



Rural Communities in the Path of Development

Stories of Growth, Conflict and Cooperation

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Meeting Synopsis
San Antonio, Texas
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INTRODUCTION: A GATHERING OF RURAL PRACTITIONERS

The important thing was: That little group of people with that kind of creative “whatever” happened. And, you know, you can’t do that from a textbook.

—MARIA VARELA, GANADOS DEL VALLE

In January 1995, the Rural Economic Policy Program of The Aspen Institute (REPP) convened 31 people in San Antonio, Texas, to consider the causes and consequences of rapid growth in small towns and rural places that have outstanding natural and cultural amenities.

MEETING OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- better understand how development occurs in rapidly growing, amenity-rich rural communities
- learn what it takes for communities to recognize and confront problems associated with rapid growth and, conversely, what prevents them from taking action
- examine whether and how different strategies to deal with growth work better if used in concert, and how the choice of strategies depends on local context
- identify actions that will assist communities in the path of development and the people who work in them

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

To better understand small-town growth issues, prior to the meeting, a Rural Economic Policy Program team spent several months talking with local officials, planners, development practitioners, conservationists and others who work in or with rural communities. Based on these conversations, we constructed a conceptual framework to help explain how development progresses in rapidly growing rural communities, as well as a listing of the three main strategies—and a beginning list of tools and techniques—that local leaders and

activists use to address that growth. These two tables are included in this report, and explained in later sections:

■ Table 1: *Stages of Development in High-Amenity Rural Communities*

■ Table 2: *Strategies for High-Amenity Rural Communities*

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Each of the 31 people who gathered in San Antonio is concerned with rural community growth. Some engage local residents in community-based planning. Others work to improve job opportunities for low- and moderate-income people. Still others employ various growth management and land conservation strategies.

The participants represent a range of professions and backgrounds. Some are elected officials, others community organizers. Some are growth management consultants, others economic development professionals. One owns a bed-and-breakfast business, another is a real estate developer. They also come from very different places: communities on sea coasts, deserts, mountaintops, lakeshores and high plains. Among the towns and cities represented were Missoula, Montana; Los Ojos, New Mexico; Hayward, Wisconsin; Wilmington, North Carolina; and Traverse City, Michigan.

Our goal in convening such a diverse group was to provide an opportunity for exchange among people who approach growth issues from different angles and who, together, are knowledgeable about the three strategies that we considered. This wide-ranging group enabled us to examine how different approaches might be integrated to address the connected issues associated with rapid growth in small towns.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE MEETING: THE POWER OF STORIES

We used a series of case presentations, small group discussions and exercises to jump-start the exchange of ideas and peer evaluation of different strategies. What emerged—no matter the original structure or purpose of any particular meeting session—was a clear and ever-present desire on the part of each participant to “tell my story” and to hear others’ stories. During the latter half of the meeting, the REPP team organized each session to feature stories as frames for the discussion.

One lesson the REPP team learned from this meeting is that among a group with this much diversity in people, practice, place and profession, *the power is in the stories*. The

stories themselves engaged participants in a way that no chart or analytic framework could. More important, they sparked insights that will add value to the framework and help guide our future work.

IN THIS REPORT

In this summary report, we:

- provide background on the issue of rapid population growth in rural areas
- highlight what we learned about the development process, as well as about community capacity building and community-based economic development strategies used to recognize and confront problems of rapid growth
- provide a list of participants' recommendations for future action

Throughout, we use the words and stories of participants whenever possible. We hope that community leaders who live in or work with small towns will be informed and inspired by these stories, and that, as a result, they will begin to explore new ways to shape development and make better development decisions in these special places.

BACKGROUND: RURAL GROWTH IN THE UNITED STATES

The landscape is the only really long-lasting permanence to which we can attach our memories, cultural traditions and community-based organizations. All my vivid memories have always been attached to some physical environment.

