

smart  
growth

at  
the

frontier:

Strategies and Resources  
for Rural Communities

BY BARBARA WELLS

NORTHEAST-MIDWEST INSTITUTE

## NORTHEAST-MIDWEST INSTITUTE

The Northeast-Midwest Institute is a Washington-based, private, non-profit, and non-partisan research organization dedicated to economic vitality and environmental quality for Northeast and Midwest states. Formed in the mid-1970s, it fulfills its mission by conducting research and analysis, developing and advancing innovative policy, providing evaluation of key federal programs, and highlighting sound economic and environmental technologies and practices. The Institute is unique among policy centers because of its work with the bipartisan Northeast-Midwest Senate Coalition, co-chaired by Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Jack Reed (D-RI), and Congressional Coalition, co-chaired by Reps. Marty Meehan (D-MA) and Jack Quinn (R-NY).

The Institute began its smart growth work in 1998 to address the dual challenges of redeveloping the urban core and improving the built and natural environment in metropolitan regions. The program published *Successful Strategies for Infill Development* on the creative recycling of vacant or underused land in cities and suburbs, and *Smart Growth and the Clean Air Act* and *Smart Growth and the Clean Water Act*, which provide valuable insights and recommendations for leveraging efforts to improve air and water quality with smart growth. The Institute's current research on rural development and conservation also addresses sustainable forest management to support the environmental, economic, and social values of privately owned forest lands.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# executive summary

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“Smart growth” has captured the imaginations of citizens, planners, environmentalists, and policymakers throughout the nation. This evolving approach to land development and redevelopment promotes a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational uses; preserves green space and working landscapes; and provides a variety of transportation choices. It appeals to cost-conscious communities by maximizing the use of existing infrastructure — highways, transit, schools, sewer systems, and every type of public service. It also protects air and water quality by conserving undeveloped land; minimizing the spread of paved, impervious land cover; and offering alternatives to automobile travel that reduce traffic congestion and the number of vehicle miles traveled.

Although suburban and urban communities increasingly recognize and use the hallmarks of smart growth — such as collaborative planning, mixed-use development, downtown revitalization, and open-space conservation — these tools are not as widely applied to rural areas. It may be more difficult for rural communities to embrace and implement smart growth if they cannot envision the long-term consequences of building a new mega-mall or believe they have an inexhaustible land supply to develop. Rural communities also may lack the funding and organization that comprehensive planning requires.

Yet the need for rural smart growth strategies is clear: rural towns are at the very frontier of tomorrow’s sprawling development. Some rural communities have mobilized around their concerns about growth and its effect on traditional town centers, natural resources, and working landscapes. These concerns spur innovations in planning for growth and leveraging a wide variety of financial and technical resources. The results are promising rural growth strategies that revitalize small towns; link natural resource protection with resort and residential development; maintain working landscapes; and coordinate regional development.

**Revitalizing Small Towns:** Ironically, sprawling rural development does not necessarily signify a healthy economy. In fact, in many regions scattered, haphazard

development occurs where the rural economy — particularly in traditional town centers — is deteriorating. Abandoned main streets and employment centers lead to dispersed development and even community disintegration. To reverse this decline, rural towns have begun to identify economic assets that help draw growth back to their town centers. By marketing their historic, cultural, and locational attributes, rural towns can attract public support and various types of financing for both redevelopment and complementary new development.

- **Miner County, South Dakota:** The Northwest Area Foundation is providing nearly \$6 million to develop and carry out a ten-year plan for land use and economic development based on the county's characteristics.
- **Bayview, Virginia:** More than 31 state, federal, and private agencies have contributed more than \$7 million — including \$4 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and more than \$2 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) — to revive agriculture-related industries and redevelop the town's dilapidated housing.
- **Brownfield Sites:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (U.S. EPA) Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative has spurred community revitalization by funding more than 200 assessment demonstration pilots at up to \$200,000 each.

**Linking Natural Resource Protection with Development:** Many rural areas that attract vacationers or homeowners seeking a natural setting or small-town atmosphere become the victims of their own success. Scattered development of vacation cabins and year-round housing can fragment farm and forest lands and pollute waterways with surface water runoff. Poorly planned efforts to accommodate tourism and residential demands can lead to unsightly, sprawling commercial development that causes unnecessary environmental impacts, taxes the capacity of country roads, and saps the economic vitality from existing main street stores. Through innovative planning and development strategies, rural communities can enjoy the benefits of growth while protecting their natural resources and maintaining their rural character.

- **Pennsylvania Heritage Parks:** This state program preserves and showcases historic, scenic, and recreational resources to spur regional tourism and economic growth — using precious regional assets to attract economic development, which in turn finances the protection of those assets.

- **Green Neighborhoods Alliance:** With funding from the Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs and U.S. EPA Region 1, this multi-stakeholder group is developing model by-laws and an outreach program to encourage open space residential development.
- **Vermont Housing and Conservation Board:** Through 2001, this board awarded more than \$142 million to nonprofit housing and conservation organizations, local jurisdictions, and state agencies — leveraging \$516 million from other sources to create 6,419 units of affordable housing and conserve more than 328,000 acres of agriculture, recreational, and natural lands.

**Maintaining Working Landscapes:** The benefits of working landscapes are becoming increasingly well known. Forested land and open space protect watersheds, filtering water as it seeps into the ground and providing buffers for rivers and streams. These lands provide critical wildlife habitat, supporting complex ecosystems that require large acreage. They also afford “countryside,” the outdoors treasured by urban dwellers for all sorts of recreation, from camping to berry-picking. Yet the vast majority of this land is privately owned, and individual landowners bear much of the cost of maintaining its benefits for the rest of society. To survive and resist the pressures to develop their land, they need access to a resource-based economy that supports working lands; planning and zoning that preserves a critical mass of working land; and the cooperation of urban and suburban neighbors.

- **Sustainable Woods Cooperative:** In 2001, USDA awarded this cooperative \$330,000 to advance practices that benefit the region’s forest landowners through collaboration with the Hiawatha and Kickapoo cooperatives.
- **Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program:** Working with two other state programs, this initiative has protected more than 288,000 acres of farmland, strategically linking contiguous land areas with environmental significance, high-quality soil, and the agricultural infrastructure needed for farming communities.
- **New York City Watershed Agricultural Program:** Based on an agreement among New York City, New York State, U.S. EPA, environmental organizations, and the watershed’s communities, this program is protecting New York City’s drinking water supply while strengthening the watershed’s economic vitality through a \$1.4-billion investment. Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, the federal government has committed up to \$105 million to implement the agreement, and

the USDA Conservation Reserve Program has provided \$10.4 million to establish riparian buffers.

**Coordinating Regional Development:** Coordinated land-use planning poses a challenge for major cities with full-blown planning and zoning departments and financial support for technology, consultants, and community outreach. Small communities that lack these resources may be unable to conduct comprehensive planning at all. Even worse, their efforts may be subsumed by the development decisions and pressures of neighboring communities that function without benefit of regional coordination. Some federal and state programs aim to strengthen local land-use planning by supporting coordination across agencies, sectors, and political jurisdictions.

- **Loudoun County, Virginia, General Plan:** This 20-year plan seeks to balance the conservation needs of farmland and open space with the housing demands of explosive population growth, creating suburban, transitional, and rural policy areas. The plan for the rural policy area, covering two-thirds of the county's land, will curb residential development and support the area's agricultural economy.
- **Minnesota Community-Based Planning:** This program awarded \$1.25 million in grants for eight initiatives in 13 counties to encourage planning that includes citizen participation, economic development, environmental conservation, livable design, and sustainable development.
- **Vermont Highway Interchange Project:** With the assistance of a \$300,000 U.S. EPA Sustainable Development Challenge Grant, this project is undertaking community planning projects at four highway interchanges where the local towns are experiencing growth pressures typical of interstate exit locations. The project also will create a manual of design guidelines for the state's 52 interchanges.

**Accessing Resources for Shaping Growth:** As the experience of numerous rural communities illustrates, small towns and nonprofit organizations can use a wide variety of private and public resources to help enhance local growth, development, and conservation. An array of grant, loan, and technical assistance programs can be found at the local, state, and national levels. Unfortunately, this array also is ever-changing. A program's emphasis may shift, its funding may rise or fall, and occasionally it may disappear altogether.

Some organizations and agencies can help navigate the complex maze of resources to identify and access the program best suited to a community's needs. The Funders Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Rural Development program, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development all produce web pages and directories of programs and grants to assist in community development and conservation initiatives. Some state and local agencies compile directories of such resources as well.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Virtually every example of successful rural development, revitalization, and conservation illustrates three characteristics.

- A critical mass of committed citizens determined to enhance their community's growth and quality of life.
- The recognition and use of the area's assets — location, natural resources, natural attractions, and historic and cultural value.
- Financial and technical support.

To help advance rural smart growth initiatives with these important qualities, federal and state programs could increase their efforts to do the following.

**Support local land-use strategies.** The impact of federal and state development and conservation projects can run counter to smart growth principles when these efforts are carried out in isolation. Without an inclusive, comprehensive planning process there is no framework that embodies a community vision or directs growth and conservation. Federal and state agencies have begun providing communities and nonprofit groups with grants and technical assistance for planning that includes citizen outreach, visioning processes, comparing growth scenarios, and revision of zoning codes. With a firm mandate and adequate funding, these programs could help arm rural communities against misguided development projects with consensus-based plans and the regulations to enforce them.

**Leverage and coordinate public and private programs.** Some federal and state programs are built on the synergy between various objectives. Many linkages can be traced to the economic value of sound land management — whether in providing an appealing quality of life, attracting tourism, sustaining resource-based industries, or preserving clean water and air. Yet federal programs can fail to recognize such linkages, at best losing opportunities to leverage their investments and benefits and at worst working at cross purposes. Strong coordination, both among agen-

cies and with nonprofit organizations, could increase the effectiveness of all federal rural development and conservation efforts.

**Facilitate access to grants and loans.** Some sophistication about government agencies, their structures, and even their web design is needed to begin identifying funding sources, and even more to actually obtain funding. Federal and state programs could help reach their target audiences by simplifying and consolidating their programs and educating a wider universe of potential applicants about available resources and eligibility requirements. Clear presentation of program information also could assist communities. In addition, greater stability in program structure and content could facilitate the use of these programs and reduce confusion about their provisions.

# introduction: smart growth in rural america

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“Smart growth” has captured the imaginations of citizens, planners, environmentalists, and policymakers throughout the nation. This evolving approach to land development and redevelopment promotes a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational uses; preserves green space and working landscapes; and provides a variety of transportation choices. It appeals to cost-conscious communities by maximizing the use of existing infrastructure — highways, transit, schools, sewer systems, and every type of public service. It also protects air and water quality by conserving undeveloped land; minimizing the spread of paved, impervious land cover; and offering alternatives to automobile travel that reduce traffic congestion and the number of vehicle miles traveled.

Despite the apparent benefits of smart growth strategies for the environmental quality and economic viability of rural areas, many of these communities lack the financial and technical resources to develop and implement thoughtful approaches to development and conservation. To better understand how some communities have overcome this challenge, the Northeast-Midwest Institute investigated the market conditions that create incentives and disincentives for rural smart growth and the financing tools that rural communities can use to advance smart growth in areas with encroaching or poorly planned development.

Smart growth models are proliferating in urban and suburban communities. Efforts are well underway to overcome the entrenched policies and traditions that inhibit smart growth, such as zoning laws that block mixed-use development, public misconceptions about increased density, building codes that needlessly increase rehabilitation costs, and permitting procedures that strongly favor sprawling development on open land. However, the challenges of launching smart growth strategies in rural areas are not as well understood, in part because widely accepted principles of smart growth are perceived as most amenable to areas of relatively dense population. (See box on next page.)

## SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES

- Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
- Create Walkable Neighborhoods
- Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration
- Foster Distinctive, Attractive Places with a Strong Sense of Place
- Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective
- Mix Land Uses
- Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty, and Critical Environmental Areas
- Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
- Strengthen and Direct Development Toward Existing Communities
- Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

Source: Smart Growth Network, "Smart Growth Online," [www.smartgrowth.org/about/](http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/)

Collaborative planning, mixed-use development, and open-space conservation may be marketable to urban and suburban residents who already have confronted the results of poorly conceived growth — blighted neighborhoods, underused infrastructure, mounting traffic congestion, and unsightly development. However, it may be more difficult for rural communities to embrace and implement smart growth if they cannot envision the long-term consequences of building a new mega-mall or believe they have an inexhaustible land supply to develop.

Moreover, research by Joseph E. Gyourko and Witold Rybczynski of the University of Pennsylvania has found skepticism in the financing community about the ability of "town center retail" to work in a rural setting: "[Lenders and investors] claim that successful retail must serve a market area much broader than a subdivision or small town. Competing with low-cost suburban strip retail, which requires a minimal investment for infrastructure, struck many respondents as highly risky, if not impossible."<sup>1</sup>

Yet the need for rural smart growth strategies is clear. Small rural towns continue fighting the construction of strip malls and big-box retailers that sap the vitality from their commercial centers, and each year state and local laws and referenda fund new and expanded open space protection programs to preserve the rural environment. Ironically, today's haphazard rural development is fueled by the migration of people from the suburbs who are dissatisfied with how development is occurring there.

Many of these suburbs were the rural areas of twenty years ago, begging the question: will today's rural areas be tomorrow's congested suburbs?

A key challenge to rural smart growth is the enormous pressure on landowners to sell large, contiguous areas of open space to developers, both to avoid rising taxes and reap huge profits. These land transfers erode the quality of life by decimating scenic areas; destroying resource-based economies built on farming, ranching, or forestry; diminishing the character of small towns with traditional "main street" commercial areas that can no longer support the needs of a rapidly growing population; and increasing air and water pollution through the expansion of impervious surfaces and roads.

The consequences of poorly planned rural development are pronounced in the states of the Northeast-Midwest region: Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin. In the Great Lakes states, especially Michigan and Wisconsin, strategies are needed to guide the construction of vacation homes and other development that threatens the ecosystems of the Great Lakes Basin. According to a 1996 report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, nonpoint source pollution from farming and housing development is now the largest contributor to water quality problems in the Lake Michigan basin and very likely the basins of Lakes Huron, Erie, and Ontario as well. "Cottage development and the conversion of seasonal to year-round residences increases non-point source pollution related to construction and maintenance of buildings and roads, and, perhaps more importantly, private septic systems."<sup>2</sup>

Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia have similar concerns related to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Rapid population growth and development in the water-

## DEFINING RURAL AREAS

Rural areas are defined not by what they are, but by what they are not: urban areas and urban clusters of densely settled territory. For recent censuses, the U.S. Census Bureau defined "urban" as including all population and territory in urbanized areas, which are densely settled areas containing at least 50,000 people, and in other places with a population of 2,500 or more (but excluding the portion of a few incorporated places that contained a significant amount of sparsely settled territory). For Census 2000, the Bureau established "urban clusters," which are densely settled areas with a population of 2,500 to 49,999.

shed led these states and their federal and regional partners to adopt a 2000 Bay Agreement including smart growth goals: restoring wetlands and forests; reducing sprawl development by 30 percent by 2012; rehabilitating 1,050 brownfield sites by 2010; and coordinating transportation and land use planning.

In New England states such as Vermont, communities are famous for combating development that threatens the viability and character of small, historic towns. In Maine and New York, development pressures on the Northern Forest have spurred state agencies to join the Nature Conservancy and other land trusts in negotiating agreements with private companies for the environmental conservation of forestland that also provides economic and recreational benefits for the entire region.

The Institute's investigation identified numerous rural communities that have mobilized around their concerns about growth and its effect on traditional town centers, natural resources, and working landscapes. These concerns spur innovations in planning for growth and leveraging a wide variety of public and private financial and technical resources. The results are promising rural growth strategies that revitalize small towns; link natural resource protection with resort and residential development; maintain working landscapes; and coordinate regional development.

# i. revitalizing small towns

**I**ronically, sprawling rural development does not necessarily signify a healthy economy. In fact, in many regions scattered, haphazard development occurs where the rural economy — particularly in traditional town centers — is deteriorating. Abandoned main streets and employment centers lead to dispersed development and even community disintegration. To reverse this decline, rural towns have begun to identify economic assets that help draw growth back to their town centers. By marketing their historic, cultural, and locational attributes, rural towns can attract public support and various types of financing for both redevelopment and complementary new development.

## GUIDING ECONOMIC RENEWAL

For many communities, economic revitalization depends on renewing existing industries rather than attracting new ones. Through a strategy involving a number of small initiatives instead of a single solution, community leaders can find ways to infuse a struggling economy with financial resources, technical assistance, and improved housing and social services. Such approaches nourish a gradual transformation from decline to growth.

