromising natural systems and the needs of future

generations of North Carolinians. The General Assembly outlined sustainable development principles for North Carolina (G.S. 143B-344.34) that mirror those developed as part of the federal HUD-NCEPA-DOT Partnership for Sustainable Communities (refer to the introduction and purpose of this report for a detailed description of the state principles).

The major accomplishments of the SCTF over the past year have been the completion and deployment of the North Carolina Community Practices Assessment, the execution of the SCTF Grant Award Program, and establishment of a policy and procedure for providing technical assistance to communities.

- **Community Practices Assessment:** Pursuant to General Statute 143B 344.35(7) the Task Force was required to develop a sustainable practices scoring system incorporating the six sustainable development principles. The SCTF developed this scoring system and refers to this as the Community Practices Assessment (CPA). The sustainable practices scoring system, in the form of the CPA, was submitted to the House Commerce and Job Development Committee and the Senate Commerce Committee in February 2011, as required by General Statute 143B 344.38(b). This CPA system was developed to help local governments and regional bodies evaluate their current practices and identify opportunities for improvement in the six areas of sustainable development identified by the General Assembly. Similar efforts across the nation were studied and a model applicable to North Carolina was developed. The initial effort was led by the SCTF with significant expertise provided by the Governors' Institute on Community Design.

The CPA consists of two main sections: one for local governments and the other for regional agencies (i.e. those covering multiple local jurisdictions within the state). The CPA is organized according to the six sustainable development principles outlined in the SCTF legislation. The SCTF plans to continue using the CPA as an educational tool and to help communities implement sustainable practices. A copy of the CPA is available on the SCTF website at http://www.onencnaturally.org/PDFs/NC_Community_Practices_Assessment_Tableoid%20Layout.

- **SCTF Grant Program:** General Statute 143B 344.37 established a grant fund specifying eligible recipients and purposes. The associated grant program is to provide funding to regional bodies, cities or counties to improve regional planning efforts that integrate housing and transportation decisions, to increase the capacity to improve land use and zoning, and to provide up to 50 percent of any required local matching funds for recipients of federal Sustainable Communities Planning Grants. In the fiscal year 2010-11, a \$250,000 fund was appropriated for this purpose. A request for proposals was disseminated in March 2011 and 15 organizations submitted applications and requested a total

of nearly \$700,000. Grant awards were made to fund projects that are expected to improve regional planning efforts, integrate housing and transportation decisions and increase the capacity to improve land use. Due to the challenges associated with contracting procedures and requirements, only six of the awardees were under contract by June 30, 2011; a total of \$152,114 of this funding was able to be disbursed in fiscal year 2011. Additional information about the projects funded can be accessed at http://www.onencnaturally.org/pages/SC_Grants_Program.html.

The SCTF held a strategic planning session in July 2011. The areas of focus for the upcoming year are:

1. **Increase Education and Awareness of Sustainable Community Principles.** This effort could include activities such as disseminating best practices, working to establish training programs through partnerships with universities/community colleges and others, improving the Sustainable Communities Practices Assessment, or working directly with communities in a hands-on event. The SCTF is currently working to improve the Sustainable Communities Practices Assessment. In addition to possibly being used as a funding criterion as discussed in item No. 2 below, it could serve as a good tool to raise awareness about sustainable development and in educating communities on the principles.
2. **Identify Opportunities for Enhancement of Existing Programs.** This will include activities such as evaluating existing funding programs to help support implementation of the sustainable development principles. For example, the Community Practices Assessment will be evaluated to determine if this assessment can be used as criteria for existing funding programs to incentivize more sustainable development. In addition, the SCTF will identify and evaluate opportunities for state services to be provided in a more integrated and efficient manner in partnership between state, regional and local entities.
3. **Explore Strategies for Integrating Health Benefits and Impacts into Decision Making.** The SCTF will work with the Division of Public Health and stakeholders to further understand and identify possible options to address this issue. It is important that the link between community design and health be better understood and considered in land use and infrastructure investment decisions.

For more information on the North Carolina Sustainable Communities Task Force, see http://www.onencnaturally.org/pages/SC_SustainableCommunities.html.

