Shrinking Gracefully:
Looking for Effective Planning and Design Approaches for Small Town America

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Abstract

The term "shrinking" is often considered a death sentence for Small Town America. Public officials, planners and residents often try to "solve" the condition of shrinking, applying the same tool kit used for growth, with little success. A widespread assumption is that shrinking is the opposite of growth and synonymous with decline, and therefore common practice in planning and design practice has been to try and reverse the trend of population loss, often with last-ditch efforts such as free land offers, problematic industrial recruitment or unrealistic visioning exercises.

If growth, even in its most destructive forms, can be made smart, can shrinking be made graceful, and if so what approach is needed to achieve it? This thesis argues that shrinking is not the opposite of growth but rather requires a much more complex and nuanced understanding, and that the condition of shrinking does not have to be a terminal diagnosis for a small town. Those communities that identify, adapt, and reuse existing human and physical assets can in fact shrink gracefully, especially given that shrinking is seldom a rapid process, but rather one that plays out over generations, providing the luxury of time to be purposeful about the planning and design process.

The stories of two very different communities are told here. Each, in response to generations of shrinking, has recently engaged in asset-based planning processes. These two approaches lead to suggestions of a planning approach that diverges from the traditional rural development model, which relies heavily on physical infrastructure investment. Rather, by engaging the realities of the shrinking condition, being deliberate in the planning process, and linking the creation of social capacity to the tools of physical planning and design most likely to be utilized when faced with limited resources—in particular: adaptive reuse of community icons, consolidation of redundant programs, multi-purpose physical infrastructure—a community can meet the challenge of shrinking gracefully.

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Biographical Note

As a student at MIT, Jeff Fugate has worked in the planning offices of Lowell, Massachusetts, compiling illustrated design guidelines for residential development; helped design a house and construction process for rebuilding the Gulf Coast of Louisiana in partnership with OxFam America; and contributed to urban design recommendations for the city of Kyiv, Ukraine, among other projects.

Jeff worked as a Graduate Assistant on the Forgotten Cites and MIT@Lawrence Projects and was a Teaching Assistant for the Fall 2006 Saõ Paulo Urban Design Studio. His team was an Honorable Mention in the 2005 ULI Gerald Hines Urban Design Competition.

Prior to attending MIT, Jeff worked in the community development field at the Rural School and Community Trust in Washington D.C. Prior to that and upon graduating from college, Jeff gave a year of service to DC Habitat for Humanity as an Americorps member, where he supervised housing construction by volunteers. He later served as a community board member for the organization.

In spring of 1999, Jeff received his undergraduate degree in Geography at the University of Kentucky, where in addition to graduating *Summa Cum Laude*, he was a Gaines Fellow in the Humanities. His undergraduate thesis, *Powerful Music: Activist Musicians in Appalachia*, was presented at the 2000 meeting of the American Association of Geographers.

Acknowledgements

Note on the Title

In regards to the title *Shrinking Gracefully*, I should note that while the phrasing was my own, in the course of my research, I discovered the use of the term in a 2001 *Washington Post* story on Philadelphia (Ginsberg, Thomas. "Remaking Philadelphia: As Population Drops, Planners Think Small" *Washington* Post. Sunday, February 4, 2001, A20), and also in a September 2005 Blog posting by Michael O'Hare in regards to New Orleans (www.samefacts.com/archives/social_insecurity_/2005/09/growing_small_gracefully.php [accessed April 12, 2007]).

photo by author

"Professionals have been concerned almost wholly with new growth rather than the environment of decline."

- Kevin Lynch *What Time is This Place?*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The term "shrinking," especially when it comes to our hometowns, is a loaded word. Most good things in our communities are measured by growth. Public officials brag about adding jobs, growing the economy, and building new homes. Photo-ops for mayors and Congressional delegations revolve around ribbon-cuttings rather than demolitions. Even in its most challenging forms—such as urban overcrowding or suburban sprawl—growth is something to be managed or even made "smart."

Shrinking has no such luck. Loss, whether in terms of population or a basketball game is acknowledged only with the air of "we'll do better next time" and is certainly never celebrated.[1] The problem with this attitude is that many cities and small towns are shrinking, and we as planners and designers have few guiding principals to address the condition.

The assumption is that shrinking is the opposite of growth and synonymous with decline, and therefore common practice in our communities has been to try and reverse the trend of population loss—to stem the brain-drain, attract new creative residents, and play up the tourist angle on anything of value, or in more desperate situations, recruit a prison, landfill, or nuclear waste facility—anything to bring back past prosperity.

In a 2002 report on population loss in rural communities, demographers David McGanahan and Calvin Beale conclude with the grim view that "unless [these rural counties] can find a means to develop a recreation industry, they must deal with either industrial agriculture or continued population loss."[2] What McGanahan and Beale leave little room for in their assessment is whether population loss has to be a community-ending event in the life of a small town.

If growth can be smart, can shrinking be graceful?

I believe so. In the pages that follow, I argue that shrinking does not have to be a terminal condition for a small town and that communities that identify, adapt, and reuse existing human and physical assets can in fact shrink gracefully. To inform what that might look like in Small Town America, I examine two communities who have recently engaged in asset-based planning processes after decades of declining population. While neither community offers a complete model, together they inform an approach that planning and design practitioners can apply when faced with a shrinking community.

Rural Population Trends

While urban decline has become status quo for a generation, rural-to-urban migration has been a demographic staple for much of the 20th century. However, the image of leaving the farm for the big town is not quite so simple. Rural communities can be broken into three general types—1) exurbia, 2) recreational, and 3) Small Town America.

After the Second World War, many places that had been rural became suburban. The dividing line between rural and urban is no longer clear along the exurban periphery, resulting in the "rurban" phenomenon—rural living with access to urban amenities. These places, delineated as "non-metro adjacent counties" by USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), are typically growing or are projected to do so in the near future. While these places can seem very rural, they are functionally part of a metropolitan region.

Likewise, in the 1980s and 90s, areas with natural amenities such as mountains and water features began attracting retirees and second home buyers.[3] While not always part of a metro area, they tend to be growing as well, and many of their new residents are coming from metro regions.

The challenge for these two rural settings is growing gracefully. Much of the existing competency on small town planning and design addresses the issues faced in these communities—how to maintain character when population doubles overnight.[4]

The third type of small town is beyond what David Brooks describes as the meatloaf line, the point where "there will be a lot fewer sun-dried-tomato concoctions on restaurant menus and a lot more meatloaf platters."[5] These are the ones that have seen local industry or agriculture play out and have experienced population loss for generations. This is Small Town America, chronicled (often in caricature) by story, film, and Hot County songs. These communities are located within shrinking regions, unlike many shrinking cities which are located within growing or stable metro regions. These communities are often loosing population for the long term, and we as practitioners are lacking competency in how to plan and design for it.

Responses to Shrinking

Responses to the trend of rural population loss have been varied. Michael Lind, of the centrist think-tank New America Foundation, argues that the solution to urban poverty and rural depopulation is to return to the homesteading model of the 19th Century, which provided immigrants an alternative to urban squalor and could do so again. As Lind puts it, "The heartland needs people—and many Americans on the coasts need affordable housing. Why not bring them together?"[6]

This is not an idle thought experiment. More than a few places see promise in a potential return to homesteading. A network of Kansan towns has started KansasFreeLand.com, a portal Web site to communities in the state offering free residential and commercial properties to new residents.[7] From the Web site of Eureka, Kansas:

> I hope that you find this offer too good to pass up and consider joining our community. There is no doubt that your insight and talents will assist us in reaching our goals of defying the odds of declining growth. One thing is for certain, you will not regret moving to this community and living the good life in a rural town.[8]

There are other variations of this story. The *Associated Press* recently reported on an Alaskan town offering a similar deal of free land for settlers.[9] Another version is free education, used to recruit medical doctors and others back to the hills of Appalachia. In the

proposed (but un-passed) "New Homestead Economic Opportunity Act" of 2002, Senators Hagel (R-Nebraska) and Dorgan (D-North Dakota) wrote in a student-loan forgiveness provision for college graduates who settled in counties hardest hit by population loss.[10] While attention-grabbing, there is skepticism about the potential of free-land or other incentive programs.[11]

Also attention-grabbing has been Frank and Deborah Popper's proposal for a Buffalo Commons. In an article for *Planning* with the subtitle "A daring proposal for an inevitable disaster," the Poppers made a simple suggestion based on what seemed to be a reasonable assumption—the Plains would inevitably run out of people, and when it did, the government should step in and restore the ecology of the prairie by setting aside huge swaths of public land.[12]

The Buffalo Commons was an idea that resonated with many because of its ecological simplicity. This land is not right for settlement. It is right for buffalo. Let's make peace with Mother Nature and move on. It was also an idea that deeply offended others, who saw their communities, local cultures and livelihoods being dismissed as expendable by East Coast academics. The responses ranged from confrontational (including death threats) to thoughtful. On the more thoughtful end, Marty Strange, founder of Nebraska's Center for Rural Affairs, argued, "The rationale for "saving" communities is…not ecological. It is moral. It must be that they are "good" places to live, places where even the competitive and predatorial relationships are, for the most part, satisfying."[13]

In his hopes that even predatorial relationships might still be good relationships, Strange echoes the sentiments of the agriculturalists,

to which the author, essayist, poet, and Kentucky farmer Wendell Berry most notably gives a voice in his work. He offers this commentary: "A healthy *farm* culture can be based only upon familiarity and can grow only among a people soundly established upon the land…"[14] Berry argues that our survival as a species is dependent on a working relationship with the Earth, and that relationship is maintained by communities of people who know the limits and yield of their place. Therefore, there is real danger, in Berry's mind, to the emptying of these small communities.

While I am sympathetic with the value that Strange, Berry, and the mayors of small towns in Kansas find in "good places," the real foil to the Buffalo Commons as an applied solution is much more quantitative. Places don't actually shrink the way we expect them to.

What does Shrinking really look like?

While there are incidents of dramatic shrinking, they are usually driven by natural disaster or forcible relocation—examples being the Gulf Coast after 2005 and the towns at the bottom of any number of reservoirs across the country. Most cases are not so absolute, despite the language used to describe them.

After the 2000 Census, the Economic Research Service published a map with the title, "The Decimation of America's Heartland" (figure 1.1).[15] While the bright red shapes representing those counties losing at least ten percent of their population between 1980 and 2000 creates a visual impact, the map represents something more troubling than a region on the edge of extinction. Quite the opposite, actually, it represents just how slowly this process plays

DECIMATION OF AMERICA'S HEARTLAND
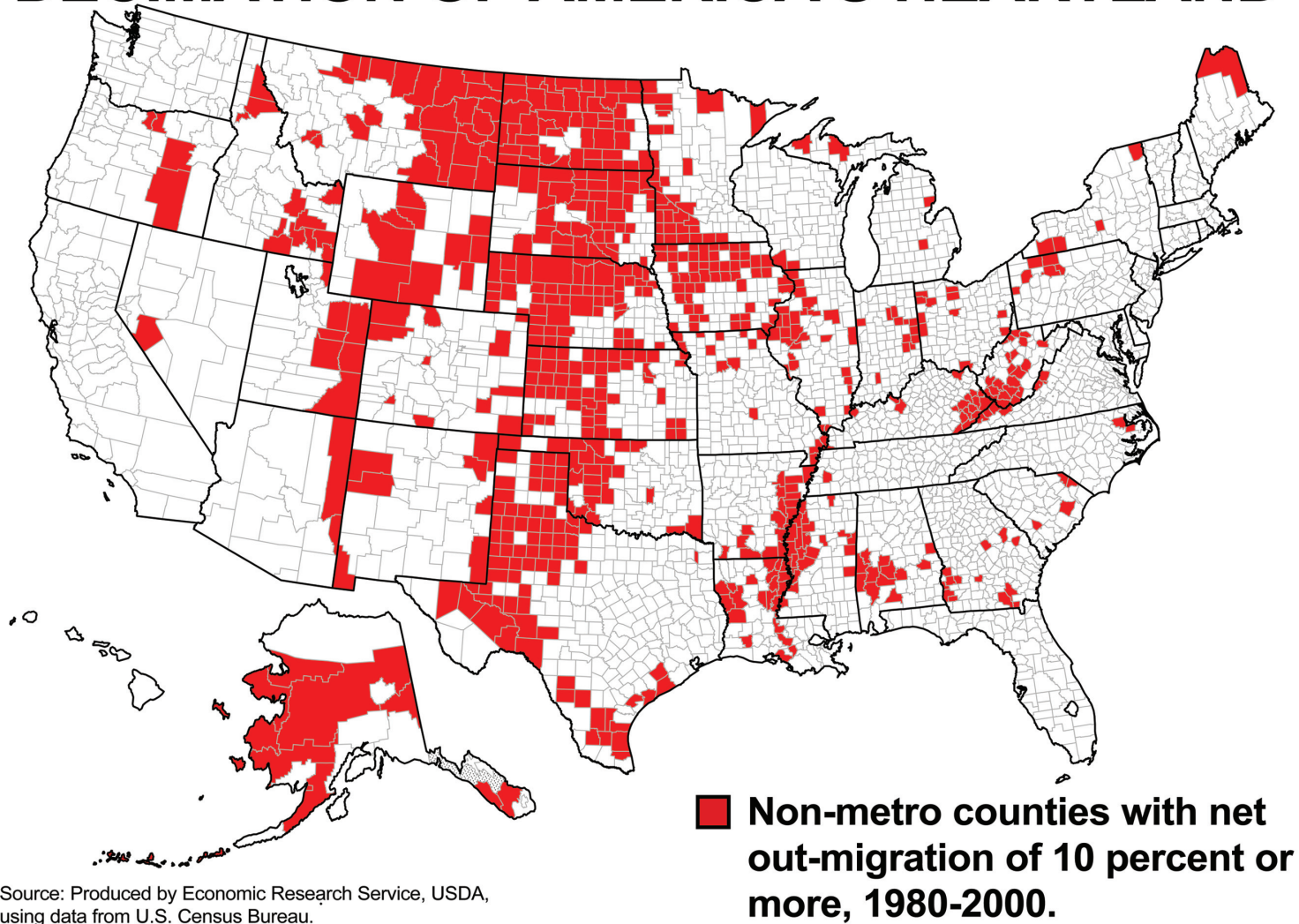

Non-metro counties with net out-migration of 10 percent or more, 1980-2000.

Source: Produced by Economic Research Service, USDA, using data from U.S. Census Bureau.

figure 1.1

source: Economic Research Service, USDA

out. At the end of *twenty* years, these places for the most part still had a net of eighty to ninety percent of their starting populations. Compare this with the pace of growth. The one hundred fastest growing non-metro counties saw increases of between ten and fifty-three percent in the *five* years between 2000 and 2005.[16]

Economists Ed Glaeser and Joseph Gyourko modeled the rates of growth and decline for urban areas, concluding that growth typically results in rapid population increases with stable housing values, while decline had slow population decreases with rapid property devaluation.[17] While the same analysis still needs to be done for non-metro areas, the descriptive data seems to suggest a similar dynamic. As such, the reality is that America's non-metro population, while shrinking, is still significant.