—BUDDY MILLIKEN, THE MILLIKEN COMPANY

Prescott, Arizona. Santa Fe, New Mexico. Aspen, Colorado. North Conway, New Hampshire. Branson, Missouri. St. George, Utah. Recently, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time* magazine, National Public Radio and other national and local media have headlined rapid growth in places like these across the nation.

Many less-known and smaller towns are growing as well, although they haven't made headlines yet. These are the towns we call *communities in the path of development*. Their proximity to places like Aspen or Branson, or just their scenic beauty and quality of life, have attracted growing numbers of tourists, usually followed by recreation visitors, second-home owners, retirees and other so-called "amenity migrants"—whose arrival is usually accompanied by business and site developers. With all these new people and activity come benefits and threats to the existing rural community—and a host of knotty development challenges.

RURAL POPULATION GROWTH

About three-fourths of the nation's nonmetropolitan counties gained population from 1990 to 1994, compared to fewer than half in the 1980s. Overall, the total nonmetro population increased by about 2 million people from 1990 to 1994, compared to about 1.3 million over the entire decade of the 1980s. Most of this recent growth has come from net migration. Virtually every county that USDA calls a "destination for retirees," a "federal lands" county or a "center of recreation" grew during these years.¹

This isn't the first recent period of growth in rural America. In the 1970s, rural population grew so dramatically that, by the end of the decade, demographers had hailed a rural "population turnaround." Then, in the 1980s, farm and energy prices fell dramatically and structural economic change spawned a rural outmigration. Now, just when analysts have concluded that rural growth in the 70s was only a small upward blip in a long downward spiral, rural population numbers are headed upward yet again.

Some observers think the upsurge in population numbers is temporary—that boom and bust, not expansion, is the dominant rural economic pattern. In a recent issue of *High Country News*, for example, editor Ed Marston argues that new migrants from the cities will eventually leave rural areas, and that inflated real estate prices in small western towns will tumble as surely as night follows day.²

Other analysts argue the opposite, that there's a long-term population movement outward from decayed and congested urban areas, not just to the suburbs, but to small towns that offer a cleaner, safer environment. They argue that the current trend will endure, partly because advances in information technology render low population density or distance from cities less of a disadvantage than they used to be.

¹Kenneth M. Johnson and Calvin L. Beale. "Nonmetropolitan Demographic Trends in the 1990s: The Revival of Widespread Population Growth in Rural America." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, Washington D.C. August 19, 1995.

²Ed Marston. "Essay." *High Country News*. September 5, 1994.

COMMUNITY GROWTH: BOON OR BANE?

Regardless of whether the rural “rebound” is temporary or long-term, it is clear that growth in small towns is creating tremendous change, both positive and negative. Rural growth is a double-edged sword.

On the positive side, tourism and new residents bring outside dollars and new jobs to communities where extractive, natural resource industries have declined. When new people come to settle, they bring different experiences, expertise, ideas and energy. Moreover, tourists and new residents can contribute to the renaissance of local retail service firms or, especially in the case of retirees, boost demand for social services like health care. Equally important, newcomers sometimes provide the impetus to preserve and maintain natural amenities and local culture.

Still, the potential rewards of amenity-based development are balanced by difficult challenges, especially when growth occurs very quickly. Long-term local residents who might have hoped to benefit from growth can end up as losers: The new jobs brought by tourism and service industry development rarely pay workers enough to maintain a way of life in towns that get overcrowded and expensive. Increasing land values make it difficult for current residents to continue owning property. Long-time residents often resent newcomers, particularly when traditional culture gets commercialized and traditional livelihoods are crowded out by new economic activity.

THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Tourism and second-home development polarizes communities into millionaires and hamburger flippers.

