



Lifting Up  
Communities  
through Economic  
Diversification

*NADO  
Washington Conference*

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Office of Community Revitalization

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## Today I'd Like To:

- Give an overview of EPA's Office of Community Revitalization
- Share some planning assistance programs that help communities diversify their economies through leveraging their assets
- Discuss a few examples of communities that are diversifying their economies through **health, food, and outdoor recreation**



# Why EPA?

EPA's mission:

Protect human health and the environment.

Where and how we build our communities  
impacts human health and our land, air, and water.





# Office of Community Revitalization

- In EPA's Office of Policy (reaches across all programs)
- Work on cross cutting environmental issues, helping communities grow in ways that protect the environment and human health (land use decisions are made at the local level)
- Communities ask for our help creating a vision for what they want their communities to look like in the future
  - ✓ We provide planning assistance
  - ✓ We convene stakeholders together to have these conversations
  - ✓ We bring federal agencies to communities so they can learn how their programs can help





# Office of Community Revitalization: Where We've Worked

Healthy Places Healthy People



Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities



Greening America's Communities



Greening America's Capitals



Cool and Connected



Local Foods, Local Places



Smart Growth - Other Technical Assistance



Smart Growth Implementation Assistance



National Award for Smart Growth Achievement



# Office of Community Revitalization

- Helping communities build on their assets/economic drivers, taking into account existing place-based assets.
- Focus since 2015:
  - **Local Foods, Local Places:** role of local food systems in revitalizing neighborhoods and downtowns
  - **Cool & Connected:** broadband as a catalyst to leverage investment on rural main streets
  - **Healthy Places for Healthy People:** health care facilities as economic anchors and catalysts of a holistic approach to health
  - **Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities:** a suite of tools to help build on place-based community assets
  - **Up Next: Outdoor Recreation Economy**

# PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROCESS

- Understand context, self assessment
- Refine the problem statement, goals
- Customize agenda and materials
- Coach community on stakeholder participation
- Engage federal stakeholder partners

## Assess



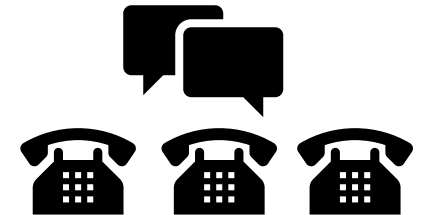
## Convene

- Conduct community tour
- Affirm collective vision
- Assess assets, challenges relative to advancing the community's goals
- Discuss relevant case studies and generate ideas and locally relevant strategies
- Refine goals and identify specific actions and next steps to move forward



- Document Action Plan
- Conduct follow up discussions to review and refine action steps
- Engage project steering committee and stakeholders to identify additional resources/Funding
- Finalize the blueprint for implementation

