Heritage-Based Rural Development
New Partners for Smart Growth 2012 Conference

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What is “Rural”

Definitions

• “Rural” is places of 2,500 population or less

• “Rural” is places in non-metro counties

• 17% of US population lives in rural places
Rural land use

Quick stats

• 80% of US land is rural
• 46% of US land is privately owned farms, ranches and forests
• 80% of nation’s 16,580 incorporated places have less than 10,000 residents
“Hot” markets

Rural sprawl

• 2 million acres of farmland developed each year
• 80% of new residential development in US outside metro areas
• 90% on lots of one acre or more
“Cold” markets

Rural decline

• 1,000 counties lost population during the 2000’s.

• 261 counties in Great Plains now meet definition of “frontier” (fewer than six residents per square mile)
Heritage at risk
“We can not preserve historic buildings to any purpose or for very long outside the contexts of community life and local economy.”

-Wendell Berry
“Heritage-based” rural development

...helps build sustainable communities and strengthen regional economies through the conservation, use and promotion of historic and cultural assets.
What is “Rural Heritage”
Rural Heritage: historic buildings and districts
Rural Heritage: historic landscapes

Heritage-Based Rural Development: Principles, Strategies & Steps
Rural Heritage: music, events and traditions
Rural Heritage: regional art, craft, products

Heritage-Based Rural Development: Principles, Strategies & Steps
Rural heritage: local agriculture and food
Six principles of heritage-based rural development

- Use a regional approach
- Protect historic authenticity
- Nurture grassroots involvement
- Forge strong partnerships
- Be flexible
- Make a long-term commitment
1. Educate about the value of rural heritage

Activities

• Inventory known assets
• Initiate surveys to uncover additional resources
• Conduct oral history interviews
• Share results with the public
2. Conserve heritage assets

**Activities**

- Save vacant/deteriorating structures through adaptive use
- Support economic viability of traditional uses
- Protect sites and districts through planning, zoning and incentives
2. Conserve heritage assets
3. Encourage entrepreneurship

**Activities**

- Create new business opportunities around regional heritage, foods, arts, music and crafts
- Provide training, technical assistance and marketing support
- Locate new enterprises in existing structures
- Work with local Main Street programs

Heritage-Based Rural Development: Principles, Strategies & Steps
3. Encourage entrepreneurship
3. Encourage entrepreneurship

Community Initiated

- Groceries
- Department stores
- Theaters
- Restaurants
- Markets

Heritage-Based Rural Development: Principles, Strategies & Steps
4. Develop cultural heritage tourism

Activities

- Enhance authentic experiences at existing heritage sites
- Link attractions thematically
- Build awareness in nearby metro areas
- Make the economic case
4. Develop cultural heritage tourism

Rural Tourism Niches

- Agri-Tourism
- Culinary Tourism
- Eco-Tourism and Civic Tourism
- Volun-Tourism
- Reunions and family gatherings
5. Brand and Market your regional identity

**Activities**
- Develop a regional brand
- Market your region’s authentic heritage assets, products and experiences
- Target internal as well as external audiences
6. Advocate for supportive public policies

**Activities**

- Work with partners to develop and promote statewide incentives
- Implement better planning and zoning
- Remove regulatory barriers
- Establish and strengthen historic preservation ordinances and design guidelines
Are you ready?

- Multi-county geographic area with common heritage, economic base
- Critical mass of historic places, landscapes and attractions
- Two or more active Main Street programs
- Existing tourism infrastructure or potential
- Financial capacity, especially locally or regionally
- Commitment from existing local organization or new steering committee
- Willingness to designate and fund full-time staff
- Consensus from government, non profit and business entities
- Capable and interested statewide partners
Thank you.

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