With this knowledge about the gradual nature of population loss, how we deal with shrinking must change. It can not simply be about how to turn off the lights, but rather must be about managing a multi-generational transition—with the recognition that entire lives will be lived over the course of that transition.[18] Most towns on the High Plains peaked in population over a hundred years ago. The coal camps of Appalachia were at their most robust during and shortly after the Second World War with a rebound in the 1970's. Despite decades of net decline, these places still have populations in need of communities that meet their needs.

Thinking differently about Shrinking

Crafting a graceful approach to shrinking starts with a different way of thinking about it. From his work on post-industrial Eastern Germany, Architect Philipp Oswalt puts it this way:

> Just as growth was not always experienced as a positive process— think of housing shortages, the crisis following unification of the German Empire, the pollution of early industrialization, and the slums of today's megalopolises—shrinkage will not always be experienced as a negative trend in the long run. It will lead—as growth did—to fundamental transformations that will bring about new guiding principles, models of action, and practices, ultimately resulting in a new orientation for society.[19]

Often, the perceived solution to population loss is to reverse it— attract new industry, built a tourist base, set up a creative economy. All of these strategies begin with the underlying premise that the current human and economic capital is insufficient to provide a decent quality of life and that the only hope is to attract new bodies and brains (and their checkbooks) to town. Setting aside the pessimistic nature of this attitude, it's just unsustainable. There are more shrinking communities than there are "smart people" to fill them. Some communities are beginning to acknowledge this reality, and from them there has emerged an alternative "think small" attitude.

Philadelphia, in defiance of legendary city planner Edmund Bacon, is talking about how to reconfigure neighborhoods for smaller populations. Detroit is enthusiastically hosting the *Shrinking Cities* exhibition and used it as a jumping off point to discuss their future. Youngstown, Ohio is next in line to host *Shrinking Cities* and has

garnered newsprint recently for its ambitious plan to deliberately abandon certain neighborhoods and to shrink its physical footprint to match its smaller population, something Mayor Jay Williams calls "right-sizing."[20] While the details on how exactly to make these changes are still murky, the shift in attitude opens the door for exploring how that might happen.[21]

Methodology

Whereas there are urban examples of communities that have decided to self-consciously planning to shrink, the trend has not yet caught on in small towns. However, there is no shortage of small towns facing population loss. Beginning with the premise that a graceful approach to shrinking involves building on the human and physical resources already present in a community, I present the experience of two rural communities that have done just that with the prompting and help of outside funders.

Howard, South Dakota is typical of the High Plains communities that have seen out-migration regardless of poverty rates. Their planning process was prompted by the Northwest Area Foundation and focused heavily on process and building social infrastructure, something that reflected the existing strengths in that community.

Hindman, Kentucky is typical of the Appalachian and Deep South communities where persistent poverty has been the primary driver of out-migration. Unlike the Plains, these communities do not have a robust social infrastructure, but do have a cultural and physical legacy that provides the basis for an infrastructure- and institutionally-based plan.

While there are certainly many small towns that would have made interesting and instructive cases, the intention was not to exhaustively survey the planning and design efforts underway everywhere, but to offer a critical assessment of what is happening in select places as well as what *could* happen in more places by developing an idealized approach for planning and design professionals.

A third case that demonstrated both types of plans would have strengthened the argument, but I did not identify an example that fit the previously mentioned criteria and was situated in a non-metro region. Part of the limitation of studying small towns is that there they are numerous and many are not well networked, meaning that it is difficult to cast a wide net in the time frame allowed for a thesis.

The case study research was primarily conducted through interviews with the major players in the planning process as well as primary and secondary documentation of the plans. In addition to background, the questions probed what attitudes drove the process, what goals were determined, and what are the on-going challenges and successes. In the cases and analysis to follow, I will examine how their plans came together, what the plans attempt to accomplish, and what difficulties they face implementing their efforts.

As both communities have faced generations of net population loss, I draw conclusions on lessons learned about building appropriate physical and social infrastructure in small towns and offer an idealized approach that planning and design professionals might apply when faced with shrinking communities.

Endnotes

1   The one glaring example being "weight loss," which can seemingly not be celebrated enough.

2   McGranahan, David A. and Calvin L. Beale, "Understanding Rural Population Loss" *Rural America*, v.17, n.4, 2002. p.2-11

3   Johnson, Kenneth M. and Calvin L. Beale. "Nonmetro Recreation Counties: Their Identification and Rapid Growth" *Rural America*. v.17, n.4, 2002. p. 12-19; and Calvin L. Beale and Kenneth M. Johnson, "The Identification of Recreational Counties in Nonmetropolitan Areas of the U.S.A.," *Population Research and Policy Review*, v.17, 1998, p.37-53

4   See Arndt, Randall [et al.]. *Rural By Design: maintaining small town character*; cosponsored by Lincoln Land Institute of Land Policy, Environmental Law Foundation, Center for Rural Massachusetts. Chicago, Ill.: Planners Press, American Planning Association, c1994; Yaro, Robert [et al.]. *Dealing with change in the Connecticut River Valley : a design manual for conservation and development.* Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy: Environmental Law Foundation, 1988; see also Daniels, Thomas L., John W. Keller, and Mark B. Lapping. *Rural Planning and Development in the United States*. New York: Guilford Press, c1989; and Daniels, Thomas L., John W. Keller, and Mark B. Lapping. *The Small Town Planning Handbook*. Chicago, Ill.: Planners Press, American Planning Association, 1995

5   Brooks, David. "One Nation, Slightly Divisible" *The Atlantic Monthly*. Dec. 2001. Available at http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2001/12/brooks. htm [accessed May 10, 2007]

6   Lind, Michael. "The New Continental Divide" *The Atlantic Monthly*. Jan/Feb 2003. Available at http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2003/01/lind.htm [accessed May 10, 2007]

7   See http://www.KansasFreeLand.com [accessed March 26, 2007]; and Shortridge, James R. "A Cry for Help: KansasFreeLand.com" *Geographical Review*, v.94 n.4, 2004

8   http://www.eurekakansas.com/land.htm [accessed March 26, 2007]

9   D'Oro, Rachel. "Alaska Town is Giving Away Free Land" *Associated Press*. March 16, 2007

10 See http://dorgan.senate.gov/issues/northdakota/homestead/decimation.cfm [accessed May 13, 2007]

11 Shortridge, 2004

12 Popper, Deborah Epstein and Frank J. Popper. "The Great Plains: From Dust to Dust" *Planning* December 1987. Available at http://www.planning.org/25anniversary/planning/1987dec.htm [accessed May 14, 2007]

13 Strange, Marty."Transforming the Rot Belt: Sustainable Rural Communities" *Northwest Report*, Jan 1996. Republished *Terrain.org* at http://www.terrain.org/articles/11/strange.htm [accessed March 23, 2007]

14 Berry, Wendell. *The Unsettling of America*, Third Edition. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996. p.43

15 Economic Research Service, USDA. Available at http://www.cfra.org/files/new_homestead_act_map.pdf [accessed May 14, 2007]

16 Data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses of Population (corrected), and the 2005 population estimate file from the U.S.Census Bureau. See http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Rurality/RuralUrbCon/Index.htm#anchor for Urban-Rural Continuum Codes. [accessed May 14, 2007]

17 Glaeser, Edward L. and Joseph Gyourko. "Urban Decline and Durable Housing" *The Journal of Political Economy*. Chicago: Apr 2005. v.113, n.2; p. 345

18 The scope of this thesis does not include shrinking caused by disaster situations, such as what is currently being faced along the Gulf Coast; however, the issue is pertinent and timely for exploration by other researchers.

19 Oswalt, Philipp. *Shrinking Cities, vol 1*. edited by Philipp Oswalt Ostfildern-Ruit [Germany]: Hatje Cantz; New York : D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers [distributor], c2005, p.12-13

20 "Right-sizing" was first used as an alternative to "down-sizing" in the corporate human resources lexicon.

21 See Ginsberg, Thomas "Remaking Philadelphia: As Population Drops, Planners think small" *Washington Post*, Feb. 4, 2001, A20; http://www.youngstown2010.com [accessed April 25, 2007]; Aeppel, Timothy. "Shrink to Fit: As Its Population Declines, Youngstown Thinks Small; Rather Than Trying To Grow, Ohio City Plans More Open Space" *Wall Street Journal. (Eastern edition)*. New York, N.Y.: May 3, 2007. pg. A.1; El Nasser, Haya, "As Older Cities Shrink, Some Reinvent Themselves" *USA Today*. Dec 27, 2006. Swopes, Christopher "Smart Decline: In 40 years, Youngstown has lost more than half its population. Those people aren't coming back. But shrinking doesn't have to mean dying." *Governing*, November 2006.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The issue of shrinking has come to the forefront recently in design and planning circles with the publication of the *Shrinking Cities* project in the form of two volumes (each over 700 pages), a compendium atlas, and traveling exhibition.[1]

The curator of the project, Philipp Oswalt, speaking on the condition of shrinking, claims, "Up until today the approach has been to avoid this new challenge, and a whole new arsenal of euphemisms has sprung up in order to disguise the core of the issue."[2] He continues, "Previous attempts to shape the process of shrinkage have been inadequate and have often failed because the conventional means and tools of city planning and urban development, if they are at all available, are not able to tackle the problem."[3]

Oswalt and his colleagues are certainly not the first to suggest that planning might think on how to shrink. In 1972, urbanist Kevin Lynch chastised us, saying "Professionals have been concerned almost wholly with new growth rather than the environment of decline."[4] Lynch does not offer this in a celebratory light, though. Instead, he equates decline with waste and offers thoughts on how to orderly depopulate a landscape in transition. In one optimistic moment, Lynch argues that we should look afresh at our waste and think of how we might reuse it, even suggesting the reuse of abandoned houses in inner-Baltimore as schools, playhouses, or workshops.[5]

Oswalt argues for a less physical approach.

"…our plan of action must be based on the idea of "weak planning." This weak planning will increasingly use "soft tools" because often cultural development, forms of communication, and the rise of social networks and processes shape urban development more than construction itself does. City planning will thus not become obsolete, but will be based on different presuppositions and use different means."[6]

While a change in attitude can go a long way towards civic problem solving,[7] something more concrete is needed. Typically, the thinking about a community begins with a laundry list of needs. John Kretzmann and John McKnight's *Building Communities from the Inside Out* offered a criticism of the needs-based assessment that most funding and community development frameworks rely upon, suggesting instead to look hard for the assets in a community and to build upon them.[8]

One framework that may provide some help in identifying a community's assets comes from the rural sociology literature. Building on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and others, Cornelia and Jan Flora classified the resources of communities into seven types of capital—cultural, human, social, and political (the human factors), and natural, financial, and built (the material factors). (table 2.1) Defining capital as any resource invested to create new resources, the Floras argue "These resources can either enhance or detract from one another. When one type of capital is emphasized over all others, the other resources are decapitalized, and the economy, environment, or social equity can thus be compromised."[9]

Community Capitals

HUMAN FACTORS

CULTURAL CAPITAL

The "right way" of behaving and what should be valued in a community. In farm communities, land ownership and the vocation of farming is an important cultural capital, leading people who hold day jobs to continue to farm "just as their father did, and his father before him." The same goes for industrial communities, where working hard and keeping family close is more highly valued than educational attainment that might send a graduate away from home.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

The connections between people. There are two types. *Bonding* social capital – connections amongst people of similar backgrounds. Relationships tend to be emotionally driven. *Bridging* social capital – connections amongst diverse groups within and between communities. Relationships tend to be instrumental or purposeful.

HUMAN CAPITAL

The whole-person value in a community such as learning, knowledge, skills, health, and talents. Traditionally a labor-force measurement in Economics that correlated almost exclusively with educational attainment, the measure has expanded in recent literature (see Gary Becker at http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/HumanCapital.html). In shrinking communities, human capital is most obvious loss, however latent human capital is often found in individuals stepping up to leadership posts or sharing talents they might have otherwise kept dormant. Human capital is also generational, as certain local or traditional knowledge, if not passed down, will die with its keeper.

POLITICAL CAPITAL

The capacity to accomplish change in a community. Power is sometimes held wittingly or unwittingly by a few in a community. When this is the case, vertical relationships give certain members of the community access to decision-makers but not others. In a community where power is more widely distributed, then decision-making includes more people, but is often less expedient.

MATERIAL FACTORS

NATURAL CAPITAL

The natural land features and resources. How land is valued depends on its use. Extractive industries value land in a consumptive manner, while recreation or place-value industries value land as a landscape to be preserved. -

FINANCIAL CAPITAL

The capacity to pay for investments. A particular challenge to shrinking communities is financial capital leaving a community, either when someone leaves town or upon inheritance well after they have left town.

BUILT CAPITAL

The physical infrastructure. For rural communities, "remoteness" is often a problem, which impacts transportation and telecom infrastructure. In shrinking communities, housing stock is often aging, as no new people mean no new housing.

table 2.1   *source: Flora and Flora, 2004*

Building on the concept of social capital, the Floras offer the concept of *Entrepreneurial Social Infrastructure* (ESI), those "structures and impacts that occur when both bridging and bonding social capital are high." They intentionally use the term infrastructure to indicate something that can be built, rather than just happens. Conceptually, this is different from social capital in that (1) it can be changed through collective effort such as conflict management or reframing issues and (2) focuses on the *outcome* of diversity, consideration and acceptance of alternative perspectives (rather than inclusion of diversity).

The basic features within a high ESI community are (1) legitimation of alternatives, (2) inclusive and diverse networks (depersonalizing politics, extra-community linkages, diverse leadership), and (3) resource mobilization.[10]

The Flora's aren't the only ones to consider how to build capacity for change in a community. Karl Stauber, CEO of Northwest Area Foundation put it bluntly to a room full of rural advocates, "some rural communities are going to prosper and some are going to die, and nothing that we do will change that." Rather, he goes on, the *people in these communities* have to decide to do something differently.[11] Stauber is describing what Sociologist James Christenson has classified as the "self-help" model of community change.[12] Christenson also names two more models—the technical assistance model and the conflict model. Like most classifications, he offers the caveat that most community efforts overlap between categories. (table 2.2)

The self-help model assumes that the community is able to work together, delineate goals, and act upon them. The role of the planner or designer is to primarily guide the process, at times offering expert opinions. Because of the process-oriented nature of this model, the work is slow, but once completed very sustainable because, one assumes, all parties have been involved in the creation of the plan.

