

# 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



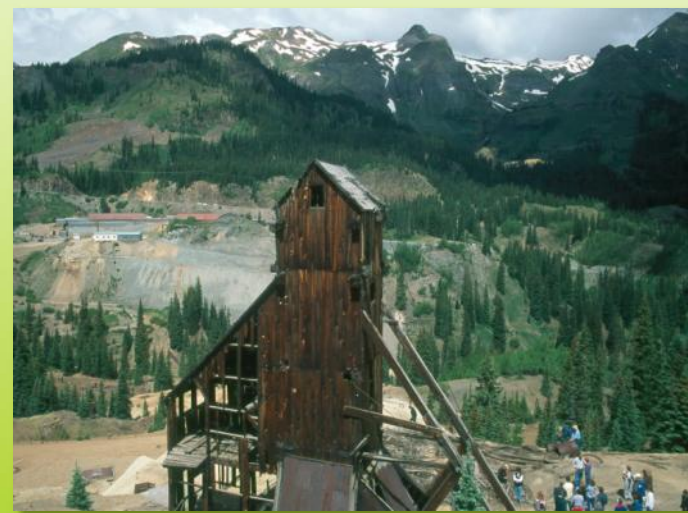
## “Cold” markets



### 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





## Rural Heritage: music, events and traditions



## Rural Heritage: regional art, craft, products





## 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

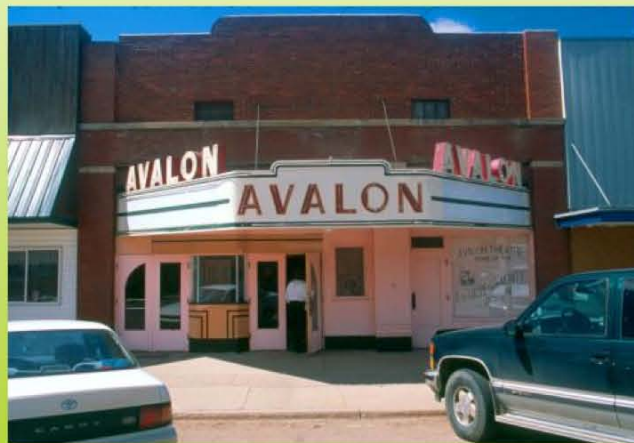
- Create new business opportunities around regional heritage, foods, arts, music and crafts
- Provide training, technical assistance and marketing support
- Locate new enterprises in existing structures
- Work with local Main Street programs



### 3. Encourage entrepreneurship



### 3. Encourage entrepreneurship



#### Community Initiated

- Groceries
- Department stores
- Theaters
- Restaurants
- Markets



## 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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