

Catawba Regional Council of Governments

Serving Chester, Lancaster, Union, & York Counties



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Changing of the Guard at Catawba Regional

Harold Shapiro retires as Executive Director of Catawba Regional Council of Governments

To say that the Catawba Region will miss him is an understatement. After 37 years of service to the region, Harold Shapiro will hand over the reins of the Council of Governments (COG) effective April 1, 2009.

Since 1991, he has directed a Council of Governments work program that comprehensively served the needs of 25 local governments in Chester, Lancaster, Union and York counties, SC. Harold joined the COG as a regional planner in 1972.

Under his leadership, the COG has become a nationally recognized support service for the region's local governments. These services have touched almost all aspects of local government within the region and have had a significant impact on the quality of life for all citizens in the four county area.

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Imler assumes duties as the new Director of Catawba Regional

Randy Imler will succeed Harold Shapiro as Executive Director of Catawba Regional Council of Governments



Randy Imler will direct the operations of Catawba Regional Council of Governments beginning April 1, 2009. He will leave his post as Director of the Catawba Regional Development Corporation (CRDC), a non-profit economic development lender, an affiliate of the Catawba Regional Council

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Harold Shapiro retires...

Harold's direction has led to the COG receiving four national awards from the National Association of Development organizations (NADO) for such services as public transit planning, GIS computer mapping, and brownfields revitalization. COG accomplishments under his leadership have ranged from obtaining major infrastructure investment grants, securing community development block grants totaling over \$44.6 million for local cities and towns, overseeing workforce retraining programs totaling \$8 million, and leveraging grants from the federal Economic Development Administration that have generated over \$200 million in plant investments just in the Richburg, SC area alone.

Harold has promoted the growth of the COG's successful business lending affiliate, the Catawba Regional Development Corporation (CRDC). To date, the Development Corporation has made loans to over 200 businesses in excess of \$41 million. This financing has stimulated private sector investments of over \$100 million and has facilitated the creation of almost 2,000 jobs in the region.

His impact on our region has been far-reaching and will be sorely missed. However, our loss will be his family's gain. A Connecticut native, Harold plans to spend more time with his wife, Patricia, and his son and daughter and three grandchildren. We wish him well!

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Imler assumes duties...

Governments.

After working in banking as a senior vice president and holding various other management positions in community development and commercial lending, Randy joined the Catawba Regional staff in 2005. Under his leadership,

the CRDC has expanded its lending activities and has generated a portfolio that has more than doubled to over \$18.6 million. The development corporation has provided much needed "gap" financing to local businesses attempting to grow or expand. The CRDC finances business expansion and allows business owners to retain capital for job creation, equipment and inventory. The CRDC's focus is to assist the growth and development of regional businesses and create jobs for the region's citizens.

When asked about his new position as Executive Director of the Council of Governments, Randy quickly points to the many successes and enormous impact upon the Catawba Region that the council has had under Harold Shapiro's leadership. Moving forward, Imler wishes to continue those traditions, but, also wants to clarify the Council's mission to foster regional cooperation and promote community and economic development. He states that the council is made up of several groups that individually impact the quality of life for the region's population; albeit, through local and regional planning, transportation, job training and development, grant applications and procurement, community and housing development projects, GIS assistance, lending, and other services that crisscross the four county area. Imler's goal is to leverage these different services into a consistent and definable vision for the Council. This will allow the Council to capitalize on its diversity of services and provide quality products as the Council performs its role as a convener for local governments and the general community.

Randy serves on several area boards, most recently, as Chairman of the Charlotte-Douglas Airport Commission, the South Carolina Affordable Housing Coalition, the York County Community Foundation, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of York County. He holds several graduate degrees from both Winthrop University and the University of South Carolina. Randy and his wife and three children live in Tega Cay, S.C.





Opportunities are available for Community Development Block Grants

CDBG application request and due date schedule

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Small Cities Program is administered in South Carolina by the SC Department of Commerce's Grants Administration Office. For 2009, the State CDGB program is expecting to receive an estimated \$21.8 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This is the same funding level as last year.

Of this total, \$18.5 million will be available for community development projects and \$2 million is marked for business development. The South Carolina Department of Commerce is also expecting to receive an additional \$5.9 million for community development projects from the Federal economic stimulus, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

In regards to the \$18.5 million for community development, \$8 million is for Community Infrastructure, \$5 million for Community Enrichment, \$3.5 million for Village Renaissance and \$2 million for "Ready to Go" Public Facilities.

