

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3374

To improve the ability of small communities to coordinate with universities and design professionals in developing a vision to address their local needs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 3, 2007

Mr. SPACE introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

A BILL

To improve the ability of small communities to coordinate with universities and design professionals in developing a vision to address their local needs.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Small Community
5 Visioning Improvement Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Small communities are vital components of
9 the nation’s economic, social, agricultural, historic,
10 and cultural fabric.

1 (2) Our national character has been shaped by
2 and is forever tied to the landscape in and sur-
3 rounding small communities.

4 (3) A growing number of small communities are
5 facing significant challenges that place their long-
6 term viability at risk, including economic hardship,
7 declining population, eroding tax bases, and environ-
8 mental pressures.

9 (4) Revitalizing and strengthening small com-
10 munities begins by helping residents of those com-
11 munities to articulate and formalize their vision for
12 the future and to develop an action plan to achieve
13 that vision, including in the areas of economic devel-
14 opment, agriculture, tourism, transportation, land
15 use, education, recreation, and culture, and by un-
16 derstanding the amenity characteristics of land-
17 scapes.

18 (5) In many cases, a community's vision for the
19 future is rooted in and inseparable from the land-
20 scape, including the natural and built environments.

21 (6) Landscape architects have the education,
22 training, and skills, including in the areas of com-
23 munity involvement and public participation, land
24 use planning, design, project visualization tech-
25 niques, scenic resource assessment, mapping and Ge-

1 ographic Information Systems (GIS), environmental
2 analysis, and environmental psychology, that ideally
3 qualify them to lead community visioning efforts.

4 (7) Expanding Federal support for small com-
5 munity visioning is an investment in the future of
6 small communities and will leverage additional pub-
7 lic and private sector participation in such efforts.

8 (8) Successful community visioning efforts have
9 yielded tangible results with regard to the enhance-
10 ment of transportation corridors, economic develop-
11 ment initiatives, land use policies, conservation of
12 natural and community resources, community mas-
13 ter plans, and park and recreation plans.

14 **SEC. 3. COMMUNITY VISIONING PILOT INITIATIVE.**

15 (a) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this section are
16 to—

17 (1) develop and facilitate innovative visions that
18 help small communities to address pressing local
19 needs;

20 (2) facilitate coordination between small com-
21 munities, land-grant and other universities, and de-
22 sign professionals;

23 (3) encourage public-private partnerships; and

24 (4) translate the small community's vision into
25 images of design projects that integrate physical

1 planning and design techniques, with sustainable
2 community action, at the appropriate geographic
3 scale.

4 (b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

5 (1) The term “small community visioning proc-
6 ess” means the process described in subsection
7 (c)(2).

8 (2) The term “small community” means a polit-
9 ical subdivision of a State with a population less
10 than 25,000 individuals, an Indian tribe (as defined
11 by section 2(7) of the Native American Graves Pro-
12 tection and Repatriation Act), a native Hawaiian or-
13 ganization (as defined by paragraph (11) of such
14 section), or an Alaskan native village (as defined by
15 section 3(c) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement
16 Act).

17 (3) The term “design professional” means a
18 landscape architect licensed pursuant to State law or
19 other individual with demonstrated skills, training,
20 and education in community involvement and public
21 participation, land use planning, design, project vis-
22 ualization techniques, scenic resource management,
23 mapping and Geographic Information Systems
24 (GIS), environmental analysis, and environmental
25 psychology.

1 (4) The term “eligible grant recipient” means a
2 small community, a land grant university or college
3 established pursuant to the Morrill Act, an institu-
4 tion of higher education (as defined in section 101
5 of the Higher Education Act of 1965), or an eco-
6 nomic or community development entity authorized
7 by a State or political subdivision of a State.

8 (5) The term “construction documents” means
9 technical documents, drawings, and designs which
10 contain dimensions, measurements, material speci-
11 fications, and other technical information necessary
12 to complete design plans.

13 (6) The term “Department” means the Depart-
14 ment of Agriculture.

15 (7) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary
16 of Agriculture.

17 (c) GRANT AUTHORITY.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall make
19 grants to eligible grant recipients for the purposes of
20 carrying out small community visioning processes.

