

### [Salisbury lands big HUD grant](#) (Salisbury Post – March 22, 2011)

The federal government will give Salisbury \$170,000 to come up with a plan for transforming the West End neighborhood, including demolishing and rebuilding Civic Park Apartments. The money will pay for a one-year study about how best to redevelop the West End, including hiring architects and consultants and engaging the community, said Sam Foust, director for the Salisbury Housing Authority. “We’re certainly honored and humbled, and hopefully we can put together a very competitive vision and do good things for our community,” Foust said. The West End is generally defined as Caldwell Street to Brenner Avenue, bounded by West Innes Street to the north and following Old Plank Road. Salisbury is the smallest of 17 cities to win a 2010 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Other winners include Baltimore, Philadelphia, Atlanta and Buffalo. Jackson, Tenn., is the next smallest city, with a population of about 65,000. Nearly 120 cities applied. After a year, cities will submit their plans to HUD and compete for grants of up to \$30 million to implement the ideas. U.S. Rep. **Mel Watt**, D-12th, toured the dilapidated Civic Park Apartments last year and suggested Salisbury apply for the grant.

#### **Watt**

and other officials will award \$170,000 to the city at 9 a.m. Wednesday at the Salisbury Housing Authority office, 200 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. “I am thrilled,” Mayor Susan Kluttz said. “I knew when I first heard this idea that it was something that really could be perfect for us and help us in so many ways.” With the city facing a \$2.7 million budget shortfall next year, the grant couldn’t come at a better time, Kluttz said. Civic Park Apartments, a 72-unit public housing complex, was built in 1953. The city’s oldest housing project, Civic Park suffers from severe deficiencies including failing building structure, water infiltration and substandard electrical systems, according to the city’s grant application. “The city considers West End as its most distressed neighborhood, with a poverty rate of 28 percent, a neighborhood vacancy rate that is nearly five times the county average and a middle school that is characterized as low-performing,” the application said. Knox Middle School serves the area. Kluttz and Foust said they want to alleviate fears expressed last year when the city decided to apply for the planning grant. “I very much understand those fears,” Kluttz said. Some people were concerned about displacement. Residents will continue to have housing while Civic Park Apartments are demolished and rebuilt, Foust said. Initial plans call for replacing Civic Park, which Foust said is crowded onto four acres, with two separate 40-unit communities. Construction would occur on existing land as well as new property the city would buy with grant money. The city would build the new complex first and fill it with families from Civic Park, he said. Other families would move to open units in other public housing facilities before the city demolishes Civic Park, he said. People also expressed fears about losing the neighborhood’s history. Kluttz said urban renewal in the 1960s, although well-intended, stripped many communities of their heritage. “I know the effect it had on the Dixonville neighborhood in Salisbury, and a lot of history was lost,” she said. “I think we’ve learned from that.” The city will proceed with caution and sensitivity, Kluttz said, seeking input from the residents along the way. “I don’t want there to be this fear that will happen to the West End community,” she said.

“We won’t let it.” In addition to new public housing, the transformation of West End could include new childcare facilities, parks, services for veterans, educational opportunities and more. The Obama Administration wants Choice Neighborhoods to succeed HOPE VI, a grant program that improves housing but not necessarily the surrounding community, Foust said. A Choice Neighborhoods grant, on the other hand, requires collaboration with a variety of agencies, providing more meaningful change for an at-risk community, Foust said. The grant urges communities to build accessible, sustainable housing that includes people from mixed income levels, not just those living in extreme poverty. The grant focuses on providing access to amenities and services, access to education, sustainable neighborhood planning, walkability, cost savings through energy efficiency and access to broadband technology. [0x14]Salisbury last year launched Fibrant, a city-owned broadband network. During the next year, Foust and the city’s planning department under the direction of Joe Morris will develop partnerships for West End transformation with the VA Medical Center, Salisbury Community Development Corporation, Salisbury-Rowan Community Action Agency Inc., Rowan-Salisbury Schools, Salisbury Parks & Recreation Department and more. Stogner Architecture will serve as the planning coordinator. “We will work to develop plans that would transform the whole West End neighborhood into a viable community,” Foust said.