A technical assistance model usually involves a big idea by those in leadership positions. The planner or designer is brought in to work

Models of Community Change

	Roles of Change Agent	Task/Process Orientation	Typical Clientele	Speed of Change	Sustainability of Change
SELF-HELP	Facilitator, educator	Process	Middle-class	Slow	Excellent
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	Advisor, consultant	Task	Leadership, Administrators	Moderate	Good
CONFLICT	Organizer, Advocate	Process & Task	Poor, Minorities	Fast	Weak

table 2.2   *taken directly from Christenson, 1989. p.33*

out the technical details of the idea, or in some cases to provide the idea as well. Traditionally, planning and design has fallen most comfortably in this model. The work is often moderately quick, as a limited number of people, usually of like minds, are involved.

The conflict model has its roots in labor and community organizing, where the goal is amassing power against entrenched interests. The preliminary work is slow, but when victories come, they come fast, though are far and few between and often short-lived. The role of the planner in this model is more strategizer, identifying tasks around which to organize the conflict.

Despite the comfort with which planning and design rest in the technical assistance category, the problems we tackle demand more adaptive solutions. Again, Kevin Lynch:

> "More often than we like to admit, we are not engaged in changing the world to some determined end. We are adapting—responding to outside forces beyond our control, seeking to survive, to preserve something, to maintain some desired level of performance. Although there is a substantial literature on adaptive management in other fields, there is very little that is concerned with the physical environment. We have always focused on newness, growth, and deliberate change."[13]

Ron Heifetz of Harvard's Center for Public Leadership makes a distinction between technical and adaptive solutions.[14] Technical solutions are the answers to problems we've seen before. While each situation requires some creative application, the core solution is replicable. Examples of this would be engineering sewer system and form-based zoning codes—anything that fits in a "toolkit." One hopes that most problems facing communities can be solved

this way, because it provides right answers. Heifetz uses adaptation in an evolutionary sense, a change that happens when distress is introduced into a system, in this case the social system of a community. He argues that the act of leadership is purposefully introducing and manging distress in order to prompt adaptive change in social systems, often in the form of public conflict.

> "For a social system to learn, old patterns of relationship—balances of power, customary operating procedures, distributions of wealth—may be threatened. Old skills may be rendered useless. Beliefs, identity, and orienting values—images of justice, community, and responsibility—may be called into question. Humans can learn and cultures can change, but how much and how fast?"[15]

Unfortunately, when faced with adaptive situations for which communities don't have ready answers—such as the condition of shrinking—the work is much harder not only because of the experimentation required to find the solutions, but because of the threat of uncertainty and change.

Uncertainty in the Plains was brought to a head by the Buffalo Commons literature. Taking the perspective that much of the Plains should never have been settled in the first place, the Poppers suggest that the communities of the Plains were well on their way to oblivion and that the soundest solution to the "largest, longest-running agricultural and environmental miscalculation in American history" is intentional depopulation and deprivatization of most of the Plains by the federal government, creating "the ultimate national park" on which Buffalo, prairie dogs, and wildfires might run free.[16]

The original article is written with a planner's technocratic glee—here's an interesting solution to an obvious problem—but at a time when the Spotted Owl controversy was at its peak in the Pacific Northwest, the proposal became a similar "nature versus human" type discussion for the Plains. The Poppers later reframed the proposal as a metaphor, recognizing that their initial idea had sparked a much deeper and complex discussion than they had expected.[17] In the Poppers own assessment, "People variously interpreted the metaphor as a general assault on their way of life, as an evocation of a fabled past, as a vision of a feasible future, or as a distillation of what they were already doing."[18]

Within the Buffalo Commons is an assumption of inevitable decline. In a separate article, the Poppers call for a model of smart-decline to mimic smart-growth, which challenges communities to think of alternatives to growth-models, suggesting much like the Shrinking Cities literature that "planning for less—fewer people, fewer buildings, fewer land uses—demands its own distinct approach."[19]

Endnotes

1   See *Atlas of shrinking cities = Atlas schrumpfender Städte*, edited by Philipp Oswalt & Tim Rieniets. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz ; Maidstone: Amalgamated Book Services [distributor], 2006.; *Shrinking Cities vols 1&2*, edited by Philipp Oswalt Ostfildern-Ruit [Germany]: Hatje Cantz; New York : D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers [distributor], c2005.; and http://shrinkingcities.com/ [accessed May 13, 2007]

2   Oswalt, 2005, v.1, p.13

3   Oswalt, 2005, v.1, p.15

4   Lynch, Kevin. *What Time is this Place?* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972. p.190.

5   Lynch, 1972. p.191

6   Oswalt, 2005 v.1, p.16

7   See Landry, Charles. *The Creative City: a toolkit for urban innovators*. London: Earthscan Publications; Near Stroud, UK: Comedia, 2000; and Landry, Charles. *The Art of City Making*. London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan, 2006.

8   Kretzmann, John and John McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Evanston, Ill.: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 1993.

9   Flora, Cornelia Butler and Jan Flora with Susan Fey. *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*. Boulder: Westview Press; 2 edition (March 2001) 2004, p.9

10 Flora and Flora, 2004

11 Stauber, Karl. Presentation to National Rural Funders Collaborative (NRFC), May 30, 2006. Available at http://www.nrfc.org/ [accessed April 21, 2007]

12 Christenson, James A. "Chapter 2: Themes in Community Development" *Community Development in Perspective*, James A. Christenson & Jerry W. Robinson, eds. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989. Thanks to Flora & Flora (2003) who provide a nice overview of Christenson in *Rural Communities*.

13 Lynch, 1972. p.199

14 See Heifetz, Ronald A. *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994; and Heifetz, Ronald A. and Marty Linsky *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

15 Heiftetz, 1994, p.30

16   Popper and Popper, 1987. Quote from p.12.

17   Popper, Deborah Epstein and Frank J. Popper. "The Buffalo Commons: Metaphor as Method" *Geographical Review* Oct 1999

18   Popper and Popper, 1999. Quote from p.495

19   Popper, Deborah Epstein and Frank J. Popper, "Small Can Be Beautiful: Coming to Terms with Decline." *Planning*, July 2002.. Quote from p. 23

Chapter 3: Hindman, Kentucky

Early settlers in Appalachia were fans of truth-in-naming of the natural features, and Troublesome Creek is no exception. Winding through downtown Hindman, the creek has had a history of cresting its banks and flooding this small town in Eastern Kentucky. Unknown to the early settlers, "Troublesome" might also describe the economic fortunes of the region. In response to that history, Hindman has engaged in an "arts & smarts" plan that intends to create a sustainable local economy around the production of high-end crafts by providing artisan studios, gallery space, and a School of Craft linked along a series of downtown streetscape and creek improvements.

Hindman is the Seat of Knott County, which numbers sixty-one on the list of the one hundred poorest U.S. counties based on per capita income in 2000. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case in the region. Kentucky hosts fifteen of the bottom one hundred,[1] all of which are located in the coal fields of Central Appalachia. While more blame for the Appalachian challenge has been heaped on coal than might be rightly deserved, any discussion of Central Appalachia, and Knott County in particular, must consider the legacy of coal.[2]

At the end of the 19th Century, with the rising demand for coal for industrial purposes, speculators rode the hillsides, purchasing the mineral rights from the local farmers. When the industry relied solely on deep shaft mining, this wasn't an issue, but the Broadform Deed, as the document was called, preferred mineral rights over surface rights, giving operators legal authority to evict those living above the coal seam. The advent of strip mining in the 1950's began a half century conflict over mining in the region, illustrated with images of little old ladies sitting in front of bulldozers and Uncle Dan Gibson, rifle in hand, suggesting to the county magistrates that they ban stripping in Knott County.[3]

To the early organizers, this battle should have simply been between the local people and the outside business operators, but like Troublesome Creek, this battle didn't stay between its banks. Instead, the conflict emerged between those who opposed the mine and those who relied on the mine for their paycheck, and it escalated from there. Communities ended up embroiled in what Richard Drake called a "kind of holy war,"[4] one in which shooting people on the other side was not unheard of.

After World War II, coal operators had an interest of mechanizing their operations. Earth moving technology was available, and scraping away the ground above a coal seam which could then be loaded on trucks was more efficient than digging a shaft and bringing the coal out of the ground. Since few occupations on Earth are as dangerous as mining, the Union had an interest in getting their men above ground and guaranteeing that those who did go under were paid very well. The Love-Lewis agreement between the United Mine Workers and the industry in 1950 set high wages, but encouraged rapid mechanization of coal mining, eliminating mining jobs faster than anyone expected. By some accounts, over

Population of Knott County, 1900-2000

to Northern industrial job centers. Entire "hillbilly neighborhoods" of former Kentucky coal miners grew up in Cincinnati, Akron, Detroit, Gary, and Chicago. Between 1950 and 1970, Knott County lost a quarter of its population—sort of.

Studies of the migrants found that few actually cut ties to back home, maintaining land ownership, and making sometimes weekly trips home. The return migration of the 1970's may have had less to do with coal's mini-boom, and more to do with families deciding to head back home for good instead of episodically.[6] Some of those brought back pensions, but that lasted only for a generation.

One other lasting legacy of an extractive local economy was the disincentive for most people to pursue education beyond the base level required to get a job at the mines (or later at the factories in Gary). In Knott County, a little over ten percent of the 25+ population has a 4-year college degree. Over forty percent are without a high school diploma.[7] After deindustrialization of the Rust Belt, the earning potential for someone with only a high school diploma is nominal anywhere. Therefore, the pull of urban settings is no longer strong enough to draw people out of places like Knott County en mass, as it did in the 1950's and 60's, leaving a population that is shrinking, but not rapidly through out-migration.[8]

Appalachia, particularly Kentucky's Cumberland Plateau, has attracted the attention of outside social assistance for over a hundred years. Hindman is best know as the location of the Hindman Settlement School, an early rural settlement school founded in 1902, in the tradition of Jane Addam's Hull House in Chicago. Originally providing a whole host of social services now provided
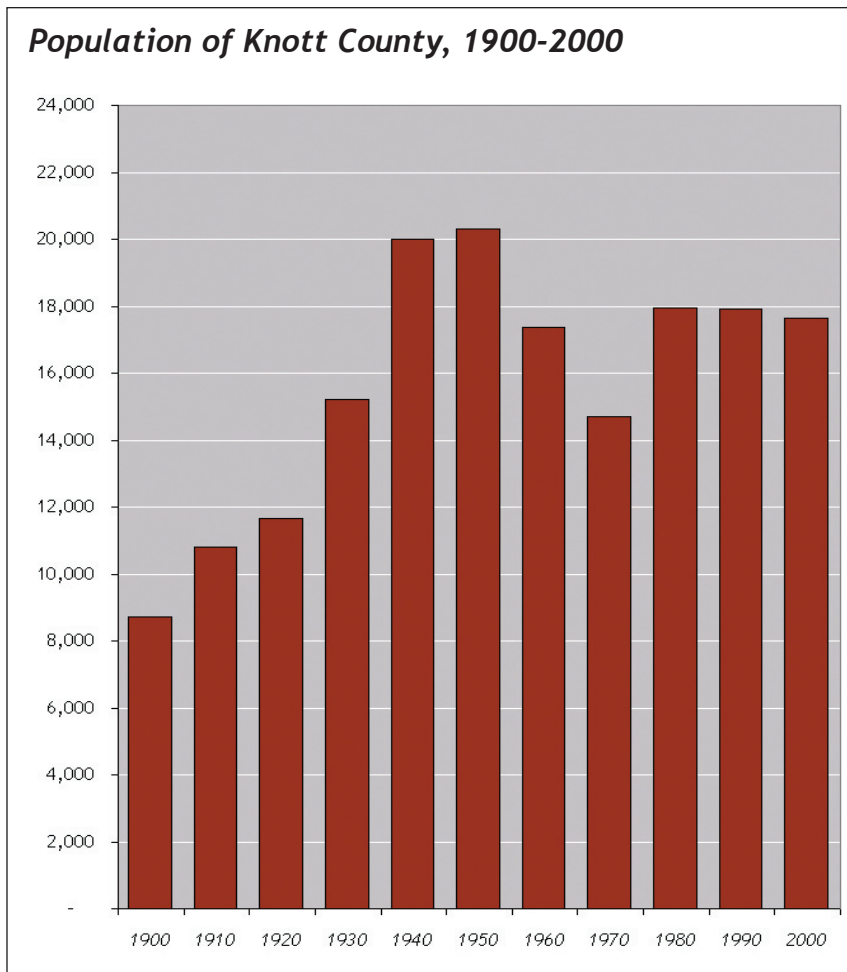
a half million miners were employed in Appalachia during World War II. By 1960, less than 150,000 were employed.[5] This prefaced the Great Migration, a steady outflow of working-age Appalachians

by governmental agencies, the school currently runs programs for children with special needs, adult GED and literacy courses, and supports local arts and literature through festivals and writer workshops.[9]

New Deal programs were particularly generous to mountain towns, providing transportation infrastructure and public buildings, such as Hindman High School. Thirty year later, the War on Poverty directed federal funds into the hills through the Office for Economic Opportunity (OEO) and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).[10]

The OEO was charged with social programs, and mobilized college graduates from across the country as VISTA volunteers to run federally-funded Community Agency Programs. Known as "poverty warriors," VISTAs often took literally the enabling language that said their programs should be created "with maximum feasible participation of the poor." This was the confrontational 1960's, and by design, the activist zeal with which some of the "outsiders" acted quickly ran afoul of established interests, especially once they began involving themselves in the anti-stripping efforts. In 1968, a change in the legal language made VISTA funding contingent upon local approval, effectively ending the federal effort to affect change by circumventing local control. Despite the cut-off of funding, many of the VISTAs stayed on in the area, often contributing their professional skills in law, architecture, or medicine to their new communities.