### Miner County Community Revitalization

Like many rural farming communities, Miner County, South Dakota, has experienced twenty years of high poverty rates and rapid population decline, losing 18 percent of its residents since 1990. In March 1999, a diverse group of local citizens responded to a growing sense of crisis by initiating a strategic plan and organizing Miner County Community Revitalization (MCCR). Today MCCR is increasing collaboration and community involvement, building leadership, and facilitating new business development and social services.

Much of MCCR's strategy is based on an economic renewal model created by the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), a nonprofit research organization that has provided consulting services to dozens of communities in North America. RMI's *Economic Re-*

*newal Guide: A Collaborative Process for Sustainable Community Development* offers a framework for community stakeholders to envision the future they desire, consider community conditions and the opportunities of their natural environment, identify and choose promising development projects, and create action plans to implement them. (See box on next page.) According to the guide, sustainable development:

- Redefines prosperity, weighing quality of life, community character, and the environment alongside economic considerations.
- Seeks true development, in the sense of getting better, instead of expansion, which is merely getting bigger.
- Advocates the long-term stewardship of community resources, ensuring that present actions don't erode the basis for future prosperity.
- Pursues self-reliance and a more democratic approach to decision-making, representing community-wide interests over those of an elite few.
- Stresses diversity, resilience, and a conviction that many small efforts work better than a single one-size-fits-all solution.

To launch its effort, MCCR partnered with the Northwest Area Foundation (NWAf) to help inform and fund its work. NWAf is dedicated to reducing poverty in Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Washington by providing knowledge, financial resources, product, and services to communities. The foundation provided \$500,000 in start-up funding for MCCR, and in February 2001 awarded Miner County an additional \$2 million as the first of sixteen communities selected for its ten-year Community Ventures partnership. In February 2001, Miner County began implementation of the plan, with technical assistance and partial funding from the foundation. The plan estimates a ten-year budget of roughly \$18 million, with a total contribution from NWAf of \$5.8 million to be released in three installments, based on satisfactory achievement of specific indicators.<sup>3</sup>

The county plan identified the following initial activities:

- Promoting value-added processing of agricultural commodities and developing high-end specialty products.
- Creating a business assistance program for technical assistance, financial restructuring services, and loans.
- Working with regional technology-dependent businesses and industries that may be interested in expansion in Miner County to develop a trained workforce in the county for those businesses.

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

The Rocky Mountain Institute's (RMI) community work focuses on "economic renewal." According to RMI, "In contrast to conventional approaches that rely on recruiting new industries, economic renewal stresses self-reliance, diversity, and more inclusive decision-making. Taking the view that many small efforts work better than a single one-size-fits-all solution, its priorities are resource productivity, support of existing businesses, encouragement of new local enterprise, and recruitment of compatible new business — in that order."

The process is built on four principles:

- **Plug the leaks.** Like heat from an uninsulated home, dollars leak from an inefficient community. Plugging unnecessary leaks puts money back into the local economy just as surely as if it had been earned through new industry — but it avoids many growth-related problems and costs.
- **Support existing businesses.** Too many communities woo outside businesses while overlooking the wealth-creating power of their own entrepreneurs. Locally owned businesses tend to be more responsive to local needs and values, and more likely to stand by the community through thick and thin. Supporting them also keeps more dollars circulating in the local economy.
- **Encourage new local enterprise.** As with existing businesses, new businesses will contribute far more to the local economy if they're locally owned. A town that's plugging leaks and supporting existing businesses is an exciting place to start a new one.
- **Recruit compatible new businesses.** "Smokestack-chasing"— the indiscriminate courting of outside corporations — is a risky, high-stakes game that has left many a small town in the lurch. However, having pursued the previous three steps, a community will be in a stronger position to recruit new businesses that are compatible with its values and needs.

**CONTACT:** *Rocky Mountain Institute* • [www.rmi.org](http://www.rmi.org)  
1739 Snowmass Creek Road • Snowmass, Colorado 81654-9199 • 970/927-3851

- Creating systems to increase credit and financial restructuring services in the county.
- Developing an affordable housing program that will use local contractors to build or rehabilitate quality, life-cycle housing.
- Creating an early childhood development program/childcare center.
- Sustaining MCCR as a financially stable, permanent facilitator of comprehensive, inclusive community development.
- Updating the county land-use and zoning ordinances and regulations.

Each activity emanates from thorough consideration of the county's characteristics and opportunities. For example, three of the county's towns have no land-use plans

or zoning regulations at all, and others have plans that are outdated or poorly enforced. Inadequate plans result in disorganized or stagnant growth, and can hinder community efforts to obtain federal assistance. MCCR plans to work with the county commission, city councils, federal and county agencies, and the business community to revise the county's land-use plans and zoning regulations. The plan can foster housing development for a mix of income levels, encourage mixed-use development, clarify infrastructure requirements for new construction, establish growth boundaries, and generate community support for development projects.

The plan also includes a program to reverse the increase in property owned by landlords outside of the county, removing it from local control. Nonresidents own 63 percent of Miner County's 353,692 acres, primarily for hunting purposes. Of the 18,069 acres sold between May 1997 and May 1999, 12,424 were purchased by nonresidents. According to the plan, "With the loss of this limited resource, the community loses the opportunity to develop potential home sites and acreage for hobby farms and future economic ventures that will draw people to Miner County who will contribute significantly the community's economic and social life. Many of the out-of-county owners contribute very little economically and socially to the community, only appearing a few months of the year to hunt, paying taxes but reaping much more in financial benefit that leaves the county."<sup>4</sup> The new program would help the county retain land ownership as a future economic and social asset for residential, commercial, and agricultural development. Strategies include public education, creating a land trust, and forming regional alliances to support increased property taxes for land with out-of-county ownership.

MCCR already has spurred economic activity in the community by bringing diverse stakeholders together to make ideas a reality. It has facilitated start-ups of a cheese factory, fish farm, café, used clothing store, and business that refurbishes and sells wind turbines. MCCR also has worked to clean up and rezone an industrial park, revive an economic development corporation, and collaborate with and expand representation within a for-profit development group. Based on its experience, MCCR expects to facilitate the creation of an organization to run a business assistance program.

**CONTACTS: MCCR** • [www.mccr.net/mccr/plan/miner.html](http://www.mccr.net/mccr/plan/miner.html)

P.O. Box 307 • 131 South Main Street • Howard, South Dakota 57349 • 605/772-5153

**Northwest Area Foundation** • [www.nwaf.org](http://www.nwaf.org)

60 Plato Boulevard East, Suite 400 • St. Paul, MN 55107 • 888/904-9823

## FORGING PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION

The best hope for many distressed communities is a critical mass of concerned citizens, often formed into a nonprofit organization. These people sound the alarm about deteriorating conditions, inspire participation in creating a new vision for the town, and identify resources to finance change. The public-private collaboration that follows can dramatically alter the future of even the smallest rural communities.

### Bayview, Virginia

Through the perseverance of citizen leaders, Bayview, Virginia, has attracted an extraordinary amount of federal and private resources to rebuild a community in dire condition. The community's redevelopment will ensure adequate housing and economic stability for its citizens, many with roots extending as far back as 300 years. It also will sustain a rural quality of life in a seaside area rich in environmental and cultural resources that is a prime target of developers. More than 31 state, federal, and private agencies have contributed more than \$7 million with the goal of implementing a redevelopment plan, acquiring 158 acres of land, and building 140 units of housing.<sup>5</sup>

Alice Coles and other concerned citizens formed Bayview Citizens for Social Justice (BCSJ) in 1994 to protest the state's proposal to build a maximum-security prison on Bayview's edge. After successfully defeating the proposal, BCSJ turned its attention to the community's economic and housing conditions. More than 90 percent of Bayview's 114 residents live in substandard housing, 85 percent without indoor plumbing. Their average annual income is \$9,000. BCSJ has led a relentless campaign to provide the community with clean drinking water, secure housing, and economic opportunity. Today BCSJ has obtained county subdivision approval for its first 52 units of affordable housing, which began construction in Spring 2002.

Bayview attracted worldwide media attention when in 1998 BCSJ invited representatives of the NAACP to town to boost community interest. In part from the resulting exposure, BCSJ and the local chapter of The Nature Conservancy obtained a \$420,000-grant in 1998 from the U.S. Environmental Agency (EPA) for community-based planning. The grant enabled BCSJ to create a design team including a facilitator, urban designer, planner, and environmental engineer, as well as community representatives. The team developed a vision and action plan for creating a new village to meet the need for additional housing. Eventually the participants endorsed a plan for clustering housing and preserving open space next to an existing development, with state-of-the-art waste

## USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT

USDA coordinates federal assistance to rural areas of the nation. USDA Rural Development works closely with the private and nonprofit sectors as well as state, tribal, and local governments to create economic opportunity for rural communities. Its activities include:

- building water and wastewater systems;
- financing decent, affordable housing;
- supporting electric power and rural businesses, including cooperatives; and
- supporting community development with information and technical assistance.

Three agencies and the office of community development carry out these efforts.

- **The Rural Business-Cooperative Service** includes cooperative development and technical assistance, plus other business development programs.
- **The Rural Housing Service** includes rural housing programs as well as rural community loan programs.
- **The Rural Utilities Service** offers telephone and electric programs along with water and sewer programs.
- **The Office of Community Development** operates special initiatives to demonstrate effective community development techniques and address unique and pressing economic development issues.

Detailed information about Rural Development programs and applications for financial assistance are available through Rural Development State and Local Offices or USDA Service Centers.

**CONTACT:** [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov)

treatment and water systems, community education and empowerment, and economic development projects.<sup>6</sup>

BCSJ's activities focus on economic development, capacity building, and housing, recognizing that citizens without economic opportunity and training cannot maintain and support improved housing. In 1999, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded Bayview \$528,500 under the Water 2000 program, which aimed to bring clean drinking water infrastructure to low-income rural communities in order to promote economic development. A total of \$4 million in USDA support through its rural development, housing, and utility programs has improved Bayview's streets, lighting, housing, and water and sewer systems. This funding leveraged a \$1.25-million Community Development Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program works to provide decent affordable housing, offer services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and create jobs and expand business opportunities. Since states are in the best position to know and to respond to the needs of local governments, each state is able to administer CDBG funds for non-entitlement areas — cities with populations of less than 50,000, and counties with populations of less than 200,000. These areas do not receive CDBG funds directly from HUD.

Communities may use CDBG funds for a variety of community development activities including:

- acquiring property for public purposes;
- constructing or improving streets, water and sewer facilities, neighborhood centers, recreation facilities, and other public works;
- rehabilitating public and private buildings;
- providing public services;
- sponsoring planning activities; and
- assisting to private nonprofit and for-profit entities in community development activities.

**CONTACT:** *U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*  
451 7th Street S.W. • Washington, DC 20410 • 202/708-1112  
[www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/cdbg.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/cdbg.cfm)

Development (HUD), awarded through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, to further support infrastructure development.

In addition, a low-interest loan from the McAuley Institute enabled BCSJ to purchase 158 acres from state and private landowners for a community farm that preserves open space and will create one of Bayview's economic engines. BCSJ is working on a conservation easement to protect 80 percent of the site from future development. In 2000 the farm produced and sold its first crop of specialty sweet potatoes and enlisted 100 Eastern shore residents for its subscription produce service.

Perhaps most significant to Bayview's longterm growth and prosperity was a \$1-million grant from HUD's Economic Development Initiative (EDI). However, virtually all EDI funds are "earmarked" by Congress — allocated to particular sites before any competitive application process. In the case of BCSJ, then-Senator Chuck Robb made it possible to obtain this flexible funding for pre-development activities that include increasing the organization's capacity. In addition, the EDI grant financed construction of a community center, greenhouse, and two-story farmers' market that not only

## McAULEY INSTITUTE

**F**ounded by the Sisters of Mercy, McAuley Institute is a national, nonprofit housing organization that provides technical assistance and financial support to grassroots organizations working to expand housing and economic opportunities for low-income women and their families. Over the past 15 years, McAuley has worked with more than 2,100 groups and loaned over \$12.3 million at below-market interest rates. These funds have leveraged more than \$103 million of total development in low-income neighborhoods, creating more than 4,300 units of affordable housing in 48 states and the District of Columbia.

McAuley targets inexperienced organizations, undertaking much of its work in areas where the community development infrastructure is not well developed, such as small cities, rural communities, and underserved urban areas. In addition to helping groups increase their operating and project development capacity, McAuley conducts research and advocates for policies to meet the housing needs of the low-income families.

**CONTACT: McAuley Institute** • [www.mcauley.org/bhconline/new.htm](http://www.mcauley.org/bhconline/new.htm)  
8300 Colesville Road, Suite 310 • Silver Spring, MD 20910 • 301/588-8110

sells agricultural products but also serves as a site for workshops on job skills, financial management, and other training. The EDI grant also supports a food pantry serving 78 area families and a “country kitchen” that will provide catering services and sell local jellies and preserves.

**CONTACTS: Bayview Citizens for Social Justice Inc.** • Alice Coles or Adebola Ajayi • [bcjsj@esva.net](mailto:bcjsj@esva.net)  
P.O. Box 527 • 22836 Bayview Circle • Cheriton, VA 23316 • 757/331-1840

**McAuley Institute** • [www.mcauley.org/bhconline/new.htm](http://www.mcauley.org/bhconline/new.htm)  
8300 Colesville Road, Suite 310 • Silver Spring, MD 20910 • 301/588-8110

**U.S. Department of Agriculture** • [www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/index.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/index.html)  
Rural Housing Service National Office • Room 5037, South Building  
14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W. • Washington, D.C. 20250 • 202/720-4323

**U.S. Department of Agriculture** • [www.ezec.gov/welcome/index.html](http://www.ezec.gov/welcome/index.html)  
Rural Community Empowerment Program • Office of Community Development  
Stop 3203 • 1400 Independence Ave., SW • Washington, D.C. 20250-3203  
202/619-7980 or 1-800-645-4712 • [ocd@ocdx.usda.gov](mailto:ocd@ocdx.usda.gov)

## LEVERAGING COMMUNITY ASSETS

Attracting tourism is one way for communities to create the kind of economic vitality that can foster a vibrant town center. Many towns with no tradition of significant tourism find that their cultural and historical assets can be leveraged to draw tourist dollars, which strengthens the local economy and enhances amenities for the community

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Economic Development Initiative (EDI) provides grants to local governments that have created a catalyst for expanding the use of federally guaranteed loans available through the Economic Development Loan Fund (Section 108). Normally, Section 108 loans require that local governments pledge their current and future Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocations for up to five years as security for the loan. EDI grants enable communities to decrease the risk to their CDBG funds in two ways: by providing additional security for the loan, or by simply making a project more feasible by paying for some of the project costs or reducing the interest rate on the revolving fund loans. A key component of EDI's job growth strategy is increasing access to capital for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

HUD awards EDI funds as competitive project grants, in conjunction with Section 108 loan commitments, to states and CDBG entitlement and non-entitlement communities. However, most EDI funding is allocated to specific projects by Members of Congress during the appropriations process and therefore is unavailable for competitive grants. EDI grants can be used only with projects assisted through the Section 108 Economic Development Loan Fund, which may involve acquiring property; rehabilitating publicly owned property; rehabilitating housing; conducting economic development activities; acquiring, constructing, or installing public facilities; and improving public works and other sites. Most Section 108 loans and EDI grants are used to encourage economic development, either through physical development projects or direct loans to private firms and individuals. However, some Section 108/EDI funding rounds have solicited proposals for specific types of activities, such as development of Homeownership Zones or community-based lending institutions.

**CONTACTS:** *HUD Community Connections* • 800/998-9999

*HUD SuperNOFA hotline* • 800/HUD-8929

*U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development* • [www.hud.gov/progdesc/edi.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/progdesc/edi.cfm)  
451 7th Street S.W. • Washington, DC 20410 • 202/708-1112

as well. Private-sector organizations can guide communities in identifying their assets and securing government and foundation grants to support redevelopment.

## HandMade in America

HandMade in America launched its Small Towns Revitalization Program at the request of North Carolina communities along the Craft Heritage Trails that sought to revitalize their main streets for residents and visitors alike. These rural towns are too small to qualify for programs such as the National Main Street program, but eager to leverage their historic and cultural assets. The Small Towns Project offers these communities

## APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

Established by Congress in 1965, the Appalachian Regional Commission supports economic and social development in a 200,000-square-mile region from southern New York to northern Mississippi. It includes all of West Virginia and parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Its partners include the governors of the 13 Appalachian states and a presidential appointee, as well as local boards made up of elected officials, business people, and other community leaders. ARC projects address five goals:

- developing a knowledgeable and skilled population;
- strengthening the region's physical infrastructure;
- building local and regional capacity;
- creating a dynamic economic base; and
- fostering healthy people.

ARC helps fund education and workforce training programs, highway construction, water and sewer system construction, leadership development programs, small business start-ups and expansions, and the development of health-care resources.

