

EPA Programs Supporting Livable and Sustainable Rural Communities



Ed Fendley

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Office of Sustainable Communities

Livable Regions and Communities in Appalachia

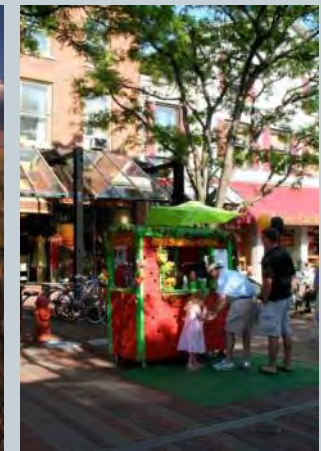
Cartersville, GA, May 15, 2012



Photo Credits (left to right): NRCS, EPA, Clark Anderson

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

- EPA's mission: Protect human health and safeguard air, land and water
- Where and how we build our communities impacts those things
- Provide technical assistance to communities and states
- 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
- 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 about 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



- **Development that provides:**
 - Choices for where to live and how to get around
 - Savings of public \$ by using existing infrastructure
 - Opportunities to protect the things that you love (farmland and open space, natural beauty, sense of community)



So what does smart growth mean for a rural community?



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





FLAT TOP ST
CROSS TIMBER ST





GOLD HILL STORE

GOLD HILL
GENERAL
STORE
OPEN
PARKING
ACROSS
STREET

NO PARKING



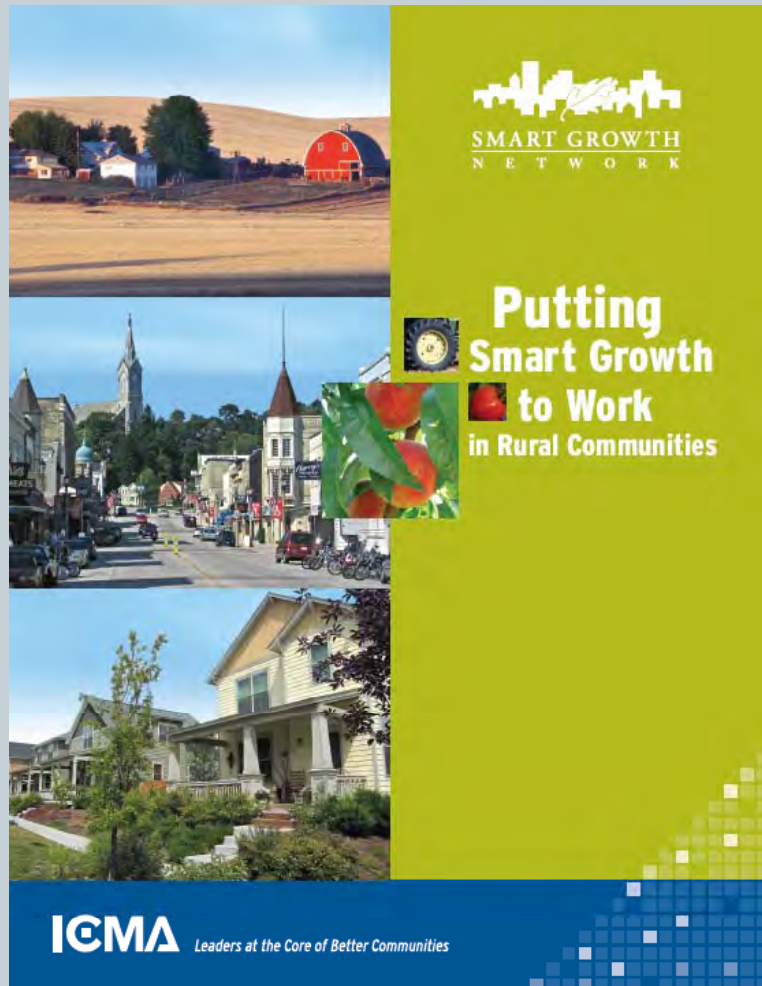
Photo Credit: National Trust for Historic Preservation



Fiddlers Festival in Berlin, Maryland
Photo Credit: Worcester County



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

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





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

Partnership for Sustainable Communities

- Began in June 2009: EPA, HUD, DOT
- Also partnering with USDA to think through how the Partnership's activities can best serve rural America
- Recently released report includes:
 - How the Partnership Principles Support Rural Communities
 - HUD, DOT, EPA, and USDA Programs At Work in Rural Communities
 - Case Studies of Federal Support for 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



- **Recent categories of assistance:**
 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***
- **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>
 - Applications are typically due in the fall

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
- 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



- One of the categories for assistance is small town/rural zoning codes
- For more information:
 - Contact Kevin Nelson: nelson.kevin@epa.gov, 202-566-2835
 - Building Blocks Website:
<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/buildingblocks.htm>

More Building Blocks...



- Some of the technical assistance is being provided through grants with the following organizations:

- ForTerra (Cascade Land Conservancy)
- Global Green USA
- Project for Public Spaces
- Smart Growth America



- These organizations will offer direct technical assistance -- apply directly to the organization
- For more information:
 - 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



- Brownfields are properties whose expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.
- EPA's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization has many programs to help prevent, inventory, assess, clean up, and reuse brownfields properties.
- EPA Office of Brownfields Website:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields>
- EPA R4 Brownfields Website:
<http://epa.gov/region4/bflr/brownfields.html>

Disaster Recovery and Planning Resources



- **EPA-FEMA Partnership**
 - Memorandum of Agreement between EPA and FEMA to assist communities on the ground as they recover/rebuild following disaster and to plan for future disasters
 - Projects to date:
 - ✦ 6 projects in Iowa after the 2008 floods
 - ✦ Iowa Adaptation Pilot
 - ✦ Currently working in North Carolina (Wilmington and New Bern) to assess vulnerabilities in housing and water infrastructure and to identify strategies for future investments
- **Essential code fixes for disaster resiliency – upcoming publication**

Disaster Recovery and Planning Resources



- **EPA's Climate Ready Estuaries**
 - Works with National Estuary Programs (including Mobile Bay NEP) and coastal managers to assess climate change vulnerabilities, develop adaptation strategies, engage and educate stakeholders, and share lessons learned.
 - <http://www.epa.gov/cre/>
- **EPA's Climate Ready Water Utilities**
 - Provides resources to help the water sector adapt to climate change.
 - <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/watersecurity/climate/>
- **Other federal agencies also have resources available for hazard mitigation planning**
 - HUD – disaster planning as part of Regional Planning Grants
 - NOAA – focus on hazard mitigation and land use planning for coastal communities

For More Information

www.epa.gov/smartgrowth
www.sustainablecommunities.gov
Fendley.ed@epa.gov