The ARC, on the other hand, remained popular because they, in the words of Richard Drake, "built things—mostly roads." They also built sewers and other lucrative infrastructure projects, which like most federal programs, were run through state and often local government offices. Regional planning has had some success, such as the Appalachian Development Highway System, a three thousand mile system authorized in 1965 that is eighty-five percent complete and may cost as much to finish as it has cost to build to this point.[11] However, since the 1960's, physical planning in rural Appalachia has revolved around piecemeal infrastructure grants that have seldom added up to a coherent community vision, leading Ron Eller—the ARC resident scholar at the time—to claim that "the ARC is essentially a governors' slush fund"[12]

The Planning Process

In 1996, the Kentucky Appalachian Commission, with the support of Governor Paul Patton, developed the Appalachian Community Development Initiative (CDI) as a new strategy for distributing ARC funds within the state. Rather than fund discreet projects all over the region, the CDI asked communities to develop a coordinated plan that could generate a local sustainable economy. Criteria included an economic vision, a foundation of civic capital, a history of financial stability, the wherewithal to participate in the grant process, and a foundation for bricks and mortar improvements.[13] Furthermore, the stated idea was to get communities thinking for themselves and not parroting what experts were saying they should do. The RFP flatly states, "You do not need consultants, engineers, or lawyers for this first phase of the CDI program. We want to know *your community's* vision—not the vision of someone unfamiliar with your town or county."[14]
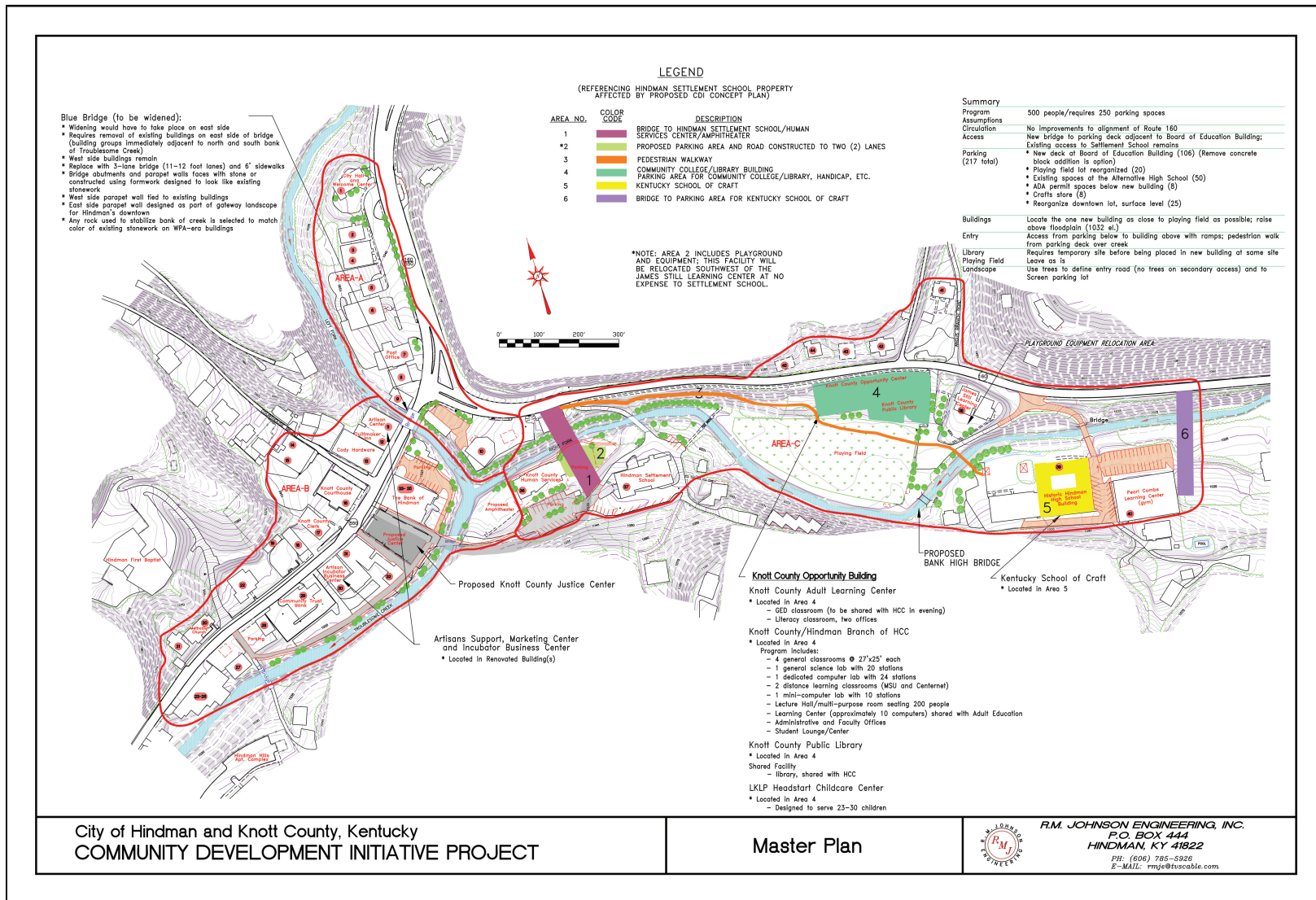
Blue Bridge (to be widened):
* Widening would have to take place on east side
* Requires removal of existing buildings on east side of bridge (building groups immediately adjacent to north and south bank of Troublesome Creek)
* West side buildings remain
* Replace with 3-lane bridge (11–12 foot lanes) and 6' sidewalks
* Bridge abutments and parapet walls faces with stone or constructed using formwork designed to look like existing stonework
* West side parapet wall tied to existing buildings
* East side parapet wall designed as part of gateway landscape for Hindman's downtown
* Any rock used to stabilize bank of creek is selected to match color of existing stonework on WPA-era buildings

LEGEND
(REFERENCING HINDMAN SETTLEMENT SCHOOL PROPERTY AFFECTED BY PROPOSED CDI CONCEPT PLAN)

AREA NO.	COLOR CODE	DESCRIPTION
1		BRIDGE TO HINDMAN SETTLEMENT SCHOOL/HUMAN SERVICES CENTER/AMPHITHEATER
*2		PROPOSED PARKING AREA AND ROAD CONSTRUCTED TO TWO (2) LANES
3		PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY
4		COMMUNITY COLLEGE/LIBRARY BUILDING PARKING AREA FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE/LIBRARY, HANDICAP, ETC.
5		KENTUCKY SCHOOL OF CRAFT
6		BRIDGE TO PARKING AREA FOR KENTUCKY SCHOOL OF CRAFT

*NOTE: AREA 2 INCLUDES PLAYGROUND AND EQUIPMENT; THIS FACILITY WILL BE RELOCATED SOUTHWEST OF THE JAMES STILL LEARNING CENTER AT NO EXPENSE TO SETTLEMENT SCHOOL.

0' 100' 200' 300'

Summary

Program Assumptions	500 people/requires 250 parking spaces
Circulation	No improvements to alignment of Route 160
Access	New bridge to parking deck adjacent to Board of Education Building; Existing access to Settlement School remains
Parking (217 total)	* New deck at Board of Education Building (106) (Remove concrete block addition is option)
	* Playing field lot reorganized (20)
	* Existing spaces at the Alternative High School (50)
	* ADA permit spaces below new building (8)
	* Crafts store (8)
	* Reorganize downtown lot, surface level (25)
Buildings	Locate the one new building as close to playing field as possible; raise above floodplain (1032 el.)
Entry	Access from parking below to building above with ramps; pedestrian walk from parking deck over creek
Library	Requires temporary site before being placed in new building at same site
Playing Field	Leave as is
Landscape	Use trees to define entry road (no trees on secondary access) and to Screen parking lot

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT RELOCATION AREA

AREA-A
AREA-B
AREA-C

Proposed Knott County Justice Center

Artisans Support, Marketing Center and Incubator Business Center
* Located in Renovated Building(s)

PROPOSED BANK HIGH BRIDGE

Kentucky School of Craft
* Located in Area 5

Knott County Opportunity Building

Knott County Adult Learning Center
* Located in Area 4
  – GED classroom (to be shared with HCC in evening)
  – Literacy classroom, two offices

Knott County/Hindman Branch of HCC
* Located in Area 4
  Program includes:
  – 4 general classrooms @ 27'x25' each
  – 1 general science lab with 20 stations
  – 1 dedicated computer lab with 24 stations
  – 2 distance learning classrooms (MSU and Centernet)
  – 1 mini-computer lab with 10 stations
  – Lecture Hall/multi-purpose room seating 200 people
  – Learning Center (approximately 10 computers) shared with Adult Education
  – Administrative and Faculty Offices
  – Student Lounge/Center

Knott County Public Library
* Located in Area 4
Shared Facility
  – library, shared with HCC

LKLP Headstart Childcare Center
* Located in Area 4
  – Designed to serve 23–30 children

City of Hindman and Knott County, Kentucky
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE PROJECT

Master Plan

R.M. JOHNSON ENGINEERING, INC.
P.O. BOX 444
HINDMAN, KY 41822
PH: (606) 785–5926
E–MAIL: rmje@tvscable.com

figure 2.1

source: *R.M. Johnson Engineering, Inc.*

Prompted by the RFP, Mike Mullins, Director of the Hindman Settlement School, said, "We asked ourselves 'What do we have that's unique?' Well, these beautiful hills and quality crafts."[15]

Beginning with that premise, a core group of citizen activists held a series of public meetings to fill out a vision of what a local craft and heritage economy would look like. Around fifty residents met twice before breaking into four committees, each tasked with preparing a section of the application to the state. From the meetings emerged the vision and title "Using Our Heritage to Build Tomorrow's Community" and a list of goals and projects. At the heart of the vision was a belief that what had local cultural and social value might generate economic value as well.[16]

Hindman was one of two communities selected for the first round of CDI funding. The other was Jenkins, a community forty miles away in Letcher County that hoped to finally cash in on decades of transportation infrastructure improvements by building an industrial park, one of many such facilities in the state and region.[17]

After securing $20 million of state support, the Hindman steering committee issued an RFP and brought in national firms Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, Economics Research Associates, and Main Streets Program founder Mary Means to help rework the locally developed plan. "Charged with assisting the community in locating the components to best capture and extend the value of each individual investment" the consultant team produced a plan that emphasized enhancing the environment, building upon the educational, literary and cultural heritage of the community,

"Using our Heritage..." Goals

1. Utilize the strong literary, educational, folk art, and cultural tradition of Knott Countians;

2. Remove all pollution from the Troublesome Creek watershed and develop Hindman community around the Creek;

3. Revitalize downtown Hindman as a destination marketplace for all Knott Countians;

4. Develop planned uses for available buildings and land sites which can be used to accomplish our Community Development Concept Plan;

5. Establish complete, maintainable infrastructure throughout the Community Development District;

6. Emphasize the area's unique history as the origin of the rural settlement school district;

7. Mesh downtown Hindman with the Settlement School and provide easy access between the two for pedestrians and vehicular traffic;

8. Provide housing within the District consistent with the area's heritage and with Knott County's growing potential as a "bedroom" community.

9. Establish a development corridor which ties together Route 80, the Hindman connector, downtown Hindman, Route 160 and Holly Hills Mall;

10. Increase tourist activity in Knott County while improving the quality of life for all Knott Countians;

11. Provide easier access in and out of Hindman while emphasizing the natural beauty surrounding the town;

12. Market available resources and activities outside of Knott County; and

13. Encourage the involvement of Alice Lloyd College and out other educational institutions in the development of the District.

table 3.1   source: "Using our Heritage to Build Tomorrow's Future" application. Section V, 2-3.

City of Hindman/Knott County Community Development Initiative Master Plan and Pedestrian Trail
Hindman, KY

L/KLA

New Welcome Center/Town Hall

Renovated WPA-era High School for the new KCTCS community college program focusing on Arts and Crafts

New woodshop in renovated WPA building, below, with gate detail, right

New branch campus building of Hazard Community College, with plaza entry, shared library, childcare program, classrooms, labs, and auditorium, above, with detail of plaza light fixture and railing, center

CDI Master Plan Results

Plan implementation demonstrates a scheme successfully integrated within the landscape, as well as an improved network of streets, sidewalks, and open space, while reflecting vernacular building patterns and making the most of scarce opportunities. The site plan and program development includes a plaza at the entry of the HCC building, streetscape improvements for the town's Main Street, and a pedestrian trail linking the town to the new college facilities.

Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, P.C. • 815 N. Royal, Suite 200 • Alexandria, VA 22314 • 703-739-0972

figure 2.2   source: http://www.lardnerklein.com/lkla_communitydesign.pdf

unifying the physical attributes of the town, and creating a development corridor between downtown and the highway.[18]

The Plan

According to Tim Glotzbach, Dean of the Kentucky School of Craft, Hindman "was not trying to make a new face, but rediscover their old face" which was the educational heritage of the Settlement School and the traditional crafts.[19]

The Settlement School was heavily involved in developing the CDI plan and committed land for the construction of the Knott County Opportunity Center, a multi-purpose building that hosts a branch of Hazard Community and Technical College, an adult education center, Head-Start, and a unified local library that serves all the educational institutions and the public at-large.

Hindman's plan relies heavily on institutional presence in the community. Adjacent to the Settlement School and Opportunity Center is the newly created Kentucky School of Craft, which occupies the New Deal-era High School building. The plan expressly called for "seamless" linkages between the town of Hindman and the institutions, which manifested itself as a pedestrian walkway along the creek. At the other end of downtown, the committee created what is now called the Kentucky Appalachian Artisan Center, an arts incubator in two restored buildings. Movement between the two anchors was promoted by stream and pedestrian improvements. The idea is to give a consistent identity to the downtown. As Stuart Burrill, Director of the Kentucky Appalachian Artisan Center, put it, "some people think that one little center will do it, but you've got to jump in whole hog."[20]

Jumping in whole hog was made easier with the ARC money, at least in terms of the physical improvements, which are completed for the most part except for the pedestrian walk and the new studios at the School of Craft. What remains is the institution building.

In 1998, the Kentucky Legislature approved what became known as the Kentucky School of Craft, linking it to the Hazard Community and Technical College. From the beginning, this was conceived as an economic development tool. More than just studio instruction, the Kentucky School of Craft also trains its students in business management, entrepreneurship, and marketing. They opened their doors with programs in Jewelry/metalsmithing and woodworking. Currently, they are seeking state funding for Phase II, which would add facilities for ceramics, blacksmithing, and fiber arts.[21] As part of the larger development strategy, the hope is to attract faculty and students who will choose to stay and operate on Hindman's Main Street.

The steering committee acquired the 1913 Young Building, a former Ben Franklin Five-and-Dime, across from the Courthouse to use as a gallery, which represents over a hundred regional juried artisans. The Artisan Center first opened at the end of 2001, but was delayed in hiring a director until the beginning of 2006. They now have a second building which will be used as incubator space. Along with a small retail shop and cafe, there will be room for 50 studios.

Physically, the plan is efficient. Reuse of the High School Building and the downtown buildings preserves the built fabric of the community. The library, which is shared between three institutions

Knott County's Heritage
Educational
Hindman Settlement School – was founded by May Stone and Katherine Pettit, two Kentucky-born, but Wellesley-educated women in the Progressive tradition. Traditionally thought to be the first such rural settlement school, students were groomed for study in the Northeast or at Berea College.
Literary
James Still – Poet and Novelist. Author of River of Earth and two-time Guggenheim Fellow. Still moved to the Settlement School as a young man during the Depression to take a position as librarian in exchange for room, board, and laundry. He continued to live in Hindman until his death in 2001.
Appalachian Writers Workshop – Founded in 1977, the annual event at the Settlement School brings together national writers from the region, including Gurney Norman and Silas House.
Cultural
Appalachian Family Folk Week – annual event bringing together regionally and nationally-known crafters and musicians to hold workshops and classes.
Historical
Congressman Carl D. Perkins – Long-time representative from Kentucky's seventh district. Perkins was chair of the House Committee on Education and Labor and is best known for the student loan program with his name.

table 3.2

eliminates redundancy, while also bringing the public at large into the Opportunity Center. A water retention basin doubles as an amphitheater.

