# A Trail Map for Growth: Recreation Economies and Preservation of Local Quality of Life

NADO Annual Training Conference Cleveland, Ohio · November 8, 2023

Photo by Steph Bertaina

# Your Session Facilitators





### **Steph Bertaina**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

> Office of Community Revitalization

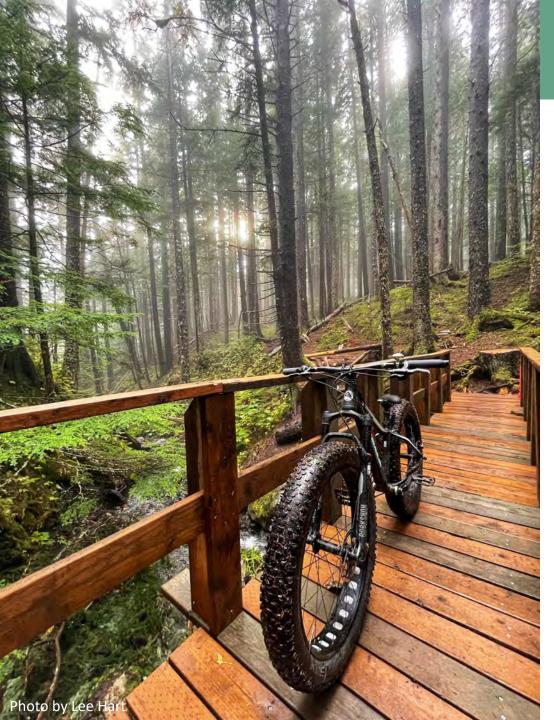
### **Beth Gilles**

**Executive Director** 

Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board



- Explore why and how outdoor recreation can be an important part of regions' economic development strategies
- Share some examples and lessons learned from the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities planning assistance program
  - Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board (NY)
- Try out parts of the RERC Toolkit
- Hear from you about the challenges and opportunities you are seeing in the rural regions with whom you work



What region are you from?

Drop a pin to show us where you are coming from! Visit menti.com and use code 2465 9002 or Scan this QR code:



# The Results...

# What region are you from?



# RECREATION ECONOMY

\*

Why EPA?

Photo by Steph Bertaina

**EPA's Office of Community Revitalization** 

# EPA's mission: Protect human health and the environment.

# <u>Where and how we build our communities</u> impacts human health and our land, air, and water.

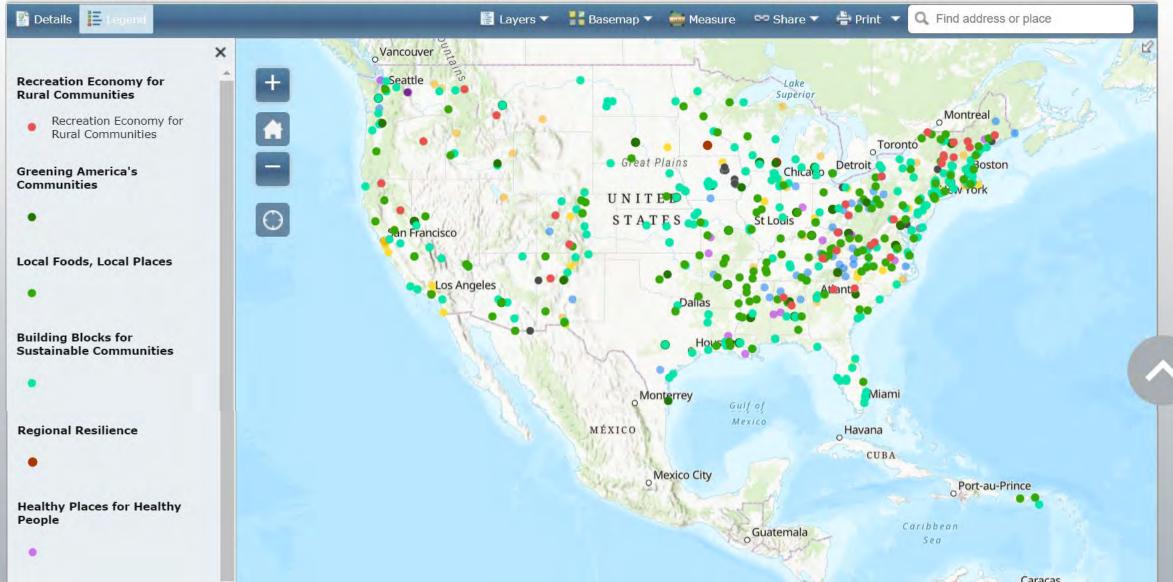


# EPA's Office of Community Revitalization

- 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

# **Smart Growth in Your Community**

# EPA Smart Growth and Community Revitalization Projects



# RECREATION ECONOMY

Why Outdoor Recreation?

DAKOTA

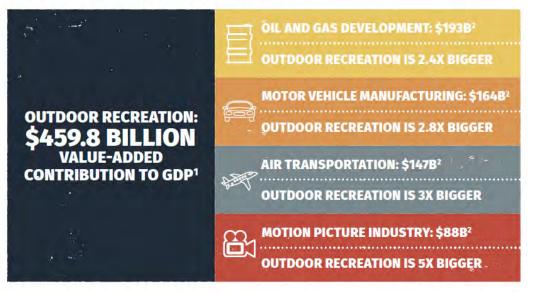
Photo by Chuck Helfer

**IRPATHICE** 

## Why Outdoor Recreation?

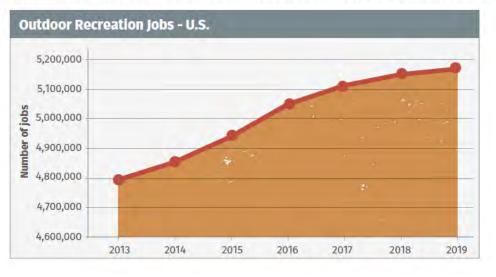
# Outdoor recreation is a large contributor to GDP.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) estimates the contribution of outdoor recreation in terms of its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2019 the value-added contribution of outdoor recreation to the U.S. economy was \$459.8 billion, representing 2.1% of GDP.<sup>1</sup>



# Outdoor recreation is a large and growing employer.

Nationwide, outdoor recreation employed almost 5.2 million people in 2019 who earned more than \$226.3 billion dollars.<sup>1</sup> For comparison, outdoor recreation employs about the same number of people as are employed in the nation's hospitals, and twice the number employed in farming.



