

# Vibrant Rural Communities

## Case Study Series

### NADO Research Foundation

The NADO Research Foundation's Vibrant Rural Communities case studies series highlights how rural regions and small towns across the country are growing local and regional economies and creating stronger communities. This series shows how small towns can leverage a wide range of tools and approaches to build on their assets, protect their resources, and make strategic investments that offer long-term benefits for residents and local businesses. While not every small town will have the same local assets and advantages described in these case studies, every community does have the opportunity to look at itself, bring residents and stakeholders together, and set a vision for how to take advantage of local strengths. To access the full case studies online, visit [www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-case-study-series/](http://www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-case-study-series/).



#### Lavonia, Georgia

Anticipating explosive growth with a new state-of-the-art medical center, Lavonia, Georgia, is working to balance new economic activity with its cultural heritage. The City wants to support businesses and create a sense of place by analyzing its master plan, zoning code, transit facilities, and utilities in order to guide future growth so that it does not compromise the resources and areas that residents value. According to Georgia Mountains Regional Commission planner Chip Wright, "We want to grow up instead of outward and reduce the sprawl that has happened in parts of the county around the interstates—we're trying to correct that and enhance all the resources of this rural county."

READ MORE: [www.nado.org/rural-community-spotlight-lavonia-georgia/](http://www.nado.org/rural-community-spotlight-lavonia-georgia/)



#### Rome, Georgia

In 1975, the first shopping mall in Rome opened. Residents flocked to the new development, dawning a story of demise all too common in America's downtowns. The downtown lost out to strip commercial development, out-migration, and stagflation, and by 1981 the vacancy rate had reached 26 percent. Still, with the largest Victorian-era downtown district in Georgia, Rome's residents value their heritage. Through the 1980s and '90s, the City and Floyd County invested in public facilities to promote downtown as a destination for residential and commercial development. That public investment set the stage for private developers to reinvest in downtown.

READ MORE: [www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-rome-georgia/](http://www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-rome-georgia/)



#### Clinton, Iowa

In 1996, the City of Clinton set out to improve a stretch of U.S. Highway 30 that runs through the heart of town. The road forms a segment of historic Lincoln Highway—dedicated in 1913 as one of the nation's first transcontinental highways. It also serves as an entryway to Clinton and the State of Iowa. As such, city officials wanted to reconstruct the road in a way that meshed with the local context. With the cooperation of several State and Federal agencies, the community created a corridor that respects existing development, presents a welcoming gateway to the community, and sustains adjacent neighborhoods' economic vitality.

READ MORE: [www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-clinton-iowa/](http://www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-clinton-iowa/)



#### Greenville, Kentucky

Five years ago if you took a stroll down Main Street in Greenville on a Saturday night you would have likely walked on deteriorated sidewalks, peered into vacant storefronts, and felt enveloped by silence and darkness. Like many other small towns throughout the U.S., Greenville's downtown had slowly deteriorated. However, thanks to a receptive mayor, a proactive tourist commission, an involved local community, and a supportive Area Development District, that same walk down Main Street today has transformed. This small community built on its local assets and infrastructure, sought innovative financing, and cultivated partnerships in a challenging economy.

READ MORE: [www.nado.org/facades-festivals-and-footpaths-greenville-kentuckys-downtown-redevelopment/](http://www.nado.org/facades-festivals-and-footpaths-greenville-kentuckys-downtown-redevelopment/)



### **Guthrie, Kentucky**

Guthrie, home to 1,400 residents, is located along the Kentucky-Tennessee border and is steeped in transportation and American history. This past August, the town broke ground on a planned Transportation Museum and Welcome Center, a \$1.4 million project almost a decade in the making. Through this new museum and welcome center, Guthrie has been able to turn a community liability into a true asset. When it opens in the summer of 2013, it will have been after years of hard work, struggle, and dedication – much in the same spirit of Guthrie’s original residents who built this railroad town many years ago.

READ MORE: [www.nado.org/on-the-right-track-guthrie-kentucky-showcases-its-transportation-history-2/](http://www.nado.org/on-the-right-track-guthrie-kentucky-showcases-its-transportation-history-2/)



### **Las Vegas, New Mexico**

For almost one hundred years, filmmakers and television producers have found Las Vegas to be an ideal location for productions on its historic streets and beautiful countryside. Las Vegas features homes, storefronts, and civic buildings that showcase mid-to-late 19th century architectural styles, making a unique backdrop. With local, state, and federal funding, Las Vegas has made significant progress in historic preservation, main street redevelopment, and supporting the arts and culture. These efforts have helped instill a sense of place as well as provide an economic boost to this city of 13,000 by creating jobs, spurring new businesses, and attracting private investment.

READ MORE: [www.nado.org/las-vegas\\_nm\\_vibrant\\_rural\\_communities/](http://www.nado.org/las-vegas_nm_vibrant_rural_communities/)



### **Lewistown, Pennsylvania**

In the mid-1990s, the SEDA-Council of Governments initiated a downtown planning process, but merchants showed little interest. Changing tacks, SEDA-COG led a regional planning process to explore relevant issues. After identifying concerns about the demise of downtown, staff channeled that interest into a downtown visioning process, supported by local legislators, and this time captured the enthusiasm of downtown merchants. Since efforts began, public and private entities have re-used vacant structures, renovated buildings, redeveloped industrial sites, improved public spaces, and attracted new businesses to a transformed downtown.

READ MORE: [www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-lewistown-pennsylvania/](http://www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-lewistown-pennsylvania/)



### **Potosi, Wisconsin**

Located in Southwestern Wisconsin near the banks of the Mississippi River, Potosi is known as the state’s “Catfish Capital.” However, thanks to an innovative and community-led redevelopment project to re-open the previously dormant Potosi Brewery and establish a brewing museum and research library, this town of 700 people is becoming internationally recognized for another one of its resources: locally brewed beer. While it is the brewery’s product – beer – that brings in the visitors, Potosi’s accomplishments are rooted in the people of the village who revived and re-branded an important part of their history, embraced historic preservation, and developed a unique business model.

READ MORE: [www.nado.org/the-good-ol-days-are-back-the-revival-of-the-potosi-brewery/](http://www.nado.org/the-good-ol-days-are-back-the-revival-of-the-potosi-brewery/)



### **Sheridan County, Wyoming**

In Sheridan County, residents with widely divergent political views can usually agree on their profound affection for the landscape and enthusiasm for the outdoors. This has translated into a conservation ethic that guides the community’s land use policies. Most recently, the County’s comprehensive plan—adopted in 2008—includes a number of strategies that the County hopes will allow growth without destroying its precious natural resources. According to the Sonoran Institute’s John Heyneman, “comprehensive plans are not new—every community has them—but many don’t have teeth, and Sheridan County is unusual in putting teeth into its plan’s implementation.”

READ MORE: [www.nado.org/conserving-treasured-landscapes-for-prosperity-in-posterity-sheridan-county-wyoming/](http://www.nado.org/conserving-treasured-landscapes-for-prosperity-in-posterity-sheridan-county-wyoming/)

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