Each year, ARC receives an appropriation from Congress that is allocated by formula among the 13 states, which in turn award grants to state or local agencies and government entities, local governments, and nonprofit organizations. Applicants must contact the program manager in their state, and also should work with the local development district in developing the application.

**CONTACT:** *Appalachian Regional Commission* • [www.arc.gov/index.htm](http://www.arc.gov/index.htm)  
1666 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 700 • Washington, DC 20009-1068  
202/884-7799 • [crea@arc.gov](mailto:crea@arc.gov)

mentoring, technical assistance, self-help, leadership training, and learning from each other and from neighboring communities.

HandMade completed a study in 1994 that documented the economic value of the region's arts and crafts. At that time, handmade objects contributed approximately \$122 million a year to the southwestern North Carolina economy: more than \$70 million from retail shops and galleries; \$26 million from full-time professional artists and artisans; and \$23 million from part-time, second-income producers. Becky Anderson, HandMade's executive director, initially sought to promote this "invisible factory," publishing a 1996 guide called *The Craft Heritage Trails of Western North Carolina*. The guide maps seven trails around the Blue Ridge Parkway and helps draw tourists into craft shops and studios, as well as restaurants and interesting accommo-

dations throughout the 22-county mountain region. Promoting the area became a natural extension of promoting the crafts.

In 1996, HandMade launched the Small Towns Revitalization Program, initially working with four small towns in Western North Carolina and expanding to twelve within six years. As the program grew, additional assistance came from funders and partners such as the Appalachian Regional Commission, the North Carolina Community Development Initiative, the western office of the North Carolina Division of Community Assistance, and the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina. Participating communities establish a planning team to assess their assets as a foundation for renewal plans, along with strong community participation to create a common focus.

Across the region, the program has spurred main street revitalization while helping communities maintain and celebrate their heritage and character. For example, Andrews, North Carolina, residents appealed to HandMade for help when they learned of plans to build a new highway interchange a mile from the city. Through the small towns program, Andrews residents developed a plan to restore the Valletown Cultural Arts Center, redesign community landscaping, and renovate facades and buildings. They also plan festivals and events to draw people back into downtown. The town enlisted 4,300 volunteer hours and attracted more than \$5.5 million in private and public investment.

**CONTACT:** *HandMade in America Community Development Corp.* • [www.handmadeinamerica.org](http://www.handmadeinamerica.org)  
*Patricia Cabe-Cantrell, Director* • [patcabe@handmadeinamerica.org](mailto:patcabe@handmadeinamerica.org)  
*P.O. Box 2089 • Asheville, NC 28802 • 828/252-0121*

## REHABILITATING CONTAMINATED SITES

Actual or suspected environmental contamination can create a formidable barrier to community revitalization, particularly in small, rural towns with limited resources. Many sites affected by residual industrial pollution occupy prime locations, where business and industry once thrived amid well-developed infrastructure, often at the intersection of major transportation corridors. These long neglected sites can benefit from numerous federal and state programs to finance their assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of such areas. Moreover, communities can leverage these financial and technical resources to re-create commercial hubs, greenways, and even town centers that take advantage of a site's central location.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has several programs designed to spur the redevelopment of contaminated areas. The most prominent include the Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative (BERI), which focuses on brownfield sites — underused or vacant properties where redevelopment is hindered by actual or perceived contamination. BERI empowers states, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. Since 1995, EPA has funded more than 200 brownfield assessment demonstration pilots, each at up to \$200,000 over two years, to assess sites and test cleanup and redevelopment models.

More recently, EPA created the Superfund Redevelopment Initiative (SRI) to help return the nation's worst hazardous waste sites to productive use by selecting cleanup remedies that are consistent with a site's anticipated future use. By integrating the consideration of cleanup and site reuse, SRI saves time and expense because everything from the location of groundwater monitoring wells to the stringency of the cleanup standards is designed to meet the needs of the site's future use. The SRI program provides up to \$100,000 in funding and services for local communities to either support efforts to predict future land use related to determining site remedies;

## BROWNFIELDS ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

**E**PA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative (BERI) funds several types of programs.

- **Assessment Demonstration Pilot Programs:** Provides up to \$200,000 over two years for pre-development activities at brownfield sites, including assessment, planning, and community outreach.
- **Job Training Pilot Programs:** Provides up to \$200,000 over two years to train residents of communities affected by brownfields, both to facilitate site cleanup and prepare trainees for future employment in the environmental field.
- **Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund Programs:** Provides up to \$1 million over five years to capitalize funds to make loans for brownfield cleanup.

**CONTACT:** [www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/pilot.htm](http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/pilot.htm)

*Lists of U.S. EPA and state brownfield contacts can be found at [www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/contacts.htm](http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/contacts.htm)*

*Northeast-Midwest Institute • [www.nemw.org/brownfields.htm](http://www.nemw.org/brownfields.htm)*

## SUPERFUND REDEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

EPA's Superfund Redevelopment Initiative (SRI) provides national coordination to help return the country's worst hazardous waste sites to productive use. Its pilot program provides up to \$100,000 in financial assistance and services to local governments for specified activities, including:

- **Reuse Assessments and Reuse Plans** to determine the reasonably anticipated future land uses, as well as activities to support the development, evaluation, and documentation of predicted reuse as it might affect or be affected by cleanup alternatives that are being considered.
- **Facilitation** provided by neutral parties who work with state and local government representatives to identify and involve community stakeholders in developing views on what future land uses might be reasonably predicted for the site.
- **Coordination** among different levels of government, community members, and organizations interested in natural resources (e.g., hunting, recreational, and environmental organizations) to identify reasonably anticipated future uses of the land or provide a focal point for reuse issues.
- **Public Outreach** including conducting public meetings, publishing newsletters and other informational material for the public, and developing strategies to educate and involve community leaders in predicting reuse or in the Superfund cleanup and decision-making processes.
- **Training and Workshops** for community members and local governments on projecting site reuse and the Superfund cleanup and remedy selection processes as related to a specific Superfund site.
- **Support for a Citizen Advisory Group** to advise the community on site reuse, such as providing meeting space or developing a newsletter.
- **Technical Assistance** to the community from consultants, nongovernment organizations, and universities to study and develop recommendations on legal, fiscal, economic, and other issues as appropriate to project site reuse and support the selection of a remedy consistent with that reuse.

**CONTACTS:** [reuse.info@epa.gov](mailto:reuse.info@epa.gov)

**Superfund Hotline** • [www.epa.gov/superfund/programs/recycle/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/programs/recycle/index.htm)  
800/424-9346 or 703/412-9810

provide professional facilitation for identifying and involving stakeholders in determining likely future uses for a site; or hire an expert to work with the local government on predicting site reuse. EPA selected ten pilot projects in July 1999 and expanded the project by an additional 40 pilot projects in July 2000.<sup>7</sup>

## Haddam, Connecticut

Since 1994, rural Haddam, Connecticut, has lost its three largest employers and 50 percent of its tax base. Yet the town of 7,200 residents has great potential, owing in large part to its proximity to the Valley Railroad, the state expressway, and area attractions such as “Camelot Cruises” of the nearby Connecticut River. Haddam recognizes a need for economic growth and diversification, but it also seeks to preserve its rural character.

Higganum Center is one of Haddam’s two commercial centers. A traditional village center dating from 1800, it features a village green with a war veteran memorial and a newly constructed gazebo. The area offers a grocery store, hardware store, banks, pharmacy, gift shops, post office, package stores, restaurants, and other retail establishments. Following a three-year study, in 1998 the town’s economic development commission proposed creating an artisans’ market to promote local crafts and attract tourists to the area, with a pedestrian-friendly business zone surrounded by footpaths leading to the banks of the Connecticut River.<sup>8</sup>

In 1999, EPA awarded a brownfield assessment pilot grant of \$156,000 for three publicly-owned properties that occupy six acres in Higganum Center, which the town plan identified as areas of opportunity for growth. The brownfield pilot will perform assessments, coordinate community outreach, prepare a cleanup feasibility study, and conduct ecological assessment of a stream adjacent to the sites. The pilot also will plan for the reuse of the sites in keeping with the economic development commission’s plan.<sup>9</sup> The brownfield grant also spurred the creation of the Higganum Center Advisory Committee (HCAC) to oversee community involvement in the pilot. HCAC brings the community together to reach consensus on everything from sidewalks and parking to potential uses for available properties.

**CONTACT:** *EPA Region 1, New England • Amy Miller • Office of the Regional Administrator  
JFK Kennedy Building (RAA) • Boston, MA 02203 • 617/918-1042*

## Lacon, Illinois

Lacon, Illinois, is a rural community of almost 2,000 residents in the Illinois River Valley, with an unemployment rate of 7 percent. The Lacon Woolen Mill was the town’s primary employer until it closed in the late 1960s, leaving behind a 17-acre contaminated site. Today the city controls the mill site, which includes a four-acre parcel of industrial property, two acres of river bank and flood plain, and eleven acres of Illinois River Bay.<sup>10</sup> Lacon plans to redevelop the site as an attraction for tourism and recre-

ation, including a green area, public park, housing, retail shops, and restaurants linked to an expanded riverfront.

Lacon has enlisted numerous programs to support rehabilitation of the mill site. In 1996, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) performed an initial site assessment, and the following year Lacon used \$250,000 from local Tax Increment Financing to remove debris and building rubble from the site. In 1999, Lacon received a \$120,000-brownfield redevelopment grant through IEPA and a \$200,000-EPA brownfield assessment pilot grant to study the mill site for use in a remediation plan. Lacon also became one of six Illinois cities eligible for a \$500,000 low-interest loan from EPA's Brownfield Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund that will help clean up the site, clearing the way for redevelopment that capitalizes on its location beside the Illinois River.<sup>11</sup>

A supplemental brownfield assessment pilot grant of \$150,000 awarded in April 2001 focused on sediment contamination in the riverfront area. By sampling river sediment and conducting necessary cleanup, the pilot will pursue a "no further remediation" letter for the area, enabling the town to extend the marina north of the mill site and provide boat access to a new green space area for recreation, dining, and shopping.

**CONTACT: Mill Committee** • Robert Weber, Chairman • bobw13@lacon.net  
508 North Fulton • Lacon, Illinois 51540 • 309/246-3185

## Allegan, Michigan

Allegan, Michigan, was built on a foundation of industrial and manufacturing facilities that over the years have been abandoned or fallen into disuse. However, the city of 4,500 residents still serves as the county's commercial hub, providing goods and services to the surrounding rural townships. In 1998, the city established the Allegan Brownfields Redevelopment Authority to launch area redevelopment and beautification projects around its historic areas and riverfront. In 2000, Allegan received a \$200,000-EPA brownfield assessment pilot grant and an additional \$50,000 for green space rehabilitation.<sup>12</sup> Together with state funding, these grants made it possible for Allegan to return property to its tax base, clean up its environment, and restore the kind of community pride that stimulates private investment.

The Allegan brownfield pilot will help assess, clean up, and redevelop up to eleven brownfields located along the Kalamazoo River and in the city's historic district. The pilot will leverage private funding and city, state, and federal grant programs, and use the supplemental green space funding to assess another three targeted greenspace

sites located adjacent to the Kalamazoo River. The pilot established two advisory groups — a broad-based stakeholder group and a technical committee — to help identify potential brownfield properties.

In addition to federal brownfield funding, Allegan received a \$650,000-grant through the Clean Michigan Initiative for a brownfield project along the Kalamazoo River. The grant has been leveraged into a \$2.2-million public-private venture that includes two new businesses and a relocated business. It revitalized a part of downtown that was virtually abandoned due to site conditions and linked it to a one-mile waterfront boardwalk.

Allegan's revitalization efforts received another boost when EPA selected the city for the superfund redevelopment pilot program in July 2000. The pilot focuses on the 30-acre Rockwell International Corporation Superfund site, a former manufacturing plant that discharged waste water and oils into the Kalamazoo River, wetlands behind the plant, and several unlined lagoons. The SRI grant has made it possible for the small community with no resources to "step up to the plate" together with EPA, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and the site's responsible party. The SRI pilot will fund community outreach, studies of future site uses, and redevelopment planning for the site. Because the surrounding area land uses are municipal and industrial, Allegan may use the Rockwell site to expand a neighboring industrial facility, house new county government offices, or relocate the county jail.<sup>13</sup>

**CONTACTS:** *City of Allegan Brownfields*

*Lisa Sutterfield • lsutterfield@datawise.net • 616/673-5511*

*U.S. EPA - Region 5 • Regional Brownfields Team • 312/353-3161*

## **Corinna, Maine**

The town of Corinna, Maine, provides a dramatic example of the Superfund Redevelopment Initiative's potential to spur community rehabilitation. With an \$82,000-pilot grant, Corinna is using the cleanup of an old woolen mill as an impetus for rebuilding the town. The superfund pilot funds supported a plan to help the community examine the impact of reusing the site; create a concept for reuse; determine whether the proposed reuse is compatible with the cleanup; and build community consensus on the reuse.<sup>14</sup> In March 2002, a town meeting approved a plan to redevelop the area as a New England village with amenities and attractions for tourists and residents alike — including trails for recreation and bird-watching.

The Eastland Woolen Mill superfund site covered 21 acres, including a 250,000-square-foot mill, two dams, and several buildings. Closed in 1996, the mill discharged wool production chemicals into the east branch of the Sebasticook River, which flowed under the mill. Since adding the site to the Superfund National Priorities List in 1998, EPA has spent \$45 million on cleanup. In 2001, contractors excavated contaminated soil to bedrock, 40 feet below what was once Main Street; relocated Route 7 from the center of town and over the Sebasticook River by way of a new bridge; and moved the town's historic Odd Fellows hall. In 2002, treatment of the contaminated soil began, which could take more than a year.<sup>15</sup>

Today the stores of Corinna's Main Street have been razed and the community is planning for a new town center with Victorian-style street lights, park with a bandstand, local market, antique shops, and attractive new homes.<sup>16</sup> The plan aims to take advantage of the town's access to lakes, rivers, and mountains, and a prime location ten minutes from I-95, 45 minutes from Bangor International Airport, and an hour from Maine's scenic coast.

**CONTACT:** *Town of Corinna • 8 Levi Stewart Drive • Corinna, Maine 04928-9757 • 207/278-4183*



## ii. linking natural resource protection with development

Many rural areas that attract vacationers or homeowners seeking a natural setting or small-town atmosphere become the victims of their own success. Scattered development of vacation cabins and year-round housing can fragment farm and forest lands and pollute waterways with surface water runoff. Poorly planned efforts to accommodate tourism and residential demands can lead to unsightly, sprawling commercial development that causes unnecessary environmental impacts, taxes the capacity of country roads, and saps the economic vitality from existing main street stores. Through innovative planning and development strategies, rural communities can enjoy the benefits of growth while protecting their natural resources and maintaining their rural character.

### CREATING HERITAGE PARKS

The Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program preserves and showcases the state's historic, scenic, and recreational resources to spur regional tourism and economic growth. This marriage of conservation and economic goals uses precious regional assets to attract economic development while using economic growth to finance the protection of regional assets.

Established in 1989, the Heritage Parks Program highlights the region's special sites, people, traditions, and events through financial and technical assistance as well as the cultivation of public-private partnerships. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) administers the program in conjunction with a State Heritage Parks Interagency Task Force, which includes the state's department of community and economic development; the department of education and transportation; historic and museum commission; and council on the arts.<sup>17</sup>

The program uses a comprehensive regional planning process with public participation to:

- protect and preserve the state’s natural resources, scenic beauty, and historical and cultural assets;
- educate visitors and residents about Pennsylvania’s heritage;
- enhance the system of state and local recreational resources;
- stimulate intergovernmental cooperation and regional approaches in the planning and creation of Heritage Park Areas; and
- promote public and private partnerships and coalitions to spur heritage tourism, ecotourism, and other economic development opportunities.

The State Heritage Parks Interagency Task Force reviews and approves feasibility studies and management plans submitted by regions to demonstrate that they have the resources, public and private support, and local commitment to plan and establish a heritage park. DCNR awards matching grants to eligible organizations on a competitive basis for feasibility studies, management action plans, special purpose studies, implementation projects, and funding of heritage parks managers. Upon the task force’s endorsement, the governor formally designates the region as part of the Pennsylvania Heritage Parks system. Eleven parks have been designated to date, focusing on the historic iron steel, oil, coke, and coal industries; railroad, canal, highway, and scenic byway transportation; and communities that lived off the land.