### Outdoor recreation contributes to economic success in many ways.

#### TOURISM

Visitors who come to enjoy the outdoors spend money on lodging, restaurants, and other services, creating jobs and putting money into the community.

### ENTREPRENEURS + TALENT

Access to the outdoors and a high quality of life attracts and retains new businesses and skilled workers.

### RETIREMENT + INVESTMENT INCOME

Wealth from retirees and investors—who are drawn to live near outdoor access—helps boost the local economy.

### TAX REVENUE

Spending at local businesses and increased property tax revenue contribute to the tax base.



### HEALTHIER RESIDENTS

Access to the outdoors improves public health and reduces costs of chronic conditions, especially for impoverished and under-resourced neighborhoods.

### **NEW RESIDENTS**

Places with recreation amenities on federal public lands have higher rates of in-migration, helping fuel jobs for teachers, doctors, construction workers, and more.

### MAIN STREET BUSINESSES

......

Restaurants, grocery stores, gear stores, and other local retailers benefit from visitors and new residents.

### GEAR MANUFACTURING

Companies that make outdoor equipment tend to locate in places with outdoor amenities, providing jobs and investment in the community.

"Inspiring the Future Outdoor Recreation Economy," State Outdoor Business Alliance Network (Summer 2021)



headwaterseconomics.org/outdoor-recreation/amenity-trap/

**HEADWATERS** ECONOMICS

Amenity-rich communities can face challenges around:

- 1. Housing
- 2. Infrastructure and Public Services
- 3. Fiscal Policy
- 4. Natural Disasters

Communities can:

- Wait
- React
- Proactively Plan

# **Recreation Economy for Rural Communities**









- Outdoor recreation is a big and growing part of the U.S. economy
- Planning assistance program to help rural communities leverage **outdoor recreation** to revitalize their main streets and diversify economies
- Helps the community convene to articulate their vision, goals, and actionable next steps
- Federal and state agencies (and other partners) come to the table to listen and help with implementation

https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/rerc



# Partner with communities to:

- Revitalize Main Streets through outdoor recreation
- Strengthen economic opportunities for residents and businesses
- Get people outdoors, as a key part of the sustainable use of natural resources – improving people's health









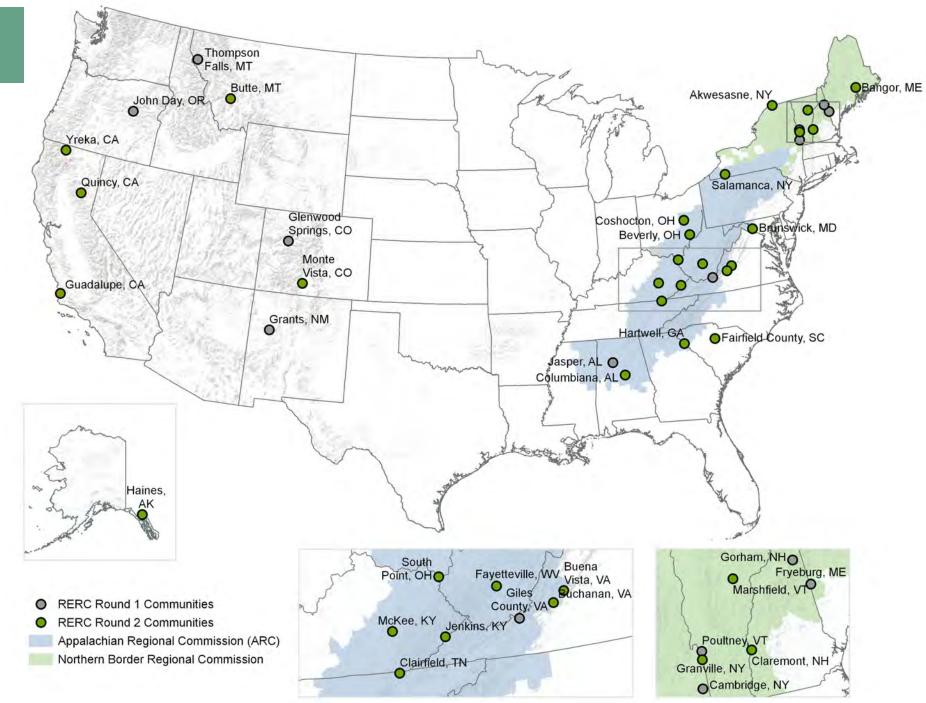


**RECREATION** ECONOMY for **RURAL** COMMUNITIES

## **Partner Communities**

10 communities in the pilot round in 2020-2021

25 communities in Round 2 of the program, with workshops in 2022-2023



# 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

# 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



Assess

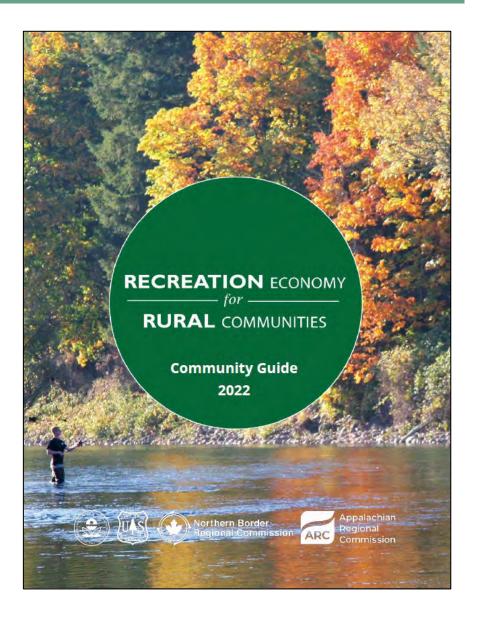
# ASSESS

## This phase includes:

- Three planning calls
- Forming the local steering committee
- Identifying stakeholders who hasn't been involved that could be invited in?
- Engaging federal, state, and other funding partners early in the process
- Completing the Community Self-Assessment
- Identifying focus areas/goals for the workshop
- Planning for workshop logistics
- Outreach!



## **ASSESS:** Community Guide



### Introduction

Congratulations on your community's selection to participate in the <u>Recreation Economy for</u> <u>Rural Communities</u> (RERC) planning assistance program! Supported by a federal agency partnership, RERC helps communities to develop strategies and an action plan to revitalize their Main Streets through outdoor recreation. The program is currently in its second year. Ten communities received assistance in 2019-2021. Twenty-five were selected for the 2022 season, including yours!

