

1. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES BUILDING BLOCKS TOOL

The City of University City, Missouri is pleased to submit a letter of interest on technical assistance for Sustainable Communities Building Blocks program. The City is seeking assistance for **Tool #4: Smart Growth Zoning Codes for Small Cities and Rural Areas.**

Located in the St. Louis Metropolitan Region, University City lies at the western edge of the City of St. Louis, Missouri. Six square miles in land area, University City is a vibrant community of about 35,000 and is known for its diversity – from the eclectic mix of commercial activities, range of housing styles, to residents who represent many economic, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Founded in 1906, the City is currently built out and landlocked. The primary land use, single-family residential, comprises approximately 82% of the land area. Another 11% is devoted to high density residential. The City is dense, with 84% of the residential lots being less than 10,000 square feet each.

The City is a signator in the Cool Cities Initiative. In July 2011, the City completed an emissions inventory and will follow the process to reduce global warming and air pollution emissions. To further this goal, the City formalized its Green Practices Committee into Green Practices Commission (GPC) in August 2011. The GPC is comprised of members with professional training and expertise in sustainable practices. An objective was to complete a strategic plan to recommend ways in which the City can be sustainable at the municipal, residential, and commercial/industrial levels. The strategic plan was completed recently. Several policies, regulations, and areas in need of improvement were identified, including a recommendation for the City to review the Zoning Code to align with green practices. The City's current Zoning Code was adopted in 1997 and is based on traditional zoning theory. It is not a flexible document that easily supports current and anticipated redevelopment trends such as mixed-use/transit-oriented development or green practices. It has been identified as an impediment to economic growth.

2. NATURE OF THE SMART-GROWTH RELATED PROBLEM

In recent years, the City has been making strides to increase sustainable practices. In late 2010, the City was awarded a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Challenge Planning Grant and a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) TIGER II Planning Grant for Parkview Gardens: A Sustainable and Accessible Neighborhood. The combined grants total \$315,687, and along with in-kind contributions allow the City to pursue a sustainability plan with improvements to the Parkview Gardens neighborhood that will foster greater connectivity to the light rail system; create LEED-certified affordable housing; and develop a portion of the Centennial

Greenway trail and on-street bike routes. The project will also redesign parks as the centers of neighborhood life. The one-year planning process, initiated in March 2011, is currently underway.

Lacking land for new development and landlocked by other municipalities, University City considers in-fill construction and/or redevelopment at higher densities one of options for major new housing development. Therefore, infill development is vital for the City to remain economically strong and competitive. Currently, the City's zoning code is an inflexible document which has been problematic for redevelopment efforts and incorporating new trends and practices. Implementation of the Parkview Gardens neighborhood sustainability plan will be a challenge under the current zoning code.

3. RELEVANCE OF THE PROBLEM TO THE SELECTED TOOL

With the Tool, the City would be well-positioned to implement the Parkview Gardens neighborhood sustainability plan after its adoption by City Council, anticipated in Spring, 2012. The Tool will build upon existing planning efforts to coordinate transportation linkages, energy efficiency, affordable housing, walkability and overall sustainable practices. It will help translate these planning efforts into policies and regulations.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS OF THE ASSISTANCE

The City expects the results of the assistance to be the identification of ways to improve the City's Zoning Code to incorporate sustainability and to achieve smart growth goals and principles.

5. AFFIRMATION OF THE PROVISION OF WHAT THE COMMUNITY PROVIDES

The City of University City will provide the background information, organize workshop and tour, and coordinate logistics. A local key contact will be provided as well.

6. PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

The City of University City will serve as the local lead for the Sustainable Communities Building Blocks technical assistance. The primary staff contact is:

Raymond Lai, AICP – Deputy Director of Planning, Zoning, and Economic Development

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If selected to receive technical assistance, the City envisions the involvement of several key stakeholders such as the Green Practices Commission, Plan Commission, Washington University in St. Louis, and Great Rivers Greenway District.