N.C. Tomorrow Fund

N.C. Tomorrow is an 18-month pilot program that was established by Commerce's Division of Community Development to spur regional planning for viable sustainable communities throughout North Carolina. The N.C. Tomorrow planning initiative will center on the six livability principles established by the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities. The creation of the N.C. Tomorrow Fund (and parent N.C. Catalyst Program) stemmed from the realization that the state cannot meet all of its housing needs, but it can strategically invest its limited resources to alleviate important housing problems for North Carolina's households. In this regard, the state has three basic goals: (1) to provide decent and affordable housing; (2) to provide a suitable living environment; and (3) to expand economic opportunity.

The N.C. Tomorrow Fund, in the amount of \$1.275million is a set-aside under the N.C. Catalyst Program. The N.C. Catalyst Program will address more focused/critical unmet needs, including but not limited to, addressing severe water-related needs; targeting very low-income households, special populations such as the elderly and disabled; increasing economic opportunities; responding to severe economic crisis; and focusing on sustainable communities efforts.

The N.C. Tomorrow Program will provide planning grants to as many as 17 non-entitlement local governments serving as the lead regional coordinator within each of the 17 council of governments (COGs) regions. In exchange for the grant, the non-entitlement local unit of government must foster regional multijurisdictional participation around the program goals and develop a regional N.C. Tomorrow Sustainable Strategic Plan. A total of \$1.275 million of proposed [since the CDBG funds are appropriated by the GA, it is probably no longer proposed. Check with Commerce to see what the final amount is for the CDBG is and then strike out the word proposed] FY 2011-12 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds has been set aside for planning grants under this program. A maximum of \$75,000 will be awarded to a non-entitlement local government serving as the lead regional coordinator. The grantee may use up to \$7,500 for grant administration. The remaining funds will be available for CDBG-eligible activities to prepare the regional N.C. Tomorrow Sustainable Strategic Plan.

Collectively, the regional N.C. Tomorrow Sustainable Strategic Plans will assist Commerce in establishing a baseline for North Carolina today with a focus on North Carolina's tomorrow.

The N.C. Tomorrow regional sustainable strategic plans will provide data and identify strategies and sustainable practices within the region that will lead to strong sustainable communities within the region. At a minimum, the local unit of government regional

coordinator must develop a regional plan incorporating data and strategies that includes:

Affordable Housing

- Increases the housing supply for low-to-moderate income (LMI) persons
- Improves and preserves existing housing in the region

Job Creation and Retention

- Creates and/or retains jobs for LMI income persons

Equitable Opportunities

- Promotes equitable housing and employment opportunities
- Includes open and fair economic competition

Accessible Transportation

- Enhances transportation choices to allow low and moderate income persons to access affordable housing and jobs

Land Use

- Provides open space and agricultural resources

Health

- Promotes public health
- Increases accessibility to health services

Energy Conservation

- Increases energy conservation
- Reduces fossil fuel dependency through energy efficient building and energy efficient technology

Diverse Investments

- Identifies and leverages investment from local, regional, state, federal and private funding sources.

N.C. Tomorrow provides funding for planning to support sustainable communities with a focus on affordable housing and is in alignment with North Carolina’s sustainable community principle of “equitable, affordable housing.”

The North Carolina Sustainability Center

Formally established in 2011 with funding from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and staffing support from Commerce, the North Carolina Sustainability Center was created to address the following needs:

- to help the people of North Carolina build their future on a sustainable foundation;
- to strengthen and grow North Carolina's economy by boosting global competitiveness, increasing recruiting potential, increasing capital investment and creating quality jobs;
- to protect and strengthen North Carolina's natural assets and the quality of life, health and safety of its citizens through the careful stewardship of natural resources, protection of the environment, assurance of social equality and business viability; and
- to develop, enhance, and maintain citizens, businesses and communities, which are sustainable, by creating a collaborative relationship between the public, private and non-profit sectors of the state with dedicated leadership, in order to purposefully advance North Carolina's sustainability agenda.

