



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Karen Howard, Chair
Mike Dasher, Vice Chair
Franklin Gomez Flores
David Delaney
Katie Kenlan

COUNTY MANAGER: Dan LaMontagne

November 20, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington DC, 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing on behalf of Chatham County, NC, to express our enthusiastic support for lead applicant Central Pines Regional Council's grant application to the United States Department of Transportation's Thriving Communities Regional Pilot Program. We are fully committed to working with Central Pines Regional Council and the Piedmont Triad Regional Council to advance capacity building activities within our organization and our community's current and future development needs.

Our community is within one of the project's four counties that have made headlines across our state for widescale economic investments by companies including Toyota, Vinfast, and Wolfspeed that will add thousands of new jobs and large industrial facilities in the next few years. As historically rural or small micropolitan areas, these investments need to shape our future equitably and sustainably. Already, these projects are requiring our organization, and that of the municipalities within our County, to rapidly scale our internal ability to respond to growth, move large-scale transportation and community development projects ahead, and ensure responsible preservation of land through modernized ordinances and regulations.

As a result of these transformational economic development projects, the County has engaged in substantial land use planning efforts for unincorporated areas of the County anticipated to be impacted by high growth demands. The explosive growth of commercial construction around the County continues to tax our development services operations. Chatham County Central Permitting and Inspections Department, for instance, has permitted over \$250 million in the first six months of 2023 – more than any full year in Chatham County history. The County expects it will permit over \$2 billion in commercial construction in Calendar Year 2023 alone, with many of these permits supporting commercial development related to the renewable energy and semiconductor manufacturing industry clusters. As an effort to keep up with the forces of growth, the County funded 39 new positions in the current fiscal year – five of which were allocated to Permitting and Inspections.

The increased service demands are not isolated to two or three County departments; instead, the impact of growth is placing a significant burden on both internal and external services organization-wide. Additionally, and resulting from current and forecasted growth, Chatham County is actively investing and preparing to fund major capital projects and improvements – from water treatment plant and distribution system improvements to the construction of new schools and other government facilities.

The Thriving Communities Regional Pilot Program will enable our regional partners, Central Pines and Piedmont Triad Regional Council, to provide additional staffing, expertise in government finance, grant management, community planning, and facilitation between communities impacted by this growth. As Chatham County grows, so will the challenges we face. Considering its unprecedented development, the augmented capacity that can be offered to Chatham County in critical areas through the Thriving Communities Regional Pilot Program will further enhance the great work our staff is already doing and will improve our ability to serve our community in the most effective and responsible way possible.

Please, accept this letter as Chatham County's statement of support and commitment to working with Central Pines and Piedmont Triad Regional Council, as we eagerly await the outcome of the grant application and the opportunity to work together to create a more prosperous and thriving region.

Respectfully,

Karen Howard
Chatham County Commissioner, Chair
Chatham County, NC
karen.howard@chathamcountync.gov



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