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County, consortium get \$5M grant

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SALT LAKE CITY — Based on its innovation and successful history of regional urban planning, Salt Lake County and a consortium of Wasatch Front agencies have been awarded a \$5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

HUD's Deputy Secretary Rom Sims made the announcement this week at Abravanel Hall Plaza, noting that Salt Lake County was one of three communities to earn a perfect score in the grant selection process.

"What these grants represent is our ability to fund the best ideas and approaches ... something that we can export to other places and say 'Do what they're doing in Salt Lake County as a region. Do what they're doing because it is smart,' " Sims said.

The three-year Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant will fund the creation of an affordable housing plan, the study of six transit-oriented development sites, and the creation of sustainability blueprints that can be used locally, regionally and nationally.

"We picked communities that were comfortable with risk, comfortable with maturing, comfortable with new ideas, and most important to us, comfortable with each other," Sims said.

Robert Grow, speaking on behalf of Envision Utah, one of the consortium members, said joint planning efforts along the Wasatch Front have become a "national model for other communities and regions."

Other consortium members include: Salt Lake County, Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC), Mountainland Association of Governments, the Utah Department of Transportation, Utah Transit Authority, Salt Lake City, University of Utah's Metropolitan Research Center, the U.'s Bureau of Economic and Business Research and the American Planning Association's Utah Chapter.

The grant is part of the federal Sustainable Communities Initiative to improve regional planning efforts to integrate housing, land use, economic development, transportation and infrastructure. The initiative's goal is to incorporate livability and sustainability into land use plans and zoning.

Sims said this grant program, was unprecedented because HUD held community meetings across the county to refine its granting processes.