

City of Greensboro, NC

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Six Finalists Vying for \$500,000 in City's SC2 Economic Development Challenge

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Six proposals designed to stimulate job growth and business expansion are competing for \$500,000 as the City of Greensboro's Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) Challenge competition enters phase two. Gig G, a proposal based on the design and development of a publicly-owned gigabit speed Fiber Optic network for use in the Greensboro community, was awarded \$55,000 after winning the first phase of the prize competition.

Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan says the proposals offered by the finalists represent part of the future of the city's economy. "Thanks to the SC2 Challenge and our six finalists, the City of Greensboro will have a new road map for better leveraging its vast and dynamic array of resources in new ways," says Vaughan. "Greensboro can use these strategies to continue to create a climate for growing higher wage jobs and fostering innovation, as well as paving the way for long-term sustainable growth."

Interest in Greensboro's SC2 Challenge prize competition came from 43 countries, 49 states and 65 cities. In all, 20 strategic proposals were entered in the competition from multidisciplinary teams. The entries covered a range of economic development themes including workforce development, transportation, alternative energy, technology, place-making, and small business development, among others.

Each of the 20 submissions was rated by an evaluation panel assembled by the City. Just 4.2 points separated first-place from sixth-place after the first phase of scoring was tabulated.

According to Greensboro City Manager Jim Westmoreland, the City is looking forward to the great opportunities that these proposals represent. "This truly is an exciting day for Greensboro when you think about the prospects of each of these six plans," says Westmoreland. "If implemented, each of these plans represents economic growth, opportunity, and future success for our city and business community."

Each of the finalists has the opportunity to enter phase two of the competition, which involves the final teams expanding their proposals by developing a more comprehensive economic development plan with attainable goals and objectives that can lead to implementation. First-place awards \$500,000, followed by \$150,000 for second-place, \$100,000 for third-place, \$75,000 for fourth-place, \$50,000 for fifth-place, and \$25,000 for sixth-place.

The finalists' plans will be reviewed by a separate, five-person selection committee chaired by Westmoreland. The Challenge winner is expected to be announced in spring of 2015.

More information about the SC2 Challenge is [online](#).

SC2 Challenge Finalists

First-place - \$55,000 - Gig G (59.8 points)

This proposal was entered by Joel Bennett, Larry Cecchini, and Michael Hentschel. The Gig G proposal is based on the design and development of a public-owned gigabit speed Fiber Optic network for community use. The proposal also includes the formation of a 15-501C Gig-G Social Entrepreneurship Fund business model designed to foster business development and acceleration.

Second-place - \$35,000 - Gateway University Research Park Testing Center (59.7 points)

This proposal was entered by representatives from Gateway University Research Park. The proposal describes a testing center that would support the primary technological companies/industries of a community.

Third-place - \$10,000 - Global Greensboro (57.7 points)

This proposal was entered by Mass Economics, a research and consulting firm based in Massachusetts that specializes in urban economic growth and equity. The Global Greensboro

proposal aims to build upon the city and region's assets by creating distinct local economic specializations that are valued and traded by nationally and globally.

Fourth-place - Cityfi (56.6 points)

This proposal was entered by Dr. Andrew Brod and Roch Smith Jr. The Cityfi proposal is based on a true city-wide wi-fi network. It includes the expansion of public wi-fi access beyond the limited range of hot spots in public parks and buildings to locations throughout all of the city's neighborhoods and business districts.

Fifth-place - Lifelong Learning City (55.9 points)

This proposal was entered by The Merrick Group, which features professionals and experts from NC A&T and GTCC. The proposal includes a vision that builds upon Greensboro's unique educational assets and the new downtown university campus to create the Greensboro Union of Institutions for Learning and Development, called GUILD.

Sixth-place - Global Opportunities Center (55.6 points)

This proposal was entered by UNCG's Office of Research and Economic Development. The team included professional and experts from North Carolina A&T State University, Guilford Technical Community College, Bennett College, the North Carolina Small Business and Technology Development Center, and Boundless Impact. The Global Opportunities Center would be housed in downtown Greensboro and is designed to leverage the extensive resources of local colleges and universities, corporations, and community partners by connecting and educating students and businesses in innovative ways that result in new global business and career opportunities.

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The City works with the community to improve the quality of life for residents through inclusion, diversity, and trust. It has a professional staff of about 3,000 employees who maintain the values of honesty, integrity, stewardship, and respect. The City is governed by a council-manager form of government with a mayor and eight council members. www.greensboro-nc.gov or call 373-CITY (2489).

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