The programming of the plan tries to create a sense of cohesiveness, with arts-related anchors at each end, which doesn't preclude other

types of establishments downtown, but gives the place a purpose that doesn't put it in direct competition with Wal-Mart. What is lacking still are the "school town" accoutrements, such as cafes, bars (it's a dry county), and bookshops, but this is a typical chicken-and-egg problem. These types of retail have small margins and need customers immediately, while the potential customers would like to see these businesses in place.

Ongoing Challenges

The arts are hot right now as an economic development tool amongst experts, but the starving artist myth dies hard locally. "Crafts have been part of people lives here, but they didn't think of it as economic development," says Glotzbach.[22] He thinks that the challenge is showing people that by utilizing markets beyond selling to your neighbors or local craft fairs, that a crafter can generate a decent supplemental income or even a primary family income if they choose. He points out a national shift in the craft market. Young artisans are no longer dependant on the validation and exposure of galleries, but now have access to the internet and more informal markets.

In order to get local people thinking differently about their abilities, though, the people with whom I spoke admit that while they would love to fill the school and the studio with locals, they realize that they have to recruit further a field. As such, that puts them in competition for artisans with other communities that are trying to do the same. Asked about this, Stuart Burrill, Director of the Artisan Center, says, "We're four years ahead of everyone else," but the market will get saturated very shortly. "If we can get thirty-five artists in the next three to four years, we'll be alright."[23]

Those thirty-five artists might have a hard time finding somewhere to live, though. Burrill told me that when he moved to Hindman a little over a year ago he had a very difficult time finding somewhere to rent. He's single, non-smoker, no pets—should have been an easy tenant, but there is a lack of rental options in town.

The School of Craft is non-residential and more than half of their students are not local, some commuting two and half hours from Lexington three times a week. This is frustrating to the CDI folks for two reasons: the first is that it makes it hard to recruit artists to the community; and the second is that rental income should be one of the economic benefits to non-artisans.

Along a mountain creek, devoting land to one purpose means that there is not much land left over for another, unlike on the Plains where there is land in every direction. Someone not familiar with the topography of Central Appalachia might wonder why the town doesn't move up the hill; however the land along the creek is usually the only buildable land in the mountains other than former strip mine sites. Granted, there is certainly not enough room on the banks of Troublesome Creek for an industrial park or a Big Box store, but committing $20 million and the structure of the entire downtown to support the craft economy is still no small decision— nor was it an unanimous decision.

"Frankly, there are people here who want this to fail, to say I told you so or are mad they aren't getting any money," according to Burrill.[24] To understand the cynicism that runs deep in the mountains, one has to remember the long history of unfulfilled promises and corruption.[25] From a recent story in the *Lexington Herald-Leader:*

Like many local governments in Kentucky, Knott County has a storied history of political shenanigans…. At least one former judge-executive, Tubby Calhoun, was indicted in the 1980s for allegedly spreading gravel on private driveways. More recently, Thompson's predecessor, Donnie Newsome, spent 10 months in federal prison on vote-buying charges and eventually resigned from office.[26]

"We are doing this work for and in spite of the people in the community," said Mullins. "In these small towns, local support is directly proportional to how much it benefits them."[27]

Bill Weinberg, a local businessman and Chair of the Artisan Center, takes a more reserved view. "Until we do it, I can understand that there will be skeptics out there." But he goes on to acknowledge the local politics. "You're not going to get everybody in Knott County on the same page because of political differences. If you don't like someone, you're not going to support something they support, even if it is a good idea."[28]

Endnotes

1   2000 Census. Despite an image of isolation, Knott County is home to over 17,000 residents and the combined population of those fifteen poorest counties is over 280,000.

2   The classic critical exposé on mining and its impacts is Caudill, Harry M. *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1963. For a history of industrial Appalachia, see Eller, Ronald D. *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, c1982.

3   Stories from the early days of resistance to strip mining are documented in Bingham, Mary Beth. "Stopping the Bulldozers: What Difference did it Make?" *Fighting Back in Appalachia: Traditions of Resistance and Change*, Stephen L. Fisher, ed. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1993; Also in Fugate, Jeffrey Neil. *Powerful Music:Activist-Musicians in Appalachia*. Unpublished thesis, Gaines Center for the Humanities, University of Kentucky, 1999

4   Drake, Richard B. *A History of Appalachia*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001. p.205

5   Reported in Drake, 2001.

6   Garkovich, Lorraine. "Kinship and Return Migration in Eastern Kentucky" *Appalachian Journal* Autumn 1982. p.62-70

7   U.S. Census Bureau. QT-P20. Educational Attainment by Sex: 2000, Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data

8   McGranahan and Beale, 2002

9   For a critical history of the Settlement School see Whistnant, David E. *All that is Native & Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, c1983.

10   Much of the history of federal programs in this section is taken from Drake, 2001, chapter 10.

11   http://www.arc.gov/index.do?nodeId=1006 [accessed April 18, 2007]

12   Quoted in Ferenchik, Mark and Jill Riepenhoff, "Mountain Money: Federal Tax Dollars Miss the Mark in Core Appalachia" Appalachia – Hollow Promises Series *Columbus Dispatch*, September 26, 1999 Sunday, Home Final Edition, p. 01A. For more on the structure of the ARC, see http://www.arc.gov/index.do?nodeId=6 [accessed April 18, 2007]

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26 Mueller, Lee. "Knott paving projects questioned" *Lexington Herald-Leader*. February 24, 2007. Available at http://www.kentucky.com [accessed March 1, 2007]

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Chapter 4: Miner County, South Dakota

As the twentieth century wrapped up, Howard was typical of many small Plains communities. The population continued to steadily decline, as it had since the Great Depression. Over half of the homes in the county were built prior to 1940, and sixteen percent of them stood vacant.[1] Agriculture still loomed large in the life of the community, but seemed to employ fewer and fewer people full-time. At the edge of town the local slaughterhouse stood vacant.

In analyzing the 2000 Census data, demographers David McGranahan and Calvin Beale identified three characteristics of counties that lost population in the previous decade: (1) location away from metropolitan areas, (2) low population density, and (3) low levels of natural amenities. In analyzing those counties that despite having these characteristics maintained population, the answer was in idiosyncratic events like construction of a prison, industrial agriculture, or the creation of a lake. They state specifically, "In no case did small business entrepreneurship alone seem to be the critical factor." They go one step further and point out that the data refutes the assumed correlation between high poverty and out-migration. "Rural counties with high poverty in 1990 were no more likely to have population loss in 1990-2000 than were other rural counties."[2]

In another study out of the University of Nebraska, researchers concluded that while economic considerations are important for residents in that state, the two most important variables for predicting satisfaction with ones community are non-economic: social networks (family/friends/religion) and the level that the community rates as "friendly, trusting and supportive." They also found, not surprisingly, that as a resident ages, they become more satisfied with their settings, but as education increases, satisfaction declines.[3] For communities like Howard, this means that the existing workforce population (age 25-64) is likely to remain, but there is little guarantee that the next generation will stay or return in numbers sufficient to off-set natural decline.

The Planning Process

"Wind-swept" has become a bit of a cliché in describing the Great Plains, but there are two wind turbines on the outskirts of Howard, South Dakota that rely on that cliché. Since 2000, those turbines have become as much a symbol of the community as the water tower for what they represent. The process that resulted in the wind turbines and related businesses began in 1995 when the business students at Howard High School surveyed the town's citizens about their spending habits. Using a fairly sophisticated survey, with a 64 percent return, the students analyzed what was being spent locally and concluded that a simple ten percent increase by each household could generate an additional $7 million circulating in the local economy.[4]

While such numbers make great headlines, the students and their teachers realized that they had to go one step further and understand what would entice the local populace to actually increase their
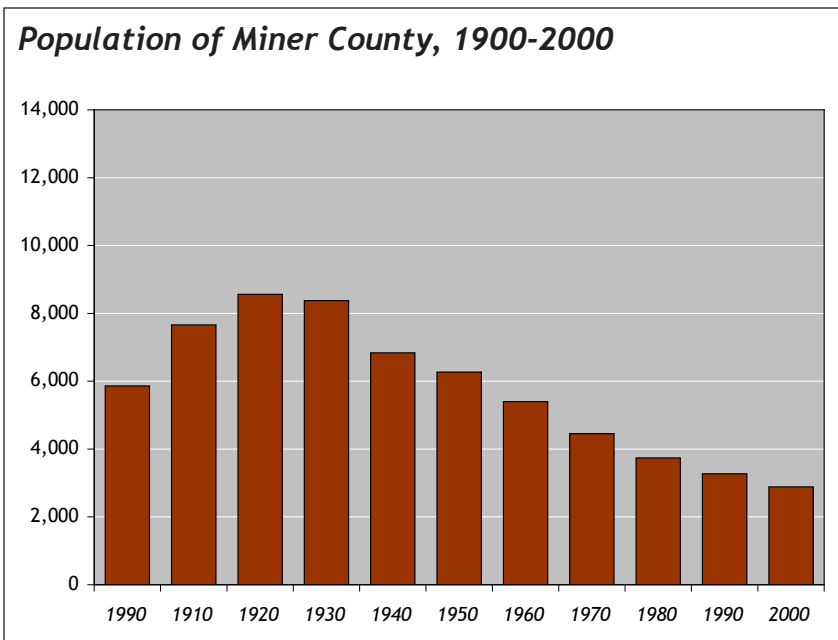
Population of Miner County, 1900-2000

Chart 4.1   source: U.S. Census Bureau

part of the Annenberg Foundation's $500 million challenge for school reform in 1995, $50 million was distributed by the Rural Challenge. The Howard HS project quickly became one of the star examples that the Rural Challenge pointed to as successful place-based education as they worked to spread the idea in the rural development field.[5]

In 1997, the town's largest employer—a company that manufactured plastic wrappers for baseball cards—laid off 75 of its 210 workers. That prompted Parry and the next generation of high school students to hold a series of community visioning meetings during the 1997-98 school year. More than just "speak your piece" meetings, the students set up a system of three large meetings supplemented with twelve break-out groups that met twice at people's homes. Through advertising in the local paper and word of mouth, the students attracted 158 attendees at the first meeting.

To generate discussion, the first meeting began with presentations from teachers on local community issues before the students moderated a listing of strengths and weaknesses in the community. The comments were typed up and distributed before people left for the evening. These lists provided the basis for the first small group meetings which focused on the specific issues of community cleanliness, elderly care, and education. The groups ranked how well the community was dealing with these issues and came back to the second large group meeting to discuss the one that generated the most concern, which was community cleanliness. Using this issue, the students compiled lists of problems, underlying causes, and potential solutions.

spending. Their survey provided some answers to that question, so they worked directly with local merchants to meet the needs of their local costumers. The following year, local sales actually increased by twenty-seven percent.

This project grew out of a school-reform effort called place-based education, which engages students in close-to-home service-learning. Then business teacher and basketball coach, and current director of Miner County Communty Revitalization (MCCR), Randy Parry, worked with South Dakota State University to develop the curriculum used by the students. The SDSU effort was

Howard, Facing East

Main Street, Howard, SD

source: MCCR

Wind Turbines, Howard, SD

source: MCCR

At the second meeting of the small groups, they discussed economic development, specifically creation of new business, increasing local expenditures, and circulation of money locally. Local expenditures were the topic for discussion at the final meeting. Out of the process, the community formed two standing committees on Economic Development and Community Cleanliness. While both were chaired by traditional leaders in the community (the former school superintendent and the mayor respectively), they were filled out by un-titled residents and high school students, something that would later play out as a primary strategy in Miner County.[6]

After a heavy snow in November of 1998, Northwest Area Foundation (NWAF) officials met with the committees that formed out of the visioning meetings the prior year. Impressed with the fact that 80 of the expected 82 citizens showed, despite many of them working to corral livestock that had walked up the snow banks into the open,[7] NWAF said keep going, providing a half million dollars to fund a planning process for the community that would serve as the blueprint for a ten-year commitment in 2001.

At the beginning of the planning process, the community had recognized that an industrial recruitment strategy wasn't a likely winner for them. They also realized that they didn't need to be as big as neighboring communities Mitchell or Watertown, but as NWAF President Karl Stuber put it, "The community was stuck in the old economy. When we got there, we started asking people 'what's the economic base of Miner County?' They had a vision of their economic base that was at least 30 years out of date."[8]

With the help of Darryl Hobbs, a University of Missouri rural sociology professor, Miner County's Strategic Planning Team tried to check the perceptions of the economy against the data and found that the perceptions were mainly wrong. Agriculture was assumed to be the biggest source of income in the community, but a survey found that transfer payments—mainly in the form of Social Security and Medicare—were just as large of a source of income.[9] Providing a place for the elderly to remain in town was no longer just a nice thought, but an economic necessity.

The efforts of the community visioning process addressed some low-hanging fruit which built momentum. As a former basketball coach, Parry certainly likes this metaphor. You've got to build community before you tackle the problem, he said. "We did it by setting goals that we could actually achieve."[10] In this case, those goals were the community clean-up piece. It didn't take much outside support or financial infrastructure to clean up Main Street and repaint some houses.

This idea of setting achievable goals continues to permeate the thinking around current plans. Parry said that the intention is to stabilize the decline of Miner County and maybe grow in the future, but right now it is about meeting the needs of the current residents and keeping them. For most communities, securing the future is such a priority that they forget to secure the present.

According to Kerstin Gorham, the Program Officer for NWAF, like the community's perception of the economy, its vision for revitalization may also have been 30-years out of date; the community vision looked a lot like the one that the 40- and 50-somethings in town remembered from childhood.[11] According to Gorham, they talked a lot about revitalization early on. Now they are more forward-looking and not focusing so much on the "re-" part of things.

