

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 5, 2011

## **Essex Selected for U.S. EPA Assistance With Land Use Code Reviews**

**Essex** - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson today announced that Essex is among 32 communities in 26 states that will receive assistance with tools that can help them get the type of development they want. Under the Sustainable Communities Building Blocks program, the selected communities will get help on a specific development-related challenge as well as explore general sustainable communities strategies. Essex requested assistance with reviewing its land use regulations to help determine where barriers or gaps exist that are preventing the community from getting the type of development it wants.

"EPA has seen a demand for tools and resources to help communities strengthen their economies, protect human health and the environment, and create more housing and transportation choices at the local level" said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. "The Building Blocks program will bring in private-sector experts to train communities to use tools that have been applied successfully in other places, spreading our technical assistance program's positive effect to our nation's communities."

In consultation with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), EPA selected the 32 communities through a competitive process. Each community chose a specific, proven tool to be the focus of the assistance from a list that included zoning code reviews, walkability assessments, economic and fiscal health assessments, complete streets evaluations, water quality audits, and sustainable design guidelines. During a day-long session with EPA-funded, private-sector experts, participants will explore the selected tool, as well as other ways to make progress toward community goals for environmentally responsible, economically healthy development.

Town Planner John Guszowski, who worked with the Essex Planning Commission and the Essex Citizens for Clean Energy to submit the project application, said "The Town of Essex has been working for many years on several projects that aim to protect both the environment and the quality of life in Town. The Building Blocks program gives the Town a chance to look at these projects all together and see if our planning and zoning regulations are really set up properly to make those goals a reality."

The Building Blocks program is part of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, a joint effort between EPA, HUD, and DOT to coordinate federal actions on housing, transportation, and environmental protection. This interagency collaboration's primary goal is to invest federal funding more efficiently in infrastructure, facilities, and services that meet multiple economic, environmental, and community objectives.

Dr. Thomas Danyliw, MD, Chairman of the Essex Planning Commission, commented, "This program is welcome help for our continuing efforts to ensure the Town of Essex conserves its

rich heritage as we develop for the future. We are pleased that the EPA recognizes the hard work of our many commissions and citizen groups by making this award.”

In addition to Essex, the selected communities are: Bemidji, Minnesota; Bluffton, South Carolina; Cambridge, Maryland; Chelmsford, Massachusetts; Deerfield Beach, Florida; Dover, New Hampshire; Erie County, New York; Fitchburg, Wisconsin; Granville, Ohio; Helena, Montana; Hellertown, Pennsylvania; Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania; Kayenta Township, Arizona; Lincoln, Nebraska; McKinney, Texas; Muskegon, Michigan; Nashville/Davidson, Tennessee; Northampton, Massachusetts; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Portland, Maine; St. Louis, Missouri; Pike’s Peak Council of Governments, Colorado; Ranson, West Virginia; Reedsburg, Wisconsin; Renton, Washington; Rockport, Texas; Shelburne, Vermont; Spencer, North Carolina; Syracuse, New York; and Wichita, Kansas.

EPA received 354 letters of interest requesting assistance through the Building Blocks program. This level of interest shows how many places around the country want to improve their development planning to spur economic development while safeguarding the environment and public health.

More information on the Building Blocks program:

<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/buildingblocks.htm>

More information on the Partnership for Sustainable Communities:

<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/partnership/index.html>

For local details, contact John Guskowski, Consulting Town Planner

[planner@essexct.gov](mailto:planner@essexct.gov)