

# The Central View

Serving the Citizens of Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry & Richland Counties



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>The Midland's Economy &amp; the Stimulus Package</i>	2
<i>Planning Official Training</i>	2
<i>CMCOG Praised for Planning Approach</i>	3
<i>New Sub-Area Plans in the Works</i>	3
<i>CMCOG Aging Director Receives Two Scholarships</i>	3
<i>A Word From Our Chairman</i>	4

## Fairfield County receives \$1 million for Jobs Center



Fairfield County's David Brown receives the \$1 million check from the SC Department of Commerce.

With unemployment running around 12% and amid a recent spate of economic closings, a much anticipated check was recently delivered to Fairfield County Council for the development of a QuickJobs Training Center.

Midlands Technical College (MTC) and the county, with the assistance of CMCOG staff, collaborated on submitting a grant to the SC Department of Commerce for funding through the Community Development Block Grant program.

The county will own and maintain the facility, with MTC providing the faculty and programs to provide much-needed job training. Students at the facility will participate in programs to prepare them for high-demand occupations with an emphasis on the energy industry in Fairfield County. The facility

will also prepare participants for occupations in other local industries, such as health care, and increase the basic skill levels necessary to participate in local economic development opportunities. The ceremonial check was presented by Bonnie Ammons, Director of the CDBG Program of the SC Department of Commerce who said, "I think this is a big day for Fairfield County."

County Council Chairman David Brown received the check on behalf of the county saying "we hope this will open doors for a lot of people who need training and jobs in our county."

The college and Fairfield County also submitted a proposal to the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration for additional grant funding to enhance the QuickJobs facility.

## CMCOG Assists Seniors with DTV Transition

The Central Midlands Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging was awarded a \$10,000 grant through N4A (National Association of Area Agencies on Aging) from NTIA (National Telecommunications & Information Administration) to educate and offer individualized assistance to older persons to help them successfully transition to digital broadcasting. The project period began in December, 2008 and has recently been extended through August 2009.

The grant money is being used to educate older consumers and their caregivers about how to successfully transition to digital transmission by offering one-on-one assistance to senior citizens, including in-home assessments to determine their need for a converter box; assistance in applying for a converter box coupon or obtaining a converter box from a retailer; as well as assistance in installing the converter box and using the new technology.

To date, more than 107,000 seniors have been notified about the DTV transition through radio and TV announcements, newsletters and expos. 834 seniors have received assistance in determining their need for a converter box; 46 have received help applying for coupons and, to date, staff have installed 11 converter boxes in the homes of senior citizens.



Shelia Bell-Ford of CMCOG's staff talks with seniors about the DTV switch.

The Midlands Workforce Development Board (MWDB) was recently awarded the coveted Joe A. Young Award for being the Outstanding Local Workforce Development Board. This award is presented to the workforce investment board most involved in meeting the workforce development needs of its region.



## Spotlight on: The Midland's Economy & the Stimulus



### Announcements

Please join us in welcoming our newest Board members:

Elise Partin, Mayor  
City of Cayce

Clabie Edmund,  
Lexington County

Rep. Boyd Brown,  
Fairfield County  
Legislative  
Delegation

Michael Letts,  
Richland County

The CMCOG  
*2008 Multi-Family  
Housing Survey* is  
now available for  
purchase from the  
CMCOG office.

Contact  
Andy Simmons at  
803-376-5390 for  
further details

Over the course of the past twelve months or so, the economic situation in the Midlands of South Carolina has steadily declined as the country has entered a period of recession. The unemployment rate in South Carolina has risen sharply over the last year from 6.1% to 11% (the second-highest rate in the nation). Locally, counties where unemployment rates have typically been lower than the state average, have also seen significant increases as a number of high profile businesses shutter their doors or lay off sizeable portions of their workforce.

Furthermore, Residential building permit activity down 31.2% in last year in Greater Columbia area, striking a blow to the local construction and real estate industries. Foreclosures are on the rise and home sales have fallen 26% in the Midlands in recent months. Apartment complexes are also reporting their highest vacancy rates in 30 years. The upshot of this is a great deal of financial hardship for many, and much economic uncertainty in general.

Much has been made of the region's economic plight and the new Obama Administration's response

thereto, in the media, and in particular how much money may be available to Midlands governments through the stimulus package

Recognizing the opportunity afforded by the stimulus bill to kick-start the local economy and undertake a number of crucial infrastructure-type projects, in late 2008 CMCOG staff began tracking developments in the stimulus bill, which would eventually become the American Recovery and Reinvest-



ment Act (ARRA). Concurrently, the staff was also working with local governments and other agencies to identify possible projects eligible for funding under the ARRA.

