



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**Strategic Growth Council Awards Over \$3 million
in Urban Greening and Sustainable Community Planning Grants
to San Luis Obispo County Agencies**

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA – On December 3rd the State of California's *Strategic Growth Council* awarded the County of San Luis Obispo, the City of San Luis Obispo and the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), '*Sustainable Planning*' grants totaling over \$1.5 million. In addition, the cities of Atascadero and Paso Robles received approval of their applications for "*Urban Greening*" grants totaling over \$1.5 million to develop a "Green Parking Lot" at the Charles Paddock Zoo and provide improvements along 21st St in Paso Robles. The region was very competitive in these two grant programs as these grants total over \$3 million dollars and represent about 7.4% of the funds distributed.

Atascadero will use \$564,700 to develop a "Green parking Lot" at the Charles Paddock Zoo and Lake Park; and, the City of Paso Robles will use \$993,000 for a green upgrade of five blocks of 21st Street, near the Paso Robles Event Center.

The *Strategic Growth Council* is tasked with coordinating the activities of state agencies to improve air and water quality, protect natural resources, increase the availability of affordable housing, improve infrastructure systems, promote public health, and assist state and local entities in the planning of sustainable communities. These grants are derived from *The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006* (Proposition 84) which provides funds for safer drinking water, as well as better water quality and supply, flood control, waterway and natural resource protection, water pollution and contamination control, state and local park improvements, public access to natural resources, and water conservation efforts.

The County will receive \$399,000 to support implementation of innovative local plans that promote sustainable communities. The City of San Luis Obispo will receive \$880,000 for an update to the Land Use and Circulation Elements of the General Plan. SLOCOG was awarded \$239,000 for their continued work on the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that requires regional transportation agencies, such as SLOCOG, to link land use planning to transportation planning in order to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Regional collaboration is a necessary ingredient for all three planning grants.

County Board of Supervisors Chairman, Frank Mecham, was delighted to hear of the news. *“In this time of increasing unfunded mandates and take-aways from the State, it is gratifying to get funding back that will be used to promote progressive programs for our communities and helps protect the resources in San Luis Obispo County”*.

The County's grant application identified important General Plan implementation measures intended to facilitate development that meets the County's strategic growth goals including revising development standards to encourage urban infill, adjusting parcel size ranges and guidelines to encourage varying housing types to meet a wider range of income levels.

Implementation measures will address ordinance modifications, streamlined processes, partial fee waivers, and other incentives. Computer image modeling will provide communities and developers with simulated “fly throughs” of conceptual projects that will show how new standards can integrate development with existing neighborhoods. Grant funding will also be used to identify infrastructure needs for unincorporated communities, update a community plan for San Miguel, and supplement funding for work on a countywide Land Use and Circulation Element update.

The City of San Luis Obispo identified the update of the Land Use and Circulation Elements to be timely and a good fit for this particular grant. Two significant pieces of legislation, AB 32 and SB 375, combined with advancements in the health and sciences fields, support the need to update City policies. The process envisions a comprehensive public engagement process including a community task force as well as neighborhood-level issue and opportunity identification effort. The City's \$880,000 grant award is the third highest award in the state in the category of Local Sustainable Planning.

The City's planning and land use decisions affect access to things such as walking and biking trails, open space for recreation, healthy food choices, employment, affordable housing, transit and services. The Community Development Department will be the lead on this process which looks to incorporate strategies from the draft Climate Action Plan, as well as health-oriented planning strategies.

The City of Paso Robles' \$993,000 grant will be used to upgrade five blocks of 21st Street, between Vine Street and Riverside Avenue, to a green street. It will be a park-like street with natural drainage features, traffic calming features, bicycle lanes, park benches, hundreds of shade trees and native plants, and storyboards explaining the design for the public.

State Senator Sam Blakeslee in summarizing the benefits of the Paso Robles project indicated that *“The 21st Street project presents a unique opportunity to create a tremendous impact on the local community and environment by reducing the volume and intensity of stormwater discharged to the Salinas River and by increasing groundwater recharge for water supply and aquifer health. On top of these significant*

environmental benefits, it would also benefit Paso Robles by increasing pedestrian and bicyclist mobility and safety. The street will be a unique and prominent example of green street design.”

The City of Atascadero’s \$564,000 grant will be used to construct a Low Impact Development parking lot in front of the Charles Paddock Zoo. It will include pervious pavements, bio-swailes, sub-surface storage of rain water, drought tolerant landscaping, and a kiosk explaining the design to the public.

Atascadero Mayor Roberta Fonzi was pleased with the grant and stated *”The Zoo’s Green Parking Lot Project is an opportunity for the City to showcase the new and positive aspects of our efforts to improve water quality at the same time as maintaining the Zoo and Lake Park as a beautiful destination for tourist visiting our City”*.

SLOCOG will be collaborating with local governments to implement the recently adopted Preliminary Sustainable Communities Strategy by developing and refining performance measures and further defining the relative fiscal impacts of implementing the regional growth strategy versus traditional approaches. SLOCOG will also reassess programming policies, practices and criteria to enhance investment in urban areas and will be working with the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) alongside the County, cities and Community Service Districts (CSDs) to conduct an assessment of resource capacities and identify suitable land for infill development or redevelopment to provide for additional affordable or “workforce” housing;

SLOCOG’s President and Atascadero City Councilmember Tom O’Malley noted that “We are pleased the state’s Strategic Growth Council recognized the efforts of SLOCOG, the County and the cities in this competitive grant processes. The economically challenging times have curtailed our ability to develop better infrastructure and funding for planning activities has been dramatically reduced. These funds will support planning efforts that focus on maintaining the Central Coast’s unique character and allows two great projects that demonstrate better ways to accommodate our needs.”

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