The state designated its eleventh heritage park, the Lumber Heritage Region, in September 2001. The heritage area encompasses the Allegheny National Forest, 1.4 million acres of state forestland, and 34 state parks.<sup>18</sup> To plan the heritage area, the North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission partnered with regional tourism agencies, county planning departments, conservation and historic preservation organizations, local government officials, the Allegheny Hardwoods Utilization Group, the Hardwoods Development Council, the Hardwood Lumber Manufacturer’s Association, and residents. According to the commission, “The planning process for a State Heritage Park will help to ensure that the cultural, historic and natural resources of a region are protected to perpetuate their legacy for future generations, enhance opportunities for recreation and education, and foster a sense of pride and community among the residents in the Lumber Heritage Region.”<sup>19</sup>

**CONTACTS:** *Pennsylvania State Heritage Parks* • 717/783-0988

*National Trust for Historic Preservation* • Rural Heritage Area Program  
[www.ruralheritage.org/hertarea.html#projects](http://www.ruralheritage.org/hertarea.html#projects)

*North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission*  
 651 Montmorenci Avenue • Ridgway, PA 15853 • 814/773-3162 • [ncprpdc@ncentral.com](mailto:ncprpdc@ncentral.com)

## PLANNING RESORT DEVELOPMENT

In some rural towns, new development and expanding tourism threaten the small-town character and natural beauty that attracted outsiders in the first place. Yet some tourist economies are built on the value and economic rewards of preserving natural amenities, maintaining small-town qualities, creating attractive gathering places with pedestrian access, and providing a mix of housing that accommodates both affluent tourists and existing residents of modest means. Resorts that rely on these principles can be more sustainable and profitable than those that bring sprawl, traffic, and homogenization to formerly rural areas.

### Nisswa, Minnesota

In Nisswa, Minnesota, community residents recognized the hazards of rapid, unplanned growth, and with the help of the Initiative Foundation created a community-based plan and zoning ordinance for growth that is compatible with the town's values.

A classic rural small town, Nisswa originally grew up around a railroad station that brought tourists to area resorts. The city of 1,900 residents occupies 18 square miles in north central Minnesota, with thirteen lakes covering more than 40 percent of its land. The largest of these, Gull Lake, has 100 miles of shoreline surrounded by pine and oak forest. Nisswa's economy is tourism-based, with 70 percent of its businesses in the retail and service sectors. Its town center features small cafes, shops, civic buildings, and parks — all within walking distance of one another. When accelerating housing and commercial development threatened Nisswa's small-town way of life, its residents joined together in planning for growth that preserves the community's character and natural beauty.<sup>20</sup>

The development of housing lots in Nisswa increased from 15 in 1990 to 104 in 1997, spurred by the construction of retirement homes and the expansion of the neighboring Brainerd-Baxter area as a regional center. But Nisswa's citizens did not react until in 1997 the construction of an expensive townhome project replaced several small businesses on the lakefront, dramatically altering the shoreline. Soon after a family-owned marina was sold for residential development, eliminating the only site for boaters arriving from the area's chain of lakes to park their boats and visit the town.

That fall, Shelly Jay Neiman, Nisswa's director of land and zoning, obtained a \$10,000-grant from the Initiative Foundation, an independent, nonprofit philanthropic organization created by The McKnight Foundation to address the human and economic needs in Central Minnesota.<sup>21</sup> The foundation's Healthy Communities Part-

## INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

The McKnight Foundation established the Initiative Foundation in 1986 to address the human and economic needs of a 14-county area in central Minnesota. The foundation invests in well-planned, collaborative community development endeavors that improve the economic vitality and overall health of communities while increasing the asset base of the fund. Its activities include:

- gap lending to assist new and expanding businesses;
- grants to community and nonprofit groups for community and economic development activities;
- leadership training to build the capacity of communities to plan for growth and change;
- public education regarding regional needs and opportunities such as housing, work force, planning, and economic development; and
- fundraising programs to support the fund, increase the level of philanthropy in central Minnesota and to educate residents about philanthropy.

**CONTACT: Initiative Foundation** • [www.ifound.org/index.cfm](http://www.ifound.org/index.cfm)  
405 First Street Southeast • Little Falls, MN 56345 • 320/632-9255

nership Program “provides integrated community development training, grant support, and technical assistance to strengthen the leadership capacity of communities to plan effectively for the future.” Under the grant, eleven community members attended the Initiative’s training sessions and passed along what they learned to a larger citizen group called the Nisswa Navigators. Using skills gained in the training sessions, the group defined their community, identified priority issues, and facilitated discussions of ideas for change.

The Navigators include every stakeholder group — city government, local business interests, landowners, youth, the press, religious groups, service and social agencies, and both seasonal and year-round residents. They reviewed all of the city’s land-use ordinances, updated the comprehensive plan, and brought their findings and recommendations to the city council at a public hearing. In April 1999, the Nisswa City Council adopted the new comprehensive plan, with specific goals for designing a public beach and marina, managing the lakeshore, using building codes to preserve small-town character, and rewriting some of the city’s land-use ordinances.

The plan sets numerous goals for protecting and creating community open space; expanding the area’s recreational opportunities; preserving Nisswa’s small-town character; and supporting automobile-oriented commercial development based on conservation design rather than suburban “strip mall” design. It also calls for conserva-

tion design standards in developing a variety of housing styles and types to accommodate people of varied ages and incomes brackets.

With additional support of the Initiative Foundation, the city drafted a new zoning ordinance to implement the comprehensive plan. Its provisions include an “open space neighborhood” component to promote clusters of housing development on tracts of ten acres or more rather than on standard lots. This design would preserve more green space and create a common entrance road to reduce both visual impact and stormwater runoff. The plan offers economic incentives for clustering, including allowing developers to build more homes than they could with standard lots and thus increase their return on investment.

The ordinance pays particular attention to protecting Nisswa’s trees and lakes, which are the primary reason people live and vacation in the area. It requires wetland setbacks, tightly restricts shoreland planned-unit development, and requires conditional use permits for open and clear cutting of vegetation. To ensure all properties maintain their own surface water runoff, highway business district lots are allowed only 50 percent impervious coverage (for structure, driveways, parking, and sidewalks), and residential lots are allowed only 25 percent impervious coverage.<sup>22</sup> The Nisswa City Council agreed to pass the zoning ordinance March 18, 2001.

**CONTACTS:** *Initiative Foundation* • [www.ifound.org](http://www.ifound.org)

*Karl Samp, Director of Community Initiatives*

*405 First Street Southeast • Little Falls, MN 56345 • 320/632-9255*

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## Crested Butte Mountain Resort

Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR) in Colorado offers an example of sustainable resort development that builds on the appeal of a mining town of 1,700 permanent residents in the nation’s largest national historic district, located in the pristine wilderness at the base of the Elk Mountain range.<sup>23</sup> According to company president Edward Callaway, “CBMR has always made open space preservation a top priority...We are the alternative to the big resorts. But even so, we have to be a viable alternative. To protect our niche, we have to keep open spaces open and learn how to house our community.”<sup>24</sup>

In a 1999 SKI Magazine article, Ken Castle described CBMR’s relationship with the Crested Butte community and environment:

*Not long ago there was plenty of finger-pointing around the valley, and almost everybody had a bone to pick with the resort. Prevailing opinion was that the ski*

*area intended to keep growing at the expense of long-time residents, who feared that it would stimulate the construction of trophy homes, drive up the price of land and force people of average means to move elsewhere. Crested Butte was on the brink of becoming another trendy haven for the rich.*

*Callaway wanted no part of that scenario. He and a handful of local business leaders, ranchers and environmentalists — strange bedfellows, to say the least — formed a nonprofit organization called the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy. Located in the town of Crested Butte, the Legacy worked to preserve ranches by purchasing development rights, placing those rights in permanent trust and leasing them back to their owners. In this way, the properties would forever remain open space while continuing to operate as ranches.<sup>25</sup>*

In November 1998, CBMR successfully completed a historic three-way land exchange that preserved more than 7,000 acres of open space. The exchange added 5,500 acres to the area's National Forest land and transferred a 2,020-acre working cattle ranch, purchased by CBMR, to the state land board. In exchange for the purchase, CBMR received 420 acres of National Forest land adjacent to its current ownership.<sup>26</sup>

In July 1999, CBMR presented its preliminary plan for its 24 undeveloped land parcels in Mt. Crested Butte to the public for comment. The plan's gradual addition of 2,899 housing and lodging units provided for density that reduced the level allowed by town guidelines by 45 percent. Edward Callaway challenged the valley's other developers to follow CBMR's lead by reducing density, assisting with public parking, putting 4 percent of sales revenues toward open space conservation, and allotting 15 percent of their developments to community housing.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to conserving the resort's natural setting, CBMR has embarked on a \$250-million renovation oriented around a town center. The original resort, built in the mid-1960s, included a ski operation, several hotels, and condominium residences with no center. The master plan for the town center includes a 260-unit condominium residence and 160,000 square feet of retail space, with a central marketplace, shops, restaurants, a town hall, post office, recreation center, and 300-seat performance hall. The plan keeps building heights at three to four stories and designs streets and public squares to maximize sunlight and provide views of the surrounding mountains. The plan also incorporates affordable homes and apartments for workers who live and work at the resort, thus ensuring that year-round residents can participate in an active and a vibrant community.

As part of its affordable housing goal, in late 1999 CBMR opened the Marcellina Apartments, a \$4-million development to house 122 employees in 43 three- and two-bedroom units. The project qualified for a federally insured mortgage from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to initiate construction. According to CBMR human resources director Kim Gailey, the apartments not only contributed to community life but also improved the quality of the resort. "To be able to offer an excellent place to live creates a much better total package for our associates, and that translates to better service for our guests."<sup>28</sup>

In recognition of its unprecedented efforts to preserve the area's natural habitat, Crested Butte Mountain Resort received the Mountain Sports Media 2001 Silver Eagle Award. The award recognizes environmental achievements in ski areas. Judges, who included representatives of the Trust for Public Land and the Conservation Law Foundation, selected Crested Butte from among 26 resorts that participated in the awards program.

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## DESIGNING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FOR CONSERVATION

Residential development is the primary threat to rural landscapes. It fragments forests, watersheds, and habitat; creates pollution from automobiles, septic systems, and surface water runoff; and encroaches on land that supports fragile resource-based economies. The pace of development is startling: almost 80 percent of the land used for new housing since 1994 is outside urban areas or in nonmetropolitan areas; 94 percent of this land is in lots of one acre or larger; and 57 percent is in lots of ten acres or more.<sup>29</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "The highest rates of population growth are occurring at the edges of metropolitan areas, in the predominantly rural counties that have already been absorbed into the metropolitan area through increased commuting. Population growth at the metropolitan fringe increased from 7.1 percent during 1982-1987 to over 10 percent during 1992-1997, while growth in the metropolitan core dropped."<sup>30</sup> Maine is a good example: the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission reports that as the population in many counties declined in the 1990s, the number of people living in some of the state's most rural areas increased by 20 percent.

In many rural areas new housing development is a fact of life; the housing demands of a growing population simply cannot be met by increasing housing density in existing communities. However, conservation design can minimize the impacts of new residential development on environmental health, wildlife habitat, recreational land, aesthetic values, agriculture, and forestry.

Popularized by Randall Arendt of the Natural Lands Trust, conservation design clusters new homes on a section of a development parcel so that the remainder can be preserved as open space. As Arendt notes, the two-acre lots proliferating across America are “too large to mow and too small to plow.” Moreover, “Many forms of wildlife are driven farther away, and opportunities to take woodland walks or weekend strolls across wildflower meadows simply do not exist, because every acre has been divided into private lawns and yards.”<sup>31</sup> By contrast, under the conservation design approach, land conservation is the central organizing principle around which houselots and streets are sensitively designed, preserving at least half the land area of each site in addition to the wetlands, flood plains and steep slopes that are protected under most existing codes. This approach provides numerous benefits:

- Enabling landowners to recover their equity without destroying farms and forests.
- Creating walkable neighborhoods that foster a sense of community and reduce auto dependence.
- Preserving rural character without the cost of acquiring open space or development rights.
- Reducing costs for roads, sewers, and other infrastructure that are passed on to homeowners.
- Enhancing home values through their proximity to open space amenities.

In fact, conservation design responds to a growing market demand. An informal survey by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* revealed that as many as four out of five home buyers in two golf course developments in Montgomery County, Maryland, had little or no interest in playing golf. According to the Natural Lands Trust, “They have chosen homes there primarily because they prefer to dwell in park-like settings, ones that offer attractive views from their windows and pleasant places in which to stroll. Developers find that lots abutting or looking onto open space sell faster — and at premium prices — compared with lots that are surrounded by more of the same.”<sup>32</sup>

**CONTACT:** *Natural Lands Trust* • [www.natlands.org](http://www.natlands.org)  
*Hildacy Farm* • 1031 Palmers Mill Road • Media, PA 19063 • 610/353-5587

## Green Neighborhoods Alliance, Massachusetts

A movement to promote and facilitate conservation design on the North Shore of Massachusetts emanated from a study of water quality, land use, and living resources in the region. Led by Massachusetts Audubon: North Shore, the project identified contributors to water quality problems, including the stormwater runoff created by rapid development. Recognizing that acquisition alone could not protect the amount of remaining open space needed for conservation purposes, Massachusetts Audubon recommended the construction of water and land “friendly” subdivisions as one of the tools to ease the environmental impacts of sprawling subdivisions.

The North Shore region’s small coastal communities and picturesque countryside attracted people in record numbers throughout the past thirty years, threatening scenic landscapes, wildlife habitat, and water quality. From 1971 to 1991, the population of eastern Massachusetts increased 15 percent, but the area of developed land increased 35 percent. By 2020, the area’s population is projected to increase by 8 percent with a 23 percent increase in land consumption.<sup>33</sup> This growth alarmed not only conservation groups but also planning boards overwhelmed with applications for subdivision permits and homebuilders frustrated by a slow and obstructive permitting process. In fact, most of the region’s zoning codes encouraged land-consumptive subdivisions.

In 1997, Massachusetts Audubon began working with Randall Arendt to promote an open space residential design model (OSRD) that offers a tool for easing the planning, permitting, and open space protection impasse. This type of design is not an antidote to sprawl because it does not affect determinations of whether specific parcels of land should be developed or the number of houses on those parcels. Rather, OSRD is a way to protect natural and cultural resources on parcels of land that already are slated for development. It basically turns the conventional development process on its head by setting aside contiguous or significant open space before siting homes and roads.

<b><i>OSRD Process</i></b>	<b><i>Conventional Process</i></b>
1. Identify and set aside resource area.	1. Draw lot lines.
2. Locate housing sites.	2. Align roads.
3. Align roads and trails.	3. Locate housing sites.
4. Draw lot lines.	4. Open space??

OSRD differs from traditional “clustering” of housing by setting high standards for the quantity, quality, and configuration of open space, creating an interconnected network of open space throughout a community.

Massachusetts Audubon sponsored several meetings to explore the use of OSRD that led to the formation of the Green Neighborhood Alliance, a group composed of conservation groups, developers, planners, homebuilders, realtors, and state and local officials. According to the alliance, “For the first time in the region, people with diverse and seemingly antagonistic goals and attitudes found themselves working together enthusiastically to develop and promote a planning methodology that actually pooled their interests, their desire to alter business as usual in planning and permitting subdivisions, and their willingness to overcome the often divisive and confrontational relationships that emerge over these topics and replace them with a carefully crafted, yet flexible creative process.”<sup>34</sup>

With funding from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) worked with the alliance to research local bylaws and develop two model OSRD bylaws. In 2000, MAPC published a handbook for communities that includes a discussion of the elements to consider and include in developing local bylaws, a summary and analysis of selected local bylaws, and an annotated model OSRD bylaw.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, Massachusetts Audubon and the Massachusetts Homebuilders Association lobbied the state legislature to enact “cluster-by-right” legislation. The new law, enacted in 2000, allows localities to adopt bylaws for cluster subdivisions that require no special permit.

### MEMBERS: GREEN NEIGHBORHOODS ALLIANCE

- Camelot Realty Trust
- Gloucester Community Development Department
- Home Builders Association of Massachusetts
- Hunneman & Company Real Estate
- Ipswich Open Space Committee
- Massachusetts Audubon Society
- Massachusetts Bays Program
- Massachusetts Coastal Zone Mgmt.
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- North East Builders Association
- Spearfields, Ltd.
- Symes Associates, Inc.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 1 awarded Massachusetts Audubon a \$50,000-grant to create an education and outreach campaign for implementing OSRD. The project is providing technical assistance to several North Shore communities, and two have enacted open-space bylaws. In addition, alliance members deliver presentations on OSRD throughout the state for realtors, homebuilders, planners, conservation groups, and watershed associations.