—KURT CULBERTSON, DESIGN WORKSHOP

THE REPP FRAMEWORK: STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

The table on pages 8-9—*Table 1: Stages of Development in High-Amenity Rural Communities*—shows in a broad-brush way how we think growth-related impacts tend to emerge and intensify in rapidly growing, amenity-rich rural communities. We think the

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

DEVELOPMENT STAGE					
	1. EARLY	2. EMERGING	3. DEVELOPING I	4. DEVELOPING II	5. MATURE
ECONOMIC BASE/JOB	Declining natural resource base; lack of jobs and income.	Natural resource mixed with emerging visitor and/or retiree service industry. Likely that community has embarked on tourism/retirement as a way to increase jobs and income; gains small to moderate.	Visitor and/or retiree service industry is becoming a major force, but mixed with traditional industry. Provides moderate local employment/income; seasonal cycles may or may not complement agricultural cycle.	Visitor and/or retiree service industry begins to dominate the economy and jobs, possibly crowding out others. Tensions may arise over who gets jobs.	Visitor and/or retiree service industry has largely taken over economy. Firms may import workers from ever farther away.
RESIDENT POPULATION	Declining/stable population; outmigration due to lack of job opportunities.	Indigenous population still stable or declining; possibly some small, scattered influx of second-home owners, those escaping developing areas or returning to home region.	Some outsiders (possibly previous visitors) begin to move in, in order to profit from tourist trade, or for quality-of-life reasons. Still have outmigration, because of lack of good jobs for young people.	New residents and second-home owners begin to (or already do) displace oldtimers, especially as increased cost of living pushes indigenous residents out.	Trophy homes/big hotels predominate. Many if not most of original residents (who did not make it big) unable to live in center or even adjacent areas.
VISITOR POPULATION	Trickle of people seeking untouristed areas, but few to no services/ways to capture visitor dollars.	Some visitor flow—within region, people on their way elsewhere or on day trips from tourist center; or very selective, looking for “different” experience (e.g., serious hikers, those in search of out-of-the-way places).	Moderate/increasing visitor influx; still visitors seeking rather specialized experience; lots of day trips; increasing overnight stays as services are developed (below).	Strong/crowded visitor flow during peak season; visitor population becomes less selective, drawn to built as well as natural attractions; visitors more characteristic of “mass tourists” though still interested in specialized activity of area	Mass tourism in full swing; peak season is crowded, with considerable visitor flow during other seasons (maybe more true of mountain resorts than coastal resorts).
ATTRACTION DEVELOPMENT	Awareness of tourism and/or retirement as a development option, but little if any development that would market or make more accessible local attractions.	Amenity value “discovered;” local or outside entrepreneur “capitalizes” on opportunity (e.g., builds ski resort, develops craftmaking/sightseeing opportunities). However, local sources of capital for development often lacking.	Development of other amenities, and further development of existing amenities (e.g., another resort, expansion of existing, development of further trails).	Development and decentralization of resorts/services clusters, which absorb visitor overflow from original sites; development of year-round attractions. Increased crowding.	Attractions increasingly crowded, often beyond carrying capacity, often, especially in case of natural amenities, harming their value as attractions. Further decentralization of attractions.
VISITOR SERVICES	No or few visitor-targeted services; visitors tend to patronize existing local services.	Some development of small ancillary visitor and/or retiree services (B&Bs; new restaurants; retail shops) by local entrepreneurs and/or pioneering newcomers. Lack of capital still a constraint.	New or continued development of limited visitor and retiree services, which serve broader range of visitor needs/tastes and which are run by newcomers and locals. Increased awareness of opportunities among outsiders with capital.	Specialty shops predominate (low-end or high-end depending on clientele); local owners starting to be (or already are) priced out of the market.	Ownership of visitor shops is largely by national chains, outsiders or relative newcomers who have amassed capital in more wealthy areas.
LOCAL SERVICES	A few locally owned services; with small population, difficult to support residential/consumer services. Lots of shopping done outside town at regional centers.	Local services may begin to multiply or to carry wider range of products due to visitor patronage. Growing numbers of retirees in an area may support local services.	With new residents and visitor patronage, local services may multiply further or begin to carry wider range of products. Retiree services, such as health care, may begin to turn up.	Influx of national chains, to serve new resident/visitor demand for familiar services; visitor services may begin to displace resident services such as hardware stores, auto repair, etc. (Not sure how this plays out in retirement-dominated communities.)	National chains displace individually owned stores; by this time, it is hard to find—and/or hard to afford—local hardware stores, etc.