On Tuesday, February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the ARRA provid-

ing \$787 billion in funding and tax cuts. While South Carolina is expected to receive \$2.8 billion in funding, the amount that the Central Midlands region will receive is uncertain until further guidance from the various funding agencies is made available. Central Midlands COG is taking steps to incorporate stimulus projects and programs into its project lists and work program, as well as competitive grant programs to which counties and municipalities will have access, such as through the COPS program and through the state's energy office. Workforce Development programs also stand to benefit from the stimulus funds as efforts are made to provide job training to those in the direst need.

Similarly, work is also being undertaken by CMCOG transportation planners who have identified a number of projects that fall under the umbrella of the economic stimulus program. To date, \$17.5 million in stimulus funds have been identified for transportation projects in the Central Midlands region, to be used for selected highway and intersection improvements, road resurfacing and other safety-related issues.

## Planning Official Training Is Not Voluntary

Planning and zoning officials have a tough job. The work they do directly influences the character of a community while providing a blueprint for growth. Legislation passed in 2005 requires all members of local government planning commissions, boards of zoning appeals and architectural review, as well as staff who directly or indirectly work with planning officials, to complete six hours of orientation training within one year of their initial appointment or employment.

"I cannot stress enough the importance of all planning officials covered by this law attending the required training," said Municipal Association Executive Director Miriam Hair.

"Cities and towns that do not make sure their officials receive training are taking a risk that planning and zoning decisions may be challenged in court. An appointed or elected planning official may be removed

from office or dismissed from employment if he fails to complete the required number of hours of training each year."

The Municipal Association, in partnership with the SC Chapter of the American Planning Association and the SC Association of Regional Councils, developed a six-hour curriculum provided in one-hour segments on DVD to help officials meet these requirements.

An approved facilitator must present the DVD-based training for the participant to receive credit. To be designated as an approved facilitator, the State Advisory Committee requires the individual to be certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners, hold at least a accredited college or university, or be licensed to practice law in South Carolina. Facilitators provide the Municipal Association with proof of

a participant's attendance at the training sessions. The Association will certify the planning official who must then file the notice of the certification with the city/town clerk.

The training requirement is not satisfied with just the initial six hours of training, however. Each appointed or elected planning official must attend at least three hours of continuing education each year. An approved facilitator is not required to deliver this training, but the trainer must be knowledgeable of the course material and use approved materials.

For a calendar of training sessions at CMCOG visit <http://www.centralmidlands.org/planningtraining.asp>

Reprinted with permission, *Uptown*: November 2008, Municipal Association of SC)

# CMCOG Praised for Planning Approach

CMCOG's planning efforts recently drew the attention of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) for its work in recognizing the role of military installations in regional planning. The following is an excerpt from the NARC report, "Working with Regional Councils: A Guide for DOD Installations."



Training at Fort Jackson

"The Central Midlands Council of Governments (COG) has been working with several military installations in South Carolina, particularly Fort Jackson, since 2005. That interaction began with Central Midlands COG's participation in Fort Jackson's long-range sustainability planning effort, which involved a number of working groups, including a transportation planning group. Members of these working groups were drawn from installation staff, as well as representatives from state agencies and local communities. Issues facing Fort Jackson in-

cluded the additional strain placed on transportation resources at the installation as a result of the need to support mobilized reservists. Due to the Central Midlands COG's understanding of growth trends within the region, including those surrounding the installation, the Central Midlands COG staff was able to help finalize Fort Jackson's ideas on transportation issues related to sustainability. When the issue of growth pressures surrounding the base surfaced in a meeting presided over by the installation's

garrison commander, Central Midlands COG provided documentation showing building permit patterns within the region between the years 2000-2004. The documentation included a GIS map of these permits in relation to the installation, which helped to illustrate the growth issues facing Fort Jackson."

The report concludes that interaction between military installations and regional councils is vital for mission sustainability, the environment as well as continuing growth around military bases. If activity and land use planning on installations and in their surrounding communities can be integrated as a cooperative planning effort, concerns and challenges can be identified at the beginning stages of the planning process, thereby increasing community consciousness. [Go to http://narc.org/uploads/ncr2009/narc.dod.primr.021809.pdf](http://narc.org/uploads/ncr2009/narc.dod.primr.021809.pdf) to view the full report.