Charged with the goals of (1) providing the people of Miner County with the ability to earn a living based on their abilities, needs, and aspirations; (2) sufficient mechanisms for financial investment locally, and (3) creating a community where people will continue to have the option to make a life in Miner County, the planning task force incorporated as MCCR with the charge of implementing the adopted plan, which the NWAF signed onto with $5.8 million in support.[12] Jonathan Eig, writing for the *Wall Street Journal*, described the plan as "both radical and modest."[13]

Radical in its modesty might be a more apt description. Accepting that the population and jobs that have left aren't coming back anytime soon is difficult for a community and often politically disastrous for those who say it out loud, but the community instead looked inward and found a number of assets on which to build. Strikingly, they did so without the use of maps, images, or renderings of how the community might look in the future. The entire plan is thirteen pages long and available on the MCCR website.[14]

The Plan

The Miner County plan emphasizes economic development, focusing on value-added industries, while also addressing community services. On the short list of initial activies for MCCR was creation of a certified child care center. True to their aim for

Miner County Strategic Activities

1. Create an affordable housing program that provides a range of quality life-cycle housing for all residents of Miner County

2. Sustain Miner County Community Revitalization (MCCR) as a financially stable, permanent facilitator of comprehensive, inclusive community development

3. Create systems to open up more credit and financial restructuring services in the county

4. Create an affordable, quality early childhood development program/child care center

5. Work with regional technology-dependent businesses and industries that may be interested in creating branch offices or new businesses in Miner County to develop a trained workforce in the county for those businesses

6. Update a land use plan and zoning regulations for Miner County

7. Develop Lake Carthage and Redstone Park as recreation sites

8. Create a business assistance program that provides technical assistance, financial restructuring services, and loans

9. Promote potential value-added processing of agriculture commodities and the development of varied, new niche markets building on local assets

10. Develop a program to reverse the trend toward out-of-county property ownership

11. Create a Community Learning Center to educate community members about key issues and activities in Miner County and foster cohesion, inclusiveness, and networking

table 4.1   *source: http://www.mccr.net/mccr/plan/strategic.html*

each activity to serve multiple purposes, MCCR created a non-profit, Children's Care Corner, to plan and construct the center. Part of the project was to fund participation by locals in the training programs necessary for the center to be certified, which in turn was necessary in order to participate in federal programs such as food assistance and Head Start. Not only did they attempt to meet the community's need for child care, they also used the project to provide workforce training and leverage additional funding for social services.

Also on the list of initial activities was establishing affordable life-cycle housing in the community. Recognizing early on that their elderly population was an important source of local income and that housing options for them was limited, MCCR set out to convince the local nursing home, Good Samaritan, to build independent living units in town. The result was Northview Apartments, which had a waiting list before completion of the project.

Hoping to build on that success, MCCR went around again pitching assisted living. Unfortunately, Good Samaritan wasn't interested, so MCCR went out and recruited Greenleaf, a regional operator. To facilitate the plan, the local economic development group, Howard Industries, purchased the land and resold it to Greenleaf. The city provided the infrastructure for the project, and Greenleaf built 28 units of assisted living. Once built, Greenleaf had trouble operating the project and decided to pull out. Rather than have it shuttered, the community formed a management organization and kept the facility open after Greenleaf pulled out.

Providing seniors new options served two purposes. First, there was the real fear that many seniors would leave Miner County for another location that provided some level of assisted care, which economically would be the equivalent of all the ranchers in the county moving to Montana. The second was to generate some churn in the market by opening up some of the homes occupied by the community's elderly.

Childcare and housing were specific activities named in the plan, but there was also an opportunistic element to the activities of MCCR as well. They knew they wanted to build an economy around local assets, but had not named exactly how might happen. It played out that wind and beef would be the main products of Howard.

Wind-energy is emerging as a bit of a cluster in South Dakota, which has its fair share of wind, but lags in developing a wind economy. Early on, wind-mills pumped water wells for farmsteads and later produced household electricity with small wind generators. As pressure increases for an alternative to oil-generated electricity, Miner County is gambling that wind is on the rise again and trying to get into the game early. The first municipality in South Dakota to own and operate their own turbines, Howard is using the energy generated to defray city expenses and power the local industrial park.

The turbines were acquired by the city and retrofitted by Energy Maintenance Service, a recent start-up business by a graduate of Howard High School. In addition to Energy Maintenance Service, a yatch manufacturer out of San Diego recently began manufacturing of wind turbine blades in Howard. MCCR built the manufacturing facility to suit and is currently leasing it to Knight and Carver, which has an executive from the area.[15]

Another area of value-added production is organic beef. Scott Lively, a Massachusetts-based entrepreneur and logistics executive, was visiting his wife's hometown and got to talking with local ranchers about organic beef. What he found was that there was no distribution system for local ranchers who wanted to raise organic beef. Their only option was to try and make a go of it at local markets. Lively sensed an opportunity for vertical integration and distribution system for organic beef. The key component for Dakota Beef would be the ownership and operation of their own processing plant so that they could control the quality of the final product before shipping. That vacant slaughterhouse at the edge of town in Howard suddenly became an asset. MCCR stepped in, used their local connections to negotiate purchase of the building, and resold it to Lively's group.[16]

At one point, the initial venture capital pulled out and the deal looked dead. With the help of MCCR, Lively found another set of investors. Dakota Beef was initially distributed exclusively through the Williams-Sonoma catalogue, but recently has signed a deal to supply Whole Foods Market with organic steaks and Major League Baseball with sausages for sale in ballparks.

Like EMS and Knight & Carver, Dakota Beef was started by someone with a personal connection and commitment to the area. According to Gorham, commitment to the place by people who have left has been an impressive part of Miner County's story.[17]

source: MCCR

While the big employers get the headlines, MCCR has also been working to keep services and merchants local. One of the first actions was to set up a revolving loan fund in partnership with Northeast South Dakota Economic Corporation and the Federal Department of Agriculture. A year later in 2002, MCCR established a Business Assistance Program to help would-be start-ups with financial planning and marketing. In 2004, they opened a Business Center in a Main Street building, which provides incubator space for start-ups.

Part of this strategy has been for MCCR to purchase and lease buildings to start-ups and groom them towards purchase and upkeep of their own building. A local physical therapist set up shop a few years ago and is about ready to purchase his building from MCCR. Reselling the buildings both returns capital to MCCR to start the process again, but also literally invests merchants in Main Street. Another story has the local dentist thinking of leaving town. MCCR helps him identify a market in Medicaid patients and helps in preparing the federal application that pays him to see these patients. The dentist stays and hires an associate. The most promising development on Main Street was the 2004 opening of Rusty's Hardware, which provided an anchor for Main Street and almost immediately increased downtown traffic. The revolving fund was a big part of the financing for Rusty's.

Ongoing Challenges

In a shrinking community, a host of problems arise, not the least of which is housing mismatch, when the supply doesn't meet the demand. As MCCR's Director of Housing and Economic Development put it, "One of the unfortunate parts of our situation is that we have housing that is vacant because it's just not what people are looking for." The unoccupied housing in the community tends to be owned in abstentia and much of it is old and dilapidated. The available rental apartments in the community are three hundred square foot units built with Rural Development funds years ago.

Attempts to generate new construction have been mixed. The remaining seven acres next to the independent living facility were subdivided by Howard Industries into thirteen quarter-acre lots, of which only four have sold in the ensuing five years. A private developer has acquired a parcel next to the municipal golf course and is developing large lot housing, which presents a problem for a community that needs to infill many of the empty lots in town.

Part of the problem is valuation. The median value of owner-occupied housing unit for Miner County in 2000 was $26,500 ($31,800 in Howard itself).[18] In economic terms, rent is below replacement cost. In common terms, the cost of building a home is above what one could feasibly expect to get for it and still turn any profit. This impacts capital improvements to existing properties as well. As Knutson put it, "We've established the mindset that houses in Howard are not worth much because they won't appreciate in value…. As this attitude creeps in, and is reinforced by 'coffee talk,' people begin to feel that it's a bad investment to update their houses."[19]

Unlike the income sources, this is a perception that is likely backed by the facts. Monetary appreciation requires an increase in demand, which is hard with a shrinking populace. It's a tough cycle. Young families aren't inclined to return or stay in Miner County because existing housing options are limited, but unless they do, there is no market pressure to create new housing.

A recent approach by MCCR has been to nurture rehab projects, which take existing units, both multi- and single-family, and retune them to match what they hope young families are looking for. This, combined with the city beautification projects, attempt to create non-monetary appreciation. Basically, the utility a household receives from improving their property increases because they aren't the only one on the block fixing things up, which results in improved confidence, and eventually a quality of life that encourages monetary appreciation.

Endnotes

1   U.S. Census Bureau. QT-H5. Physical Housing Characteristics - Vacant Housing Units: 2000, and QT-H7. Year Structure Built and Year Householder Moved Into Unit: 2000; Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data

2   McGranahan and Beale, 2002

3   Filkins, Rebecca, John C. Allen, and Sam Cordes. "Predicting Community Satisfaction among Rural Residents: an Integrative Model" *Rural Sociology;* v.65, n.1, 2000; Social Science Module, p.72

4   The nearest Wal-Mart is in Mitchell, a town of 14,000 and home to the Corn Palace (of bumper sticker fame), a little over thirty miles away. See FBLA Howard HS. *Cash Flow Survey and Results*, 1995. Available at http://www.whatkidscando.org/featurestories/cashflow.html [accessed Feb 23, 2007]

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6   FBLA Howard HS. *Report on Community Visioning Meetings*, 1998. Available at http://whatkidscando.org/archives/featurestories/community.html [accessed May 14, 2007]

7   Reported in Eig, Jonathan "New Crop: In Bid to Hang On, Miner County, S.D., Downsizes Dreams; As Farmers Dwindle, Towns Make Best of What's Left; Big Grant Helps Fight Odds; Windmills and Organic Beef" *Wall Street Journal (Eastern edition)* New York, N.Y., Mar 25, 2005. p. A1

8   Stauber, 2006.

9   Laible, Matt. "Miner Notes-Income: What it Means" available at http://www.mccr.net/mccr/minernotes/index.html [accessed May 14, 2007]

10   Interview with author, Jan. 19, 2007

11   Interview with author, Feb. 14, 2007

12   See Northwest Areas Foundation website: http://www.nwaf.org/
     ProgramsNoHdrImage.aspx?pg=Programs/ventures_Miner_County.htm
     [accessed May 14, 2007]

13   Eig, 2005.

14   See http://www.mccr.net

15   See http://www.knightandcarver.com/WindBlade/#SouthDakota; http://
     www.energyms.com/default.asp; and "Building an 'Ecoengine' in a South
     Dakota County" *in business: The Magazine for Creating Sustainable
     Enterprises & Communities*, v.27, n.2, March-April, 2005, p.23

16   See "About Dakota Beef" www.dakotaorganic.com; "Building an
     'Ecoengine' in a South Dakota County" *in business: The Magazine for
     Creating Sustainable Enterprises & Communities*; "New Beef Processor
     Takes on Old Stereotypes" *Market to Market. http://www.iptv.org/mtom/
     archivedfeature.cfm?Fid=317* [access May 3, 2007]

17   Interview with author, Feb 14, 2007

18   U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3)

19   E-mail exchange with author, Feb. 14, 2007

Chapter 5: Analysis

Hindman and Miner County both represent the shrinking condition in Small Town America, but through different processes produced rather different plans, which focus more either on the physical infrastructure, in the case of Hindman, or on the social infrastructure, in the case of Miner County.

The Planning Process

Karl Stauber of the Northwest Area Foundation really likes the Howard story. He uses it as a framework to discuss how other communities might move forward, listing three things that have to change in a community before they have a fighting chance: (1) who is in the conversation, (2) what the conversation is about, and (3) the behavior of the community.[1]

Stauber's idealized process seems to have legs in Howard, which tells a tidy story of bringing everyone together around the kitchen table to work on solving their problems, eventually presenting a cohesive face to outside funders. Returning to Christenson's Community Change models, Howard seems to fit the self-help model, which often calls upon a facilitator to guide a process that returns a non-predetermined outcome. Process is more important than the product of the task and focuses on leadership development and consensus-building. All told, the various planning processes in Howard took over five years before the adoption of the Strategic Plan.

Hindman, on the other hand, tells a story of a group of dedicated citizen activists who imagined a different approach to economic development and guided the process from the inception of the state funding guidelines up through staffing the present-day steering committee. While there was certainly an effort to invite the public at-large into the planning process, which at times had over fifty people involved, the process was task-oriented and results-driven from the beginning and brought in consultants to finalize the plan. Christenson would classify this as technical-assistance.

It would be easy to make the claim that Hindman should be more like Howard, but there is an unfortunate tendency towards automatically favoring one model of change over the other in planning practice, forgetting that the social infrastructure of a place is important. If we truly buy the idea of building on assets in a community, then as planners we need to meet the people of the community where they live. Howard, for the most part, is a socially cohesive community lacking long-standing conflicts or personal politics, unlike the situation in Hindman, where educational attainment is poor, conflict is long-standing, and politics is personal. Both Mullins and Weinberg were clear that they never expected to find much community cohesion around this plan and that they had to prove that it would work.

While Christenson's self-help description focuses on formal process, the Heiftetz model of leadership allows for informal processes in a community to play out, spurred by actions that push members of

the community to react and contribute to the discussion, whether formally or informally. While a greater cross-section of people need to be brought into future planning processes in Hindman, it can't happen without first building the social infrastructure. Just as the early successes in Howard brought more people to the table for the planning process, an above-board expenditure of ARC funds in Hindman may challenge some members of the community to imagine that it could happen again.

In order to understand why these two communities engaged different planning processes, it's useful to take a look at their community capital strengths and weaknesses, the capacity of their existing infrastructure (Table 4.1). Howard's key strengths are social and human. Hindman's are cultural, natural and built.

The Plans

Hindman and Howard produced two very different types of plans. The Hindman plan, with the help of outside consultants, hung the big idea of growing and marketing regional crafts and education on the physical infrastructure that would support them, producing a Master Plan and Phasing document with maps and renderings showing what the final project should more or less resemble. Howard on the other hand, with the help of a data expert, but no planners or architects, drafted a Strategic Community Plan devoid of maps or images that focused more on process and economic outcomes than on physical ones.

The Hindman plan incorporates a number of what might be called best-practices in its plan—walkability, place-making, adaptive-reuse. In fact, they won a *Places* award in 2000 for the plan, which

celebrates that "What ties the plan together is a vision for placing these activities in the physical realm."[2] This quality celebrated in Hindman is what is conspicuously missing from the Miner County plan. Despite the fact that many of the activities outlined in the Strategic Plan have a very physical quality to them, there is no grounding of the actions in a physical plan with maps or images.

In many ways, the plans are representative of the outside funding entities that brought them forth. The NWAF was deliberate in looking for plans that addressed persistent poverty and were heavy on process.[3] Howard delivered such a plan. Nowhere in the mix, did NWAF suggest the need for planners or architects to get involved. This is partially indicative of the rural development mindset. "Planning" is a word that usually describes the work of community planners in the Rural Extension tradition, which has little to do with land-use or physical objects, and much more to do with economic development.

Hindman, on the other hand, was responding to a state-issued RFP that asked specifically for a plan describing the "(physical) infrastructure and any other material improvements your community needs to assist it in fulfilling (its) vision for the future."[4] In this case, the state not only suggested the use of professional planners, they paid for it. Within this context, Hindman's consultants put together a plan that was, in fact, heavy on physical infrastructure improvements and reads more like a typical growth-oriented plan.