21 (2) SMALL COMMUNITY VISIONING PROCESS.—
22 In order to be eligible for a grant under this section,
23 the applicant must use a small community visioning
24 process that includes the following:

1 (A) SOLICITING AND ORGANIZING PUBLIC
2 PARTICIPATION.—The broadest segment of the
3 public is invited to participate, and the process
4 is structured to maximize participation and
5 maintain efficiency.

6 (B) NEEDS DETERMINATION.—The small
7 community determines whether the community
8 requires assistance through this process with a
9 broad-based needs assessment or whether it has
10 identified a specific need through a prior com-
11 munity-based process that the community wants
12 to address through the small community
13 visioning process. Needs may include the areas
14 of economic development, transportation, land
15 use, agriculture, and the natural, cultural, and
16 aesthetic values of the community.

17 (C) DEVELOPING DESIGN OPTIONS.—Mem-
18 bers of the community engage in a series of dis-
19 cussions to articulate their vision for addressing
20 the identified need. Design professionals facili-
21 tate the discussions, help members of the com-
22 munity identify areas of consensus, and begin
23 translating the vision into images, including
24 sketches, maps, digital images, computer sim-
25 ulations, and design concepts. The vision and

1 design options are refined in an ongoing dia-
2 logue until community consensus is reached and
3 physical designs for 1 or more projects are fi-
4 nalized.

5 (D) IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING.—Design
6 professionals, members of the public, and others
7 develop and finalize a plan that describes the
8 specific steps the community would take to
9 achieve its vision. At a minimum, the plan
10 should identify—

11 (i) projects relating to that vision, in-
12 cluding projects the community can under-
13 take and complete with existing resources,
14 personnel, and funding, and projects which
15 the community could undertake and com-
16 plete only with the infusion of additional
17 resources, personnel, and funding;

18 (ii) government agencies, nongovern-
19 mental entities, and other potential part-
20 ners that could participate in implementa-
21 tion; and

22 (iii) possible sources of public and pri-
23 vate funding to achieve the vision.

24 (d) APPLICATION PROCESSES.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after
2 the Secretary issues final regulations under sub-
3 section (h), the Secretary shall solicit applications
4 for grants from eligible grant recipients. The appli-
5 cation shall include the following:

6 (A) A statement of the needs that the
7 small community would address through the
8 small community visioning process, or a state-
9 ment that the small community requires assist-
10 ance to identify such a need.

11 (B) A brief description of process the small
12 community used or will use to involve a diverse
13 cross-section of residents of the community in
14 determining the need.

15 (C) A description of how the applicant will
16 use the services of design professionals or uni-
17 versity programs with demonstrated expertise in
18 small community visioning processes in pro-
19 viding assistance to the small community.

20 (D) A description of how the applicant will
21 involve a diverse cross-section of residents of
22 the small community in the visioning process.

23 (E) A description of the phases of the
24 visioning process, the anticipated outcomes of

1 each phase, and of the visioning initiative as a
2 whole.

3 (F) A detailed budget for the visioning
4 process, including the contribution to be pro-
5 vided by the applicant pursuant to subsection
6 (h) or a request for waiver of such a contribu-
7 tion.

8 (G) A description of the steps the appli-
9 cant will take to—

10 (i) assess the effectiveness of the
11 visioning process in addressing the commu-
12 nity's need; and

13 (ii) integrate the findings of the needs
14 determination into ongoing efforts to im-
15 plement the vision developed pursuant to
16 this section.

17 (2) ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PROCESS.—The
18 Secretary may establish an alternative application
19 process through which eligible grant recipients may
20 apply for funding sufficient to facilitate small com-
21 munity visioning processes in 2 or more small com-
22 munities without having to apply separately for a
23 grant for each community. The alternative applica-
24 tion shall include the following:

1 (A) A description of the applicant's capa-
2 bilities to achieve the purposes of this section,
3 including a description of experience providing
4 the assistance described in this section.

5 (B) If the applicant is an institution of
6 higher education or land grant university or col-
7 lege and has an accredited undergraduate or
8 graduate degree program in landscape architec-
9 ture, a description of the substantive role that
10 the landscape architecture program will play in
11 carrying out the purposes of this section.

