



Smart Growth Collaborative & Water Resources Collaborative Joint Meeting: Green Regional Economic Development

Thursday, September 10, 2020

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Virtual meeting – Microsoft Teams link shared with RSVP

Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions (~15 min.)

TJ Cawley, Morrisville and Lori Bush, Cary - Water Resources Collaborative Co-Chairs
Wendy Jacobs, Durham and Steve Rao, Morrisville - Smart Growth Collaborative Co-Chairs
TJ Cawley and Wendy Jacobs opened the meeting at 2:03 p.m. and provided an overview of the upcoming meeting. Lori Bush and Steve Rao also provided opening remarks and welcomed all attendees.

Attendees

Wendy Jacobs, Durham County
Steve Rao, Town of Morrisville
Alex Halloway, AmeriCorps/TJCOG
Hannah Barg, TJCOG
Lindsay Whitson, TJCOG
Sydney Miller, City of Durham
TJ Cawley, Town of Morrisville
John Hodges-Copple, TJCOG
Carmela Teichman, City of Raleigh
Michael Orbon, Wake County
Lori Bush, Town of Cary
Heidi Carter, Durham County

Robert Deaton, NC DOT
Nancy Daly, Wake County
Jack Watson, AmeriCorps/TJCOG
Erika Brown, TJCOG
Heather Keefer, WakeUp Wake County
Nathan Spencer, WakeUp Wake County
Sean Driskill, City of Raleigh
Maya Cough-Schulze, TJCOG
Keshi Satterwhite, Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association
Rickie White, Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association
Jeff Gannon, Central Carolina Community College

2. The Watershed Academy in East Durham (~20 min.)

Keshi Satterwhite, Community Engagement Specialist for the Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association, shared how ECWA's Watershed Academy offers adults in East Durham a 4-month program about watersheds with the goal of providing skills and resources to 10 new community stewards. Keshi explained that after completion of this now virtual program, participants have the option to explore further assistance, such as obtaining a rain garden certification.

The Watershed Academy is specifically designed to help people understand the importance of preventing polluted stormwater runoff and education about their local urban watershed. Through a series of four hands-on sessions, participants leave the Academy with resources and an understanding of how to improve water quality and environmental stewardship for East Durham. All participants leave the program with an environmental toolkit and skillset to be able to deploy specific projects in their own community. According to the "service-learning" method, participants will learn from reflection on their own role/experience and not just from being taught how to do projects.

Lori Bush shared her enthusiasm for the program and that she would be happy to have Keshi come speak about the program to Town of Cary staff.

Nancy Daly asks: What age group the program is geared towards?

- Keshi: The first iteration last summer was for ages 6 to 18. They wanted to make sure that they are extending the opportunity to all community members, so this year, it has become a program for all ages. Keshi likes to say it is for anyone ages 6 to 60 with an interest to have the tools to learn about environmental issues and how to implement such work within their communities.

TJ Cawley asks: Do people have reservations regarding the allotted time required to complete the program?

- Keshi: The community has shown there is an unmet need regarding the opportunity for people to have environmental education opportunities and how green infrastructure is addressed. The need to continue to grow the program has been shown as the program quickly fills up and people have asked about a waiting list. With that said, people respect the program's time commitment.

Wendy Jacobs: What is the average age range the program attracts?

Keshi: The middle range is 34 and the oldest person currently enrolled is 56. Participants are provided with everything needed to eliminate any potential barriers – including pens, notebooks, earbuds for the virtual environment, and a stipend for their time. One module is about fresh food from farm to table and participants are provided with the necessary ingredients required to complete the module's exercise. This is just one example of how the proper resources are provided to ensure barriers do not prevent access to education.

Wendy Jacobs shared that she really loves how the program is addressing barriers and inequities while also empowering people. Discussion regarding how the program allows participants to apply real-world practices was also commended.

3. Green Building Design and Construction at Central Carolina Community College (~20 min.)

Jeff Gannon, Lead Instructor of the Building Construction Technologies Program at the Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) campus in Pittsboro, discussed how the program offers students skills they can use to design and construct buildings that consume less energy, a workforce development opportunity that can aid students' entry into sustainable construction.