In Miner County, the NWAF has foregone funding physical infrastructure for organizational capacity instead. Stauber offers this assessment of the Miner County case—in most communities,

Initial Community Capitals in Hindman and Miner County

	HINDMAN, KY	MINER COUNTY, SD
SOCIAL	- While there are few ethnic differences, class is a major dividing issue in this part of the world and distrust is hereditary. Labor and environmental organizing has built bonding social capital, but often at the cost of internal bridging capital between different groups.	+ Miner County scores very high on social indicator data (Putnam 2000, 2003). Ethnically, it's a fairly homogenous community with multi-generational roots. As a historically agricultural community, there is no systematic class divide as in historically industrial communities.
HUMAN	- Knott lost about 5% of its population in the 1990's – most of which were young people. Poverty is high and slightly more than 40% of the over-25 population does not have a HS diploma. + Two local institutions of note – the Hindman Settlement School and the Hazard Community & Technical College in an adjacent county.	+ High educational attainment and local knowledge. - Miner has lost three quarters of its total population, suffers the brain-drain, and is lodged in a region that is hemorrhaging population.
CULTURAL	+ Mountain culture has a romantic popular appeal, whether in the form of Bluegrass and traditional music, quilting and other crafts, or traditional foods.	+ Educational attainment is highly valued on the Plains, resulting in higher graduation rates than most other rural regions.
POLITICAL	- At the local level, politics have often been corrupt and personality-driven. Participation is usually limited to the county-seat elite. + At the time of the Community Development Initiative Plan, the governor was from the area, and the local community activists had direct access to him with much of the planning actually taking place with his input.	- Same small group of citizens had held all the local offices for thirty years – not out of intentional power-centralization, but more out of self-selecting leadership. + Populist tradition on the Plains actively engages citizens in decision-making
FINANCIAL	- Despite low cost of living, wages are also low.	- Despite low cost of living, wages are also low.
NATURAL	+ Very scenic landscape perfect for outdoor recreation, but the same landscape is under duress due to Mountaintop Removal mining practices—though the "reclamation" sites have provided recreational and flat developable land.	+ For agriculture, the landscape is a boon, if arid. Wind presents an opportunity, though the plains, while beautiful, are not scenic in the popular sense.
BUILT	+ Intact historic downtown fabric and buildings, but terrain limits where development can happen. Water and sewer infrastructure insufficient.	- Mismatch between supply of durable assets and demand. Empty storefronts, abandoned houses and industrial property. No elderly housing or options for young people. 1.5 hour drive from Sioux Falls.

table 4.1   *based on Flora and Flora,2004*

the people working on economic development are doing so separate of those working on social services which are doing so separate of the educational institutions. In Miner County, they are intentionally working on all the pieces together. The Strategic Plan is crafted so that each strategy meets at least two goals and each activity meets multiple strategies.

Given the CDI funding mechanism, Hindman didn't really have that option. Since ARC money was used, most of the funding was for physical infrastructure, not organization-building. While the plan included the strategy of creating synergy around overlapping roles of the institutions in the town, until the hiring of a Director for the Artisan Center, the entire effort had been run by the same small group of volunteers who headed up the plan at the beginning.

Building Physical Infrastructure

Small towns once served many purposes—market for the hinterlands, financial center, civic forum, and entertainment complex. My own father talks of heading into the town square from the farm on Friday nights to accomplish everything from getting a haircut to buying shoes to taking in a movie (often while his father convened on the sidewalk with other townsfolk to discuss local issues).

For most small towns, economies of scale have changed the viability of Main Street as it was in the Eisenhower era. The cases provide two reactions to that change. In Howard, they challenged the notion that there wasn't a market to support Main Street businesses by launching a buy-local campaign and finding creative financing to retain and open new businesses. In Hindman, they reinvented Main Street as something new, adapting the streetscape

as an artisan corridor, anchored on either end by the Artisan Center and the School of Craft. Reusing the fabric of downtown Hindman to create an arts corridor captured a latent built asset for a new program, gracefully matching excess with need. Considering that the entire program easily could have gone into a new facility outside of town, this is significant.

There was discussion of building the educational institutions on the flats closer to the highway, but when the Hindman Planning Committee drafted their proposed projects for the CDI application, they knew that the former Hindman High School building was a material resource that they wanted to keep in the community.

The High School building served as a icon to the many residents who attended school there before consolidation made it obsolete as a school.[5] In order to capture that iconic value, the building needed to adapt to a new use. Luckily, it was not much of a challenge to convert classroom into art studios, and it became the partial home of the Kentucky School of Craft. "It's an incredible space," says Tim Glotzbach, Dean of the School,[6] but existing structures are not always incredible spaces for new uses. While the School of Craft was a good match, initial efforts to create work-live space above the Artisan Center on the other side of town failed because the existing water and sewer infrastructure, built for Main Street retail, could not support the demands of residential uses.

In Howard, residents recognize that they have a glut of aging housing, but no options for smaller families. Their initial attempts to rehab existing housing is a first step toward utilizing existing assets.

Adapting the physical infrastructure can also mean adapting our expectations as to "how something is built." When resources are scarce, they should be used judiciously, but often times bureaucratic considerations result in redundancies. After much negotiation and wrangling, the disparate institutions in Hindman agreed to share operation of a single library instead of separate facilities, about which the Master Plan understatedly says "This does present challenges."[7] One might imagine that meshing funding, computer, and operational systems could kill such a project in most communities, resulting in greater square footage dedicated to a handful of lesser libraries.

Efficiency can also be introduced by putting different uses under the same roof. The Opportunity Center houses not only the library, but also community space, Community College courses, and a distance learning center. Multi-use school facilities are an emerging method of keeping schools in many rural areas where the facility is also home to, among other uses, the village shop, medical services, town library, and community meeting space. There are numerous examples of creative educational facility plans to be found in both urban and rural areas.[8] Looking outside of both Hindman and Howard, one school of note is Littleton High School in Littleton, New Hampshire, where business students meet in (and operate part of) the local general store, the spatial information science program meets in a local bank, and science students meet in the woods. This arrangement was part of a larger community-planning initiative in Littleton that focused on how to not only keep the school in the community, but how to better integrate it into existing activities and spaces.[9]

Both communities point to housing as one of the more bedeviling problems they face. Valuations are low, dilapidation high, and options limited. Howard had luck with providing housing for the targeted population of the elderly, while Hindman is thinking about how to provide student housing to support the Craft School. Addressing the needs of particular populations may provide the starting point for dealing with this issue.

Building Social Infrastructure

Too often, the planning and design process is only used to produce a plan or a design, when it should pull double duty by building social infrastructure. In growing communities, new people often bring new energy to social networks. This is how change is usually sought in social groups. If things are bad, getting rid of someone is thought to exercise the problem, while if things are stagnant; new blood is what is needed. Shrinking communities often do not have this option. Yes, there is churn in these small towns. Between 1995 and 2000, Miner County picked up 377 residents new to the county despite a net loss of population, but in general, shrinking communities need to build their social infrastructure with the people they have.

Social infrastructure is created at many grains. In addition to their framework for thinking about assets versus deficits, Kretzman and McKnight also offered a "how-to" that operates at a finer grain than planning usually operates, exploring the basements of church buildings, school cafeterias, and the residents of the local half-way house, among other resources. Community organizers have long understood how to use space to leverage social connections, literally meeting people where they are.[10]

Planning practitioners should take a lesson from the community organizing field, as the grain of a planning process can make huge differences in the social capacity created during the planning process. In Howard, there is a lesson found in how the process played out at a very fine grain. In the initial planning session run by the students, their report notes "by adding an element of closeness and hospitality to the meeting, many people were kept interested in attending"[11] This is apparently important when dealing with rural and specifically Midwestern tradition. The progression of the session topics over time is interesting as well. The participants started the conversation with cleaning the streets before getting to the elephant in the room—economic development. Pacing and focus on "root-causes" allowed the community space to recognize that the solution wasn't found in going out and finding a quick replacement for the seventy-five jobs that had recently left town.

Two things come to mind about the role of the students in Howard's process. First, they are non-threatening to most members of the community, and they keep the process "local." It's interesting to note that in the literature on the project, staff of the Rural Challenge managed to keep their names out of the press coverage, despite a significant role in funding and coaching the process. Second, students have time to prepare and conduct a local planning process while resident volunteers with day jobs may not. When it came time to do the full strategic plan for NWAF, the connections and trust established in the initial sessions carried over to the next phase.

Another lesson from Howard is the value of truth-testing. The community expressed its vision but then checked it against the facts; these facts didn't support what was generally thought to be true—namely that agriculture still paid the bills. NWAF's Kristen Gorham made an interesting observation. Parry and much of the rest of the leadership on this project came out of the schools, where the culture rewards continuous learning and improvement.[12] The ability to "learn while teaching" is vital to problem-solving.

Howard presents a tidy case of building social infrastructure, which is to take nothing away from the hard work and thoughtful process that got them this far. However, not every—or even most—rural communities are starting from the same place as Howard, which had high levels of trust and cohesiveness from which to build. Outside of the Midwest, most rural communities have histories more like Hindman, where generations of distrust make working together difficult, with or without the kitchen table. In these communities, there is potential for adapting the social infrastructure in both formal and informal ways.

The formal methods are facilitated processes or negotiations where the factions in the community are identified and intentionally represented. Such conflict resolution processes have become more popular as alternatives to legal action over environmental issues.[13] The informal method, as discussed here, operates in the public arena through frank dialogue, when the plan challenges the accepted view of things, threatening mind-sets just enough to generate reaction from members of the community who would not have engaged the process otherwise. In Hindman, many people in the community would like for a new factory to pay the bills, but the truth is that they are up against just about every other community in the state to attract that same factory. Heritage planning challenges that notion, and even if Hindman doesn't eventually look the way it is drawn up in the plan, the residents of Knott County have

witnessed a major investment in something other than a highway or industrial park, potentially sparking broader creativity in the future. There are obvious draw-backs to this informal method. It's very imprecise and requires a way for the planning process to adapt to new information and learning. When much of your plan hangs on physical infrastructure, there isn't much room for learning once the sewer lines are laid.

Ultimately, social infrastructure is about getting value out of all the members of the community, who share an interest and usefulness in maintaining the community's vitality. In a shrinking community, that means imagining how to adapt the roles that people have played in the past (sometimes for decades) to something new. Howard intentionally pulled people into leadership positions who had never even spoken at the PTA. In Hindman, they are trying to convince local crafters that what they do "just piddlin" could be valuable enough around which to build an economy.

Shrinking Successfully?

"People ask what if you spend all this money and it doesn't work," said Mullins. "I don't give a didily-squat, because at least we are trying something. You may try three or four times and fail before you get something that works."[14]

This long-term attitude hasn't resonated well with the state and others. After a second round of funding, the new Governor dropped the CDI approach in favor of distributing ARC funds in a "growth-center" approach, which focuses on central-places in the mountains.[15]

The most recent chunk of state funding for Knott County has again focused on physical infrastructure, this time on water/sewer improvements and recreation improvements around ATV and horseback trails and elk restoration on reclaimed strip mines. A Master Plan for this project was prepared by an engineering firm at the request of the County Fiscal Court.[16] Tourism is the aim here, something that the CDI Master Plan talks about as a result of the craft economy, but the community members seem hesitant to hang their hats on. "I never really felt like its going to generate huge amounts of tourists here," said Weinberg. The idea is not really to generate tourists, but to get forty or so new businesses set up, which "brings a lot to the table for your local economy."[17]

Hindman's modest goals may not resonate well with the community. The idea was to establish a new sustainable local economy, not necessarily transform the economy for the county overall. Even if this does take hold, the economic impact for most Knott County residents will be tangential, which for many does not seem like a good return for $20 million.

It might be suspected that Parry's Midwestern reserve would not allow him to express it quite as colorfully as Hindman's Mullins, but a similar sentiment is still valid in Miner County. In a conversation with Gorham, she said that frankly, it was only very recently that she thought that Howard might make it.[18] There had been a number of set-backs along the way and each time, she figured that was the end of things. That attitude has changed, and her boss, Karl Stauber, has started using Miner County as *the* example of what can happen in rural communities.

Still, in the midst of all the planning and building and shaking up of mind-sets, Miner County lost three hundred residents in the five years between 2000 and 2005, a decrease of over ten percent. As one state official told me, "it gives me hope that talented people like them are willing to work so hard on rural development…. I wish I could be more optimistic, but part of me wonders if MCCR isn't just hospice care for rural areas."[19]

This is the crux of the issue of shrinking—it's hard to separate it from the gloomy potential of the condition. In the *WSJ* article, which ran under the headline "In a Bid to Hang On, Miner County, S.D., Downsizes Dreams," Randy Parry says "We don't need to be big"[20] indicating the they had made peace with the condition of shrinking. However, in a later interview, Parry says: "It's not about downsizing the dreams; it's really more about having a dream for the future and a vision of what that future might be." He continues by complementing the community's commitment to "work to keep Miner County the kind of place young people choose to return to raise a family, start a business, or build a home."[21] While these comments are not totally incongruous, they do belie that we don't have a vocabulary yet to celebrate shrinking.

Endnotes

1   Stauber, 2006.

2   "EDRA/Places Award – Place Planning: Hindman-Knott County Master Plan," *Places*, v.14, n.1, p.14-17; Quote from p.15

3   From their website: "The Foundation believes that effective long-term poverty reduction requires the following principles be put into action: Including those traditionally left out of community decision-making; Identifying local assets; Ability to design, lead, and implement community efforts; Expanded access to economic opportunity." http://www.nwaf.org/Programs.aspx?pg=Programs/Ventures.htm [accessed April 24, 2007]

4   *Kentucky Appalachian Community Development Initiative Program Application*, Section V.