**CONTACTS: Metropolitan Area Planning Council** • [www.mapc.org](http://www.mapc.org)  
60 Temple Place • Boston, MA 02111 • 617/451-2770

**Massachusetts Audubon Society** • [www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org) • [www.greenneighborhoods.org](http://www.greenneighborhoods.org)  
Kathryn Leahy, Director • North Shore Conservation Advocacy • [k Leahy@massaudubon.org](mailto:k Leahy@massaudubon.org)  
346 Grapevine Road • Wenham, MA 01984 • 978/927-1122, ext. 2700

**Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management** • [www.state.ma.us/czm/czm.htm](http://www.state.ma.us/czm/czm.htm)  
Andrea Cooper, Regional Coordinator • [andrea.cooper@state.ma.us](mailto:andrea.cooper@state.ma.us)  
2 State Pier • Gloucester, MA 01930 • 978/281-3972

## Prairie Crossing, Illinois

Prairie Crossing in Grayslake, Illinois, is a unique mixed-use community of energy-efficient homes and a main street village with transit access to Chicago and O'Hare Airport. Its innovative design has reserved 70 percent of the area's 677 acres as open space, including wetlands, a lake, and an organic farm. The community is the western anchor of the Liberty Prairie Reserve, a 2,500-acre preserve of forest, marshes, prairies, and farmland created by the Prairie Crossing development team in partnership with The Conservation Fund.

As late as 1986 this former farm was slated for development as a typical subdivision of 1,600 houses, until in 1987 conservationist Gaylord Donnelley and seven neighboring families won their fifteen-year battle to develop the land using conservation design. The group formed the Prairie Holdings Corporation, which notes: "Much of Prairie Crossing's notoriety comes from its 'conservation community' design, which is manifested through its commitment to preserving the environment."<sup>36</sup> To preserve its open spaces, 150 acres were placed under a permanent conservation easement through The Conservation Fund; greenways were constructed and houses situated to protect native vegetation and wildlife corridor; and the land was contoured to manage stormwater without using manmade stormwater discharge systems.

Prairie Crossing hired Applied Ecological Services to design measures for reducing stormwater volumes and pollutants such as nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, and road salt through a "Stormwater Treatment Train." This system incorporates open

swale stormwater conveyance, upland prairie biofiltration, wetlands, and a man-made lake, using biological and mechanical means to reduce pollutants. Other environmental design standards in the area include narrow streets and crushed-limestone trails in place of concrete sidewalks.

Prairie Crossing includes 110 acres of farmland, including a ten-acre certified organic farm that produces vegetables, fruits, herbs, flowers, and free-range eggs for an annual revenue of \$90,000. The farm sponsors special events and workshops and encourages neighbor participation through a community garden plot and subscriptions for weekly baskets of vegetables. In addition, the Prairie Crossing Stable Cooperative owns a stable with thirteen stalls, tack room, outdoor arena, paddocks, and pastures for horses and other farm animals owned by community residents. Other amenities include a nine-acre Village Green with gazebo, neighborhood playgrounds, tennis courts, ice skating, and cross-country skiing.

Prairie Crossing's regional trail winds through its prairies and hedgerows, connecting the community with the Liberty Prairie Reserve. Ultimately the trail will span the reserve and link to the Des Plaines River Trail. The Liberty Prairie Conservancy manages the reserve and coordinates volunteer habitat restoration and environmental education programs. Prairie Crossing's development team, community leaders, and The Conservation Fund formed a partnership to establish the conservancy, which is funded through membership dues, program grants, and operating support from the Liberty Prairie Foundation. The foundation receives funds generated by a transfer fee at the initial sale and resale of every house at Prairie Crossing and from tipping fees on an adjacent landfill that generates \$300,000 per year.

**CONTACT:** *Victoria Post Ranney* • [www.prairiecrossing.com](http://www.prairiecrossing.com)  
32400 N. Harris Rd. • Grayslake, IL 60030 • 847/548-4062 • [vranney@aol.com](mailto:vranney@aol.com)

## LINKING HOUSING AND CONSERVATION AGENCIES

As sprawling rural growth saps the economic vitality from community main streets and overtakes rural open space, recreational areas, and working landscapes, it often exacts one more cost: the loss of affordable housing. Aging housing, increasingly isolated from commercial centers, may become uninhabitable, while new homes for the affluent price low- and moderate-income residents out of the market. The relationship and interdependence of these consequences of sprawl have spurred some state governments to combine programs for affordable housing and land conservation in a single entity.

## Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

In the mid-1980s, rapid development in Vermont threatened the state's historic and rural character and drove housing prices beyond the reach of many Vermonters. As the development of valuable agricultural and natural land escalated and historic downtowns were abandoned, a coalition of affordable housing, conservation, and historic preservation advocates urged the legislature to form an agency to review and fund projects for a range of community needs. In response, in 1987 the legislature passed the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund Act, capitalized with \$3 million.

Under the law, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) is composed of five citizens appointed by the governor — including a farmer and advocate for low-income residents; the commissioners of the state agencies of agriculture, housing and community development, and natural resources; and the head of the Vermont Housing Finance Agency. With a state budget surplus and on the recommendation of the Governor's Commission on Vermont's Future, in 1988 the state legislature appropriated of \$20 million for the board. VHCB became a pioneer in linking affordable housing and community development with land conservation and historic preservation. The results have been impressive. The board works with numerous local, nonprofit groups to identify and develop key projects in every part of the state.

VHCB's support for reinvestment in the older housing of small town centers has helped revitalize downtown neighborhoods and rebuild a sense of community. Its assistance in conserving open space and wildlands preserves a critical part of the state's identity and supports the agricultural economy, protects wildlife habitat, and provides public access to waterways and woodlands. Through 2001, VHCB awarded more than \$142 million to nonprofit housing and conservation organizations, towns, municipalities, and state agencies to develop more than 745 projects in 205 towns. These funds directly leveraged approximately \$516 million from other private and public sources. The result: 6,419 units of affordable housing and the conservation of more than 328,350 acres of agricultural, recreational, and natural lands. Twenty-six percent of VHCB housing awards have supported historic buildings, and 31 percent of the farms it has funded contain historic barns, farmhouses, or archeological sites.

In fiscal 2001, VHCB awarded more than \$15 million in grants and loans to create 557 units of affordable housing and conserve 11,901 acres of agricultural, recreational, and natural land.<sup>37</sup> For example, \$1.71 million will help construct Lime Rock Village, a 48-unit multi-family rental development in South Burlington. The project will be built on a 12-acre site bordering the Winooski River Gorge. An additional

award of \$23,000 to the Winooski Valley Park District will allow for the acquisition of ten acres of the site — featuring 100-foot bluffs and rare cedar-pine forest — to preserve the natural area and allow safe public access.

Another grant of up to \$325,200 to the Vermont Land Trust will acquire development rights on 381 acres of the Brattleboro Retreat Farm, ensuring that the land remains in agricultural use and allows perpetual public access to woodland trails and 91 acres of submerged meadowland. A local fundraising effort raised an additional \$230,000, which was supplemented by the Windham Foundation to reach the farm's full purchase price of \$1.35 million. According to VHCB executive director Gus Seelig, "Continued agricultural and educational use of this property will make a significant contribution to preserving the community's character and heritage while conserving recreational opportunities and protecting important wildlife habitat. This farm has excellent managers and has been the subject of great community interest." In operation since 1836, the entire dairy farm complex is on the National Register of Historic Places.

**CONTACT:** *Vermont Housing and Conservation Board* • [www.vhcb.org](http://www.vhcb.org)  
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# iii. maintaining working landscapes

The benefits of working landscapes are becoming increasingly well known. Forested land and open space protect watersheds, filtering water as it seeps into the ground and providing buffers for rivers and streams. These lands provide critical wildlife habitat, supporting complex ecosystems that require large acreage. They also afford “countryside,” the outdoors treasured by urban dwellers for all sorts of recreation, from camping to berry-picking. Yet the vast majority of this land is privately owned, and individual landowners bear much of the cost of maintaining its benefits for the rest of society. To survive and resist the pressures to develop their land, they need access to a resource-based economy that supports working lands; planning and zoning that preserves a critical mass of working land; and the cooperation of urban and suburban neighbors.

## STRENGTHENING FOREST-BASED ECONOMIES

The past thirty years have brought dramatic change to the timber and forest products industries. Environmental concerns and strict standards have increased the costs of growing and processing timber, and these expenses have contributed to the difficulty of competing with low-cost imports from countries with lower environmental standards and wages. At the same time, new technologies have enhanced efficiency and reduced the industry’s labor demand, displacing workers who relied on the forest industry for jobs. Such changes have wreaked havoc on forestlands and the communities that have depended on them for more than a century. Unless these communities can devise ways to extract profits from working forestlands, the land may succumb to development pressure that fragments the forest and permanently alters the natural landscape.

### Green Certification

In the face of strong international competition and concerns about sustaining forests for generations to come, many foresters have turned to “green certification” — typi-

cally a process of providing third-party assurances that wood and wood products came from forests that are managed according to specified sustainable forest management standards. The certification encourages sustainable forest management by providing a “seal of approval” that can serve as a marketing tool among consumers. Green certification can provide the competitive edge that American timber and wood products companies need in a global market.

The American Forest and Paper Association, representing members that manufacture more than 80 percent of the paper, wood, and forest products produced in the United States, provides certification for its members through its Sustainable Forestry Initiative. The initiative requires adherence to an exacting set of management criteria, but does not involve individual third-party verification. By contrast, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) provides independently verified certification based on its Principles and Criteria for Forest Management.

FSC is an international nonprofit organization of representatives from environmental and social groups, the timber trade and the forestry profession, indigenous people’s organizations, community forestry groups and forest product certification organizations. It uses independent, accredited certification bodies to conduct impartial, detailed assessments of forest operations at the request of landowners. Forest operations that are found to conform to FSC standards receive a certificate that enables the landowner to bring product to market as “certified wood” using the FSC trademark logo.

Despite the potential marketing advantages of certified wood, many small forest landowners cannot afford the expense of complying with FSC standards and applying for third-party certification, especially given its uncertain competitive advantages. Some nonprofit organizations are working to overcome this barrier. For example, with a grant from the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, Vermont Family Forests (VFF) has developed a community-based forestry program that independently verifies the use of sustainable forestry practices “from stump to shelf.”

VFF’s program shares the conventional certification program goals of promoting sustainable forest management, improving the financial returns for family forests, and increasing the availability of locally grown, sustainably produced forest products. However, it also strives to make green certification affordable. After creating and adopting a set of voluntary timber management practices designed to protect site productivity, water quality, and biological diversity, VFF in 1998 provided 31 family forest owners with affordable access to independent green certification by SmartWood®. Their forestlands range from 32 to 1,757 acres and total 4,718 forested acres in nine towns.

## FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) accredits independent certification bodies throughout the world to conduct impartial, detailed assessments of forest operations at the request of landowners. These assessments are based on FSC's "Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship." Forest operations found to be in conformance with FSC standards receive a certificate that enables the landowner to market its product as certified wood with the FSC trademark logo.

Accredited certification bodies also verify and certify chain of custody systems for products from certified forests, and may issue sub-licenses allowing the use of the FSC name and trademark on certified forest products. FSC has accredited two entities in the United States: the Rainforest Alliance Smart Wood Program and Scientific Certification Systems.

**CONTACTS:** *Forest Stewardship Council* • [fscoax@fscoax.org](mailto:fscoax@fscoax.org) • [www.fscoax.org/principal.htm](http://www.fscoax.org/principal.htm)

*Rainforest Alliance Smart Wood Program* • [www.smartwood.org](http://www.smartwood.org)

Richard Donovan • 802/434-5491 • [info@smartwood.org](mailto:info@smartwood.org)

61 Millet St. • Goodwin Baker Building • Richmond, VT 05477

*Scientific Certification Systems* • [www.scs1.com](http://www.scs1.com)

Robert Hrubes • 510/832-1415 • [rhrubes@igc.org](mailto:rhrubes@igc.org)

Park Plaza Building • 1939 Harrison Street, Suite 400 • Oakland, CA 94612-3532

More recently, VFF developed an Ecological Forestry Fund to provide cost-share assistance to landowners for forest management planning, erosion control, and boundary line maintenance. VFF also works with private consulting foresters, ecologists, and other resource professionals to identify sources of technical assistance for landowners interested in enrolling their lands in VFF's certified land base.

In addition to providing certification, the VFF community-based forestry program builds networks among its certified family forests and local secondary wood product manufacturers. VFF surveyed local wood products manufacturers and published a listing of available services, and then developed an ambitious business plan to educate landowners; encourage sustainable practices; provide affordable green certification; demonstrate local value-added equipment, facilities, and services; and develop markets for green forest products.

**CONTACTS:** *Vermont Family Forests* • [www.familyforests.org](http://www.familyforests.org) • David Brynn, Director  
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*Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund* • [www.vsjf.org](http://www.vsjf.org) • Wayne Fawbush, Executive Director  
58 East State Street, Suite 5 • Montpelier, Vermont 05602-3044 • 802/828-5474 • [wayne@vsjf.org](mailto:wayne@vsjf.org)

## VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT MARKET DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants (VADG) encourage independent producers of agricultural commodities to further refine these products increasing their value to end users. A separate part of the program also aims to collect, disseminate, and coordinate information on value-added processing for independent producers and processors.

The grants for independent producers facilitate greater participation in markets for value-added agricultural commodities and the creation of new markets for value-added products. They can be used to conduct feasibility analyses, develop business plans, develop marketing plans, or conduct other types of studies to help establish a viable value-added business venture. Grants also can be used to establish working capital accounts to fund operations before a venture has sufficient cash flow from operations. These funds can be used to pay salaries, utilities and other operating costs; to finance inventories; to purchase office equipment, computers, and supplies; and to finance other related activities necessary to establish alliances or business ventures that allow producers to better compete in domestic or international markets for value-added products.

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*[www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm)*

### Sustainable Woods Cooperative

Forestry cooperatives can pool the resources of forest landowners to improve the condition of the landscape, add value to local forest products, and promote the region's economic development. The Sustainable Woods Cooperative (SWC) of southwestern Wisconsin combines its members' certified forest management with a cooperative ownership structure for sales of certified wood products from members' forests. SWC's members include 150 private landowners in eleven counties that together built a sawmill and hardwood manufacturing facility to produce and market certified wood products. They collaborate with two other cooperatives: the Hiawatha Sustainable Woods Cooperative with more than 80 members and the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative with more than 35 members. Together they form the largest forest cooperative in the Midwest.

SWC members adopt forestry plans that meet the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council for third-party certification. According to SWC, the practice of sustainable management "leads to a full range of forest age classes and species and main-

tains the forest's ability to produce all values and products, including timber, fish and wildlife habitat, clean water, carbon storage, recreation, and biodiversity."<sup>38</sup>

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded SWC a \$330,000 grant to help advance forestry practices that benefit the region's landowners through its collaboration with the Hiawatha and Kickapoo cooperatives. The grant is supporting market development for sustainably harvested wood; the technological infrastructure for the three co-ops to communicate and share inventory information; development of member communication and services; and improved production efficiency. SWC asserts, "Our aim is to allow proven sales demand to pull us forward, then scaling production to meet that growing demand. At the same time, we are moving to make it as simple as possible for landowners to join in and for consumers to buy the sustainably harvested wood that comes from member lands. This will help strengthen the fabric of the economies and the woodlands across southwestern Wisconsin."

**CONTACT: Sustainable Woods Cooperative** • [www.sustainablewoods.com](http://www.sustainablewoods.com)  
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## RESERVING A CRITICAL MASS OF FARM LAND

Countless small family farms have vanished from the landscape, many succumbing to rising costs, falling prices, high taxes, and the ready profit of selling to land developers. However, some farms that might continue operating simply cannot survive because the agricultural infrastructure is disappearing around them. As area farms one by one convert to residential development, a shrinking market forces farm equipment suppliers and processing facilities out of business, thus eliminating services for the farms left behind. At the same time, encroaching housing developments produce automobile traffic that is not compatible with farm machinery, and residential neighbors who complain of the noise and odors that farms produce. Eventually, under these conditions, individual farms no longer can operate in isolation.

Communities that value a rural landscape can take steps to make an agricultural economy viable and keep farms in business. Subsidies and conservation easements certainly help, but many agricultural communities need thoughtful planning that accommodates the special needs of farm production and marketing.

## COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Community Food Projects are designed to increase food security in communities by assessing strengths, establishing linkages, and creating new systems. Federal grants to support Community Food Projects aim to meet the needs of low-income people by increasing their access to fresher, more nutritious food supplies; increasing the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and promoting comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. Projects should:

- develop linkages between two or more sectors of the food system;
- support the development of entrepreneurial projects;
- develop innovative linkages between the for-profit and non-profit food sectors; and
- encourage long-term planning activities and multi-system, interagency approaches.

These grants are intended to help eligible private nonprofit entities that need a one-time infusion of federal assistance to establish and carry out multi-purpose community food projects. Projects are funded from \$10,000-\$250,000 for periods of one to three years, and require a dollar for dollar match in resources. Funds have been authorized through fiscal 2002 at \$2.5 million per year.