This Community Guide provides an overview of the RERC program and the steps your community will follow during and after the planning assistance process. Lessons learned and suggestions for success come from communities just like yours, who have already been through this or a similar program. Inside, you'll find an outline of the RERC program's purpose, details on the three main project phases, and descriptions of each partner's responsibilities, including the leading roles your community will play throughout the process and beyond.

Use this guide to stay on track. Early in the process, you'll find resources like the Program Overview helpful. A sample community tour schedule and workshop agendas provide examples of how to structure these key parts of the program. You'll also find tips on conducting outreach to ensure broad participation from the community during and after the workshop.

This guide anticipates many of your questions along the way, so refer to it often throughout the planning assistance process. Starting strong and maintaining the momentum generated while creating your action plan will help your community achieve key goals for leveraging the outdoor recreation economic assets for improving your downtown and Main Streets.

We look forward to working closely with you over the next few months to define these goals and the actions that will help you achieve them!



Photo Credit: Gerry James

# **ASSESS:** Community Self-Assessment

#### **Community Self-Assessment**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the USDA Forest Service, the Northern Border Regional Commission, and the Appalachian Regional Commission developed this self-assessment for the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) program. Completing the RERC Self-Assessment can help your steering committee identify and describe the existing and aspirational elements of your outdoor recreation economy. It will also help facilitators to better prepare for and tailor a community workshop to meet your community's needs. This snapshot in time can serve as baseline and can be revisited in the future to see where your community has made progress towards your goals.

#### What this self-assessment is

- A conversation starter.
- A learning tool for the community steering committee to begin thinking about recreation economy initiatives.
- An information-gathering tool for an outside facilitator to better understand where the community is today and where it wants to go.

#### What it is not

- · A scorecard, ranking, audit, or judgment of any kind.
- A checklist of programs and projects you could have.
- A permanent assessment that cannot be revised.
- Intended to be an onerous task for the community.

#### Benefits for the community

- Helps the community conceptualize their current recreation economy and place-based initiatives and begin to examine the scope of possibilities and interrelated activities.
- Helps generate ideas about possible stakeholders to invite to the workshop.
- Provides a preliminary activity for the steering committee to do together.

#### Benefits for an outside facilitator

- Provides valuable background information on the status of the recreation economy and place-based initiatives.
- Helps clarify workshop goals and desired outcomes.
- Helps identify case studies and supplemental materials most pertinent for the community.

#### Areas of Focus:

In this section, assess your community's current status in the following categories related to the outdoor recreation economy and Main Street revitalization:

- 1. Outdoor Recreation Asset Identification and Mapping
- 2. Recreation Infrastructure Development
- 3. Recreation Economy Support and Ancillary Services
- 4. Downtown Revitalization & Placemaking
- 5. Economic Development: Opportunities and Advancement
- 6. Local and Regional Promotion and Branding
- 7. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- 8. Public Health
- 9. Leveraging Partnerships
- 10. Natural Resource Stewardship
- 11. Risk and Resilience

These areas of focus demonstrate the intersectionality of the outdoor economy and necessary support systems to build the ecosystem of community support to generate a thriving local economy while protecting the natural resources necessary to support outdoor recreation.

For each area of focus, you will be asked to review a list of best practices related to community development and the outdoor recreation economy. As a team, check each of the strategies that your community has successfully implemented or is currently implementing. Please provide additional information in response to the questions at the end of each checklist to summarize your community's aspirations to employ the best practices and/or barriers to success. You are welcome to attach any additional materials or add narrative and explanatory comments where needed.

#### 1. Outdoor Recreation Asset Identification and Mapping

A key first step is to identify what outdoor amenities your community already has and how they are currently enjoyed. What are the major natural assets? What is the land ownership mix for those assets? Are there existing maps or guides that show your community's outdoor amenities, and how they are connected to your downtown? Please attach any maps, statistics, visitation, usage, or other relevant data as part of your response to this section.

Of the following best practices for outdoor recreation asset identification and mapping, check all those that your community is currently working on or has already successfully implemented. Provide any notes or comments as needed to provide more information on the status of implementation.

#### Common Strategy or Action:

- Your community has identified /inventoried high value outdoor recreation assets in or around your community.
- Your community knows what types of recreational activities are most popular, and where and when those activities generally occur.
- Your community understands how recreational experiences are currently supporting outcomes you want to see (e.g., quality of life, public health, Main Street revitalization, recruiting new residents and businesses, attracting visitors).
- Your community has maps, guides or other materials (print or online) that show recreational opportunities and related amenities.
- Your community has identified known access points for recreation and also knows where there are gaps in access to outdoor assets.
- Your community has identified regional outdoor assets that are relevant for your community.
- Your community has identified cultural or historic assets that connect to outdoor recreation.
- Your community has identified areas of current or potential user or landowner conflict.

Of the strategies checked above, what is working well? List accomplishments to date.

Of the strategies checked above, where would you like to see your community focus in the near future?

What are identified barriers or challenges to achieving implementation of the best practices for this area of focus?

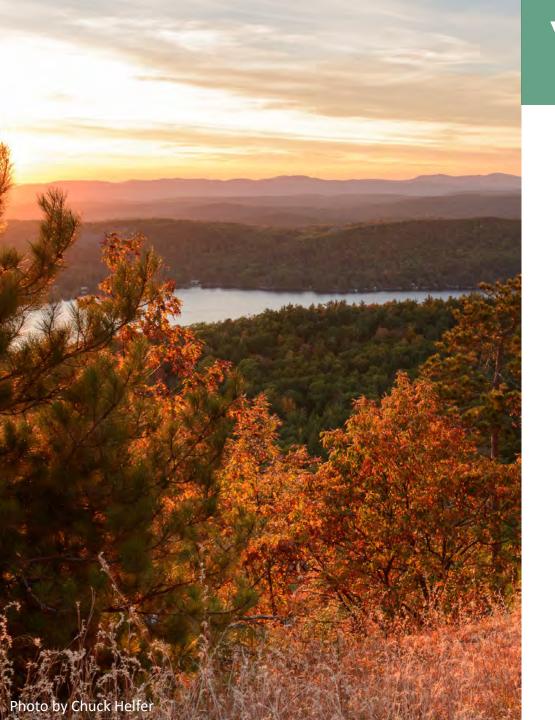
Who or what has been key to the successful implementation of these best practices in your community?

