

EPA Programs Supporting Vibrant and Sustainable Rural Communities



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Office of Sustainable Communities

ARDI Technical Assistance and Grant Writing Workshop

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Farm in Washington State



Port Washington, Wisconsin



Edwards, Colorado

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

- EPA's mission: Protect human health and the environment
- 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

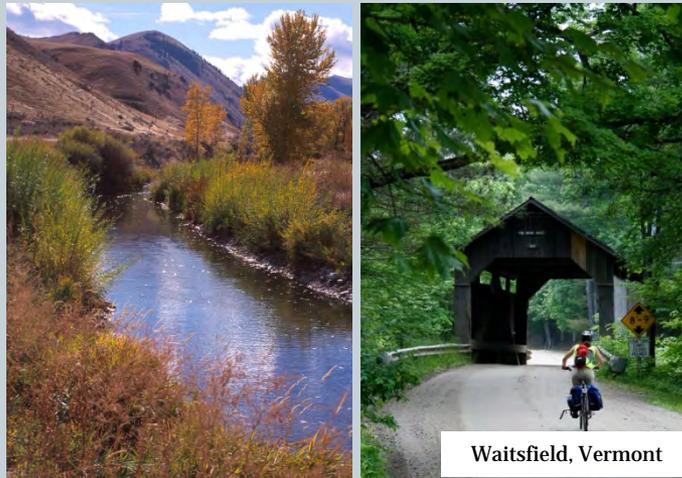
- **Changing economies**
 - Decline of traditional economic base, questions about what's next
- **Fewer farms and farmers**
 - Although there is a growing interest in farming
- **Loss of forest and other natural and working land**
- **Some communities are growing, some are shrinking**
 - Rapid growth at metro edges
 - Shrinking population in some communities
- **Limited access to jobs, services, and transportation**
- **Limited planning capacity**
- **How to recover from disaster, and plan for future disasters?**



Smart Growth: A Response to Rural Challenges



Skaneateles, New York



Waitsfield, Vermont

- **Development that provides:**
 - Choices for where to live and how to get around
 - A stronger, more resilient economy
 - A safer, healthier place to live
 - Opportunities to protect the things that you love about the place you live (farmland and open space, natural beauty, sense of community, etc.)

So what does smart growth mean for a rural community?



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





Edwards, Colorado
Photo Credit: Clark Anderson



Crested Butte, Colorado
Photo Credit: Clark Anderson



GOLD HILL STORE

GOLD HILL
GENERAL
STORE
OPEN
PARKING
ACROSS
STREET

No parking sign



Photo Credit: National Trust for Historic Preservation



BerlinFiddlersConvention.com

CAT
COUNTY
97.5

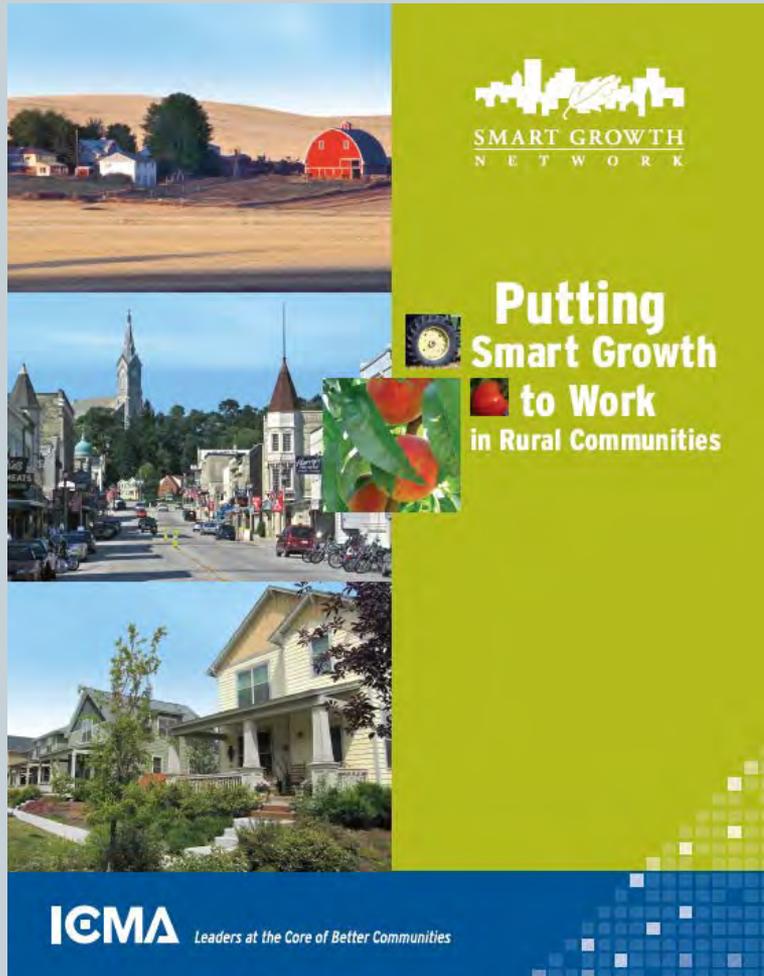
PNC BANK

Historic
Berlin

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



National Forest in Colorado



Goal #1: Protect valuable farmland.