Most local governments in the Catawba Region are eligible to apply. Normal CDBG requirements are expected to apply, including the requirement to benefit communities' low to moderate income residents. Fair housing, EEO, labor standards and environmental requirements will also

apply. The Grants Administration Office will continue to provide additional information as it becomes available. The Grants administration has also posted the 2009 Program Descriptions online.

Under a new program change, construction-ready projects eligible under the Community Infrastructure and Enrichment Programs may be submitted on an ongoing basis. Two million dollars is available statewide for projects which have completed project design, environmental review, acquisition and permitting and can be advertised for bid within 60 days of grant award. Complete applications will be evaluated using all non-comparative community development program scoring criteria. Of course once eligible, funding will be subject to availability.

Upcoming Dates for Applications:

- CDBG Community Infrastructure Applications due—April 20, 2009
- Village Renaissance & Community Enrichment Application Request Deadline—August 21, 2009 Applications due—September 21, 2009
- "Ready-to-Go" Public Facilities-Ongoing





Development Corporation sees upturn in loan requests

Catawba Regional Development Corporation (CRDC) experiences an increase in loan requests as credit market tightens

It is hard to open a newspaper or turn on the television and not hear about the myriad of troubles impacting the financial markets in the U.S and abroad. In addition to the troublesome Wall Street issues, we are hearing about the lack of credit available in the financial market. Businesses continue to complain that banks are restricting access to credit.

Within the local market, Catawba Regional Development Corporation (CRDC) has seen most banks tighten their credit criteria, which is typical in an economic downturn as banks look to avoid loan losses. The stricter credit standards have positively impacted CRDC, as it has seen an increase in loan requests. Some of the increase has been the direct result of banks looking to partner with CRDC to lower their risk for projects involving the financing of fixed assets; for example, real estate, machinery and equipment. The banks' risk is reduced by financing a smaller portion of the transaction thereby lowering their loan-to-value (LTV) from the norm of 80% to 50%. The business benefits because a higher percentage of the pro-

ject gets financed and a lower amount of owner's equity (cash) is needed for a given project. Also, the business benefits from longer payment terms and below market fixed rate financing for the CRDC portion of the deal. This helps to lower the business owner's monthly payments as compared with conventional financing.

In a market where uncertainty continues, the various loan programs offered by CRDC are an excellent choice to manage lender risk and provide value for our local small businesses. A key component of our value-added programs is to keep our local businesses as healthy as possible, thus, promoting job creation as well as job retention for the citizens of the Catawba region.



When owners, Mike Granger and Ernie Keener decided to open their third gas station, Catawba Regional and South Carolina Bank and Trust of the Piedmont assisted with the financing. Twenty jobs are expected to be created as a result of this project.



Recovery Act offers summer employment for Youth Population

Expanded Summer youth program targets out-of-school youth population suffering from high unemployment, basic skill deficiencies, and poor work experience.

A portion of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds (\$1.8 million) for the Catawba Region is addressing a critical segment of the region's population—youth, ages 16-24. This group experiences some of the highest rates of unemployment and their future labor market prospects are poor given their lack of education and work experience. The goal of the expanded program is to create summer employment opportunities that provide high quality work experiences, teach participants proper work ethics, and offer activities that address basic skill gaps.

Summer employment activities will be designed to encourage participants to take responsibility for their learning, to understand and manage their career options, and to develop social skills and a maturity level that will help them interact positively in the workplace. This is especially true for at-risk students and high school dropouts. Summer employment may be one of the few opportunities they come across to learn how to enter the world of work. Program content will stress developmental or age-appropriate strategies for each participant - what is appropriate for a 24 year-old may not be appropriate for a younger youth.

Local areas are being encouraged but not limited to, developing work experiences and other activities that expose youth to opportunities and career paths in “green” businesses and industries. Within state and local areas, program providers will be identifying regional and local environmental resources, businesses, and pre-apprenticeship programs that are promoting “green” jobs and products. The goal is to demonstrate to participants potential career opportunities by providing summer work experiences that prepare them to compete in a “green” economy.