## Implement



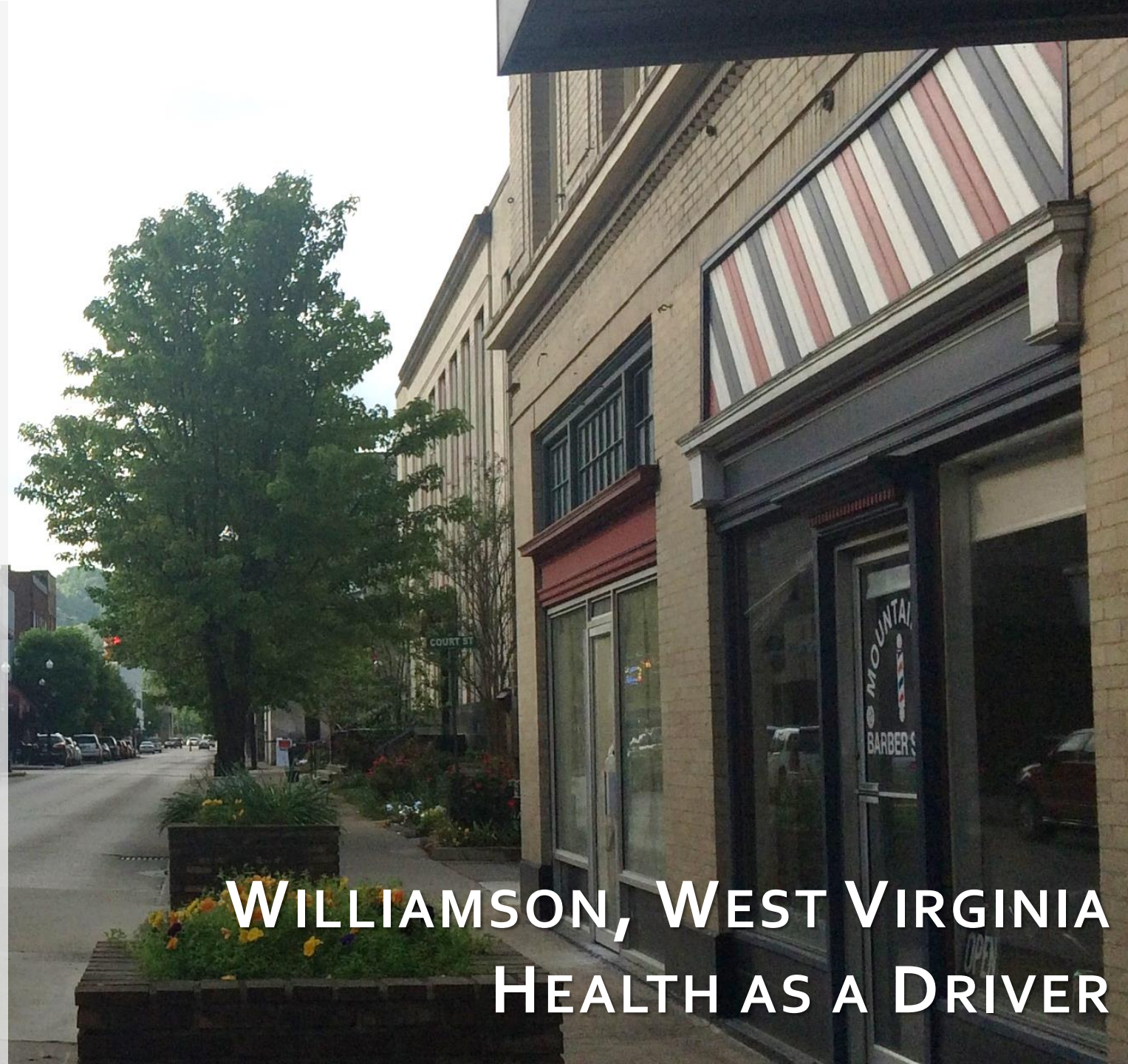


A group of people, mostly women, are walking outdoors on a paved path. They are dressed in professional or business-casual attire. In the foreground, a woman in a light purple top and red pants is walking towards the right, gesturing with her hands. To her left, another woman in a patterned top and red pants is also walking. In the background, several other people are visible, some standing and some walking. A large blue circular overlay is positioned in the center of the image, containing the text "STORIES FROM THE ROAD" in white, bold, uppercase letters.

STORIES FROM  
THE ROAD



- ⊙ Population 3,000, in SW WV
- ⊙ Coal-reliant community in transition
- ⊙ Health challenges: obesity, diabetes
- ⊙ Their approach = creating a culture of health
- ⊙ Workshops in 2012, 2015, and 2017 (Livable Communities in Appalachia; Local Foods, Local Places; Cool & Connected)



**WILLIAMSON, WEST VIRGINIA  
HEALTH AS A DRIVER**



# Williamson Health and Wellness Center



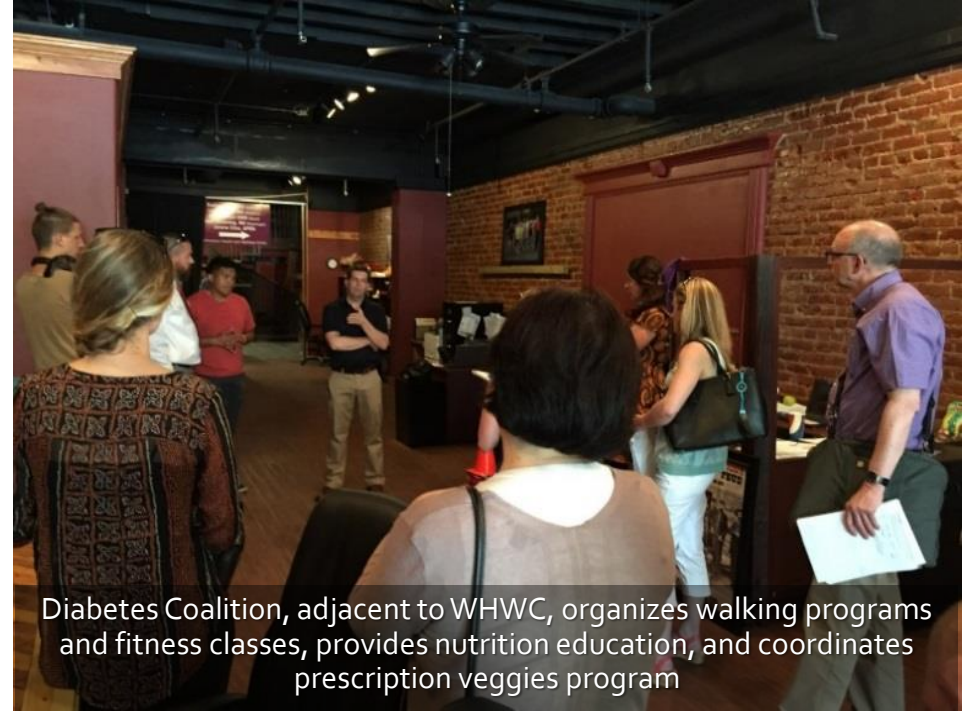
- Federally Qualified Health Center
- Located in a formerly vacant building on main street
- Organizes activities around health, wellness, local food
- Is an anchor for economic development







