



## Sustainable Communities Initiative Western Rural Grantee Gathering

Billings, Montana ~ May 5 - 6, 2015



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### Northern Hotel

19 North Broadway  
Billings, MT 59101  
(406) 867-6767

## Day One • Tuesday, May 5

- 7:30 am**      **Registration and Breakfast Meet & Greet** (North Ballroom)
- 8:30 am**      **Welcome and Introductions** (North Ballroom)
- *Bill Vanderwall, Capacity Building Manager, Minnesota Housing Partnership*
  - *Brett Schwartz, Program Manager, NADO Research Foundation*
  - *Naomi Friedman, Government Technical Representative, HUD Office of Economic Resilience*
- 9:00 am**      **Keynote Presentation – Place Value: Building Communities that Create Prosperity in the Rural West** (North Ballroom)  
*Clark Anderson, Director, Rocky Mountains Program, Sonoran Institute*  
Local leaders intuitively recognize that creating great places is essential to building a strong and resilient economy, but what underlies this linkage and how can communities strengthen it to inform local planning and economic development initiatives? This presentation will discuss new directions in community and economic development, including the results of the Sonoran Institute's *Place Value* study which examined factors that attract entrepreneurs and an educated workforce to communities in the Rocky Mountain West.
- 10:00 am**      **Break**

**10:15 am**      **Telling Your Story – 5x5 Grantee Presentations** (North Ballroom)  
*Grantees will each have five minutes and five PowerPoint slides to tell their story in this fast-paced series of short presentations followed by Q&A.*

**11:30 am**      **Lunch and Presentations** (North Ballroom)

**Presentation: Your Work is Just Getting Started**  
*Rick Garcia, Regional Administrator, HUD Region VIII*

**Presentation: Building Bridges in Divided Communities**  
*Tom Horner, President, Horner Strategies LLC*

Political polarization reaches from Washington, D.C. to local town halls. Too often in this environment, the loudest voices are those who always say, "No." Understanding the values and visions that divide people and the challenges and opportunities of communications in today's world can help advocates establish common ground and build a foundation for getting to "Yes."

**12:45 pm**      **Discussion Session: Defining the Challenges Ahead** (North Ballroom, East and West Babcock)

All participants (grantees, agencies, and organizations) will gather in small groups for facilitated discussions to identify the greatest challenges and opportunities facing grantees in implementing their plans in the rural West. Groups will mix grantees, agencies, and geographic location. Over the break, facilitators will consolidate all input for the benefit of those attending the 2:30 pm Option 1 session.

**2:15 pm**      **Break**

**2:30 pm**      **Breakout Sessions:**

**Option 1: Problem-Solving Dialogue: Analyzing the Rural Challenges** (North Ballroom)

All those wishing to engage in collaborative problem-solving will help analyze the specific challenges that were brainstormed during the small group discussion session. We will discuss these implementation challenges and sort them according to scope and scale. By the end of the session, the group will better understand if and how rural challenges should be addressed at the local, state, regional, and/or federal levels.

**Option 2: Tour of East Billings Urban Renewal District and Downtown Transfer Center**

*Patty Nordlund, Director of Operations, Billings Industrial Revitalization District*  
*Ron Wenger, Transit Manager, MET Transit*

This bus tour will take us to innovative projects underway in downtown Billings, including a visit to the Downtown Transfer Center and the East Billings Urban Renewal District (EBURD). The Downtown Transfer Center, the public transportation hub of Billings Metropolitan Transit (MET), is a LEED Platinum-certified facility that incorporates many green features, including the 100% collection of stormwater on-site and an electric system that generates around 50% of the building's and site's electricity. EBURD was created in 2006 when the Billings City Council approved an Urban Renewal Plan

and Tax Increment Finance district for the east end industrial area of the city. EBURD is where the commercial life of Billings was born and still houses some of the most important components of the state's economic engine. During the tour, you will also hear more about the Billings Livability Partnership, a private/public partnership of more than 30 key community organizations joined in the common interest of creating a livable community that is healthy by design.