12 (C) A description of how the applicant will
13 use the services of design professionals and uni-
14 versity programs with demonstrated expertise in
15 small community visioning processes, in car-
16 rying out the purposes of this section.

17 (D) A description of the phases of the
18 small community visioning process, and the an-
19 ticipated outcomes of each phase.

20 (E) A projection of the number of small
21 communities that the applicant could assist
22 with the grant amount requested during the fis-
23 cal year in which the grant would be received,
24 and with a proposed schedule for providing the
25 assistance.

1 (F) A detailed budget for the activities to
2 be carried out by the applicant with the grant.

3 (G) A description of the steps the appli-
4 cant will take to—

5 (i) assess the effectiveness of the
6 visioning process in addressing each com-
7 munity's need; and

8 (ii) support community-based efforts
9 to integrate the findings of the assess-
10 ments into ongoing efforts to implement
11 the vision developed pursuant to this sec-
12 tion.

13 (e) GRANT AWARD CONSIDERATIONS.—In making
14 grants under this section, the Secretary shall consider—

15 (1) the value of making grants to communities
16 of various population sizes;

17 (2) the geographic distribution of the grants;
18 and

19 (3) the value of giving priority to applicants
20 with well-defined community, private sector, and
21 university participation.

22 (f) GRANT AMOUNTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE EX-
23 PENSES.—

24 (1) AMOUNTS.—A grant under this section
25 shall not exceed—

1 (A) \$25,000, if the application for the
2 grant was submitted pursuant to subsection
3 (d)(1); or

4 (B) \$250,000, if the application for the
5 grant was submitted pursuant to subsection
6 (d)(2).

7 (2) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—The Sec-
8 retary may use not more than 10 percent of the
9 total amount appropriated under this section for
10 each fiscal year to administer this section. A recipi-
11 ent of a grant under this section may use not more
12 than 25 percent of the grant for administration.

13 (3) LIMITATION.—A grant under this section
14 shall not be used to develop or produce construction
15 documents.

16 (g) RECIPIENT CONTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT.—

17 (1) IN GENERAL.—As a condition of receiving a
18 grant under this section, the grantee shall con-
19 tribute, from non-Federal sources, to the activities
20 for which the grant is made an amount equal to 20
21 percent of total costs of the activities.

22 (2) USE OF IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS.—The
23 Secretary shall allow a grantee to meet the require-
24 ment of paragraph (1) by making qualifying in-kind

1 contributions of such type as the Secretary may
2 allow in regulations.

3 (3) WAIVER.—The Secretary may waive the re-
4 quirement of paragraph (1) in the case of a recipient
5 who demonstrates to the Secretary's satisfaction
6 that the recipient is incapable of meeting the re-
7 quirement.

8 (h) REGULATIONS.—Within 180 days after the date
9 of the enactment of this section and after opportunity for
10 public comment, the Secretary shall issue such regulations
11 as the Secretary deems appropriate to carry out this sec-
12 tion.

13 (i) REPORT TO THE CONGRESS.—Not later than 3
14 years after the date of the enactment of this section, the
15 Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture
16 of the House of Representatives and the Committee on
17 Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate a re-
18 port that describes, at a minimum—

19 (1) the most effective practices and procedures
20 used to assist communities in the small community
21 visioning process;

22 (2) examples of the public-private partnerships
23 developed to identify and implement community
24 goals;

1 (3) examples of the tangible, physical outcomes
2 of small community visioning processes funded
3 under this section;

4 (4) recommendations for improving, strength-
5 ening, and expanding the program carried out under
6 this section; and

7 (5) a list of all grantees under this section, the
8 city and State in which the grantees are located, and
9 grant amounts received by each grantee.

10 (j) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—For grants under this sec-
12 tion, there are authorized to be appropriated to the
13 Secretary not more than \$5,000,000 for each of fis-
14 cal years 2008 through 2012.

15 (2) RESERVATION OF FUNDS FOR APPLICA-
16 TIONS TO ASSIST MULTIPLE SMALL COMMUNITIES.—
17 Not less than 40 percent of the amounts made avail-
18 able to carry out this section for each fiscal year
19 shall be made available for grants for applications
20 submitted pursuant to subsection (d)(2).

21 (3) AVAILABILITY OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
22 Funds made available to carry out this section are
23 authorized to remain available until expended.

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