COST OF LIVING	Worker housing increasingly located in “bedroom” communities, which have fewer amenities/tourism and less tax base to pay for services and infrastructure.	Affordable housing declines, making it difficult for many local people/service industry workers to hold property/afford living in center. Disparity between tourist/new resident lifestyle and that of indigenous residents.	Housing costs start to rise, and there may be housing/rental shortages; other living costs may also start to increase.	Similar to Early Stage. In some places, may begin to see housing costs increase marginally.	Generally relatively low, except for difficulty (and therefore expense) of obtaining some needed goods and services.
LAND USE PATTERNS	Acceleration of trends in Developing Stage II: stress on wildlife, etc. is greater; natural-resource uses crowded out by visitor and/or retiree services; environment becomes increasingly urbanized.	Loss of open space/rural character as commercial and recreation uses dominate landscape. Increased build-out on subdivisions. Natural environment experiences stress.	Increases in “perceived” property values, because of outsiders paying inflated prices for select properties. More opportunities for farmers/ranchers to cash out, as developers purchase newly subdivided open space. May see moderate build-out.	Continued largely natural resource. Farmers/ranchers/etc. begin to see opportunities to sell as a few speculators look at/buy parcels, scattered development arises, or individuals purchase second homes or lots. Tension between recreation and resource uses, and between different recreation uses.	Largely agricultural/natural resource based; land may be dormant due to closed mines, cost of keeping it in production.
PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE	Highly developed, linked regional transportation system and utilities serve subdivisions which continue to grow in order to serve new residents, second-home owners and workers.	Transportation system begins to be overloaded with growth and increased commuting. Roads/utilities further developed to link attractions, second homes, tourist services and workers in expanding resort region.	Increasing necessity of serving growing number of tourists and/or new residents leads to road improvements, increase in plans for/laying of sewers, etc. to serve new and planned subdivisions.	Still underdeveloped, but pro-tourism/retiree development forces may push for improved transportation to bring in outsiders and for improved utilities to allow development of hotels, etc.	Roads, water/sewer, etc. underdeveloped and/or ill-maintained due to difficulty in paying for them with small population base.
SOCIAL AND HUMAN SERVICES	Services become overwhelmed by demand as the transient, commuting, and/or low-wage population increases.	As population base grows, the tax base to fund services increases. But the demand also increases, with growing number of retirees, workers with low-wage jobs, and community transience.	Continued need for services to low-income residents, who still make up large proportion of population.	Similar to Early Stage. Need for services might decline slightly as employment increases.	May be hard to provide because of small population base; need is among unemployed and underemployed workers and their families.
CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT	More of Developing Stage II.	Livelihoods that sustained traditional cultures largely lost, though artifacts supported by outsiders buying a piece of “local culture.” Start to see mass production of handicrafts.	Tensions may arise between retaining cultural integrity/community character, and taking advantage of commercial opportunities.	Some opportunities for selling cultural artifacts may arise, thus contributing to the maintenance of some traditional handicrafts and traditions.	Deterioration of traditional cultures and way of life as the livelihoods associated with that way of life (agriculture, etc) decline.
POLITICAL AND CIVIC ENVIRONMENT	In some places, transience can create instability in local politics. In others, a more stable immigrant population comes to dominate politics. Powerful factions may include developers, earlier newcomers who want to restrict further growth. May, as in case of Santa Fe, have a populist or no-growth backlash.	Intensification of Developing Stage I: increased power of developers; newcomers (who often want to shut the gate on growth) may outbalance old-timers politically. Interjurisdictional issues arise as economy expands and more workers live outside community.	Integration of small number of newcomers may go well, or tensions may arise, especially if new and old resident lifestyles are different and have large impact on each other. Politically experienced newcomers are often active in local politics.	May see debates on whether and how to attract tourists and new residents. May find that the pro-tourism forces dominate and are moving ahead with plans with little opposition. Savvy developers can hoodwink uninformed locals.	May be a general lack of civic capacity to instigate—and/or differing opinions about how to encourage—development. Some community members highly resistant to change, while others energetically pursue visitor and/or retiree services. Likely to be lack of awareness about the actual costs and benefits of tourism.

