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COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT 2026

REQUEST FOR FUNDING

Funding Request

To: Bureau of Community Planning and Growth
Division of Community Development
107 East Madison Street, MSC 160
Tallahassee, FL 32399-4120

Contact Information

From: Rebekah Harp, Executive Director
Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC)
P.O. Box 811
Cape Coral, FL 33991

Specific Grant Project & Its Significance to the Region

The project focuses on strengthening regional capacity to address infrastructure needs due to unprecedented growth along the Burnt Store Road Corridor. Previously this 20 mile corridor traversed through a rural stretch of highway that supported livestock and production of other agriculture products. The Corridor extends from Jones Loop Road in Punta Gorda through south Charlotte and north Lee Counties to Pine Island Road in Cape Coral. Over the last six years, ten new developments have broken ground just in Charlotte County. These communities account for an additional 9,348 residential units. This is in addition to 6,134 units in established communities. An additional 4,997 residential units have been approved for northern Lee/NW Cape Coral. These numbers do not include the number of established and newly built or to be built residences west of Burnt Store Road on Old Burnt Store Road in NW Cape Coral; and those who live on Pine Island and in Matlacha.

The integrity of the Corridor to handle natural disaster evacuations is of paramount concern. Since Hurricane Irma in 2017, the area has had direct by three other major storms – Ian, Helene, and Milton. As the only major north bound route, the volume of traffic can be expected to continue to outstrip its capacity in the future. This concern is further exacerbated by the existence of a final 5.5 mile two-lane segment. This segment borders the County line of Charlotte and Lee. It is the last segment of the 20 mile stretch to be widened to four lanes and presents a challenge for evacuations, as well as safety on a daily basis. Emergency vehicles are seriously challenged. There is limited space for traffic to pull over to allow clearance for emergency vehicles; and emergency vehicles are not able to easily negotiate driving around the traffic, especially during inclement weather when the swales are swollen. It should be noted that the four lane segments in both counties will require widening to six lanes within the next 15 to 20 years.

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Those living within a five mile radius of the County line are further challenged by the absence of urgent or walk-in medical services or any other essential services including groceries, pharmaceuticals, and gasoline. The fire stations on both sides of the line are serving as surrogate urgent care centers. Currently, residents need to travel more than ten miles to access urgent care services. Access to these services becomes even more critical in the event of natural or other disasters.

Another key concern is ensuring adequacy of water flow and management of the watershed, especially in light of all the development occurring to the east of Burnt Store Road. There are natural preserve areas on both the east and west sides, but residents in established communities are concerned about the changes in chemical balance, water flow, debris build up, and adequacy of the infrastructure to support the level of development in progress.

The Regional Planning Council (RPC), working with the Burnt Store Corridor Coalition, recognizes the need to improve inter-jurisdictional collaboration and coordination to address the concerns outlined above and to ensure a continued high quality of life for those living in established communities, rural areas, and in newer construction. We believe this can be accomplished through consensus on guidelines for ingress and egress, buffers, traffic calming, access to commercial services, water and wastewater management, and other mutual concerns. Below are some examples of efforts that have been or are being taken by each of the four affected jurisdictions – Lee and Charlotte Counties, and the municipalities of Punta Gorda and Cape Coral.

In 2005, Charlotte County adopted a Burnt Store Area Plan. This plan has served as the basis for approval of the new developments currently under construction. Cape Coral adopted guidelines to manage commercial growth within the City limits of the Corridor in 2022 and went into effect recently. The developer of a large, planned community is funding the construction of a potable water and wastewater treatment plant to serve the needs of this mixed use property. Lee County has recently approved an investment to improve road safety on the remaining two-lane segment of Burnt Store Road immediately to the south of the County line with Charlotte County until the road widening project can be completed. A Burnt Store Drainage Study was funded by Charlotte County to identify projects that mitigate the effects of new development on communities at the terminus of the water shed and Charlotte Harbor. Enforcement of traffic calming devices such as digitized speed signs and coordinated interagency surveillance was spearheaded by the City of Punta Gorda to reduce speed along a densely populated area of Burnt Store Road.

Each of these projects benefits the residents along the Corridor and has merit for consideration by the other jurisdictions. The public benefits from the joint undertaking of studies, initiatives, and projects by reaching greater numbers of those affected, shared costs, and ability to leverage funds beyond the local tax base.

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The Product that will be Produced by the Grant

The purpose of this grant is to identify areas of mutual benefit that can be memorialized through interlocal agreements and ultimately result in the development of a cross-jurisdictional comprehensive Burnt Store Area Plan. We believe this work can serve as a model for other communities that have shared concerns across jurisdictional boundaries.