# CONVENE



### This phase includes:

- Two-day, in person workshop in the community
- DAY ONE: Community tour and evening community meeting
- DAY TWO: All-day working session
- Bringing together all local stakeholders plus federal, state, regional, and other partners
- Moving from vision and values, to goals, to specific actions that the community wants to take moving forward to strengthen outdoor recreation and main street revitalization
- Includes interactive exercises, case stories to inspire, goal affirmation, and action planning



What does outdoor recreation mean to you?

Outdoor recreation means different things to different people! Tell us what outdoor recreation means to you.

Go menti.com and use code 1976 0813

or

Scan this QR code:

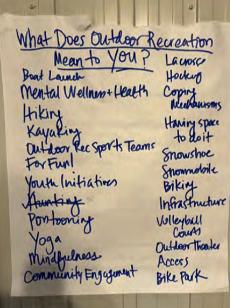


# The Results...

### What does outdoor recreation mean to you? 88 responses



# **CONVENE:**Workshop in Akwesasne, NY











# **CONVENE:**Workshop in Quincy, CA









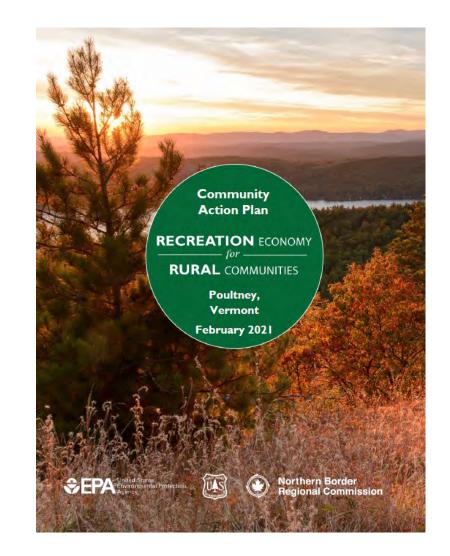


# IMPLEMENT

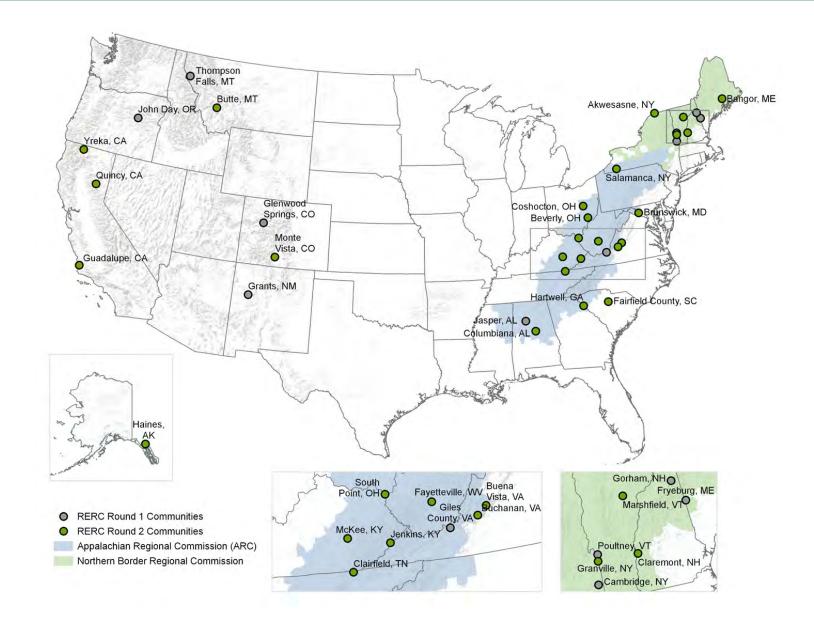
### This phase includes:

- Three follow up implementation calls
- Broadening the steering committee
- Identifying community "goal champions"
- Drafting and finalizing the action plan together
- Identifying funding and other resources needed for implementation
- Charting a path for implementing the plan moving forward





# **RERC PARTNER COMMUNITIES:**





## New Featured Video!



Granville, NY and Poultney, VT are two neighboring communities and recipients of the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) planning assistance program.



# **RECREATION** ECONOMY

**RURAL** COMMUNITIES

# **GRANVILLE, NY**





Appalachian Regional Commission

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SHAWS Antiques, Collectables Mettawee River

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Granville

1h

21=

Main Street

Granville Walking Path

Mettawee River

Pember Library and Museum

5

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Slate Valley Museum

Mettawee Park























#### 59 Pump House Rd

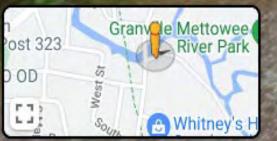
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Granville, New York



Google Street View

Oct 2014

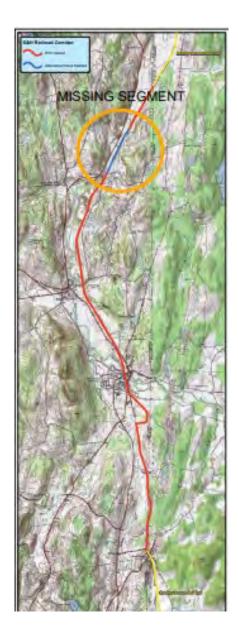




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# **RERC** Goals

- Goal 1. Reinvest in Granville's Main Street, Mettawee Park and the riverfront, and the cultural campus.
- Goal 2. Integrate Granville's unique history, art, and cultural traditions to develop a distinctive identity, brand, and promotion strategy.
- Goal 3. Improve infrastructure such as trails, sidewalks, cell phone service, and park facilities.
- Goal 4. Support collaborative relationships with nearby communities.
- Goal 5. Create and expand opportunities for young people in Granville to be involved in outdoor recreation activities.