**CONTACT:** U.S. Department of Agriculture • [www.reeusda.gov/crgam/cfp/community.htm](http://www.reeusda.gov/crgam/cfp/community.htm)  
CSREES, Stop 2241 • 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W. • Washington, D.C. 20250-2241  
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### Maine Farms Project

In Maine, many family farms have folded under the pressure of property taxes and the expense of purchasing new equipment and infrastructure to comply with environmental regulations and operate in a more sustainable way. According to a report by Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), a nonprofit community development corporation, "farmers are often heavily invested in equipment and facilities inappropriate for new and different practices. They also have little access to alternative marketing channels needed to get a good return from sustainably grown products." Yet Maine has many key elements of a strong farm economy — infrastructure such as grain and equipment stores, metal repair shops, and know-how; large tracts of underused farmland; and a small core of organic farms and specialty processors.

To take advantage of the region's assets, CEI set out to help make sustainable practices more economically viable, focusing on flexible production networks, cooperative marketing organized by a third party, and innovative community compacts.<sup>39</sup> With a

planning grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Program, CEI created the Maine Farms Project to increase local food production as a way to build local self-reliance. The project integrates farms, processors, markets, restaurants, and food pantries with one another, and ties the food system into broader community development strategies. The Maine Farms Project partners with other organizations, such as the Maine Coalition for Food Security and the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, on activities involving market development, business assistance, financing, and policy. Some of its farm services include:

**Farms for the Future** — Providing selected farms with business services leading to development of an investment-grade business plan and the chance to obtain a grant of up to \$25,000 to implement the plan.

**Image Building Concepts** — Offering professional assistance in creating logos, brochures, labels, and other promotional materials that enhance a farm’s image or help it access new markets.

**Financing** — Issuing loans to farms and food-related ventures through various loan pools such as the Kennedy Organic Farm Loan Fund, which offers below-market rate loans to organic farms (or farms transitioning to organic production).

Several project activities involve working with food stores to create community markets that give area farmers an outlet for organic and local produce without having to meet the requirements of large supermarkets — such as grading products, using standard crates, and applying uniform pricing code stickers).

**CONTACT: CEI/Maine Farms Project** • [www.ceimaine.org/farm/home.htm](http://www.ceimaine.org/farm/home.htm)  
John F. Piotti, MFP Director • 207/948-3335 • [jp@ceimaine.org](mailto:jp@ceimaine.org)  
Unity Community Center (2nd Floor) • School Street, P.O. Box 188 • Unity, Maine 04988

## Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Initiative

In 1974, Congress established the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) in a region where agriculture had been in decline for a century. To reverse this decline within the park boundaries, the CVNP has launched the Countryside Initiative to rehabilitate and revitalize approximately 30 to 35 of the old farms that operated in the valley from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. According to the CVNP:

*Although the old farms within the boundaries of CVNP have been protected from the concrete and asphalt blanket now covering their counterparts in surrounding suburbs, most park farms have continued their long slide into disuse and disrepair — and have quickly become overgrown with weeds and brush.*

*The distinctive look and feel of a working agricultural landscape is largely gone, scenic vistas are increasingly obscured, and the park as a whole feels more and more closed in.*

The Countryside Initiative will allow the park to better fulfill its congressionally mandated mission of “preserving and protecting for public use and enjoyment the historic, scenic, natural, and recreational values of the Cuyahoga River and adjacent lands of the Cuyahoga Valley.” It also will showcase alternative farming methods that could be important components of smart growth at the urban fringe throughout the United States. These methods promote sustainable agriculture that is economically profitable, socially responsible, and ecologically healthy.

According to the CVNP, sustainable farming usually produces high-quality specialty fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, as well as meat and dairy products for direct, local, retail sale to regular customers and friends. This eliminates the middle men who normally receive 80 cents of every food dollar for transportation, storage, processing, distribution, advertising, and retailing. Sustainable farming also strictly limits the use of conventional agricultural chemicals.

Although CVNP’s initiative to protect its rural landscape is unconventional in America, farming in national parks is common in Europe. For example, more than 90 percent of England’s national parkland is privately owned and most of that is farmed. The CVNP notes, “Not only is it considered natural and normal to live in parks there, farming is considered the only practical way to maintain the openness, beauty, and diversity of the countryside.”

The National Park Service owns 19,000 of the CVNP’s 33,000 acres, where just 450 acres were devoted to agriculture in 2000. In 2001, the National Park Service offered for lease five farms ranging in size from 12 to 61 acres, and eventually will revitalize about 1,500 acres of farmland. The selection process favors certified organic production or similarly sustainable noncertified production systems. Under Congressional Acts 16 U.S.C. 1a-2(k) and U.S.C. 470 h-3, properties under the initiative may be leased for up to 60 years, enabling lessees to fully amortize capital investments over the period of the lease and implement land stewardship practices that require years for development and cost recovery. Leases are transferable, subject to approval by the national park, prior to expiration. At the termination of a lease, by law it must be competitively re-offered at fair market value rent.

In 1999, a nonprofit organization called the Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy was established to help develop and manage the Countryside Initiative. The conser-

vancy provides technical assistance on sustainable agriculture, recruits and evaluates prospective farm leases, and evaluates and monitors each farm's annual operating plan.

In bringing the Countryside Initiative to fruition, the conservancy has found that the greatest challenge is not conceiving the program or enlisting prospective farmers, but rather the hurdles and barriers of 17 federal laws. The framers of these laws never envisioned the Countryside Initiative's program; nor did they foster regulations that recognize the initiative's many environmental, economic, and social benefits. For example, even on a "fast-track," completion of the initiative's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is taking more than 18 months, consuming the time of three to four National Park Service staff on a nearly full-time basis and dozens of others who have contributed hundreds of hours to the process. Three of the initial five farms offered for lease have gone forward in advance of the EIS completion, but other offerings must be delayed until the EIS is approved.

**CONTACT:** *Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy • Darwin Kelsey, Executive Director*  
2179 Everett Road • Peninsula, OH 44264 • 330/657-2532 • [darwin\\_kelsey@partner.nps.gov](mailto:darwin_kelsey@partner.nps.gov)  
[www.nps.gov/cuva/management/countryside/](http://www.nps.gov/cuva/management/countryside/)

## Agricultural Planning

Land-use planning that preserves farmland plays a key role in sustaining a viable agricultural economy. Pennsylvania and Maryland lead the nation in the number of farms and acres of farmland protected from development. Both states have devised ways to determine priorities for conservation, provide funding for conservation easements, and encourage sustainable management practices on protected agricultural land.

Pennsylvania owes its success in large part to the work of the bureau of farmland preservation. The state uses agricultural security areas (ASAs) to protect quality farmland from urbanization, providing participating farmers with special consideration regarding local ordinances affecting farming activities, nuisance complaints, and review of farmland condemnation by state and local agencies. Farmers who collectively own at least 250 acres can petition their township supervisors to create an ASA.

An ASA also qualifies land for consideration under the state's easement purchase program. Established in 1988, the program enables state, county, and local governments to purchase conservation easements from owners of quality farmland. A state board oversees the program, which is carried out by agricultural land preservation boards appointed by participating counties. Farms are chosen for easement purchases based on the following criteria:

**Farmland Quality:** Farms must be at least 50 acres in size, and at least half the tract must be either harvested cropland, pasture, or grazing land.

**Stewardship:** Farms are rated on the use of conservation and best management practices to manage nutrients and control soil erosion and sedimentation.

**Likelihood of Conversion:** Farms are scored on their chances of being converted from agricultural use based on factors such as their proximity to sewer and water lines, the extent and type of nonagricultural uses nearby, the amount and type of agricultural use in the vicinity.

Maryland's farmland conservation programs not only protect farmland, but strategically protect contiguous land areas with environmental significance and the high-quality soil and the agricultural infrastructure needed to sustain farming communities. The effort began in the 1970s when the state legislature created the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program (MALPF) to ensure the continued production of food and fiber and to help curb the random expansion of urban development. Today, MALPF's efforts are complemented by several other state programs such as Rural Legacy, which encourages voluntary conservation of the state's most valuable agricultural, forestry, natural, and cultural resources, and GreenPrint, which is designed to protect lands critical to long-term ecological health. As of June 2001, the three programs had protected a total of 288,300 acres.

MALPF establishes agricultural preservation districts that are governed by agreements between landowners and the foundation. The agreements acknowledge that farming is the preferred use of the land, require the landowner to keep the land in agriculture for at least five years, and prohibit the subdivision and development of the land for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes. Agreements may be extended indefinitely without renewal, and landowners retain the right to sell a perpetual development rights easement. Although they are not parties to the agreements, counties approve and monitor them. Many counties also use these district agreements as a condition for local tax benefits or negotiate their own agreements with district landowners as a condition for local tax benefits.

Agricultural preservation districts must cover at least 50 contiguous acres, but owners of properties of any size may petition to create a district if the land is contiguous to an existing district. The land must be in use for producing food or fiber or have production capability, and also meet certain soil quality standards as measured by the USDA Soil Conservation Service Land Classification System.

Funding for MALPF is composed of a portion of the state property transfer tax, which is assessed on all real property transfers, and the agricultural land transfer tax, which is imposed on all transfers of title in agricultural land taken out of production. The foundation receives two-thirds of the amount collected by each county, and the local jurisdiction retains the remaining one-third for agricultural land preservation purposes. However, counties that have certified local agricultural land preservation programs retain three-quarters of the agricultural land transfer tax.

MALPF and the Maryland Office of Planning jointly administer the state certification program for counties that can demonstrate that they have an effective program to preserve agriculturally viable farmland. Certification not only allows counties to keep a larger share of the agricultural land transfer tax revenue, it also requires counties to think more comprehensively about farmland preservation by identifying areas for targeted preservation, establishing acreage goals, and combining easement purchases with other tools such as agricultural zoning, transfer of development rights, right-to-farm policies, and the designation of agriculture as the best use of land.

Notwithstanding its success in preserving agricultural land, MALPF's competitive bidding process has produced some "scattershot" results for several reasons. Because the state system for ranking applications favors discounted land in order to get "the biggest bang for its buck," it can result in preserving noncontiguous lands. Moreover, although MALPF allows counties to use their own ranking systems that may favor expanding contiguous blocks of farmland, most counties still choose to use the state ranking approach. The few counties that have substituted their own ranking systems generally include contiguity or targeting as just one criterion among many factors. In addition, one of the program's goals is to protect farms with the most productive soils, which are not necessarily concentrated in large blocks of land, but rather are scattered across the state.

The MALPF Task Force, appointed by Governor Parris Glendening, is evaluating the possibility of compelling counties to target easements to create and expand contiguous blocks of farmland. In addition, some counties and private organizations have built on MALPF's success by working to target agricultural land more strategically. For example, the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) mapped an agricultural security corridor for focusing its land protection efforts and underscoring the dynamic relationship between the health of the industry and changes in land use. The corridor encompasses roughly 400,000 acres of the Eastern Shore, characterized by the best agricultural soils, a concentration of agricultural infrastructure, and extensive agricul-

tural easements. The corridor also includes extensive networks of natural resources: woodlands, waterways, wetlands, and animal and plant habitats.

Maryland's Rural Legacy Program also targets specific areas by redirecting existing state land preservation funds to limit the adverse impacts of sprawl on agricultural lands and natural resources. The program purchases conservation easements for large contiguous tracts of agricultural, forest, and natural areas that are subject to development pressure, and obtains fee interests in open space for public access and use. For fiscal years 1998 through 2002, the state authorized Rural Legacy Program funding totaling \$71.3 million.

The creation of three Rural Legacy areas in the Eastern Shore Agricultural Security Corridor provides a good example of strategic land conservation and multi-agency cooperation. ESLC worked with five counties to submit a joint application to the Rural Legacy Program to create the three areas. One of these, the Sassafras River Rural Legacy Area, encompasses approximately 12,500 acres bordering land that already has been preserved by MALPF. The area contains some of the most important soils for agricultural production in the counties and supports working family farmers, dairy herds, and crops of corn, soybeans, wheat, and small grains. The area's proposed Rural Legacy Plan preserves land with the most productive soils for agriculture, important designated forested and wetland habitats, buffer streams from pollution, and habitat for rare, threatened, or endangered species. It acquires easements next to or within a mile of existing preserved lands to form large contiguous blocks of protected land. The fiscal 2000 plan aimed to begin stabilizing farmland conversion in three to five years.

**CONTACTS: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture**

Bureau of Farmland Preservation • 2301 North Cameron Street • Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408  
[http://sites.state.pa.us/PA\\_Exec/Agriculture/bureaus/farmland\\_protection/](http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Agriculture/bureaus/farmland_protection/)

**Maryland Dept. of Agriculture** • [www.mda.state.md.us/agland/main.htm](http://www.mda.state.md.us/agland/main.htm)

Jim Conrad • Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation • [conradja@mda.state.md.us](mailto:conradja@mda.state.md.us)  
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway • Annapolis, Maryland 21401 • 410/841-5860

**Eastern Shore Land Conservancy** • [www.eslc.org](http://www.eslc.org)

124 Wye Narrows Drive • P.O. Box 169 • Queenstown, MD 21658 • 410/827-9756

**Maryland Department of Natural Resources** • Pam Bush • Rural Legacy Program • 410/260-8403  
[www.op.state.md.us/smartgrowth/legacy.htm](http://www.op.state.md.us/smartgrowth/legacy.htm) [pbush@dnr.state.md.us](mailto:pbush@dnr.state.md.us)

## Maryland Transfer of Development Rights Program

Montgomery County, Maryland, has an impressive record of maintaining a critical mass of agricultural land in an agricultural reserve through rural density transfer zon-

ing that allows for the transfer of development rights (TDR). TDRs enable landowners in the agricultural reserve to sell their development rights to landowners in a receiving area that is designated for growth. In a county that has undergone explosive housing development in recent decades, 70,000 acres of farmland still remain — enough to support a healthy agricultural economy.

Prior to adoption of the county's 1980 Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Open Space, an average of 3,000 acres of farmland was developed each year; from 1980 to 1998, a total of just 5,500 acres has been developed.<sup>40</sup> The plan created the 93,000-acre agricultural reserve, where land may be developed at a density of one lot per 25 acres. In addition to 70,000 acres of farmland, the reserve includes 20,000 acres of publicly-owned parkland and or previously developed rural villages.

Through transfer of development rights (TDR), landowners in the reserve can sell development rights for development in receiving areas that have been designated for growth at the rate of one TDR per five acres. Thus, instead of public or nonprofit entities purchasing conservation easements in the agricultural reserve, other landowners purchase TDRs so that they can build in a growth area at a higher density than base zoning would allow. To date, TDRs, state programs, and county purchases of development rights for 6,268 acres have conserved more than 53,000 acres of farmland in the reserve.<sup>41</sup> The County Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board is working to protect the remainder with easements by 2005.

Montgomery County created a TDR bank to buy TDRs and sell them to developers and private landowners. Such public TDR banks help maintain minimum prices for TDR credits, provide buyers when the market is slow, and keep the TDR market competitive. They also can facilitate the transfer of credits where the sending and receiving areas are in separate jurisdictions.<sup>42</sup>

**CONTACT:** *Montgomery County Department of Economic Development • [www.emontgomery.org/ded](http://www.emontgomery.org/ded)  
John P. Zawitoski • Agricultural Services Division • Agricultural Land Preservation Programs  
18410 Muncaster Road • Derwood, Md 20855 • 301/590-2831*

## BRIDGING THE RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE

A fundamental smart growth principle is the interdependence of rural and urban communities. Dense, mixed-use development allows residential and business growth without consuming rural working land and open space, and creates markets for resources and products of rural economies. Working landscapes provide recreational

areas, environmental benefits, and resource-based products for urban communities. Yet in many cases conflicting priorities and cultural differences prevent rural and urban communities from recognizing and benefitting from their interdependence. Cooperation, even at the very geographic point where rural and urban development collide, can ensure each side continues to support and benefit from the other.

### **New York City Watershed Agricultural Program**

A landmark agreement between the farmers of the Catskills in New York State and environmental regulators in New York City vividly illustrates the mutual benefits rural and urban communities can provide and their implications for rural development. The agreement spurred the establishment of a farmer-led program for sustaining an agricultural economy, reducing urbanization pressures, and protecting water quality through use of agricultural best management practices — all with the financial assistance of the city that relies on the watershed for a clean water supply.

When in 1986 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) required filtration for all U.S. drinking water systems, the New York City water supply system faced costs of approximately \$6 billion for construction and \$300 million annually for operation and maintenance. The city's system is the largest surface storage and supply complex in the world, with a daily yield of 1.4 billion gallons of water. In response to EPA's requirements, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) asked the agency for an opportunity to seek a watershed protection alternative to filtration. Ninety percent of the city's water comes from the Catskill and Delaware system in Delaware, Greene, Schoharie, Sullivan, and Ulster counties west of the Hudson River. This watershed is an area of primarily agricultural and forested land that faces development pressure.

