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SANFORD AG MARKETPLACE AWARDED RURAL TRANSFORMATION GRANT

Sanford, NC – July 5, 2022 – The City of Sanford has been awarded \$900,000 by the Rural Transformation Grant Fund to develop the Sanford Agricultural Marketplace in downtown Sanford.

The Rural Transformation Grant Fund is a new source of support for rural economic development projects in North Carolina funded by the federal American Rescue Plan. The goal for the fund is to help local governments overcome challenges that limit their economic competitiveness.

“North Carolina’s rural communities are our heart and soul, and we are committed to helping them grow and become more competitive,” stated Governor Roy Cooper in a June 16 announcement. The funding will “provide both the funds and the expertise to help transform and expand North Carolina’s rural economies, create good jobs, and strong communities,” he said.

Sanford’s award came from the fund’s Downtown Revitalization category, which supports downtown development initiatives that help grow and leverage a community’s commercial core into an asset for economic growth and prosperity – a natural fit for the marketplace.

“The marketplace will be an exciting and vital addition to downtown,” says Mayor Chet Mann. “The goal for this new venture is to help address food insecurity while also meeting the demand for fresh foods and local products,” he says.

The importance of the marketplace to downtown and Sanford has not gone unnoticed. Pilgrim’s Pride granted the project \$505,000 and Farm Bureau has committed \$50,000 to the effort over the next six years. The project has also been awarded \$213,600 by the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission.

“The Sanford Agricultural Marketplace will be a cultural epicenter for the Sandhills region, giving the community a central location to celebrate its rich history and diversity through food and fellowship,” says Bill Stone, Lee County Extension Director for the NC Cooperative

Extension. “The current Sanford Farmers’ Market has grown exponentially, showing the demand for an agricultural cornerstone,” he says.

“This funding from the state, the city, the county, and local partners shows our community’s best strength – which is the commitment to work together for the greater good,” says Kelli Laudate, Executive Director for Downtown Sanford, Inc. “Food always brings people together and now we are going to be able to build an agricultural hub that will bring people together for years to come.”

Construction of the marketplace is underway by the City of Sanford. Completion is anticipated for late 2024.

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