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## **CATAWBA COUNTY WINS TOP GRANT AWARD FOR 2011 FOR INNOVATIVE USE OF QR CODES**

Catawba County has been named winner of the top Government Innovation Grant Award (GIGA) for 2011, from the UNC School of Government, the Local Government Federal Credit Union, and the North Carolina Local Government Information Systems Association for its innovative use of Quick Response (QR) Codes on building permits issued in the county.

The County's QR Codes program was named a winner of a GIGA quarterly award in August 2011. Now it has been recognized as the best from among all entries, at the annual awards luncheon in Raleigh on January 27. The award carries with it a \$10,000 prize, which will be used to further the County's technology initiatives.

QR codes are a type of barcode, or two-dimensional code, designed to be read by smart phones. They look like black boxes with black and white patterns inside the boxes. When a picture of the code is taken with a smart phone, the phone is connected to more information via the internet.

Catawba County was recognized for implementation of a Building Permit QR Codes system, which provides building contractors and inspectors with up-to-the-minute job site and inspection information, at their fingertips, in the field.

The County added QR codes to building services permit placards posted at job sites in order to quickly deliver data via use of a smart phone. The placard codes link to GIS information for the parcel of the building site, and to full permit information on the web. All data is live and dynamic.

"Using QR codes on building permit placards has reduced the amount of staff time required by inspectors and permit specialists," said Steve Lackey, a Catawba County systems analyst. "And the process is easily duplicated in a number of areas. We now also use QR codes in job advertisements and in our libraries."

The grant awards are presented by the UNC School of Government and North Carolina Local Government Information Systems Association (NCLGISA), in partnership with the Local Government Federal Credit Union (LGFCU).

According to the UNC School of Government, the goal of the program is "to spur and reward technology-based innovation across governments in North Carolina by offering incentives to those governments engaged in innovative, repeatable endeavors which help improve citizen services by increasing efficiencies, effectiveness, and possibly creating cost savings. More importantly, the grant program will elevate the importance of technology in the public sector and result in increased managerial and elected official interest in governmental technology investments."

"The projects submitted for this award from across the state are truly innovative," says School of Government Dean Mike Smith. "We are pleased to recognize North Carolina local government information technology leaders' daily efforts at improving the lives of North Carolinians."