Total Amount of Funding Requested

\$75,000.00

Additional Information About the Proposed Project

The SWRPC is strategically positioned to take the efforts of the Burnt Store Corridor Coalition (BSCC) to the next level of planning coordination. It provides the management and administrative structure for the grant with its expertise in grants management and project development.

The BSCC currently represents 13 established communities located within Charlotte and Lee Counties, and the cities of Punta Gorda and Cape Coral. These communities represent a diverse mix of housing types, including manufactured homes, waterfront homes, golf and country clubs, marinas, secluded, environmentally-focused communities, and those with a more urban vibe. The BSCC also invites owners of large tracts that continue to operate agriculture-related businesses.

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SCOPE OF WORK

Goal: Strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders, e.g., local government, developers, HOAs/POAS, the Burnt Store Corridor Coalition, other Neighbor Associations, and others, to address the infrastructure and service needs of residents living along the Burnt Store Corridor.

Objective 1: Inventory relevant studies, survey results, plans, guidelines, and existing interlocal agreements affecting the Burnt Store Corridor.

Objective 2: Establish protocols for engaging in cross-jurisdictional activities, e.g., interlocal agreements.

Objective 3: Create a prospectus to move forward with the development of a cross-jurisdictional comprehensive plan for the Burnt Store Corridor.

DELIVERABLE	TASKS	TIMEFRAME (DUE DATES)	DOCUMENTATION	COST
Compile a list of studies, surveys, plans, guidelines, interlocal agreements, etc.	<p>→Convene key staff from essential government departments, e.g., administration, community planning, public works, transportation, utilities, public safety, emergency services.</p> <p>→Establish parameters; and identify relevant studies.</p> <p>→Acquire and cross-reference documents from each jurisdiction according to established parameters.</p>	<p>July 1 to September 30.</p> <p>Due September 30th.</p>	Inventory list with description of key features.	\$5,000.00
Convene Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) previously responsible for production of key documents to include government project managers, consultants, developers, and private citizens.	<p>→Form topical study groups.</p> <p>→Prioritize topics for presentation at a public input session.</p>	<p>September 15 to October 30.</p> <p>Due October 30th.</p>	Prioritized topics with justification.	\$5,000.00


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DELIVERABLE	TASKS	TIMEFRAME (DUE DATES)	DOCUMENTATION	COST
Report summary of Public Input Sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> →Offer three optional sessions at three locations and three timeframes (morning or afternoon, evening, Saturday). →Offer virtual attendance at the evening session. →Organize participants into breakout groups based on review topics. →Conduct report-out sessions. →Prepare summary of report-out sessions. 	November 15 to December 10. Due December 31 st .	Summary of report-out sessions with consultant recommendations on moving forward.	\$7,500.00
Reconvene original stakeholder group and SMEs as available, report findings, establish next steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> →Present report-out summary with consultant recommendations. →Amend recommendations re priority initiatives to execute, e.g., convene traffic enforcement task force to develop cross-jurisdictional protocols for monitoring speed and other traffic violations. 	January 5 to February 28. Due February 28 th .	Submit detailed prospectus on action items, including resources needed, sources of resources, and timeframe for implementation.	\$7,500.00
Engage expert consultants to help move recommendations presented above forward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> →Prepare scopes of work for each priority initiative. →Negotiate contracts with expert consultants and/or SMEs. →Finalize contracts. →Engage experts with initiative task forces. 	February 15 to April 30. May 15 th .	Review and prepare task force results for distribution to key staff from government partners and other key stakeholders.	\$25,000.00
Obtain approvals from partner agencies to move forward with recommendations from task forces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> →Follow-up and meet with partner agency personnel. →Make presentations before Boards of County Commissioners, City Councils, Chambers of 	Mary 15 to June 30. June 30 th .	Submit final recommendations based on partner agency and other stakeholder input.	\$15,000.00

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	<p>Commerce, and leadership of other stakeholder groups as required.</p> <p>→Publicize results through stakeholder websites, mass media, and other venues as recommended by stakeholders.</p> <p>→Identify funding sources to support creation of comprehensive cross-jurisdictional Burnt Store Area plan.</p>		<p>Submit recommendations to support funding of a comprehensive cross-jurisdictional Burnt Store Area Plan.</p> <p>Submit copies of news releases, etc.</p>	

**APPROVED AS TO FORM
AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:**



Thomas M. David, County Attorney
 LR26-0448 