Federally Qualified Health Center , LEED certified, located in formerly vacant building on main street



Diabetes Coalition, adjacent to WHWC, organizes walking programs and fitness classes, provides nutrition education, and coordinates prescription veggies program



Farmers Market located downtown; Mobile Market travels throughout the county; commercial kitchen in downtown



Ramella Park Community Garden adjacent to low-income housing facility





Growing Warriors program gives veterans the tools to become farmers



Local restaurants serving local food downtown



Health Innovation HUB



Federal Roundtable to discuss economic diversification in Williamson and Central Appalachia



# More About Williamson's approach to creating a culture of health

Williamson's Health Innovation Hub:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0S2V-tJUi0U>

More about Williamson's LFLP Project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rCR5FyvtC4&feature=youtu.be>

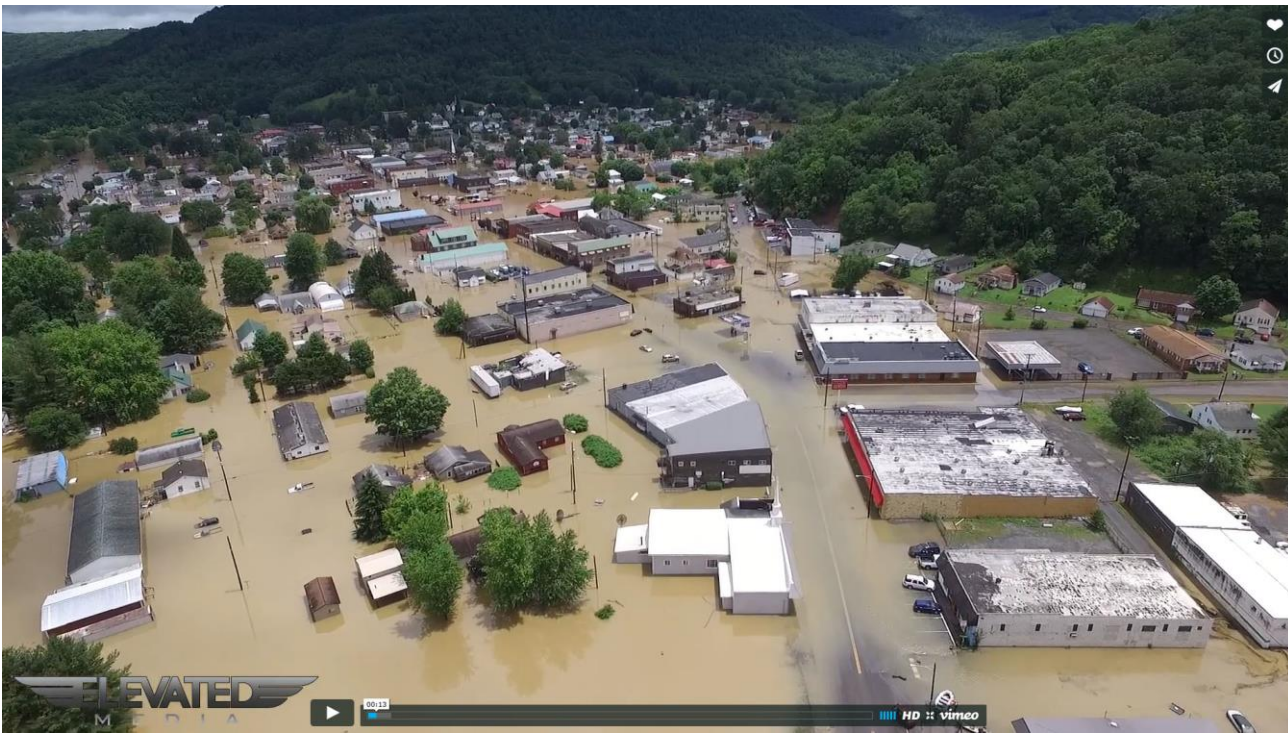
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- Population ~1,400 in southern West Virginia
- Devastated by severe flooding summer 2016
- Local Foods, Local Places community in 2017
- How can Rainelle come back stronger from the flood? And how can local food reinvigorate the local economy and heal people who are suffering?