# **RECREATION** ECONOMY

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for -**RURAL** COMMUNITIES

# CAMBRIDGE, NY

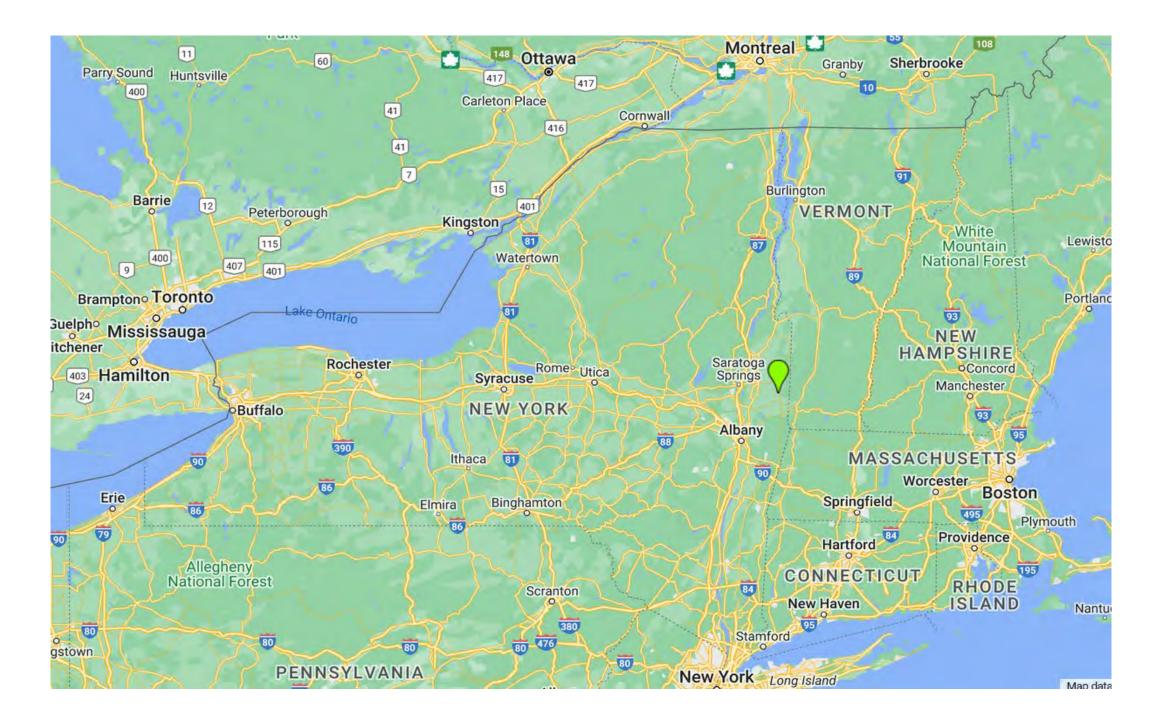


Northern Border Regional Commission

ARC

Appalachian Regional Commission

# Village of Cambridge (NY) – Community Action Plan





# **Overview of Village of Cambridge, NY**

- Population ~1,800
- Median income \$51,295
- 1 traffic light
- Major employer school
- Local business gems independent bookstore, craft brewery tasting room, co-op food store, renowned arts and cultural center, seed company
- Natural resources Owlkill, Cambridge Creek, Cambridge Community Forest, small parks, school wetland trail, and nearby state forests, lakes and Battenkill
- Fun facts

# Cambridge, NY RERC

### Timeline

- May 2019 Submitted application
- Oct 2019 Awarded (only 10 in nation selected for inaugural round)
- COVID
- April 2020 Public workshops are postponed Committee work continues
- Sept. 2020 Virtual public workshops
- Action Plan drafted
- Oct 2020-Jan 2021 refined action plan, calls with committee, and updates on progress

# Cambridge RERC Committee

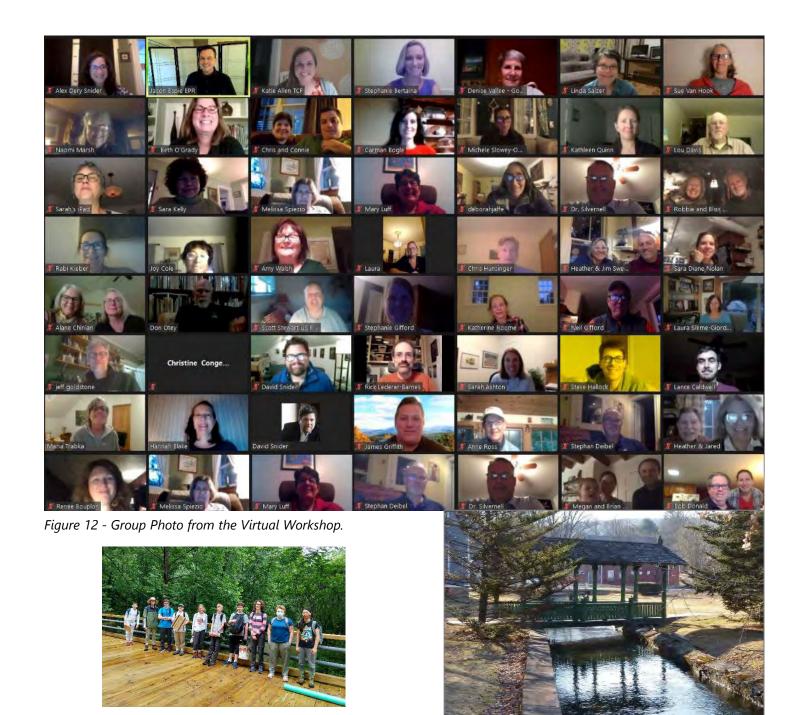
- Committee consisted of:
- Cambridge Village council member
- Town board members
- Cambridge Central School Superintendent
- Cambridge Valley Community Partnership
- Agricultural Stewardship Association (land trust)
- Chamber of Commerce
- A resident



## **Community Action Plan**

- Goal 1 Support physical improvements to streets and sidewalks and provide wayfinding signs to safely connect Main Street to walkable and bikeable natural amenities.
- **Goal 2** Identify next steps for development of the Community Forest that engages the community in planning, infrastructure development, and community-supported programming and activities.

Cambridge Community Garden



### **Community Action Plan**

- Goal 3 Celebrate what makes Cambridge unique, bringing all outdoor recreation assets together, assessing what exists and what is missing, building on business and service opportunities, and developing an identity and brand for the community.
- Goal 4 Develop an understanding of the regional context of recreational assets, connection to other communities, and alignment of regional priorities for leveraging the unique outdoor recreation amenities in the area.



