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*News from the
Partnership for Sustainable Communities*

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HUD PLANNING GRANTS: NOFA Due in April

HUD is reviewing more than 250 emailed comments about the structuring of the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program. HUD expects to publish the NOFA in mid-April, with grant applications due in early June and awardees announced in August. [Read the full story.](#)

The newly established [Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities](#) will oversee the program in partnership with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The goal of the program is to support “multi-jurisdictional regional planning efforts that integrate housing, economic development, and transportation decision-making in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of economic growth, social equity, and environmental impact simultaneously.”

Many commenters said a wide array of stakeholders should be included in regional planning coalitions and existing regional plans should be strengthened instead of scrapped.

CALIFORNIA: Sustainable Communities Planning Threatened

With high unemployment in an election year, California voters are restless, and they just might respond to a campaign now underway to suspend the state statute mandating decreases in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The sponsors of an initiative to suspend AB 32 received major financial support from at least one out-of-state oil company, increasing the chances of putting a suspension measure before the voters.

If AB 32 is suspended, it will take a lot of wind out of the sails of the land use planning process required by SB 375. Under SB 375, regional associations of government across the state are working to craft growth strategies that help mitigate the impact of land use on GHG emissions. [Read more.](#)

DOT Funds Urban Revitalization Projects

The Department of Transportation



MASSACHUSETTS: Use of Controversial Housing Law Has Plunged

The cause of a substantial decline in the number of housing projects developed under Chapter 40B is under debate in Massachusetts. The law allows developers to circumvent land use restrictions in cities and towns that don't allow enough affordable housing to be built. Some have attributed the decline to the economic downturn, others say it may have to do with increased state scrutiny of construction costs for projects built under the authority of the statute. Still others say it is because local jurisdictions have done enough to permit housing so that the law no longer applies to them. [Read more.](#)

CALIFORNIA: Alameda County Judge's Ruling May Impact the Entire State

An Alameda county judge recently ruled that a voter-approved cap on the number of residences, a measure intended to limit growth and congestion in the town, violates a state law requiring all cities to take on their share of regional housing needs. Judge Frank Roesch ordered the city of Pleasanton to disregard a limit on housing set by a ballot measure passed in

(DOT) recently awarded \$1.5 billion to trend-setting urban revitalization projects. The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grant Program is part of the Recovery Act. It recognizes the winners of a national competition for innovative, multimodal, and multijurisdictional transportation projects that promise significant economic and environmental benefits to an entire metropolitan area or a region. [Read more.](#)



A projection of St. Paul's Union Depot after it implements its DOT TIGER Grant.

EPA Awards for Smart Growth

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is accepting applications for the 2010 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement ([more on the EPA here](#)). This competition is open to public- and private-sector entities that have successfully used smart growth principles to improve communities environmentally, socially, and economically. The application period is from February 8, 2010 to April 5, 2010. Up to five awards will be given in the following categories:

- Programs, policies, and regulations
- Smart growth and green building
- Civic places
- Rural smart growth
- Overall excellence

FEDERAL: New Bill Would Preserve Affordable Housing

Rep Barney Frank (D-Mass), chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, recently introduced the Housing Preservation and Tenant Protection Act of 2010 (H.R. 4868) in an effort to preserve 1.7 million affordable apartments in more than 23,000 privately owned, multifamily properties in need of rehab.

Among other things, the bill would:

- Provide grants and loans to for-profit and nonprofit housing sponsors to help recapitalize and/or transfer the property to a preservation purchaser.
- Establish a federal first right of refusal that provides HUD with an opportunity to purchase a property from an owner who wishes to sell their property.
- Direct HUD to establish a nationwide public database of HUD and RHS assisted properties to enable policymakers and the public to more effectively monitor and preserve the existing portfolio of affordable housing and contains adequate safeguards to ensure the protection of owners' privacy rights and proprietary information.

1996 and reaffirmed by voters in 2008.

Roesch also ordered the city to remove regulatory barriers to construction of about 4,000 new housing units by 2014, at least 75% of which must be affordable housing units. He based his decision on a California law that requires cities to make land available to accommodate their share of regional housing needs, a standard that most municipalities don't meet. If other cities face similar challenges to their local laws, the California landscape could be significantly reshaped within the next few years. [Read more.](#)

LOCAL ZONING: New Rules Could Boost Number of Affordable Homes

The Town Council in Chapel Hill, NC, is considering changes in local zoning to increase the types of affordable housing available, specifically a proposed inclusionary-zoning ordinance aimed at expanding the range of housing stock and making more of it available to low- and moderate-income families.

For more than a decade, the Chapel Hill Town Council has required developers seeking zoning changes or special-use permits to make 15% of a project's housing units affordable. Critics of this system say it doesn't produce enough multi-bedroom units and does not offer enough flexibility to cover rising maintenance costs as the affordable-housing stock grows.

[Read more.](#)



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