**RAINELLE, WEST VIRGINIA**  
**THE POWER OF FOOD**





- Assets: people; commitment to revitalizing their downtown and creating opportunity for their residents; strong local food entrepreneurs; natural resources & tourism potential
- Challenges: Decades of economic decline (coal and timber); devastated building stock (residential and commercial); high poverty and unemployment; food insecurity; high incidence of opioid use disorder





# Fruits of Labor Café: Food as Recovery

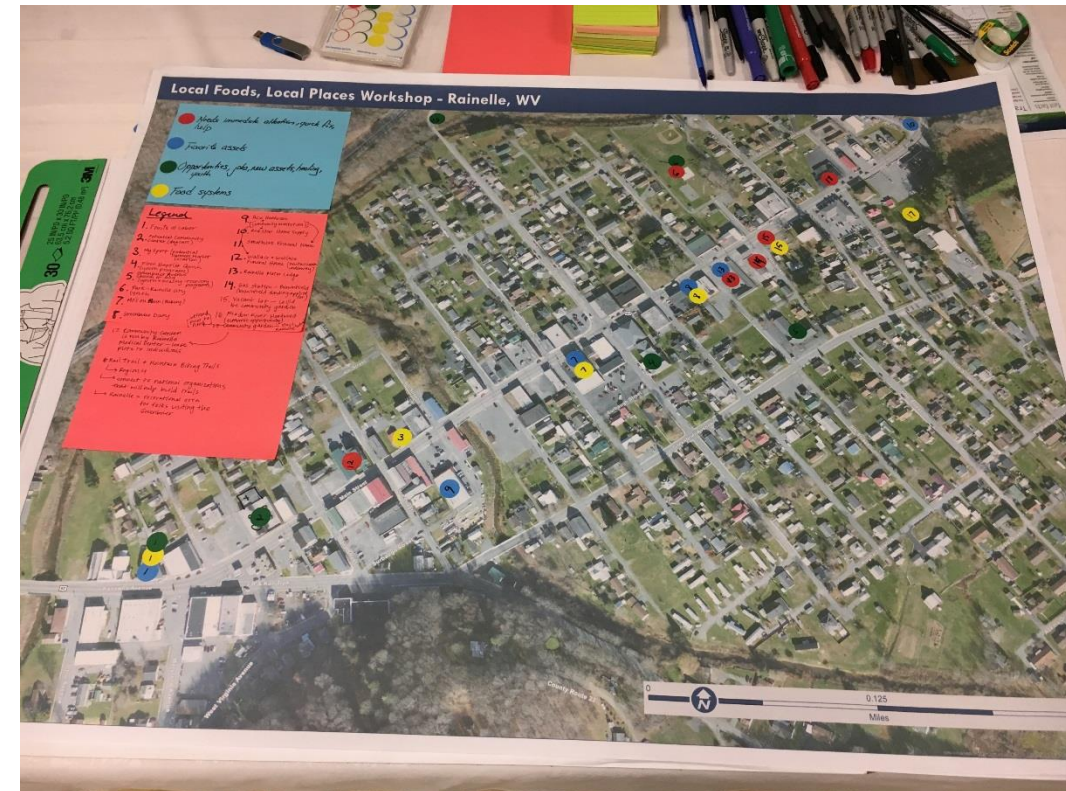
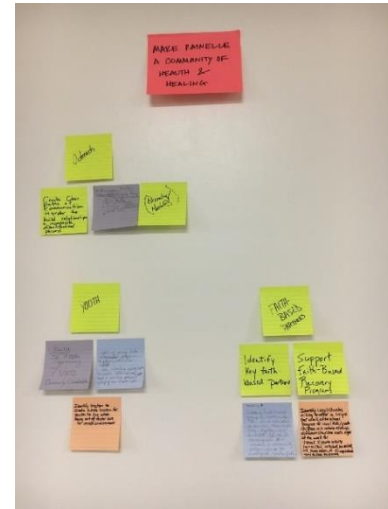