Jeff shared that the goal is to drive the energy use in homes down, which can be done by paying attention to construction details. The program allows the students to build a house each year, so they are taught advanced building science techniques and have hands-on construction experience building an energy-efficient house. The house is then auctioned to help fund the program for students the following year.

TJ Cawley asks: Does Wake Tech have a similar program?

- Jeff: No, they have a construction management program that allows students to go into the commercial construction sector as project managers. More workflow, contract, and schedule-based teachings and the CCCC program is more hands-on construction.

Heidi Carter asks: Does your program at CCCC teach only home construction or industrial construction, too?

- Jeff: The program focuses on residential construction but does dabble in some commercial.

Heidi Carter asks: What are examples of restorative, regenerative practices? What are student eligibility

requirements? Are there geeked out construction details that will lead to net zero emissions on city/county buildings?

Jeff: A house that is very well insulated with very little air infiltration and has used high-efficiency appliances and solar panels, this type of house could move themselves into that net zero metric and move it to that restorative, regenerative practice.

Heidi Carter asks: There are opportunities for associate degrees; are there certifications as well?

Jeff: Yes, and some of these students take four courses for a certificate and immediately join the workforce making \$20 to \$35 an hour. The full associate degree typically takes about five semesters and those students are landing jobs where the bottom of the pay scale is \$17 to 18 an hour going up to \$35 an hour.

Jeff stated that this program provides a pathway to the middle class, which helps address equity in our region as well.

4. Strength in Numbers: A Regional Plan for Economic Resilience and Prosperity (~30 min)

Lindsay Whitson, Senior Planner at TJCOG provided an overview of TJCOG's regional economic development strategy and led a discussion based on how Triangle communities and organizations view our regions' strengths and opportunities for economic growth, and how stakeholders can get involved. Workforce development is identified as a prioritized area in the planning process and document, as many stakeholders have identified the region's workforce training as both a strength and opportunity.

Following the presentation, Lindsay walked the Committee through a SOAR Analysis (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) where the Committee was able to provide applicable input to the region. Collected input is critical in capturing the strengths and opportunities for economic growth in the region, and the direction that stakeholders and members of the public envision the region's economy heading in both the short and long-term.

Input from Collaboratives: **Greatest strengths/assets** of the TJCOG region

- Airport and strong transportation network
- Diversity of economy and strength of diff. job clusters, which is important for resiliency. High-tech jobs and they pay good wages (need to focus not on just creating any jobs but jobs where people can support themselves and their families)
- The region is in a sweet spot – not too big and not too small
- Access to education, universities, research
 - Educational opportunities to learn more about topics in resiliency and how we can apply those to the workforce
- Talented workforce/access to talent
- High quality of life
- Resilient economy
- Cost of living
- Environment – People, climate

Input from Collaboratives: **Greatest opportunities** of the TJCOG region

- Renewable energy sector – If incentivized, we could be a leader in this area and we have lots of open space to do so – NC is third in the U.S. for solar panel installations and this positions our state to be a leader in the south
- Work on strengthening local food systems and making connections for sustainability/resiliency
- Encourage farmland preservation
- The region is poised to continue to grow as a retirement region – planning for this type of growth will be influential in effectively supporting this demographic’s quality of life
- Build upon manufacturing, biotech, and pharmaceutical industries
- Workforce training and opportunities
- Access to and connectivity of transportation systems
- Equitable economic development
- Support for entrepreneurs and small and minority owned businesses
- Community college system
- Regional collaboration and partnerships
- Smart/sustainable development
- Rural communities attracting more residents
- Business retention/recruitment (especially in a COVID/post-COVID environment)
- Post-COVID, it will be important to identify common challenges – we can explore to identify specific solutions

4. Questions & Open Discussion (~35 min.)

How can we increase access to workforce training, in the green building, green infrastructure or other sectors?