A combination of public sector, private sector, and non-profit summer employment opportunities will be targeted as potential employers. Learning opportunities may also include community service projects not conducted at an employer worksite. Pre-apprenticeship programs can be a valuable component of summer employment opportunities for youth. They have proven to be an effective way of training youth for registered apprenticeship programs. The program will also establish a cooperative relationship between worksite supervision and program monitors to ensure participant outcomes are being met. Every effort will be made to match worksites with participants' interests and goals.

Eligibility for the Catawba Summer Program is the same as for the region's Workforce Investment Act Youth Program except the Recovery Act will also serve older youth from age 21 to 24.

Work experience is the core component of the summer employment program. The program will ensure that participating worksites introduce and reinforce the rigors, demands, rewards, and employer expectations associated with holding a job to all participants. The Summer Youth Program will provide Catawba region youth an excellent chance to build a foundation for workplace success.



CONNECT to address Air Quality

In the late 1990's, Catawba Regional Council of Governments (CRCOG) worked jointly with Centralina Council of Governments in Charlotte, NC to launch the Sustainable Environment for Quality of Life (SEQL) program with the help of US Environmental Protection Agency. SEQL successfully engaged over 80 of our local governments in the Bi-State Greater Charlotte area to undertake voluntary actions to promote a sustainable future for the region—economically, environmentally, and in terms of livability. The region is now following those good works with development of a regional vision to provide a foundation for longer-term action. This effort is highlighting common values and principles around the region so that we can work to protect our common assets for the future. This regional effort is known as CONNECT.

CONNECT is a 17 county bi-state visioning effort led by Catawba Regional COG, Centralina COG in NC and the Charlotte Regional Partnership. It's the culmination of a two year process that builds on the good work already done in each of the region's communities.

CONNECT is about building a framework for working together. It's not about reinventing the wheel, but rather identifying common themes and values in existing local plans. Through an extensive review of local documents, six shared values emerged. Working with a stakeholder group co-chaired by Polly Jackson of Lancaster, these six shared values have been fleshed out, serving as vision and guides to action addressing areas such as Sustainable, Well-Managed Growth; High-Quality Education; Strong, Diverse Economy; and Sustainable Environment.

Local governments, businesses and industries were invited to be active participants in the process by forming working groups charged with development of specific strategies for implementation and an action plan to address each of the six core values. A good example of how this visioning process is bringing groups together to address common issues is the development of a Regional Air Quality Plan.

Using a stakeholder-driven process, Catawba Regional COG with support from SC DHEC Bureau of Air Quality is working with their counterparts on the NC side of this bi-state area to develop a regional plan that outlines voluntary measures. These measures will assist the

region with more rapid compliance of federal air standards. The specific implementation strategies will produce action plans and measurable results by improving our region's air quality. As part of this process, working groups have been established to monitor and guide short and long-term actions toward this goal.

Catawba Regional receives \$4.3 grant for Neighborhood Stabilization

Lancaster and York communities will soon receive assistance to combat its growing number of foreclosed and abandoned properties in an effort to stabilize neighborhoods and stem the decline of neighboring house values.

As part of a \$44 million award to South Carolina, Catawba Regional Council of Governments (CRCOG) will receive a \$4.3 million grant through HUD's Neighborhood Stabilization Program for Lancaster and York Counties to acquire foreclosed properties at a discounted rate and redevelop them into quality affordable housing for the community. Funding will also be used to demolish selected abandoned properties and dilapidated structures to help eliminate blight.

In Lancaster County, grant funds will be concentrated around the City of Lancaster. Catawba Regional has partnered with City of Rock Hill to provide \$1.6 million for activities within the city limits of Rock Hill. The remaining \$1.6 million will be utilized in the Town of Clover, the City of York and Town of Fort Mill.

"The 4.3 million flowing into the county is truly a critical component to stifling the effects of foreclosure," said Randy Imler, Executive Director of the Catawba Regional COG. "We're eager to begin deploying these resources to help protect our neighborhoods from further decline and loss of property value." Grant funds will be allocated after July 30th.

This funding is provided through the Housing & Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Program under the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. The program is administered by the S. C. State Housing Finance and Development Authority. Per grant guidelines, funds will be used in areas with the highest rate of foreclosures, highest predicted rate of future foreclosures, and the largest concentration of subprime loans.