Stages of Development table helps address two questions faced by practitioners: How can local residents recognize rapid growth before problems become intractable? And how can they plan for a more desirable level of development—one that can be sustained and that includes and benefits long-term and low-income residents?

The table outlines how growth affects 12 aspects of small-town life over time, including the types of jobs people have, the make-up of the population, and cultural and environmental resources. Specifically, the table tracks what happens, as communities grow, to these *community characteristics*:

- economic base/jobs
- resident population
- visitor population
- attraction development
- visitor services
- local services
- cost of living
- land-use patterns
- physical infrastructure
- social and human services
- cultural environment
- political and civic environment

Table 1 also divides such small-town growth into five “stages”:

- Early Stage
- Emerging Stage
- Developing Stage I
- Developing Stage II
- Mature Stage

These stages are only approximations. We intend them to represent a series of snapshots that show how high-amenity communities may develop over a period of years or decades. The idea is that if a community understands its current growth in the context of a long-term process, it can anticipate problems and opportunities in the years ahead. We suspect that these problems and opportunities may be more easily addressed if they are anticipated *before* becoming fully manifested. For example, perhaps it will be less painful to zone for open space *before* property values escalate. Perhaps polarization can be avoided if the economy is diversified *before* service jobs begin to predominate.

Of course, we don’t think that all small towns with natural and cultural amenities inevitably follow a path—or the same path—to unbridled growth as depicted in the “Mature” column on the right-hand side of Table 1. On the contrary, stages and aspects of growth overlap and, ultimately, each community follows its unique trajectory. Thus, while participants at the San Antonio meeting thought the table was useful as a tool for considering

the future, they felt it was important to recognize that growth occurs in a much more dynamic way than can be depicted by any linear chart.

THE NEW “EDGE CITY”?

Participants at the meeting agreed that there is a continuum of development in high-amenity communities similar to that shown in Table 1. On one end are small, usually remote towns where the overriding concern is too few jobs rather than too much growth. On the other end are towns—sometimes small cities—where the key issues are how to control growth and make life better for local residents.

No one argued that there’s a single point at which growth suddenly becomes a major issue in any particular place. However, there does seem to be a period during which public attention shifts away from economic development and toward managing the growth so that it benefits not just newcomers and the people who own businesses and real estate, but long-term and low-income residents as well.

Bob Einsweiler, from the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy, pointed out:

*What [Table 1] captures is... the fundamental notion that there is an evolutionary process... Different components [community characteristics] don't necessarily evolve at the same rate, and the evolution isn't always necessarily straight ahead. What has to be done [in rapidly growing communities] is... not to design something at a place in time, but to manage an **evolution**.*

Einsweiler argued that growth in high-amenity rural communities is part of a long-term trend in which urban residents are migrating away from city centers. If he’s correct, then recent growth can be expected to continue:

[High-growth, high-amenity rural communities may represent] the new “edge city”—the new edge of urbanization. But rather than get into the urban-rural dichotomy, I prefer the geography-neutral terminology of “human settlement.” So, this is just the edge of a pattern of human settlements all linked together.

Several people cited technological changes—some obvious, others rarely considered—that have made and continue to make settlement in this new “edge city” possible. For example: Air conditioning in the Sea Islands of South Carolina. Mosquito-spraying in Jackson, Wyoming. Communication technologies that allow people to earn a living as easily in remote communities as they can in any urban center in the nation.