Jeff Gannon: Chatham County offers free community college tuition to eligible students; this lowers the barrier of affordability. He is seeing a broader representation of the community in the construction program, particularly of Latinx students.

Maya Cough-Schulze: This reminds us that we need to pay attention to access – think about translating resources we create when possible to help alleviate language barriers.

How can we help ensure equitable access to contracts for development?

Maya Cough-Schulze asked the Committee what powers local governments have to promote diverse representation with contracts, and what are different organizations/local governments doing in this space?

Wendy Jacobs shared that Durham County’s a MWBE program (Minority, Women, Business Enterprises) and require 25% of contracts to be signed with MWBE contractors. With recent capital projects, they have gotten to over 40% MWBE contracts because more prime contractors are utilizing MWBE sub-contractors. Overall, this increases opportunities for smaller, locally owned businesses to take advantage of applying for and seeking out government contracts. In addition, it aids in helping smaller businesses get the required certifications that they may not otherwise be able to obtain due to capacity reasons. Durham County does have room to improve when it comes to equity in purchasing from smaller businesses, which may take longer

as it requires working with every department.

What organizations or individuals might benefit from connecting or partnering on the efforts discussed today?

TJ: Do we have any Electricities in the region? Maya checked with TJCOG Energy Program staff and Apex, Benson, Clayton and Wake Forest all fall under this designation in the TJCOG region.

Hannah: How can we collaborate with community colleges to support on the job training in the region and improve economic development?

- Wendy: Addressing barriers such as digital access, childcare, wages, etc. and looking at wages and apprenticeships so people can get paid while they are attending school; help connect people to the employers and have a more holistic, systemic approach like the Watershed Academy

Maya: Does ECWA's Watershed Academy works with Durham Tech on any certifications?

- Keshi: Not yet, but that that collaboration is a part of a future vision. They do currently work with local partners to meet the needs of the program and to ensure that local communities are receiving the services needed.

Rickie White: ECWA is making efforts to work with NC Central students to assist with current projects, which is a positive step. Duke has the means to cover masters' students' internships, so ECWA has historically taken on more of them.

Jeff Gannon: Chatham County covers tuition for students in their program and that the free education upon full completion really alleviates some of the financial burden(s) that may students face.

- Maya: How did this partnership with the county evolve?
- Jeff was unsure of the nuts and bolts of the process, but knows the opportunity was presented to the County Board of Commissioners and ultimately adopted. Commissioners recognized that that there was a shortage of people trained in construction in Chatham County.
- Wendy Jacobs shared that Durham designated a quarter cent sales tax to help pay for students to attend Durham Tech. for two years. The problem is that undocumented students still must pay out of state tuition, which is a barrier in Chatham County as well.

Jeff Gannon: First-generation college students also continues to increase in the program; these students face additional barriers.

Wendy Jacobs: Durham has a program where 11th and 12th graders are already able to do some of the plumbing and electricity programs that help connect students to Durham Tech. Wendy says that these pathways could begin even in middle school.

Jeff Gannon shared that CCCC has created a program where students talk to cohorts of eighth graders to start planting the seed in early ages. The idea that everyone needs to get a four year degree can be a barrier.

Do you think there is opportunity for intergovernmental or regional collaboration to help streamline any process(es) (if so, which processes)? Are there ways that TJCOG could help in future?

Farmland preservation was discussed and the importance it has on the local economy. Recognizing that

farmland conversion is a regional issue and encouraging developers to not develop such land just because it comes with a lower price tag is important.

5. Closing (5 min.)

Co-Chairs

Maya asked the Collaboratives what topics they would be interested discussing at the next meeting. Steve Rao stated to continue to focus on resiliency and how to get the region's economy on track during and post-COVID would be helpful. Wendy Jacobs seconded the thought about focusing on the greatest needs we see in the region currently.

Maya and the Chairs closed the meeting at approximately 4:00 p.m. and thanked all attendees for their participation. Maya announced the next meeting would be held virtually on Thursday, December 10 at 2:00 p.m.