NYCDEP proposed a series of regulations to severely restrict agricultural runoff, which likely would have devastated livestock agriculture and led to the closure of farms. Thus, by damaging the region's agricultural economy, the regulations could have accelerated the watershed's urbanization and hastened the need for water filtration. The confrontation between city regulators and Catskill farmers that ensued led to their agreement that maintaining well-managed agriculture in the region is the best way to protect the watershed.

In 1991, an Ad Hoc Task Force on Agriculture and New York City Watershed Regulations collaborated on policy recommendations called the Brown Book, which states:

*In place of regulation, farmers will be encouraged, through demonstration projects and a range of cost-sharing and other incentives, to work with their Soil and*

*Water Conservation District, Cooperative Extension and Soil Conservation Service to develop individual farm plans to control point and non-point sources of pollution. These plans will cover the entire spectrum of farm management, including practices to improve farm profitability and sustainability. It is the Task Force's and New York City's intention that not one farm will be put out of business by this program. While actively participating in the development and implementation of their Whole Farm Plans, farmers will not have to pay for the planning, implementation, maintenance or operation of Best Management Practices recommended to meet the water quality objectives of New York City's outlined in the Whole Farm Plan.<sup>43</sup>*

This strategy led to the creation of the New York City Watershed Agricultural Program, implemented by the farmer-led Watershed Agricultural Council, a nonprofit incorporated in 1993 that is fully funded by NYCDEP. In the program's first phase, ten farms piloted a whole farm plan approach including management and structural measures to reduce pathogen, nutrient, sediment, and pesticide runoff. The second phase involved recruiting volunteer farmers to participate in the program and develop whole-farm plans based on U.S. Department of Agriculture standards. With cost-share assistance from the city for implementing best management practices, the Watershed Agricultural Council achieved an 85 percent participation rate within five years, increasing to 91 percent today.

Forestry leaders created a complementary program in 1996, designed to train foresters and loggers in preventing nonpoint source pollution. With the *Green Book* of policy recommendations, the Watershed Forestry Task Force laid out a blueprint for the Watershed Forestry Program. Its mission statement: "To improve both the short and long-term economic viability of forest landownerships and the forest products industry to the benefit of local communities in the New York City water supply watersheds in ways compatible with water quality protection and sustainable forest management."

The 1996 Watershed Agreement among the watershed communities, environmental organizations, New York City, New York State, and U.S. EPA identifies the elements of the city's program to protect its drinking water supply and the economic vitality of the watershed communities. It reflects the partnership among the parties to implement a variety of watershed protection programs for land acquisition, watershed regulation, watershed protection and partnership, and the creation of a Watershed Protection and Partnership Council.<sup>44</sup>

In 1998, the Watershed Agricultural Council and New York City launched a conservation easement program to purchase development rights on watershed farms, which

## CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a joint, state and federal land retirement program dedicated to reducing significant agriculture-related environmental effects. The program coordinates the use of federal and nonfederal resources to improve water quality, control erosion, and protect wildlife habitat. Through financial incentives, CREP encourages farmers and ranchers to voluntarily enroll in contracts of 10 to 15 years to remove lands from agricultural production. The program's current enrollment is 291,830 acres.

The average cost of the conservation reserve program nationwide is about \$43 per acre per year, but the amount paid to participants in CREP varies depending on local land rental rates. The total amount paid to a farmer considers the base rental rate, cost of installing conservation practices, annual maintenance costs, and any special incentives. For example, the federal government pays a 20 percent annual bonus above the rental payment for certain high priority practices such as the installation of filter strips and riparian buffers. States and other program participants may provide other funding to further encourage participation in the program.

**CONTACT:** *U.S. Department of Agriculture • [www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crep.htm](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crep.htm)  
Farm Service Agency • Conservation and Environmental Programs Division*

in 2001 completed easements on two farms totaling 770 acres and signed contracts to purchase easements on four more farms totaling 1,500 acres. Also in 1998 the council and city entered into an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to establish riparian buffers through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The \$10.4-million initiative's goal is to retire highly erodible cropland and establish a total of 5,000 acres of forest buffers to protect 165 miles of streams in the Catskill/Delaware watershed. Under the agreement, USDA pays up to 70 percent of the program costs, as well as rental and extra incentive payments to farmers over fifteen years.<sup>45</sup> In addition, New York City has purchased more than 25,000 acres of undeveloped watershed land.

City, state, and federal commitments to the watershed total \$1.4 billion. These include the city's commitment of \$666 million for land acquisition and partnership programs and \$550 million for infrastructure and water quality improvements; the state's commitment of \$53 million to foster partnership initiatives and aid in the implementation of the Watershed Agreement; and the federal government's commitment of up to \$105 million under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

**CONTACT:** *Watershed Agricultural Council • [www.nycwatershed.org](http://www.nycwatershed.org)  
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# iv. coordinating regional development

**C**oordinated land-use planning poses a challenge for major cities with full-blown planning and zoning departments and financial support for technology, consultants, and community outreach. Small communities that lack these resources may be unable to conduct comprehensive planning at all. Even worse, their efforts may be subsumed by the development decisions and pressures of neighboring communities that function without benefit of regional coordination. Some federal and state programs aim to strengthen local land-use planning by supporting coordination across agencies, sectors, and political jurisdictions.

## PLANNING FOR COUNTYWIDE LAND USE

Countywide land-use planning provides numerous advantages for rural development. In addition to tapping the resources of a relatively large and diverse area, county planning also can foster consideration of rural, suburban, and urban development needs and characteristics in concert. Thus, the complementary nature of rural and urban growth can be fully appreciated and accommodated in a coordinated plan.

### Loudoun County General Plan

Loudoun County, Virginia, recently adopted a 20-year general plan that endeavors to balance the conservation needs of farmland and open space with the housing demands of a continued explosive rate of population growth — which hit 97 percent from 1990 to 2000. The county was able to resolve often contentious issues in part because most of its citizens endorsed planning that emphasizes slowing growth rates and enhancing the quality of life. The result is a revised general plan that provides the basis for evaluating land-development proposals and amending zoning and subdivision ordinances to implement the plan's goals.

Following extensive public meetings as the plan developed in 2000 and 2001, the planning commission conducted more than 17 hours of public hearings on draft revised plan and then met weekly for nearly four months to refine its policies. The commission approved and forwarded a final version to the county board of supervisors on May 1, 2001.

The plan establishes three distinct policy areas: suburban, transition, and rural. The Suburban Policy Area, including four of the county's largest communities, is expected to continue building out in a suburban pattern over the next twenty years. It will be characterized by a pattern of residential neighborhoods, town centers, and regional business centers linked by a network of roads, linear parks and open spaces. The Transition Policy Area, separating the suburban and rural areas, is not a reserve area for future development. Instead, it will provide a permanent visual and spatial transition between the suburban development in the eastern part of the county and rural development in the west. The Transition Policy Area incorporates a blend of rural and suburban development features and strikes a balance between the built and natural environment. All development within the area will be clustered with 50 to 70 percent open space.

The Rural Policy Area encompasses the western part of the county outside of the towns and Joint Land Management Areas (JLMAs) around certain towns. (JLMAs set the boundaries of water and sewer extension.) It covers 227,904 acres, or roughly two-thirds of the county's 333,558 acres, and includes seven incorporated towns and 12 villages (where land use is governed by the county). In recent years, residential subdivision development has accelerated beside the farms and villages of this 240-year-old farming community, weakening the rural economy and the area's historic character. According to the plan:

*Between 1993 and 2000, the County received 158 applications to rezone or subdivide more than 26,600 acres in the Rural Policy Area. The landowners requested densities to allow more than 3,400 units on that land. The pace of development activity in the rural area increased between 1999 and 2000, when the County received 74 applications to allow up to 1,714 dwelling units on more than 9,528 acres. If the conversion of rural land to residential uses were to continue at the pace experienced in the last two years, almost half of the Rural Policy Area (100,000 acres) would be in residential use by 2020.<sup>46</sup>*

The plan calls for curbing residential development in the Rural Policy Area. In the area's "Southern Tier," which is the center of the county's equine industry, development den-

sity will be held to one dwelling unit per 50 acres, with the option to cluster residential lots of up to three acres in size at the equivalent of one dwelling unit per 20 acres. For the remainder of the area, the plan calls for a development density of one dwelling unit per 20 acres, with the option to cluster residential lots of up to three acres at one unit per ten acres and retaining 70 percent of the open space. The county will establish conservation design and rural design standards for the area, keeping new development in and around rural villages visually compatible with the existing design.

These limits also will protect the scenic quality of the Rural Policy Area's roads, including 300 miles of dirt roads, which cannot accommodate the demands created by the residential density of three-acre lots. The plan asserts that the state and county could not afford to upgrade such roads for higher densities even if they chose to because the county's limited road improvement funding is needed to address traffic concerns in the Suburban Policy Area.

According to the plan, the county will support the area's agricultural economy through policies including:

- Creating new programs and amendments to the zoning ordinance to facilitate the sale of farm products and related products, promote rural tourism, and allow development of rural conference centers, private camps and parks, and similar low intensity, rural land uses.
- Allowing a range of on-farm uses by right (i.e., allowed under a zoning district classification without the need for a special permit), subject to performance standards, to provide additional sources of income, such as farm product sales and services related to agriculture and home-based businesses that are compatible with the rural landscape.
- Working with community banks to develop an agriculture linked-deposit program that increases the available capital for expanding and/or upgrading farm operations.
- Facilitating the expansion of rural hospitality businesses, such as bed and breakfasts and country inns, that preserve the rural character while offering services that support rural tourism.
- Encouraging the ownership and boarding of horses, for both commercial and recreational use, by promoting land development practices that preserve large tracts of land appropriate for grazing, growing hay, and riding horses; including the equine industry in certain property tax incentives; and supporting the establishment of easements to create an equestrian trail network.

- Prohibiting new commercial uses that are not compatible with the agricultural land-use pattern — including golf courses — outside of towns except by special exception.

After the board of supervisors adopted the revised plan in July 2001, the county in January 2002 contracted with a real estate and land-use consulting firm to amend the county's zoning ordinance, facilities standards manual, land subdivision development ordinance, and related regulatory documents. The contractor will devise amendments that are needed to make the county zoning map conform to the policies of the plan.

**CONTACT:** *Department of Building and Development* • [www.loudoun.gov](http://www.loudoun.gov)  
*Kendra Briechle, Rural Planner, Loudoun County, Virginia* • 703/777-0397 • [kbriechl@loudoun.gov](mailto:kbriechl@loudoun.gov)  
*1 Harrison Street, SE 3rd Floor • Leesburg, VA 20177*

## Minnesota Community-Based Planning

State governments typically avoid even the appearance of dictating when, much less how, local jurisdictions should conduct land-use planning. However, in recent years several states have created incentives and assistance that encourage localities to plan in accordance with statewide policies and goals. These incentives can enable communities with limited resources to make planning a priority and ensure a degree of consistency across local jurisdictions.

Minnesota's 1997 Community-Based Planning Act provided a variety of incentives for local planning beyond the Twin Cities metropolitan area, including providing funding for pilot planning projects, creating technology and planning grants, and directing the Minnesota Planning Office to review community-based plans for consistency with eleven state goals. These goals address citizen participation; cooperation among communities; economic development strategies; environmental conservation; livable community design; affordable housing; efficient use of transportation infrastructure; a framework for land-use planning; thoughtful public investments; public education on growth impacts; and sustainable development.

Minnesota Planning received 42 applications for planning assistance in 1998 and another 38 applications in 1999. Under the act, the agency awarded \$1.25 million in planning and technology grants to eight initiatives in 13 counties. A total of 16 of the state's 87 counties, as well as numerous cities, townships, and other local governments, were participating in community-based planning by 2000.<sup>47</sup> Despite the pro-

gram's popularity and success, concerns among some members of the legislature about intervening in local planning caused the act to sunset in June 2001.

Todd County received state planning grants in fiscal 1999 to support comprehensive planning for both the county and the city of Staples. These grants supplemented funding from the Central Minnesota Initiative Fund, which provided two grants in 1998 totaling \$10,000 and offered leadership training through its Healthy Communities Partnership. Other funding came from the Blandin Foundation, county funds, and in-kind donations from hundreds of citizens.

Situated in the center of the state, Todd County's land area totals approximately 631,280 acres with more than 27,000 acres of lakes. From 1980 to 1990, its seasonal cabin inventory jumped more than 50 percent, from 1,273 to 1,932, and rural residential development annually averages about 60 new dwelling units. According to the comprehensive plan:

*Most often the rural residential sites have been created adjacent to County roads and in areas where there are marketable amenities such as the natural landscapes and forested areas. The first sites to develop have usually been the lots where relatively few development limitations exist. This type of rural residential land development tends to spread out over large areas in the County leaving large parcels in between with limited access and development potential. In addition, the scattered rural residential patterns can create greater numbers of land use conflicts for the County to sort out as rural residents often find agricultural activities incompatible from their perspective.<sup>48</sup>*

The plan concluded that with just 2.3 percent of its land occupied by urban and rural development, the county had a prime opportunity to protect important community resources and guide new development to conform to community goals. Based on a countywide survey, these goals included protecting open space with wildlife and wetland areas, and preserving agricultural land. The plan's land use, natural resources, and agriculture goals include updating and enforcing the county zoning ordinance; coordinating local plans and regulations; promoting land use practices that protect surface water quality; providing incentives to support a strong agricultural economy; and developing a forest resources plan.

The plan recommends developing and encouraging enactment of county and state laws, including tax reforms, to retain and promote agriculture. It also calls for ordinances to protect viable agricultural areas from scattered rural residential development. The plan includes recommendations for protecting rural and small town char-

## BLANDIN FOUNDATION

The Blandin Foundation works to strengthen rural Minnesota communities through grants as well as discussion forums for state and community leaders and leadership training programs to help in addressing local concerns. The foundation partners with organizations throughout Minnesota on long-term projects and focuses its grant funding in four focus areas:

- Life-long Learning
- Diversity
- Leadership
- Economic Opportunity

**CONTACT: Blandin Foundation** • [www.blandinfooundation.org/grants.htm](http://www.blandinfooundation.org/grants.htm)  
100 North Pokegama Avenue • Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
218/326-0523 • [bfinfo@blandinfooundation.org](mailto:bfinfo@blandinfooundation.org)

acter while promoting economic opportunities, such as encouraging the location of residential subdivision in or immediately adjacent to the county's eleven cities; updating county subdivision regulations and zoning ordinances; and locating commercial and industrial sites in cities with public water and sewer systems.

Along with two planning grants, the Initiative Foundation provided Todd County citizens and members of the county comprehensive plan committee the opportunity to participate in its Healthy Communities Program. They attended six capacity-building training sessions, focusing on preparation, community building, visioning, assessment, planning and project implementation, and sustaining. The sessions helped the planning process assign priority to county assets and formulate a county vision statement. Through the Blandin Foundation's Community Investment Partnership program, the county organized community meetings and training sessions to set priorities and create vision statements. The foundation also sponsored a detailed community survey. These efforts fostered broad community participation in the plan.

**CONTACTS: Todd County Planning & Zoning Office** • [www.co.todd.mn.us/GIS/compplan\\_doc.htm](http://www.co.todd.mn.us/GIS/compplan_doc.htm)  
215 1st Avenue South • Long Prairie, MN 56347 • 320/732-4420 • [toddplan.zone@co.todd.mn.us](mailto:toddplan.zone@co.todd.mn.us)  
**Ekola and Associates LLC** • Lindberg Ekola • [ekola@meltel.net](mailto:ekola@meltel.net)  
434 East 7th Street North • Melrose, MN 56352 • 320/256-2112  
**Minnesota Planning, Community-Based Planning** • [www.mnplan.state.mn.us](http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us)  
658 Cedar St., Room 300 • St. Paul, MN 55155 • 651/297-2375

## FORGING REGIONAL COORDINATION

Some rural areas have special planning and development needs that emanate from their geographic characteristics. For example, the communities of remote forested

land may need assistance in maintaining a viable forest-products industry and preserving the character of small, resource-dependent towns. The communities in a watershed situated between rapidly growing metropolitan areas may need strategies to promote environmentally sensitive rural development in concert with complementary urban revitalization. Because such regions often cross the political boundaries of counties and municipalities, they can benefit from regional commissions or councils that help nurture their land conservation and development efforts.

## Tug Hill Commission

New York's Tug Hill Commission is dedicated to an area larger than the states of Delaware or Rhode Island — 2,100 square miles in one of the most remote sections of the Northeast. One-tenth of the area is composed of scattered public lands used for timber production, hunting, and recreation. The rest is privately owned working forests and farms. Tug Hill's 41 towns and 21 villages are home to 100,000 people, with just a few thousand in the area's densely forested, 800-square-mile core.