5   There is much discussion that schools like this are not obsolete at all and should never have been consolidated. Recent research indicates that students perform better when they attend smaller schools closer to their homes and communities. For more on this subject, see the resources available at http://www.ruraledu.org/site/c.beJMIZOCIrH/b.1073993/k.9100/Consolidation.htm [accessed May 14, 2007]

6   Interview with author, March 12, 2007

7   *City of Hindman and Knott County, Kentucky Appalachian Community Development Initiative Project Master Plan and Phasing Recommendations*, 1999 p.40

8   For examples, see Lawrence, Barbara Kent [et al.] *Dollars and Sense II: Lessons from Good, Cost-Effective Small Schools.* KnowledgeWorks Foundation, 2005; and Lawrence, Barbara Kent. *Lowering the Overhead by Raising the Roof…and other Rural Trust Strategies to Reduce the Costs of Your Small School.* Rural School and Community Trust, 2002

9   For more on Littleton, see http://www.concordia.com/home/article/60/Community_Planning_in_Littleton%2C_New_Hampshire [accessed May 2, 2007]

10 *Building Communities from the Inside Out* is committed to the local in a way that community organizers have long understood, for an architectural look at the fine grain of community building, see Chase, John [et al.], *Everyday Urbanism*, edited by John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski. New York: Monacelli Press, 1999

11 FBLA Howard HS, 1998

12 Interview with author, Feb. 14, 2007

13 For more on negotiated conflict resolution, see the work of Lawrence Susskind and the Joint Program on Negotiation available at http://www.pon.harvard.edu

14 Interview with Author, Jan. 31, 2007

15 Cheves, John. "Eastern Kentucky Towns Continue to Struggle Despite Development Grants" *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Nov. 16, 2003

16 WMTH Corporation, *Adventure Tourism in Knott County Master Plan*. Available http://www.trailsrus.com/adventure/phase1.html [accessed April 21, 2007]

17 Interview with author, Mar. 5, 2007

18 Interview with author, Feb. 14, 2007

19 Personal e-mail with author

20 Eig, 2005

21 Hunhoff, Bernie. "What happens when you land on the front page of the Wall Street Journal" South Dakota Magazine On-line, March 28, 2005. Available at http://www.southdakotamagazine.com/?m=200503&paged=2 [accessed May 14, 2007]

Chapter 6: A Graceful Approach

The admonition for planners and designers to think about the condition of shrinkage has been around for at least thirty years.[1] However, shrinkage continues to be treated as a symptom rather than a condition, leading small town advocates to spend their efforts on systematic changes that will "turn things around." While I do not begrudge those efforts, I'm convinced that ignoring the local reality of these places in the meantime is not really an option either.

Common practice has been to try and solve a small town's problems by bringing in new people, money, and buildings. All hold promise to a community because they're unknowns, and therefore blank canvases on which to paint their hopes and aspirations. A harder is recognizing the utility of the dusty people and structures that have always been there. The idea of adaptive reuse of existing buildings provides an obvious tool for dealing with the built environment; however, the idea has a robustness suggesting that adaptive reuse could be applied to a wider range of issues in shrinking communities. While the condition of shrinkage is usually driven by forces outside of a community's control, in order to shrink gracefully, a community must do so by design.[2]

An effective approach to shrinking will engage the issue directly, take advantage of the luxury of time provided by the pace of shrinking, and use the design process to frame conversations that build social infrastructure.

Engage the Issue of Shrinking

There is great pressure for planners and designers to deliver good news to the communities with which they work. The result is often too many visioning charettes that are little more than well-rendered fantasies, under the auspices that the vision will "inspire" the community to figure out how to make it happen.

Unfortunately, wishful thinking has seldom been a good strategy for human improvement, although it is often what passes for policy in shrinking small towns. Cornelia and Jan Flora point out that, "Rural development policies are often geared toward enhancing built capital, on the assumption that people's lives will improve, particularly people who are disadvantaged, once new physical structures are in place."[3] In Germany, new industrial parks are refered to as "illuminated meadows" as they sit well-lit and empty.

As discussed in the Knott County case, physical infrastructure seeding social improvement was the working strategy of the ARC for over thirty years (and arguably still is), and is currently the promise of many of the charettes on the Gulf Coast after the 2005 hurricanes, which offer distressed communities well-rendered versions of themselves at some indeterminate point in the future when significant new sources of capital apparently flow freely.[4] Shrinking is obviously not the same as growing, but too often the same toolkit is brought out for both, as if the best way to address

the condition of shrinkage is to envision a future with a different set of conditions.

As curators of the process, planning and design practitioners need to frame the issue of shrinkage and delineate the constrictions that accompany it, not pretend that whatever can be dreamed can also be achieved. This attitude is not to cut off creativity, but rather to promote it. Psychologist Rollo May argues that creativity is a reactive procedure, where *what-is* and *what-is-not* intersect. When the sky is the limit, there is nothing to react against. Where there are constrictions, creativity can ensue.[5]

The Floras continue their thought. "Although the built capital of a community is necessary, it cannot ensure the economic health and well-being of that community. People must be able to use the infrastructure in productive ways."[6]

Take Advantage of the Luxury of Time

Despite the sense of gloom surrounding population loss, time is on the side of the shrinking community. This is quite the opposite of rapidly growing communities, where planning is often reactive and preventive. In shrinking communities, there is time to be purposeful and to engage in the phenomenon of discovery about one's home town, which is a luxury that growing communities seldom have, where the location of physical infrastructure is often dictated by development or zoning regulations enacted after a distasteful project is built. Unfortunately, small towns often engage in the same kind of preventive planning around population loss, but there is no need to. Population loss is typically a multi-generational

event, not a catastrophic one, demanding thoughtful efforts, not last-ditch ones.

Being deliberate does not mean being inactive. If a community has time to address shrinking, there is opportunity to achieve early victories, which builds momentum in a community. The planner and designer can help identify "low-hanging fruit" to be immediately addressed before delving into the more entrenched problems. The citizens of Howard tackled hanging planters on Main Street before taking on building a value-added economy. This technique also serves to grounds the conversation in the reality of the present, rather than in some aspirational future.

Getting started may require some motivation. John Moliano of the Aspen Institute pointed out that most small town success stories seem to arise from near-death experiences.[7] When things get bad enough, people start working together and are willing to try something new. There are two ways to reach this point. One is to wait until a community gets there, which is different for each community. Howard had the benefit of someone else providing the crisis when the baseball card factory eliminated seventy-five jobs, which resulted in a much larger conversation than just how to replace those jobs.

A second way to motivate the community is to manufacture a manageable crisis, whether it is fiscal (not enough tax revenue) or cultural (our way of life is under duress). This is what Heifetz meant by introducing distress into a social system or what is colloquially known as the "wake-up call." Too big a crisis and the community may factionalize, so it is imperative that those convening the

discussion do so thoughtfully, urging people to action without completely upsetting their way of life. In some Plains communities, the Buffalo Commons idea has done this.

While they can take their time building internal capital, communities need to be prepared to leverage external sources of capital. While outside funding can be a boon to a community, it can also dictate the planning process. Both Howard and Hindman produced plans that reflected the intentions of their primary funders. While communities need to be opportunistic, they also need to know what their goals are and be prepared to use outside funding. Hindman was able to use funding for physical infrastructure to support a cultural plan, while Howard was prepared to accept outside business investment from people who had connections locally, resulting in two new employers in town.

Use the Design Process to Build Social Infrastructure

In the two cases, Hindman provides a sample of the type of design interventions that a shrinking community might employ, while Howard provides a sample of taking the time to build social infrastructure through a planning process. One might be tempted to depend exclusively on the benefits of one method or the other, but strikingly, when quizzed on what is left to do, both communities indicated that they needed to do what the other community had already done.

In Hindman, the bricks and mortar work is mostly complete, but the steering committee is still trying to make the organizational and institutional part come together. Weinberg said that in retrospect, they should have recruited the artisans before building the Center.[8]

Likewise, the School of Craft is up and running, but the students are having a hard time breaking into a rental market that is limited to start with and often requires knowing who to ask to get a place.

In Miner County, they are moving towards hosting a design charette for the community. At times in the past, they have doctored photos to demonstrate how certain beautification efforts might appear, but never put the master plan for the community down in a graphic form.

The process in Miner County is a bit of an anomaly. Most communities will rely on a planning process more like Hindman; one that leans heavily on the built infrastructure, partially because it is tangible and easier to measure success or failure. However, the tangibility of the design process is exactly what makes it such a powerful tool to engage the conversations that build social infrastructure. Changes to the built environment tend to elicit strong opinions from people, motivating them participate in the discussion.

In any community, a sufficient physical *and* social infrastructure is needed to effectively meet the needs of its citizens. In growing communities, the promise of new resources supports speculative construction and maintenance of such infrastructures. In shrinking communities, the infrastructure must be built and maintained as well, but the resources to do so must primarily be found within the community and done so deliberately.

Shrinking communities can not afford to waste its human resources, but many do. Engaging untapped human potential in problem-solving is ideal, which may require challenging the vested interests

Physical/Social Infrastructure Linkages

DESIGN TOOLS	CONVERSATIONS
Adaptive reuse of community icons	Naming the icons and debating new uses for them highlights what is valued to different groups in a community and any underlying conflict.
Consolidation of redundant programs	Consolidating programs like libraries or social services reveals turf wars and forces a conversation about the mission of these organizations—are they about self-preservation and competition or about community betterment?
Combination of divergent programs in shared facilities	Sharing facilities forces programs and the people behind them to engage each other in conversations about sharing a purpose of community improvement.

table 6.1

(but not at the expense of what value they already bring to the town). Bringing new people to the metaphorical table requires a frank assessment of why all the stakeholders aren't there to start with, which may be apathy, or history, or distress, or something else. Sometimes, it may take multiple tables to start with, before bringing all groups together. Whoever convenes the process needs to actively recruit participants, not just rely on advertising or word of mouth.

The hosting of the small group meetings in the homes of Howard residents was a bit inspired, as it provided a level of comfort for

participants that would not have been achieved at the local high school cafeteria or auditorium. While planning is often about big ideas, those big ideas can be quickly stifled by something as fine grained as the size of the meeting rooms.

Planners and designers should work with locals to identify and utilize social capital and assets in the planning process. Also, had it not been the students who instigated the process, they would have likely been left out.

Like any locale facing community change, the design process provides a forum for building the social infrastructure that allows people to use the physical infrastructure productively. The task is still to design the physical infrastructure, but the result should be a stronger community. Social Infrastructure is built from the raw material of trust and understanding which is only created when factions within a community are able to express their perspectives and learn from each other.

The experience of Hindman suggests three design tools that are likely to emerge in any community that attempts to tackle the shrinking issue: 1) adaptive reuse of community icons in the form of the High School and Main Street buildings, 2) consolidation of redundant programs in the form of the joint library, and 3) multi-purpose physical infrastructure in the form of the Opportunity Learning Center, which houses the library, community space, college classrooms, and distance learning facilities.

While communities will come up with other solutions in addition to those in the previous paragraph, negotiating the decisions around design efforts can provide the forum to build social infrastructure

(if all stakeholders are involved). Each tool starts a different conversation that builds social capital in the community. (table 6.1)

Designing the built infrastructure in a shrinking small town requires the reuse of existing fabric. The process of identifying community icons engages different stories in the community and brings these stories and stakeholders to the forefront for discussion. One might expect contention in a small Southern town over preserving a Confederate mansion. Less obvious is that while the local high school may be an icon for some, others in a community would love nothing more than see it burned. This indicates a division in the community that needs to be explored and reconciled while providing an opportunity to bring new voices to the table.

If one looks specifically at shrinking communities, it is clear that they should consolidate redundant programs in their communities, which will often require institutional cooperation, breaking through turf issues and building synergy around the shared purpose of community improvement. In Hindman, the plan brought together different libraries, which could have easily been scuttled by turf issues. Other likely targets in any community could be redundant recreation facilities, meeting spaces, and even worship facilities.

Consolidating different uses under one roof also provides both a smart use of resources as well as a chance for people to work together. In Hindman, a multi-use educational facility resulted after multiple institutions agreed to work together on the project. In doing so, they are now able to provide educational services that were previously a forty minute drive away.

Shrinking Gracefully?

The question for our home towns is not whether they will shrink. Many will, due to forces outside of their realm of influence. The more pressing question is whether our communities can shrink gracefully.

Grace is found in thoughtful, efficient, and elegant reactions to one's condition, and the condition of shrinking provides both challenges and luxuries that differ from growth. Just as growing smartly is about channeling speculative resources to socially beneficial purposes, shrinking gracefully is about channeling wasted human and physical resources to the same end.

A key challenge facing shrinking communities is one of limited resources, requiring thoughtful identification and mobilization of under-utilized assets. Limited resources call for an elegant process to capture the latent value in a community. While planning is often reactive in growing communities, in shrinking communities, the luxury of time allows communities to use the design process to efficiently build social infrastructure *in addition* to the physical environment.

While Hindman is thinking about how to build social infrastructure, and Miner County is planning a charette for next autumn, one at a time is not the way to approach the benefits of built and social infrastructure. A graceful approach suggests that both types of infrastructure must be created simultaneously, as neither is as thoughtful, efficient, or elegant without the other.

Endnotes

1   See Lynch, Kevin. Chapt 8 "Managing Transitions" *What Time is this Place?* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972; and Beale, Calvin. "Quantitative Dimensions of Decline and Stability Among Rural Communities" *A Taste of the Country: The Writings of Calvin Beale*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990, adapted from Chapt 1 of Whiting, Larry R (ed.) *Communities Left Behind: Alternatives for Development*, Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1974.

2   Thanks to John de Monchaux for suggesting the term adaptive reuse to describe the social as well as physical side of things

3   Flora and Flora, 2003. p.190-191

4   See (http://www.louisianaspeaks.org/showdoc.html?id=746) for the charette reports from DPZ. In particular, the plan for Vermilion Parish seems to lack any reality to it. Delcambre is a community primarily populated by retired elderly. The plan seems to assume a complete replacement of and substantial increase in the existing population.

5   May, Rollo. *The Courage to Create*, New York and London: W.W.Norton & Co., 1975. Thanks also to Ron Heifetz for pushing the idea further in the "PAL101: Leadership: Mobilizing Group Resources" course at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Fall 2005.

6   Flora and Flora, 2003. p.190-191

7   Interview with author, Jan. 23, 2007

8   Interview with author, Mar. 5, 2007

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Terry Schwartz - *Senior Planner, Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative, Kent State University* - January 17, 2007

Mike Woods - *Extension Economist, Oklahoma State University* - January 17, 2007

Julia Mitchell - *Vice President of Community Development, Hazard Community and Technical College* - January 19, 2007

Randy Parry - *Executive Director, MCCR* & Kathy Callies - *Development Director, MCCR* - January 19, 2007

Deborah Tootle - *Associate Professor, Community and Economic Development, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service* - January 19, 2007

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Jim Richardson - *Executive Director, National Rural Funders Collaborative* January 26, 2007

Mike Knutson - *Economic/Housing Director, MCCR* - January 31, 2007

Mike Mullins - *Executive Director of Hindman Settlement School & Chair, CDI Steering Committee, Knott County* - January 31, 2007

Kerstin Gorham - *Program Officer, Northwest Area Foundation, Ventures Communities Program* - February 14, 2007

Bill Weinberg - *Chair, Appalachian Artisans Center (formerly Knott County Arts & Crafts Foundation)* - March 5, 2007

Stuart Burrill - *Director, Kentucky Appalachian Artisans Center* - March 6, 2007

Tim Glotzbach - *Dean, Kentucky School of Craft & Campus Coordinator, KCTCS, Hazard* - March 12, 2007

Elisabeth Lardner - *Principal, Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects* - March 13, 2007

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