

The Salt Lake Tribune

Wasatch Front to benefit from \$5 million planning grant

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The Salt Lake Tribune
October 15, 2010

A coalition of public and nonprofit agencies has received a \$5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to plan for sustainable growth in the Wasatch Front. Federal officials announced the grant Friday, emphasizing that Salt Lake County and St. Paul, Minn., were the only two regions to receive the maximum \$5 million.

“We wanted a community who could work with speed and agility and you are it,” said HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims during a news conference on the plaza at Abravanel Hall in Salt Lake City.

The dollars will be spent on evaluating affordable housing needs, leading to the creation of a regional transportation and affordable housing plan. This will build on work already in progress by members of the consortium, which includes Envision Utah, the Wasatch Front Regional Council and many others.

By eventually reducing transportation costs for families, air quality and quality of life will improve, officials said.

“Smart growth is not something we just talk about,” said Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Corroon. “No entity can do this alone.”

The final plan is expected to pinpoint locations to focus financial and educational efforts. This could affect both existing and future communities in the region.

The grant will give the Wasatch Front the opportunity to take “giant steps forward as a region,” said Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker.

The funding is part of the Obama administration’s “Partnership for Sustainable Communities,” an effort to simultaneously focus on affordable housing, transportation and environmental protection.