Established in 1972, the Tug Hill Commission is a nonregulatory state agency charged with building the capacity of local governments, organizations, and citizens to shape the region's environment and economy. The commission works through six programs.

**Technical Assistance:** Responds to hundreds of information requests each year on land-use law, budgeting, and court rulings.

**Geographic Information System (GIS):** Provides data on land use patterns, property ownership, natural resources, and more to assist local land use planning, natural resource management, and economic development projects.

**Workshops and Issue Papers:** Sponsors more than a dozen workshops each year to give local officials the latest information and tools for their work in zoning and planning, municipal budgeting, maintaining local roads, and other local issues. Publications summarize key local issues.

**Land Use Planning:** Upon request, helps communities upgrade their zoning, subdivision or other local land use regulations.

**Community Economic Development:** Provides technical assistance to local businesses to encourage "home grown" job retention through Main Street revitalization, parks, and community facilities. The commission helps find grants, loans, and other local funding for these projects possible.

**Natural Resource Management:** Assists local governments, forest landowners, wood products industries, sporting groups, and regional organizations on issues including watershed planning and protection, forest management methods and impacts, wind power generation, municipal solid waste applications for forestry and agriculture, and water quality monitoring.

In 1998, the commission had an annual budget of about \$800,000, two-thirds of its 1988 funding level. The state provided \$765,000, with the remainder from local contributors, grants, and fees. That year the commission helped Tug Hill communities obtain \$8 million in grants and \$12 million on low-interest loans for parks, downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and other community projects.

**CONTACT: Tug Hill Commission** • [www.tughill.org](http://www.tughill.org) • 315/785-2380/2570  
Dulles State Office Building • 317 Washington Street • Watertown, NY 13601-3782

## Connecticut River Watershed Council

The Connecticut River Watershed Council (CRWC) has embarked on an ambitious and lengthy process to bring people together to preserve the rural quality and renew the urban life of the lower Connecticut River valley, which spans the Connecticut-Massachusetts border. Known as “Tobacco Valley,” the area between greater Springfield and Hartford has undergone rapid transition as sprawl encroaches on agricultural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources.

CRWC worked with twelve of the valley’s communities to produce a report that identifies three major threats to their towns: the pollution of drinking and recreational waters; loss of open space, farms, and agriculture; and loss of rural character and environmental quality. The report also identified opportunities and made recommendations to address these threats by improving land use and curbing sprawl.

The council followed with an October 2001 Future Search Conference of 40 of the valley’s municipal, business, agricultural, transportation, environmental, and agricultural leaders. The invitation to the two-day meeting explained its objective: to create a strategy for conservation and development in the bi-state region that preserves the rural landscape while renewing the urban centers of Springfield and Hartford. The letter said, “We want you — the Valley’s business, nonprofit, agency, and community leaders — to set a course for future growth and then help implement the vision developed at the conference through your work and leadership.”

The conference produced a report, sent to 160 community leaders, which provides the basis for an outreach program to be conducted by a steering committee of the conference sponsors — CRWC, Northeast Utilities, the Capitol Region Council of Governments, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Working Lands Alliance, Communities Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

**CONTACT:** *Connecticut River Watershed Council, Inc.* • [www.ctriver.org](http://www.ctriver.org)  
*Whitty Sanford*, Associate Executive Director • 413/772-2020 • [crwc@crocker.com](mailto:crwc@crocker.com)  
15 Bank Row • Greenfield, MA 01027

## TARGETING SPRAWL HOT SPOTS

In some areas, unplanned, scattered development may not affect a region, county, or even municipality, but instead creates sprawl in “hot spots.” Interstate corridors in particular attract rapid growth by serving as channels for visitors and commerce. Housing developers favor these areas because they see an advantage in providing easy highway access. By targeting planning and technical assistance to such hot spots, state and private programs can help manage development that is beyond the capabilities or interests of local jurisdictions.

### Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs

Vermont’s Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) has taken steps to address sprawl hot spots, where according to the department, “The pattern is familiar: what begins as a small gas station quickly expands into a convenience store, paving the way for additional service stations and accessory retail stores and in some cases, big box retail power centers. These developments often impact natural resources, scenic viewsheds, local economies, and compact village settlements.”<sup>49</sup>

In 1998, Governor Howard Dean raised concerns about sprawl along Vermont’s interstate highways and initiated state review of development along the interstate corridors. The following year the governor asked DHCA to work with communities along the interstates to address land use planning and conservation efforts in key locations. In September 2001, he signed an executive order directing state agencies to promote conservation and appropriate development at interchange exits.<sup>50</sup>

DHCA has responded to Governor Dean’s initiative by classifying each of the state’s 52 interchanges on three interstate highways according to their viewsheds, natural and cultural resources, existing development patterns, and potential for develop-

ment. In 2000, the department received a \$300,000-Sustainable Development Challenge Grant from U.S. EPA to undertake community planning projects, including natural resource inventories, at four of these interchanges. The four projects, based in towns that are experiencing growth pressures, will explore development and conservation issues that are typical of interstate exit locations. The EPA project also is funding the creation of a design guidelines manual, overseen by an advisory committee composed of state officials, municipal and regional planning commissioners, regional marketing organizations, and the development community.

Through this project, DHCA collaborates with the state agencies of commerce, natural resources, and transportation in partnering with local communities, regional planning entities, landowners, and nongovernment organizations. The state's role is to initiate the planning process, engage stakeholders in key communities, identify resources that are of statewide importance, and better direct state land conservation and development resources to appropriate locations — while recognizing local control of land use decisions.

The specific objectives of this collaborative planning effort are to develop:

- an inventory of each of the 52 interchanges, using photographs and GIS data, including critical natural resources, existing infrastructure, parcel boundaries and ownership, zoning, historic sites and viewsheds;
- computer-simulated projections of potential build-out at selected exits based on land uses and existing and potential zoning regulations; and
- model design guidelines for interstate land use and development.

The project also will evaluate opportunities for land acquisition and scenic easements at interchanges and sponsor educational workshops for landowners, citizens, and state, regional, and local decision-makers. The project is scheduled to conclude in August 2003.

**CONTACTS:** *U.S. EPA Region 1 • [www.epa.gov/ne/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/ne/index.html)*

*Rosemary Monahan • [monahan.rosemary@epa.gov](mailto:monahan.rosemary@epa.gov)*

*1 Congress Street, Suite 1100 (RSP) • Boston, MA 02114-2023 • 617/918-1087*

**Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs • [www.state.vt.us/dca/housing/](http://www.state.vt.us/dca/housing/)**

*Sue Minter • 802/828-3119 • [sminter@dca.state.vt.us](mailto:sminter@dca.state.vt.us)*

# v. accessing resources for shaping growth

As the experience of numerous rural communities illustrates, small towns and nonprofit organizations can use a wide variety of private and public resources to help enhance local growth, development, and conservation. An array of grant, loan, and technical assistance programs can be found at the local, state, and national levels. Unfortunately, this array also is ever-changing. A program's emphasis may shift, its funding may rise or fall, and occasionally it may disappear altogether. Some organizations and agencies can help navigate the complex maze of resources to identify and access the program best suited to a community's needs.

## NONPROFIT GROUPS AND FOUNDATIONS

In recent years, nonprofit groups and foundations have increased their emphasis on development and "smart growth," many of them focusing on rural communities. These organizations may develop guidance for community development such as the Rocky Mountain Institute's *Economic Renewal Guide*. Many, such as the Northwest Area Foundation and the Initiative Foundation, support local planning through training and financial assistance. Others, such as HandMade in America, Vermont Family Forests, and Coastal Enterprises, Inc., help communities leverage their cultural assets and natural resources for development that provides both economic and environmental benefits.

An organization called The Funders Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities helps to disseminate information about the foundations working to foster smart growth. The network's web page lists its more than 60 members and provides links to the web pages of each one. Although the network is useful to groups that seek funding, its primary mission is to provide a resource for foundations, nonprofit organizations and other partners working to solve the environmental, social, and economic problems created by suburban sprawl and urban disinvestment. Its activities aim to:

- Inform funders of critical policy and grassroots developments;
- Enable program staff to share effective strategies and tools;
- Build the capacity of key constituencies to promote smart growth and livable communities; and
- Raise awareness about the interdisciplinary nature of these issues and the need for sustained engagement by a diverse coalition of funders.

The network also publishes articles and reports on key issues, including the recently released *Leading the Field: Community Foundation Leadership in Smart Growth and Livable Communities*. This report showcases community foundations that have taken on unique projects that improve development throughout the country.

**CONTACTS: *The Funders Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities* •**

[www.fundersnetwork.org](http://www.fundersnetwork.org) • Benjamin Starrett, Executive Director • 305/377-4484

Collins Center for Public Policy, Inc. • 150 S.E. Second Avenue, Suite 709 • Miami, Florida 33131 L.

Report: *Leading the Field: Community Foundation Leadership in Smart Growth and Livable Communities* • [www.fundersnetwork.org/info-url\\_nocat2778/info-url\\_nocat\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=53621](http://www.fundersnetwork.org/info-url_nocat2778/info-url_nocat_show.htm?doc_id=53621)

## FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Federal agencies offer a host of programs for community planning and development. Several of this report's examples feature these programs, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development program, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grants — which are given to states for distribution among small cities. The challenge is in determining which of these myriad programs offers support for efforts to improve development and conservation in rural communities, and whether your own community qualifies for the program's assistance.

Some state and local agencies provide information on federal programs. For example, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), a Boston-area regional planning agency, recently updated an unusually thorough compendium of grants for communities called *Grant Source*. Much of the report focuses on state and foundation grants, but each section includes details of federal grant programs as well. Its sections cover community economic development, environmental protection, historic preservation, housing, planning, public safety, public works, recreation, and transportation.

Federal agencies also have devised several resources to help guide communities through this web of programs. In January 2001, USDA published *Building Better Rural Places: Federal Programs for Sustaining Agriculture, Forestry, Conservation, and Community Development*. This report details the department's programs that work together for sustainable rural development. Each program profile includes a general description, project examples, legislative authority, application and financial information, eligibility requirements, uses and restrictions, and contacts for information and assistance.

EPA published a similar resource guide in June 2001, focusing on sources of support for smart growth strategies. The *Smart Growth Funding Resource Guide* includes three sections on funding categories and grants programs; information on other funding directories; and tips on the successful procurement of grant monies. Finally, HUD has developed a web page devoted to funding, with links to its full range of funding sources.

**CONTACTS: *The Massachusetts Metropolitan Area Planning Council***

60 Temple Place • Boston, MA 02111 • 617/451-2770 • Grant Source  
[www.mapc.org/MAPC%20Web/Active%20Web/About%20MAPC/About%20MAPC.htm](http://www.mapc.org/MAPC%20Web/Active%20Web/About%20MAPC/About%20MAPC.htm)

**U.S. Department of Agriculture** • *Building Better Rural Places: Federal Programs for Sustaining Agriculture, Forestry, Conservation, and Community Development* • [www.attra.org/guide/resource.pdf](http://www.attra.org/guide/resource.pdf)

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Smart Growth Funding Resource Guide***  
[www.smartgrowth.org/pdf/funding\\_resources.pdf](http://www.smartgrowth.org/pdf/funding_resources.pdf)

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Funding Web Page***  
[www.hud.gov/fundopp.html](http://www.hud.gov/fundopp.html)



# vi. conclusions and recommendations

**P**oint to virtually any example of successful rural development, revitalization, and conservation and three characteristics will emerge:

**A critical mass of committed citizens determined to enhance their community's growth and quality of life.** Committed citizens, whether they are elected officials, motivated residents, or business leaders, are a prerequisite for improving growth. Even well-drawn plans and time-honored procedures cannot succeed without people who will raise funds, organize constituencies, foster collaboration, and demand change.

**The recognition and use of the area's assets — location, natural resources, natural attractions, and historic and cultural value.** A committed core of citizens will not make progress without realistically assessing and leveraging the assets of their community. Towns at a transportation crossroads focus on commercial development that serves the human traffic passing through. Communities with forest and farmland support an infrastructure for the profitable production of forest and agricultural products. Areas with scenic landscapes and historic and cultural values encourage the growth of tourist amenities that use these assets without compromising them. These strategies enhance the existing environment and economy instead of contorting or overwhelming it.

**Financial and technical support.** Almost by definition, rural communities have a small tax base for lack of big businesses and large populations. Limited resources leave them particularly vulnerable to unwanted growth — whether in the form of a state highway, a commercial strip mall, or a housing subdivision. Rural towns may need planning and legal expertise to create their own vision for growth and strengthen their zoning codes, or they may require economic stimulation to revive struggling businesses and infrastructure. This type of support generally is found beyond the immediate community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FEDERAL AND STATE SUPPORT

For generations, federal and state government has supported rural development, beginning with the basic infrastructure of roads, electricity, water, and telephone connections and evolving into countless grant and loan programs for business and community development, land conservation, and pollution abatement. Despite its many successes, this proliferation of programs can result in a scattershot approach that fails to enhance development and conservation across a region or even across a town. It also may miss opportunities to leverage government investments with the efforts of private and nonprofit organizations — or even those of other government agencies. Moreover, the challenge of navigating the array of programs can result in experienced and well-connected communities garnering a disproportionate level of support.

Federal and state programs can most effectively foster smart growth in rural communities by doing the following.

**Support local land-use strategies.** The impact of federal and state development and conservation projects can run counter to smart growth principles when these efforts are carried out in isolation. For example, a revitalization project may convert an old factory site into a soccer field or shopping center without fully considering its effects on traffic or sprawling development in a scenic area. A farmland conservation program may protect 100 acres of prime agricultural land that has no feasible access to agricultural services. An economic development program may fund a strip mall that kills commercial business in town. Unfortunately, such missteps often occur because rural communities grow in a planning vacuum. Without an inclusive, comprehensive planning process there is no framework that embodies a community vision or directs growth and conservation.

Federal and state agencies have begun providing communities and nonprofit groups with grants and technical assistance for planning that includes citizen outreach, visioning processes, comparing growth scenarios, and revision of zoning codes. However, some planning programs are short-lived or barely funded. With a firm mandate and adequate funding, these programs could help arm rural communities against misguided development projects with consensus-based plans and the regulations to enforce them.

**Leverage and coordinate public and private programs.** Some federal and state programs are built on the synergy between various objectives. The Brown-

fields Economic Redevelopment Initiative uses environmental cleanup to foster economic development. The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board uses housing development to foster land conservation. The Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program uses working lands to foster tourism. Many linkages can be traced to the economic value of sound land management — whether in providing an appealing quality of life, attracting tourism, sustaining resource-based industries, or preserving clean water and air. Yet federal programs can fail to recognize such linkages, at best losing opportunities to leverage their investments and benefits and at worst working at cross purposes.

A common complaint about federal assistance to rural communities is that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) coordinates it — despite the fact that by 1999 just 258 of the nation’s non-metropolitan counties relied on farming for more than 20 percent of their earnings. USDA’s programs often have no explicit focus on the rural communities that are threatened by encroaching development and no mandate to integrate a community’s existing assets. Some federal laws have attempted to at least examine the impacts of federal programs on land use. For example, the Farmland Protection Policy Act directed USDA to work with other federal agencies to develop criteria for identifying the effect of federal programs on farmland conversion to non-agricultural uses. However, in 2000 a USDA task force found that other agencies generally did not comply with the act.<sup>51</sup>

Strong coordination, both among agencies and with nonprofit organizations, could increase the effectiveness of all federal rural development and conservation efforts. Federal and state agencies should seek every opportunity to foster cooperation.

**Facilitate access to grants and loans.** Some sophistication about government agencies, their structures, and even their web design is needed to begin identifying funding sources, and even more to actually obtain funding. Over time, communities that have negotiated the intricacies of agency systems develop an advantage over communities with no agency experience. Federal and state programs could help reach their target audiences by simplifying and consolidating their programs and educating a wider universe of potential applicants about available resources and eligibility requirements.

Clear presentation of program information also could assist communities. For example, the now dissolved Livable Communities Initiative provided an Internet web page that laid out the network of federal programs, grants, and loans that could be used to shape growth. Users could search for programs by subject area and link directly to the various agency web pages with program details, contacts, and application forms.

Such resources could help communities learn of programs that otherwise lay buried in agency bureaucracies.

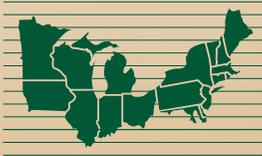
Finally, many federal and state programs are subject to the vagaries of administration politics, agency reorganizations, and congressional priorities, making them a moving target. Changes can range from a shift in name or focus to a loss of funding or total expiration. Greater stability in program structure and content could facilitate the use of these programs and reduce confusion about their provisions.

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