**5:00 pm**      **Return to Hotel, Adjourn Day One. Enjoy a Night Out in Billings!**  
*Check your folder for dining and entertainment options.*

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## Day Two • Wednesday, May 6

**8:00 am**      **Networking Breakfast** (North Ballroom)  
*Gather with your team or new colleagues over breakfast to discuss your work, plans moving forward, and addressing obstacles in the way.*

**9:00 am**      **Getting to Action: How to Put Citizen Ownership Behind Great Community Plans**  
(North Ballroom)  
*Dr. Michael Fortunato, Director, Center for Rural Studies, Sam Houston State University*  
For any community that has conducted a first-rate planning process only to see the plan sit on the shelf for years, this presentation is about taking that old (or new) plan off the shelf and giving it new life. This session will focus on immediate steps that can be taken from a programmatic level to inspire citizen-led action on a tight budget, and get results fast. The approach hybridizes insights from organizational leadership, community development, and social psychology to create a holistic pipeline of citizen collaboration, problem identification, solutions brokering, applied action, and recognizable success.

**10:00 am**      **Break**

**10:15 am**      **Breakout Sessions:**

**Option 1: Problem-Solving Dialogue: Addressing the Regional/Federal Challenges**  
(North Ballroom)

Problem-solving discussions will follow on from Tuesday's session with defining specific strategies to address regional or national-scale implementation challenges. Actions that carry out the defined strategies will be outlined that can be recommended to individual teams later in the day.

**Option 2: Engaging Communities in Shared Goals** (Babcock East)

*Tom Horner, Horner Strategies*

Focusing on the project -- the ultimate goal -- while ignoring the process -- engaging people in a shared vision of their community -- too often results in contentious, confrontational battles. This workshop will be a practical, how-to guide to engaging

communities in ways that lead to productive outcomes. The workshop will be a soup-to-nuts approach to engagement, from the necessary work of effectively planning strategies to creating new partnerships and hosting more productive conversations.

**11:30 am**

**Box Lunch Break-Outs:**

**Option 1: The Rebirth of The Northern Hotel and the Future of Downtown  
Redevelopment in Billings** (North Ballroom)

*Mike Nelson, Developer and Manager, The Northern Hotel*

In 2009, brothers Mike and Chris Nelson purchased the Northern Hotel at auction with a clear vision to make it the most modern hotel in the area, with 4-star amenities and service, while still preserving its unique history. Learn the story behind our conference hotel in the heart of Billings and how it is serving as a catalyst for downtown redevelopment.

**Option 2: Removing Barriers to Entrepreneurship and Innovation** (Babcock West)

*Michael Fortunato, Sam Houston State University*

This session will focus on how community leaders, residents, and other supporters can work together to remove institutional, cultural, and social barriers to local entrepreneurship and innovation. The presentation will use an open dialogue format centered on strategies and ideas about moving beyond conflict towards a supportive culture for creative expression and innovative local activity.

**Option 3: Rural Housing Development 101** (Babcock East)

*Rosemary Fagrelus, Minnesota Housing Partnership*

How do you get affordable housing projects going in your region? Learn more about the housing development process, from who should be involved and the roles they play – to who funds housing, and how to attract resources.

**12:30 pm**

**Team Discussion: Back-Home Action Plans** (North Ballroom, East, and West Babcock)

Grantee teams will meet separately to discuss the status of their efforts, strategize how to address local and state implementation challenges, and design an action plan to execute upon returning home. Agencies and organizations closely affiliated with each team will join in the discussions.

**1:30 pm**

**Final Reflections and Next Steps for Grantee Teams** (North Ballroom)

*Each team will briefly share action plans and next steps moving forward to goal implementation (5 minutes each)*

**2:00 pm**

**Adjourn Gathering**