# CMCOG Studies Growth Areas in More Detail

Over the next year, CMCOG will undertake new transportation/land use studies for the Elgin/Northeast Richland and Irmo/Dutch Fork areas. These studies, commonly known as "sub-area plans", look at the current land use and transportation system of each area to plan for its future transportation needs. Each plan will include a list of priority improvements designed to enhance the quality of life in each sub-area.

Each sub-area plan will be a cooperative process, affording the public and other stakeholders in the study area with opportunities to direct the process



The Irmo/Dutch Fork area is one of two areas to be studied this year.

throughout the duration of the plan. Residents will be invited to share thoughts about land use, transportation, and other quality of life improvements that they would like to see in their respective locale, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, traffic signals, walking trails, transit service, road widening or new road connections. For more information contact [Aaron Bell](#) at CMCOG. CMCOG staff have previously undertaken similar studies in the Chapin, Southeast Richland and White Knoll areas of the Midlands.

# CMCOG Aging Director Receives Two Scholarships

CMCOG Director of Aging Services, Sharon Seago recently received two scholarships to attend aging conferences. In October 2008, Ms. Seago was selected to attend the National Center for Business Planning & Strategy Workshop for the Aging at Miami University in Ohio (pictured right) and in November 2008 attended the Professionals in Residence Program at Hanley Center in West Palm Beach, Florida (pictured left).



## New CMCOG Staff

Please join us in welcoming our newest staff members:

Beth Hale

Jakeisha Roberts

Beth & Jakeisha are working within CMCOG's aging department through a work experience program of the Midlands Workforce Development Board.

## CMCOG Staff Displays its Generosity

Central Midlands COG staff recently received the United Way's Silver Award for its outstanding contributions to the United Way of the Midland's 2009 fundraising campaign.

Overall giving increased by 3% from 2008 with a total of \$4,835.00 raised for 2009.

CMCOG Executive Director, Norman Whitaker, praised the efforts saying that, "in the current economic climate, it's not an easy decision to make to contribute in this way."

Campaign coordinator, Cyndi Gawronski further added that, "staff should be very proud of themselves."



**The Official Newsletter of  
CMCOG**

Central Midlands Council of  
Governments  
236 Stoneridge Drive,  
Columbia, SC 29210-8010

Tel: 803.376.5390  
Fax: 803.376.5394  
Email: webmaster@centralmidlands.org

**CMCOG Member Governments:**

- Fairfield County**
- Lexington County**
- Newberry County**
- Richland County**
- Town of Batesburg-Leesville**
- City of Cayce**
- City of Columbia**
- City of Forest Acres**
- Town of Irmo**
- Town of Lexington**
- City of Newberry**
- Town of Springdale**
- City of West Columbia**
- Town of Winnsboro**

**Watch Out for Ozone  
Season**

CMCOG encourages everyone to observe Ozone Season (April – September 2009) and adhere particularly to Ozone Alert Days.

**On Ozone Alert Days:**

- Carpool to work and school.
- Walk instead of driving whenever possible.
- Use a bike for errands or for work whenever possible.
- Keep cars well tuned and maintained.
- Try not to spill gas when filling up your car or gas-powered lawn equipment.
  - In the summer, fill gas tanks in the cooler evening hours, after 6 p.m.
- Conserve electricity.

# A Word From The Chairman

These are indeed challenging times. Unemployment rates in our state are at their highest in over fifteen years. An unprecedented number of persons are in imminent danger of losing their homes and jobs, and countless individuals have seen their investments and savings decimated by the recent collapse of banking and other financial institutions.

It is in difficult times like these when it is more important than ever that different governmental entities work together to maximize the impact. In that respect, agencies such as the Central Midlands COG are perfectly placed to work to serve as a link between the relevant state and federal agencies as well as local governments to best put stimulus funds to use.

The American Recovery & Resta-



CMCOG Chairman Dr. Jimmy Bales,  
Richland County Legislative  
Delegation

bilization Act or ARRA, which President Obama signed into law in February, is a \$787 billion stimulus package comprised of federal spending and tax cuts aimed at reviving the nation's economy and saving or creating millions of jobs.

South Carolina and the Midlands stand to benefit from the proposed stimulus funds to address issues that are of major importance to the region, such as economic recovery efforts, transportation, projects energy projects, and housing and community development. Human capital programs, especially those aimed at workforce training and placement will also be key to the region's continued competitiveness.

It is in this regard that CMCOG's role in assisting local governments implement and monitor programs and projects funded by stimulus dollars will be crucial in insuring we see the maximum return.

What better organization is there to spearhead that effort in our region than Central Midlands COG?