To support these goals, the North Carolina Sustainability Center plans to create a focused, permanent collaboration between state/local government, educational institutions, private sector interests and nonprofit organizations. This collaboration would help North Carolina and its citizens develop an understanding of sustainability principles and the policies, programs and approaches required to facilitate the success of the state's sustainability goals, including environmental practices, business development, jobs, finance, community development, health/wellness and other areas of our state's life. Ultimately, this will improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of our state, communities and people.

The Sustainability Center anticipates that the short-term results will include:

Long-term Competitive Advantage

- World-class staff of sustainability experts in the primary sectors to advocate, advise and raise awareness of the importance of sustainability practices and opportunities
- Increase in the number of sustainable businesses, number and quality of jobs, revenues and investment in the sector
- Increase in the number of sustainable businesses recruited from outside North Carolina.

Collaboration

- Collaborative and effective governing board, convened regularly and composed of a broad cross-section of sustainability stakeholders
- Strong membership composed of businesses, nonprofits, investors, academic institutions, government agencies and other stakeholders

Inform and Educate

- Successful outreach programs that educate, communicate and encourage collaborative sustainability best practices planning and investment
- Increase research in sustainability

North Carolina as a Global Leader in Sustainability

- North Carolina is the first state to launch a comprehensive public/private state-wide sustainability initiative
- Policy environment that is supportive of sustainable businesses, community development and social engagement

The long-term results the center aims to achieve over the next 10 years include working collaboratively with stakeholders across the state to:

- Increase North Carolina's competitive advantage through sustainable business recruitment, expansion, investment and workforce training;
- Work collaboratively with business, government, nonprofits and academia to move sustainability practices from theory to practice in North Carolina;
- Inform North Carolinians (individuals, communities, businesses and government) about the application of sustainable practices, in focus areas to include: economy, environment, transportation & energy, health and arts-humanities-education, its benefits and opportunities; and
- Establish North Carolina as a global leader in sustainability practices – as the premier location for sustainable business, living, education and recreation.

The methods or strategies that the center will employ to achieve, or make progress towards achieving, these long-term results include:

- Advancing a shared vision -- Provide a clear vision and overarching strategy for the sustainability sector and facilitate alignment and collaboration among all the governmental and non-governmental stakeholders of the sector;
- Convening -- Bring together the leadership from the sustainability sector and other key stakeholder groups to identify issues, opportunities and challenges, and to develop collaborative action agendas for advancing the sector;
- Promoting awareness -- Promote awareness within government and with the public of the critical importance of the fourth sector (a way of organizing that combines the best of the three existing sectors, ie. private industry, governments and volunteer organizations) to economic revitalization and other state priorities;
- Creating an enabling policy environment -- Influence policy to reduce the barriers and create a level playing field for the sustainability sector;
- Providing funding support -- Increase access to public and private sources of funding to develop new programs and initiatives; and

- Establishing an interagency working group, with the power to convene and mobilize resources across and within various state entities, to focus on the sector's ongoing development needs.

During the next year, the Sustainability Center will be instituted and establish methods for providing the services envisioned and meeting its intended goals.

CONCLUSIONS

The N.C. departments of Administration, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Transportation and Environment and Natural Resources and the Housing Finance Agency are making progress in supporting sustainable community development across the state. They are actively coordinating on several interagency initiatives that (1) identify, direct and leverage funding for plans and projects that align with the state and federal sustainable communities principles; (2) identify opportunities within state agency programs to revise or strengthen policies to encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable community practices; (3) provide technical assistance and educational materials for state, regional and local entities; and (4) support integrated planning efforts that will result in more sustainable regions and communities across the state.

One of the most important aspects of these efforts is the collaborative approach at the state, regional and local levels that is being used to build relationships, improve communication and understanding across and within agencies, and produce tangible results around a common goal. These sustainable development activities will impact the bottom line of the state economy by better positioning North Carolina to receive federal funding, by creating more efficiency and effectiveness among agencies and by implementing measures that will lead to results that will benefit communities. State agencies are working to ensure that North Carolina's population growth is accommodated in a manner that ensures the health of North Carolina's economy, environments and people - today and for future generations.