# The Workshop

## Workshop Goals:

1. *Make Rainelle a community of health and healing*
2. *Activate and transform downtown Rainelle*
3. *Grow the local food economy and market*
4. *Create economic and recreation drivers to diversify the regional economy*







Rainelle 2018 community workshop. Image: EPA/OCR

- EPA and FEMA partnered together to lead a follow-up workshop focused on one specific aspect of the LFLP action plan – helping the community finalize a 24-mile recreational trail to bring people to Main Street Rainelle and connect to regional parks and trails
- Appalachian Regional Commission is funding trails investments, recognizing the natural assets in the region



Future Meadow River Trailhead. Image: EPA/OCR



- ◎ Population ~3,000 in northwestern Pennsylvania
- ◎ Local Foods, Local Places Community in 2015 (Forest County, PA)
- ◎ At the gateway to the Allegheny National Forest
- ◎ How to:
  - ◎ Make Marienville a recreation trail hub for the region
  - ◎ Brand Forest County as a place for local food, arts and culture, and recreation opportunities
  - ◎ Build on the natural assets of the region



MARIENVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA  
OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY



# Marienville, Pennsylvania: Outdoor Recreation Economy



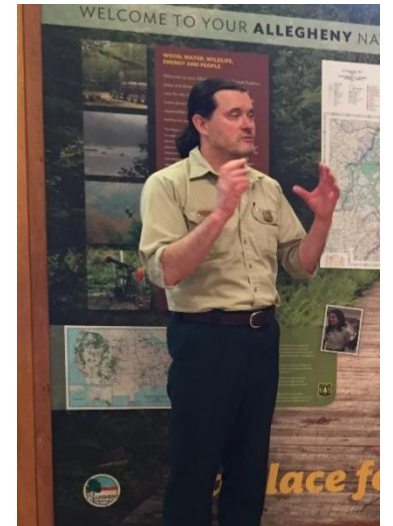
## 4 Seasons Trail & Recreation Hub

- EPA technical assistance support (Local Foods, Local Places) in 2015
- Appalachian Regional Commission implementation support (for the town's acquisition of the train station)
- Town purchased station + 5 acres
- Rail ROW will connect to North Country Trail
- Snowmobile and ATV trail connection into the National Forest under development
- "Recreation has always been a large part of the local economy and with the addition of this trail hub the Supervisors hope to give entrepreneurs opportunities to develop new businesses or expand businesses already here."





- Jenks Township recently received a **\$1.2 million DOT grant** (Transportation Alternatives Program) to construct a six-mile segment of trail, ADA parking lots, and a pavilion.
- An **Appalachian Regional Commission grant for \$67,000** will be used to update the recreational hub that will provide ADA restrooms and information for recreational activities to include hiking, cycling, ATV, snowmobile, cross country skiing and equestrian use.

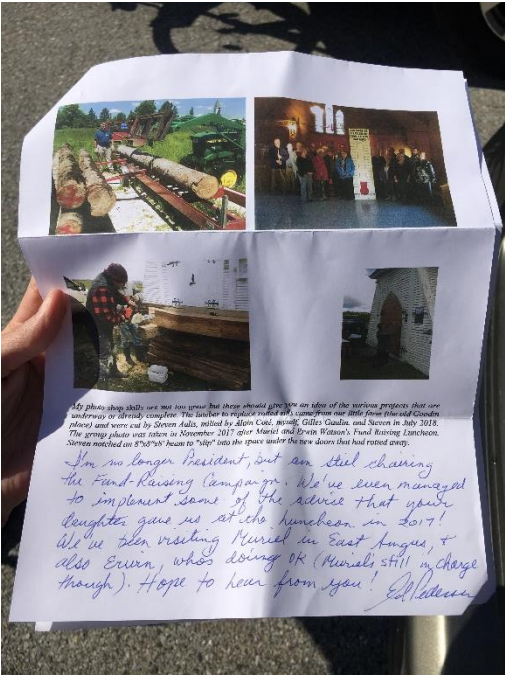


**Kevin Carter and Rob Fallon**



# Common themes

- In terms of assets it's about place **AND** people
- **Community sparkplugs** make things happen
- The vision and energy has to come locally... but efforts can be maximized with the right **partners** in the room and a **plan** that inspires confidence and action and investment



Christchurch Canterbury  
Bury, Quebec





THANK YOU!

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