### Goal 1:

Improving Physical Connections Throughout the Cambridge Community

### **Progress to date:**

- To improve walkability a subcommittee conducted a Sidewalk Audit (May 1, 2021)
- Complete Streets planning grant received to improve walkability and safety near district school, health and safety corridor and access point to Community Forest (2022)--underway
- Victorian Footbridge Rehabilitated and Installed October 2021
- Schematic plans to naturalize and better steward a highly channelized stream corridor being vetted

### **Owlkill Commons**

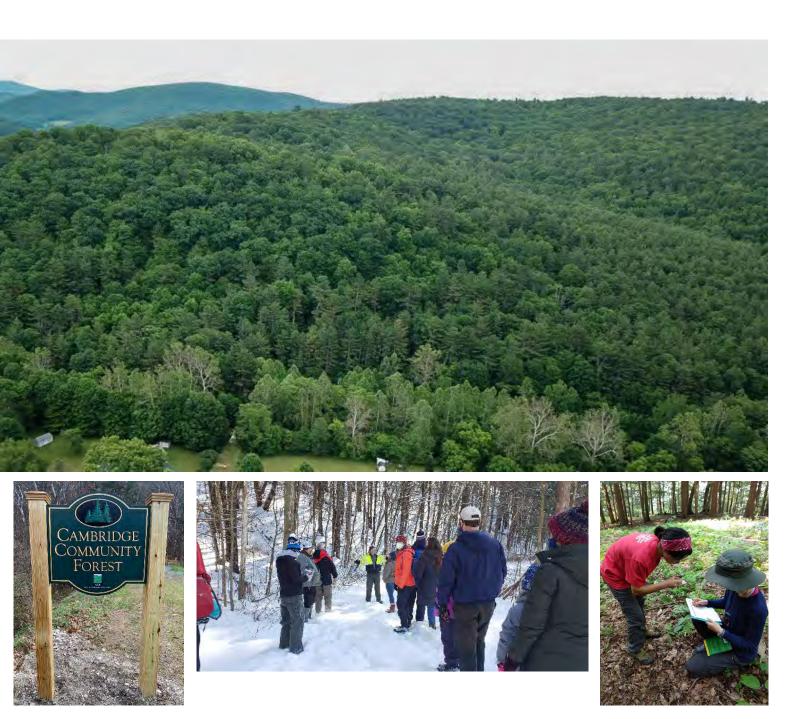
New York Forward - Project Area Village of Cambridge, NY



### Goal 1:

*Improving physical connections (continued)* 

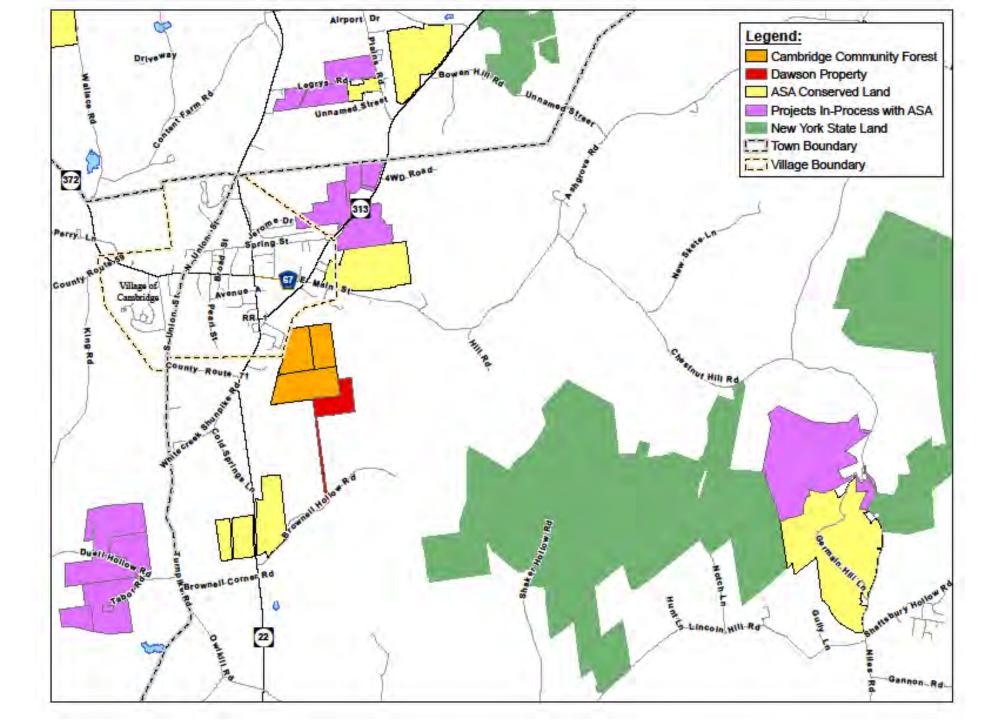
- Village selected as NY Forward Community (\$2.25 million) for mixed-use development initiative— a component of of which advances a recreation economy connected to Main Street
- Seeking support for Owl Kill trail system—eventually to connect to ASA's Community Forest



# Goal 2:

# Cambridge Community Forest

- Formed an advisory group
- Repaired the bridge for access (2 grants)
- Secured a lease for parking area
- Installed signage, kiosk
- Held grand opening in November 2021
- Volunteers working on trails





# Goal 4:

# Regional Recreational Assets

- Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) working on a community engagement plan
- Stakeholder interviews
- Community conservation projects and programming
- Communities identifying need for recreational opportunities, trails, open spaces, linking natural resources with walkable communities
- Focus on welcoming and inclusive community lands

# RECREATION ECONOMY

for -

**RURAL** COMMUNITIES

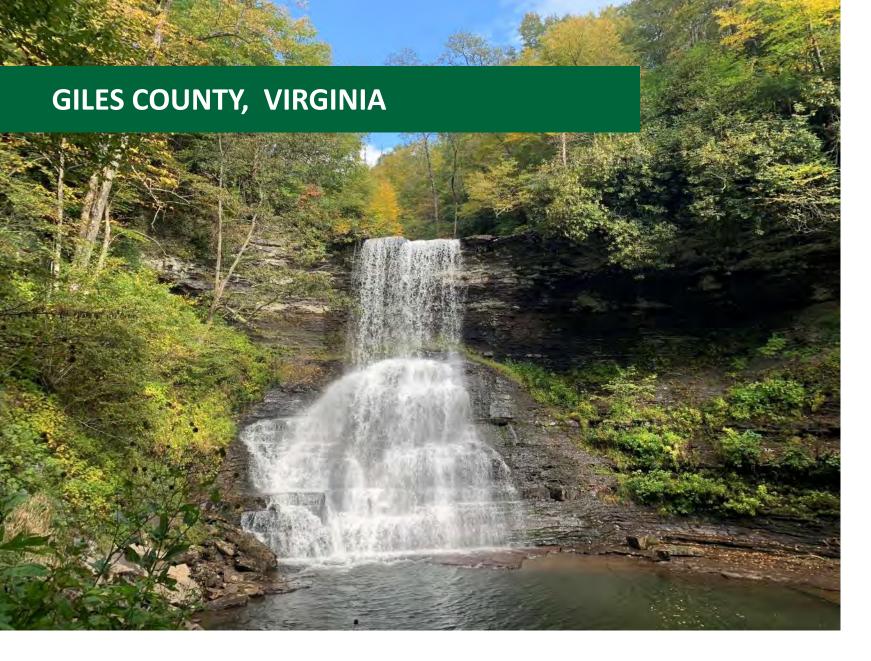
GILES COUNTY, VA







Appalachian Commission



### **COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE**

- Giles County is composed of five small towns: Glen Lyn, Pearisburg, Pembroke, Narrows, and Rich Creek, a combined population of 16,867
- New River Valley Regional Commission and Giles County Tourism collaborated on lead for RERC
- Natural assets include the New River, Appalachian Trail, Cascades Falls, Jefferson National Forest
- Challenged by lack of infrastructure, lack of walkable centers, want to increase amenities and staying power