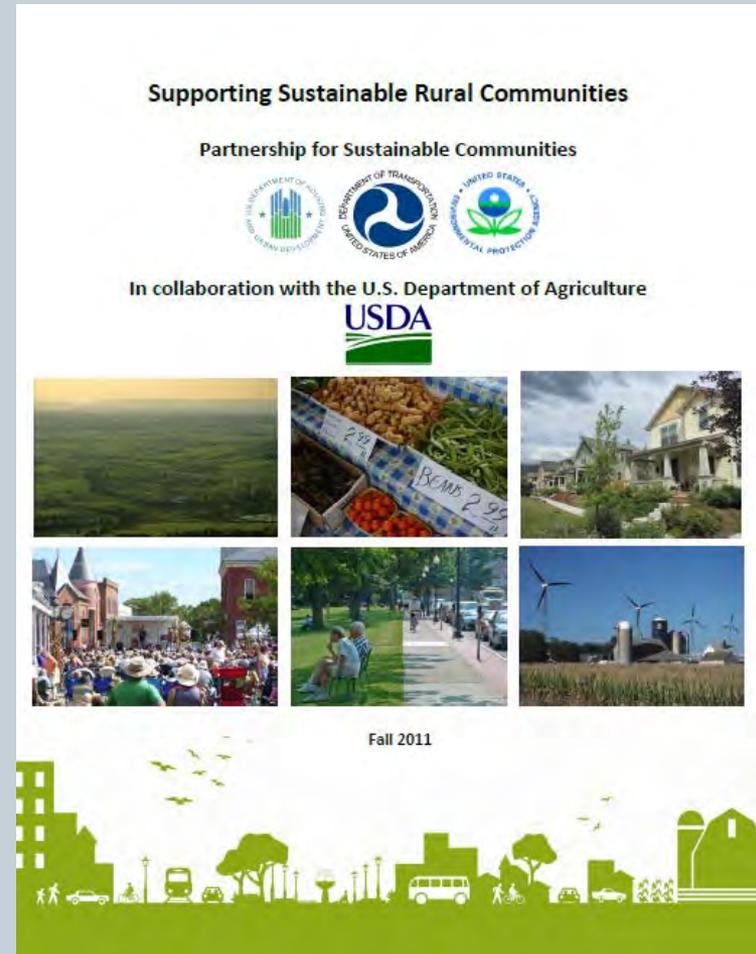
Goal #2: Enhance the existing downtown.

Goal #3: Build new neighborhoods that are adjacent to town.

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



- **Categories of assistance this year:**
 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 (this application period just closed, winners will be announced in spring 2012)

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



- Will work with 50 communities this year – last year, half of the communities were rural communities or small towns
- 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>
 - Applications are typically due in the fall (this application period just closed, winners will be announced in spring 2012)

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 to 40-70 communities per year, and more in future years – 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>



15 communities selected to receive free smart growth technical assistance

Posted on [November 16, 2011](#) by [Garett Ballard-Rosa](#)

Smart Growth America is pleased to announce the 15 communities that have been selected to receive this year's [free smart growth technical assistance](#). Stretching from Maine to Washington State, these communities represent major cities, suburban communities, and rural towns, showing that all types of communities are interested in using smart growth strategies to build stronger local economies, create jobs and improve overall quality of life.

The communities are: Township of Byram, NJ; City of Eastport, ME; City of Deerfield Beach, FL; Derry Township, PA; City of Greer, SC; Gwinnett County, GA; City of Kimberly, ID; City of Newark, OH; City of New Orleans, LA; Northern Maine Development Commission, ME; Town of Notasulga, AL; City of Oklahoma City, OK; Pima County Development Services Department, AZ; City of Pittsburgh, PA; City of Tacoma, WA.

Each community will receive a 1- or 2-day training session with a smart growth expert on the issue of their choice. This technical assistance was made possible through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities program.

Smart Growth America received [nearly 90 applications from 34 states plus the District of Columbia](#) for this technical assistance. While all of the applications were worthy, the 15 communities selected exhibited the strongest interest in and need for smart growth tools and clearly demonstrated a commitment from local business, community and political leaders to implement local smart growth solutions.

