

Sustainable Community Development in Rural Communities



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Office of Sustainable Communities

ARDI Grant Writing and Technical Assistance Workshop

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Farm in Washington State



Port Washington, Wisconsin



Edwards, Colorado

EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities: Working in Rural America



- Provide technical assistance to communities and states
- **Governors' Institute workshops with rural focus:** Montana, Wyoming, Arizona, New Mexico, Iowa, and North Carolina
- Rural guidebooks:
 - *Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities*
 - *Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Rural Planning, Development and Zoning Codes* (upcoming)
- Smart Growth Achievement Awards: Rural development category
- Work with NGOs (NADO, NACo, etc.) and other rural stakeholders
- Partnering with HUD, DOT, USDA, ARC



Challenges Facing Rural Communities



- Changing economies
 - Decline of traditional economic base, questions of what's next
- Fewer farms and farmers
 - Although there is a growing interest in farming
- Loss of forest and other natural and working land
- Some communities are growing, some are shrinking
 - Rapid growth at metro edges
 - Shrinking population in some communities
- Limited access to jobs, services, and transportation
- Limited planning capacity



Smart Growth: A Response to Rural Challenges



Skaneateles, New York



Waitsfield, Vermont

- Development that provides:
 - Choices for where to live and how to get around
 - A stronger, more resilient economy
 - A safer, healthier place to live
 - Opportunities to protect the things that you love about the place you live (farmland and open space, natural beauty, sense of community, etc.)

So what does smart growth mean for a rural community?



When you've seen one rural community...
you've seen one rural community.









GOLD HILL STORE

GOLD HILL
GENERAL
STORE
OPEN
PARKING
ACROSS
STREET





Photo Credit: National Trust for Historic Preservation

How to Grow and Maintain Rural Character: Three Broad Goals

- 1. Support the rural landscape** by creating an economic climate that enhances the viability of working lands and conserves natural lands.
- 2. Help existing places thrive** by taking care of assets and investments such as downtowns, Main Streets, existing infrastructure, and places that the community values.
- 3. Create great new places** by building vibrant, enduring neighborhoods and communities that people, especially young people, don't want to leave.



Staunton, Virginia



National Forest in Colorado



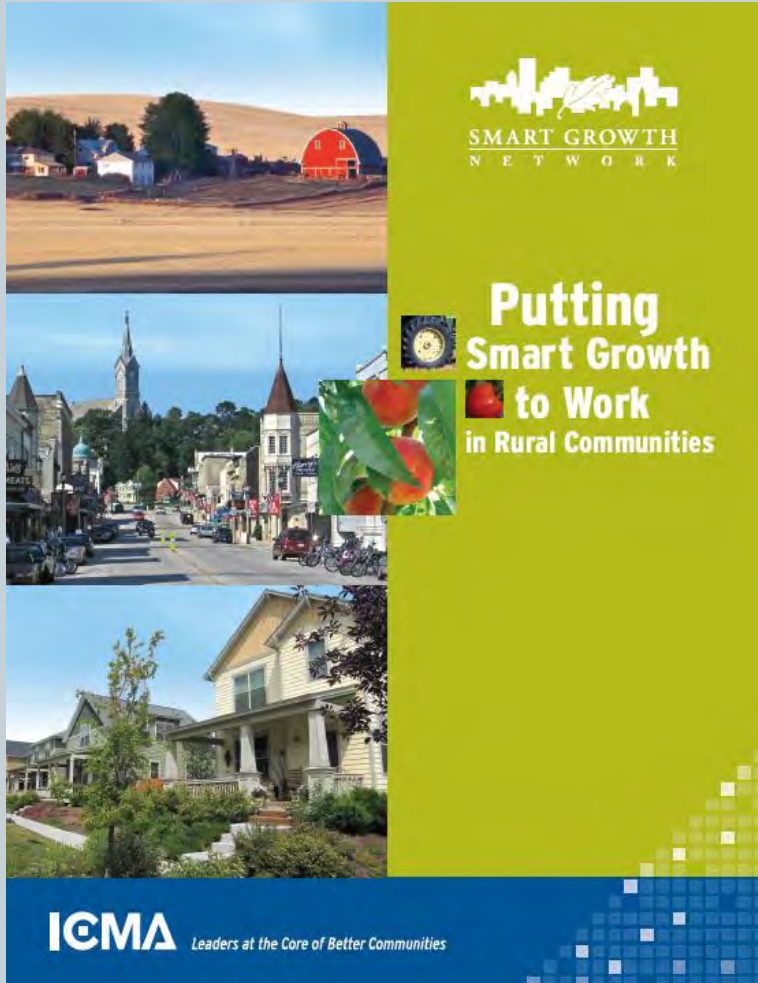
Goal #1: Protect valuable farmland.

Goal #2: Enhance the existing downtown.

Goal #3: Build new neighborhoods that are adjacent to town.

Smart growth in a rural community: How could it work in the landscape?

Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities



- Partnership between the U.S. EPA and ICMA – a Smart Growth Network publication
- Lays out a framework for rural communities and small towns seeking to implement smart growth
- Set of tools, case studies, and resources

Partnership for Sustainable Communities



- Began in June 2009: EPA, HUD, DOT
- Rural Work Group: Partnered with USDA to articulate how the **Partnership's activities can better** serve Rural America
- **The Group's Report (to be released soon)** includes:
 - How the Livability Principles Support Rural Communities
 - HUD, DOT, EPA and USDA Programs Affecting Rural Communities
 - Case Studies of Sustainable Rural Communities
 - Rural Performance Measures
 - Next Steps for the Partnership



Smart Growth Implementation Assistance



- Technical assistance to states, regions, and communities that want to implement sustainable communities approaches to development, but are facing barriers
- Provides in-depth, long-term (18 months) assistance from national experts, usually including a multi-day workshop and a final report
- Example: Victor and Driggs, Idaho

Smart Growth Implementation Assistance



- Categories of assistance this year:
 1. Community resilience to disasters and climate change
 2. Community energy planning
 3. Smart growth in tribal communities
 4. Land use strategies for economic development agencies
 5. ***Economic viability of small towns and rural communities***
- Application process:
 - Submit a letter of interest (no more than 8 pages for the total application) – **DUE OCTOBER 28, 2011**
 - If selected as a finalist, will be asked to participate in a follow up call
- For more information and to apply:
 - Contact Abby Hall: hall.abby@epa.gov, 202-566-2086
 - SGIA Website: <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sgia.htm>

Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities



- Quick, targeted smart growth assistance to communities (1-day workshops) using a variety of tools that have demonstrated results and widespread application (10 tools to choose from)
- Provides access to technical experts who can assist with public engagement, direct consultation with decision makers, and a memo outlining next steps
- Example: Cambridge, Maryland

Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities



- Ten tools for this round of assistance:
 1. Complete streets
 2. Creating a green streets strategy
 3. Green building toolkit
 4. Linking land use to water quality
 5. Parking audit
 6. Preferred growth areas
 7. Smart growth guidelines for sustainable design and development
 - 8. *Smart growth zoning codes for small cities and rural areas***
 9. Using smart growth to produce fiscal and economic health
 10. Walking audit

Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities



- Planning to work with 50 communities this year – last year, half of the communities were rural communities or small towns
- Application process:
 - Submit a letter of interest (no more than 2 pages for the total application) – **DUE OCTOBER 28, 2011**
- For more information and to apply:
 - Contact Kevin Nelson: nelson.kevin@epa.gov, 202-566-2835
 - Building Blocks Website:
<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/buildingblocks.htm>

More Building Blocks...



- Assistance through grants with the following organizations:
 - Cascade Land Conservancy
 - Global Green USA
 - Project for Public Spaces
 - Smart Growth America
- Each of these organizations will offer direct technical assistance to communities – apply directly to the organization
- For more information and to apply:
 - Contact Kevin Nelson: nelson.kevin@epa.gov, 202-566-2835
 - Building Blocks Website:
<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/buildingblocks.htm>

Other EPA Grants: Brownfields Program



- **EPA's Office of** Brownfields and Land Revitalization has many programs to help prevent, inventory, assess, clean up, and reuse brownfields properties
- **Programs include...**
- Targeted Brownfields Assessments
 - Helps states, tribes, and municipalities minimize the uncertainties of contamination often associated with brownfields
- Technical Assistance to Brownfields Communities
 - Communities can receive assistance with grant applications and brownfields issues through third-party providers who provide the assistance

More Brownfields Programs...



- Assessment Revolving Loan Fund and Cleanup Grants (open now, closes Nov 28)
 - Addresses sites contaminated by petroleum and hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants
- Multipurpose Grants (opens Oct/Nov 2011)
 - Funding to conduct assessment and cleanup activities at a specific site
- Environmental Workforce Job Training Grants (opens Nov/Dec 2011)
 - Grants to nonprofit organizations to recruit, train, and employ unemployed and under-employed residents from solid and hazardous waste-impacted communities (opens Nov/Dec 2011)
- Area-Wide Planning Grants (opens Feb 2012)
 - Planning assistance to communities to develop area-wide plans for the reuse of brownfields properties

Other EPA Grants: Brownfields Program



- For more info:
 - EPA Office of Brownfields Website:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields>
 - EPA R3 Brownfields Website:
<http://www.epa.gov/reg3hwmd/bf-lr/index.htm>
 - National Headquarters Brownfields Contact:
Stacy Swartwood, swartwood.stacy@epa.gov,
202 566-1391

Considerations for Applications



- Can you demonstrate a commitment to implementing sustainable communities approaches to development in your region/community?
- Can you demonstrate political and public support for the project?
- Can you illustrate how this work will be applicable to other rural communities/small towns?
- Several programs have specific rural/small town categories – make use of these!

For More Information

www.epa.gov/smartgrowth
www.sustainablecommunities.gov
bertaina.stephanie@epa.gov