#### **RECREATION & NATURAL RESOURCE ASSETS**



RERC

# But why?

- A robust approach to economic, community, & tourism development including outdoor & natural assets
- A place to "Live, Work, & Play"





### **GILES COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

#### **WORKSHOP GOALS**

- 1. Improve access and infrastructure: Better publicize and manage recreation access and infrastructure, especially trails connecting to towns, highlighting less used sites, and improving existing infrastructure (parking, boat ramps, Cascades access).
- 2. Improve mobility and safety: Improve transportation options and traffic flow conditions, focusing on quality of the experience, walkability, and safety.
- 3. Enhance the visitor experience and choices to stay longer, do more: Better connect current visitors to existing downtown amenities and develop new related amenities, especially lodging but also other businesses.

4. Strengthen partnerships and improve area-wide promotion: Coordinate area-wide marketing and promotion and explore how to fund a County-wide Main Street Coordinator to work on behalf of all towns in Giles.



mountain adventure experiences <sup>people</sup> collaboration opinions outdoor everyone places assets privileged dirty possibility program family streaming ideas sky streams stewardship L V views natural pandemic great opportunities moderate home culinary beauty fun <sub>love</sub> partnership falls Giles **growth** thingscommunity nature potential river partnerships new imagination revitalization diverse open adventures

### **GILES COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

#### SINCE THE WORKSHOP....

• Everyone knows RERC & Giles' efforts to rais awareness & create opportunities

Goal 1- Access	Goal 2- Safety	Goal 3- Visitors	Goal 4- Partners
Trail development in partnership with NRVRC & Mountain Lake Lodge & USDA USFS- see next slide	Cascades (USDA USFS) conversations around parking and access to	VT Management Team- Giles Tourism Study	VisitNRV Website launch and branding
Downtown Narrows trail from Duck Pond to Camp Success	Multi-locality resolution passed for Twin Depots Trail	STR Inventory & Ordinance Review	Jumpstart Giles Network- small business development
Big Stoney Creek Improvements	Narrows Downtown enhancements	Trail Center Development	Fish Virginia First & SWVA
VT CDAC project for Camp Success	Route 100 widening study with VDOT	Hotel Feasibility Study completed &	MATPRA & VTC Itineraries



# **Destination Center Ground Breaking April 2023**

LINCARD Giles Con



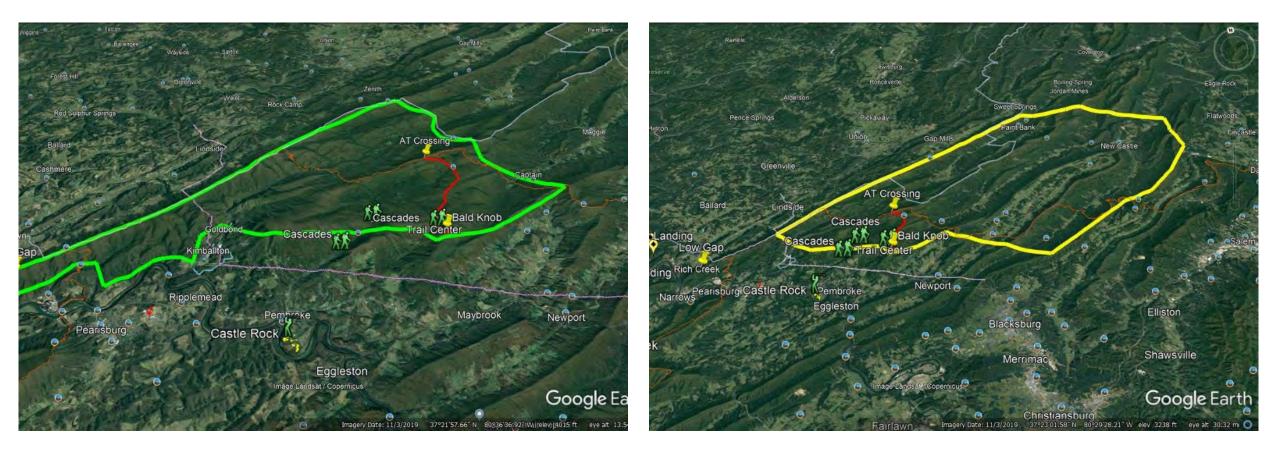


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GILES COUNTY TRAIL CENTER AT HOUNTAIN LAKE LODGE

# Trail Center to Act as a Gateway to the Big Stony Creek Watershed



# **Drive 2.0 & Drive Outdoor**



Contact Chris McKlarney emcklarney@gilescounty.org Cora Gnegy egnegy@gilescounty.org

540-921-2525 🕲 - 3:GilesCoVA 🔘



Kayak Storage Lockers Fall 2022























# RECREATION ECONOMY

for -

**RURAL** COMMUNITIES

MONTE VISTA, CO



Northern Border Regional Commission



Appalachian Regional Commission

# MONTEVISTA, COLORADO

#### **COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE**

- Very remote, rural town in the San Luis Valley (high desert plateau) in Colorado, 4-5 hours from Denver.
- In an agriculturally-rich region surrounded by public land (Forest Service, BLM, National Wildlife Refuges, and state-managed land) with striking natural beauty and outdoor recreation assets (trails, river, wildlife) but many of these assets are not well-connected to the community of Monte Vista (both in terms of residents having access and in terms of tourism potential).
- SLV GO! and the City of Monte Vista were co-leads for this project, in partnership with many other organizations in the community.
- Wanted help from RERC to help Monte Vista tap into the potential of the outdoor recreation economy in the region, for residents and to draw some in-state visitors.