Smart Growth America's technical assistance is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Sustainable Communities under the [Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program](#). The Building Blocks program funds quick, targeted assistance to communities that face common development problems. Three other nonprofit organizations—[Forterra](#) (formerly Cascade Land Conservancy), [Global Green USA](#) and [Project for Public Spaces](#)—also received competitively awarded grants under this program this year to help communities get the kinds of development they want.

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

Waverly, Iowa:

Smart Growth Assistance for Long-Term Disaster Recovery

- Waverly, Iowa (population ~10,000) was in the process of recovering from floods from 2008 and revising their comprehensive plan
- Asked for assistance with the following policy analysis:
 - Conduct an audit of Waverly's comp plan and development regulations to identify opportunities to integrate smart growth concepts
 - Establish green infrastructure strategies city-wide
 - Increase housing options and infill strategies in Waverly to accommodate the demand for housing as a result of the floods as well as new growth
- Held a public workshop on smart planning in May 2010 – stakeholder meetings, design charrette, open house, provided policy ideas



FEMA



IOWA
life | changing®



Photo Credits: City of Waverly

Smart Planning Workshop



- **Two-day event**
 - **Community Tour**
 - **Stakeholder Meetings**
 - **Kickoff Workshop with initial policy ideas and designs**
 - **Community Open House with revised designs**
- **Opportunity for community to provide feedback on initial policy and design ideas that incorporated smart planning principles**
- **Goal = inform Waverly's comprehensive planning revision**





Stakeholder Meetings



Public Presentation of Policy Concepts

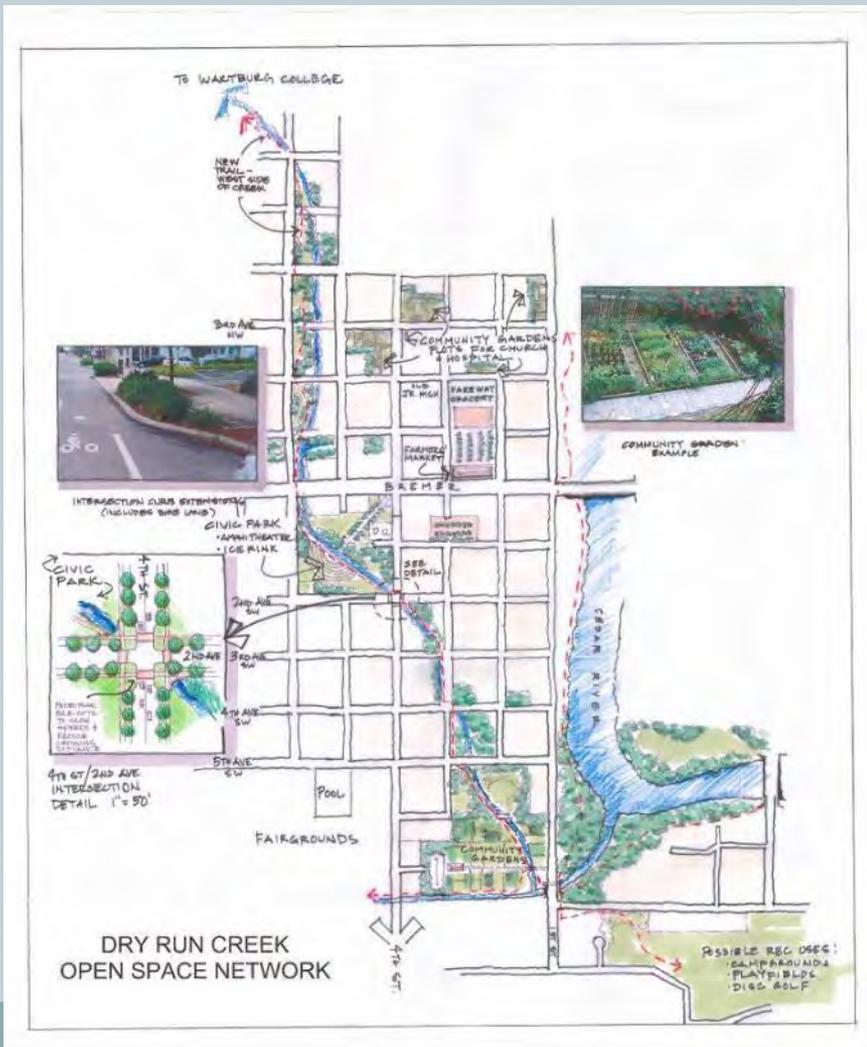


Public Feedback on Initial Design Ideas



Community Open House with Revised Design Ideas

Waverly Moving Forward



- Worked with FEMA and USDA RD to provide the assistance
- Learning how federal investments can help implement local vision (working with USDA)
- City is currently in the process of revising the comprehensive plan to target investments in existing neighborhoods and build great new neighborhoods

For More Information

www.epa.gov/smartgrowth
www.sustainablecommunities.gov
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