

Wasatch Front applies for grant for sustainable communities

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SALT LAKE CITY — High population growth and poor air quality along the Wasatch Front could work to the region's advantage in getting a grant to help with housing and transit planning.

About a dozen state and local agencies have banded together to apply for a \$5 million sustainable planning grant from the U.S. departments of Housing and Urban Development, Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Only 20 urban regions nationwide will get the \$5 million grants this year. Another round of grants could be offered next year, said Mike Gallegos, director of community resources and development for Salt Lake County on Wednesday during a meeting of the Utah Housing Coalition.

Along the Wasatch Front, so-called transit-oriented developments — housing, office and retail centers along mass transit routes — best fit the requirements of the grant.

But there is no regional low-income housing plan, which means in the next two weeks, one needs to be created. Most of the low-income housing is in Salt Lake City, South Salt Lake and West Valley City and those cities do their own planning.

The Wasatch Front group will work within the boundaries of Weber, Davis, Salt Lake and Utah counties. At least 10 organizations will put together the grant application: the Utah Department of Transportation, the Utah Transit Authority, the University of Utah's Bureau of Business and Economic Research, the U.'s Metropolitan Research Center, Envision Utah, the Wasatch Front Regional Council, Mountainland Association of Governments, Salt Lake City and Salt Lake County and the Utah Chapter of the American Planning Association.

In the grant application, the groups will demonstrate how the estimates of an additional 500,000 residents by 2030 to 2050 are going to affect the Wasatch Front. They will show air quality models, said David White, the principal planner for Salt Lake County.

The grant application will also show potential transit-oriented development sites, how governments are going to incentivize more future transit-oriented developments, and retool land use regulations to promote the sustainability goals the federal government envisions for the future.

None of the plans in the grant application are set in stone, but if the Wasatch Front area received the grant, they would work at making them happen.

"If we did have (competition), it would be the Denver area," White said. "They're looking at a physical project."

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