#### **WORKSHOP GOALS**

- 1. Recreation Opportunities and Access for All
- 2. Physical Connections, Safety, and Walkability
- 3. Downtown Amenities and Vibrancy
- 4. Business and Economic Development
- 5. Stewardship and Authenticity



# MONTEVISTA, COLORADO

#### **ABOUT THE PROCESS**

- Youth Survey: The committee worked with the school district to distribute a survey to high school students asking their thoughts on desired outdoor recreation opportunities, and we had great feedback.
- Saturday Open House Exhibit: We had an open house exhibit Saturday morning to share the results of the workshop to date, to celebrate success, and to gather additional community input.
- **Partnerships with Federal and State Partners:** Partnerships with federal and state partners unlocked a lot of other resources and guidance.

#### SINCE THE WORKSHOP

- Local news outlet covered the workshop: <u>https://montevistajournal.com/article/rerc-workshop-well-attended-organizers-say</u>.
- Steering committee member made a video documenting the workshop: <u>https://youtu.be/QLwYNLbyXXI.</u>
- Received NPS-RTCA assistance for additional trails planning.
- Received \$1 million from the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry program.
- Exploring applying for an EPA OEJECR grant.
- RERC process and action plan was highlighted at upcoming Business and Entrepreneurship Summit in June 2023.
- Steering committee members presented about RERC at the Colorado Outdoor Industry Leadership Summit in October 2023.



MONTE VISTA JOURNAI

RERC workshop well-attended, organizers say



Photos by Ware Mccolm People placed their feedback on the boards during the three days, Feb. 23-25, of the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities workshop at the Outcalt Event and Conference at SUV Six Hi Complex in Montey Vista.

In the Unit Access and Princed March 2001 ADDREY USA — A invested point eventsional economy opportunities for Moree Vita held over three days. Reb. 23-23, at the Outcalt Event and Conference at 527 SH Depice value value and eventsion by the community, according to organizers.



# RECREATION ECONOMY

RERC: Let's Dive In!

Photo by Jason Espie

Life bone . States the

# PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROCESS

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

Assess

• Engage federal stakeholder partners

# Convene

- Conduct community tour
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• 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







# Itinerary Planning Exercise

# **Itinerary Planning Exercise**

# Create a 2-day itinerary in your region for the following people (or choose your own target audience):

- A family with young children
- A local resident on a long weekend
- An out-of-state visitor
- An individual with mobility limitations
- A young couple/group of friends in their 20s
- A group of seniors

#### Where would they go and what would they do? Think about where they would...:

- Recreate
- Buy or rent gear, supplies, and guide services
- Eat, drink, shop, sleep
- Get information
- How they would get around
- What they would do in different weather conditions; at different times of the year

#### Itineraries should be based in reality, not aspirational.

#### **<u>SAMPLE ITINERARY</u>**: For a family with children visiting the region in July

Day 1

Activity	Location/destination	Supplies and services needed, source	Transportation/route to next stop
Arrive, have lunch downtown	Walt's Diner	Information from downtown kiosk	Drive Rts. 28 and 1
Canoe and swim	Big Moose Lake	Canoes from inn, maps? Snacks? Waterproof bags for phones?	Walk
Check in, have dinner	Big Moose Inn		
Evening activities?	Big Moose Inn/ nearby?		
Day 2			
Activity	Location/destination	Supplies and services needed, source	Transportation/route to next stop
Short, easy hike	Bald Mountain	Snacks from convenience store?	Drive Rts. 1 and 28
Have lunch downtown	Adirondack Dog House		Drive
	0		
Scenic chairlift ride	McCauley Mountain	Souvenirs?	Drive
Scenic chairlift ride Ice cream	U	Souvenirs?	



#### **Identify the following:**

- **Strengths:** What kinds of recreation and downtown amenities do you have a lot of/in high quality to leverage?
- **Gaps:** What are you missing? What could make your region more attractive to locals and visitors who want to recreate?
- **Opportunities:** What strengths could you build on or gaps could you address for maximum impact?

As you answer, think about the items on the asset-based placebased economic development wheel, what opportunities exist to build up this value chain, particularly in your downtown?

# Your Task

Choose one of the perspectives (young family, group of seniors, etc.) and write your community/region's name at the top

Think about your community/region's current assets and complete the itinerary to the best of your ability

3

2

Keep in mind what you *wish* you could have added to your itinerary (what's still missing)

4

When everyone is done working on their own, we will discuss and share!

# **Itinerary Planning Exercise**

Create a 2-day itinerary in your region for the following people (or choose your own target audience):

- A family with young children
- A local resident on a long weekend
- An out-of-state visitor
- An individual with mobility limitations
- A young couple/group of friends in their 20s
- A group of seniors

#### Where would they go and what would they do? Think about where they would...:

- Recreate
- Buy or rent gear, supplies, and guide services
- Eat, drink, shop, sleep
- Get information
- How they would get around
- What they would do in different weather conditions; at different times of the year

#### Itineraries should be based in reality, not aspirational.

## What are we learning?

• RERC community partners are on a spectrum – from having well-established recreation economies to just starting to develop their recreation economies.



- Specific opportunities and challenges vary depending on where they are on this spectrum.
- Many communities are tackling the *need for capacity* the human power that is needed to advance their outdoor recreation and revitalization efforts – and many are finding creative ways to meet that need.
- Many communities are balancing the needs of *residents* with the needs of *visitors*.
- Specific challenges vary for each community, but many RERC communities have expressed infrastructure as a challenge (downtown amenities, transportation, housing, etc.). For housing, even very rural communities are seeing a lack of *availability*, *affordability*, and *accessibility*.
- There is a **lot of funding** out there right now but many communities find it challenging to navigate the sources of funding and have the capacity to apply for and manage grants.

# What's Next for RERC?



- Currently wrapping up projects in Round 2 of the program and planning for Round 3.
- Stay tuned to the RERC website for future opportunities to apply to the RERC program!

https://www.epa.gov/ smartgrowth/rerc

• Subscribe to our EPA listserv for more info on the RERC program.

# **Questions & Discussion**



- What challenges and opportunities are you seeing in the rural communities and small towns with whom you work?
- How are your regions balancing tourism and economic dev opportunities+ residents' needs?
- Are you seeing solutions and strategies that are working?

# Thank you!

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#### For More Info:

**RERC Program** 

https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/rerc





RC Appalachian Regional Commission

Photo by Lee Hart