Thinking of rural growth, like Einsweiler does, as part of a larger change in human settlement patterns helps us understand that small towns are geographically and eco-

nomically linked to each other, to urban areas, and to the larger regions of which they are a part. For example, many people who work in Jackson, Wyoming—the world-famous vacation and ski-resort—actually live across the state border (and mountain pass) in more affordable Driggs, Idaho. At the same time, Driggs is trying to build its own visitor economy to attract the overflow from Jackson. Meanwhile, the economy in both communities is affected by what happens in the Central Rockies region as a whole: Occasional low snowfall and overcrowded destinations in Colorado seem to be responsible for more visitors in both Wyoming and Idaho.

In another example, amenity-related growth in Traverse City, Michigan, has what Susan Cocciarelli called a “doughnut effect.” Low-income and long-time residents are being pushed away from the scenic, high-cost towns bordering the lake to outlying, lower-cost communities. The doughnut pattern is important from an equity standpoint, since these ring communities do not have the tax base and other resources to address the problems created by growth.

ECONOMIC WINNERS AND LOSERS

Recent population growth in high-amenity rural communities comes on the heels of basic changes in how people in these communities make their living. The details vary but the overall picture is usually the same: Fewer people depend on natural resource industries while more depend on recreation, retail trade, lodging and other services.

Such structural economic change produces winners and losers. By and large, the winners are people who own businesses and make money from real estate development; the losers are people who lose jobs in natural resource industries and don’t have the capital to invest in growth. As Kurt Culbertson said, “Tourism and second-home development polarizes communities into millionaires and hamburger flippers.”

FAST GROWTH, DIVISIVE CONFLICT

Rapid population influx in small places can drastically alter the political and economic landscape as well. While newcomers may bring with them much-needed skills, capital and energy, conflict is rarely far behind. Change pits oldtimers against newcomers, property rights and development advocates against environmentalists, and those with a lock on political and economic power against those locked out.

Kurt Culbertson described the situation in Flathead County, Montana, where rapid growth has polarized towns that already had a long history of distrusting outsiders and government. As Culbertson said, “It’s a war out there.”

RECOGNIZING AND CONFRONTING PROBLEMS CAUSED BY RAPID GROWTH

I am beginning to sweat a little bit. Are we at a point where we begin to self-destruct? Where we begin to erode and create some real problems for ourselves?

—FELIX ROMERO, COSTILLA COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

THE REPP FRAMEWORK: STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

By and large, most rural people engaged in development “wars” come from one of two perspectives. Either they embrace or they resist to the death such growth management tools as comprehensive planning and zoning.

Even though long-term residents may not like the dramatic changes brought by rapid growth, their strong opposition to “urban-style” growth management techniques is, in many cases, a natural first response. Why do the resisters fight so hard? Typically, growth management entails some sacrifice of private property rights. Few Americans enjoy restrictions on their liberty—but in rural areas, this sentiment is particularly vigorous.

Even if growth management strategies *were* better received by rural people, they would not be enough to solve all the problems created by rapid population growth. As we learned from research in advance of the San Antonio meeting, a more integrated approach—of which growth management is one part—appears to offer greater hope for solving problems associated with rapid growth. Specifically, three kinds of strategies, when used in concert and tailored to the local context, appear more promising. As outlined in *Table 2: Strategies for High-Amenity Rural Communities*, these strategies are:

- growth management or *managing land use and resources* to protect, for example, open space, environmental resources, historical structures and community character
- *community-based economic development* to restructure and diversify the local economy so that long-term and low- and moderate-income residents benefit from growth
- *community or civic capacity building* to help communities confront change through goal-setting, education, leadership development, organizing, civic participation, conflict resolution and consensus-building

GOAL: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN HIGH-AMENITY RURAL COMMUNITIES THAT INCLUDES AND BENEFITS LONG-TERM AND LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS

STRATEGY	STRATEGY	STRATEGY
<p>MANAGE LAND USE AND RESOURCES</p> <p>SUBSTRATEGIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regulate land use ■ Preserve land ■ Guide infrastructure development ■ Regulate/create incentives for business ■ ■ ■ <p>TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Comprehensive planning ■ Ecosystem analysis ■ Visualization tools (GIS) ■ Zoning ■ Conservation easements ■ Purchase/transfer of development rights ■ Land purchase/land exchange ■ Tax policy ■ Development incentives (e.g., impact fees, density bonuses) ■ Preservation of historic buildings ■ ■ ■ 	<p>BUILD AND MAINTAIN CIVIC CAPACITY</p> <p>SUBSTRATEGIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Raise public awareness/debate about the effects of growth ■ Promote collaborative decisionmaking ■ Develop/expand local leadership ■ Create/strengthen institutions ■ ■ ■ <p>TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strategic planning ■ Visioning ■ Leadership training ■ Grassroots organizing ■ Mediation/dispute resolution ■ Cultural sensitivity training ■ Media campaigns ■ Community assessment ■ Local newspaper ■ ■ ■ 	<p>DIVERSIFY/RESTRUCTURE LOCAL ECONOMIES</p> <p>SUBSTRATEGIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthen local business ownership ■ Encourage firms that add value to natural and cultural resources ■ Restore/maintain environmental and cultural resources ■ Create affordable housing options ■ ■ ■ <p>TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Loans to create/expand local firms ■ Technical assistance (management, marketing, etc.) to local firms ■ Encourage eco-/farm tourism, etc. ■ Environmental restoration ■ Labor management relations ■ Zoning/taxes that preserve farms ■ Incentives for affordable housing ■ ■ ■

As it turned out, the meeting focused largely on how the second and third approaches lay the groundwork for the first—managing land use and resources. Before addressing these approaches in detail, we examine another set of issues from our discussion. These pertain to how and when people recognize growth problems in the first place, and then take the initial steps to alert and engage others in the community.

WAKING UP TO GROWTH

As we noted above, one of the main objectives at the meeting was to learn what it takes for people to recognize and take action before problems become intractable and communities become polarized. We call this the *wake-up call*.

Often, the community's wake-up call is a proposal for a local, large-scale development project, one that people expect will make a big change in the quality of their lives. Since many high-amenity communities that have experienced rapid growth are near mountains, it came as no surprise that the wake-up call most commonly cited at the San Antonio meeting was a proposed ski resort. But other types of development—like discount retail stores, golf courses, or residential subdivisions on agricultural land—may also galvanize local residents.

The question posed to and by the San Antonio group was: What other kinds of wake-up calls can move communities to dialogue and action *before* they are threatened by dramatic change or overtaken by an irreversible progression of incremental changes? There was agreement that a diagnostic *tool* like the *Stages of Development* table might help in certain situations, for example, if a trained practitioner worked with a local group to “find themselves” on the table.

There was also a clear sense that *communities can learn from each other* and recognize potential problems before they occur, although there currently is no organized way or forum to help make that happen. Indeed, Felix Romero from the Costilla County Economic Development Council in San Luis, Colorado, got precisely this kind of wake-up call simply by attending the San Antonio meeting and listening to his peers. Romero offered this comment about San Luis—which is in the “Early” stage of development—on the last morning of our meeting:

I woke up in a cold sweat last night. Despite all our success in building from the cultural and religious traditions in our community, I am beginning to sweat a little bit. Are we at a point where we begin to self-destruct? Where we begin to erode and create some real problems for ourselves? I need to go back and talk not about consensus, but about the problems we are going to encounter.

Romero's comments suggest that wake-up calls in the form of inter-community dialog will not fall on deaf ears. But then what? As Romero said, “How do I communicate about those

problems? I'm having some real difficulties with that because we're at a point that people are excited about what's going on [with our efforts to use tourism as a development strategy]."

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL EVENT

Once the wake-up call sounds for community leaders like Felix Romero, it's often a small group of creative people whose ideas and activities spark the interest and involvement of a larger group. In other words, it takes *leadership* to build broad-based, community initiatives that can address either specific development proposals or larger growth issues.

Maria Varela best described this creative leadership process as an *entrepreneurial event*—when several local residents come together and dream up an idea that resonates with a larger group:

The process is a lot like fertility. When you think about the [community initiatives we've heard described at this meeting], they didn't start with big town hall meetings where everybody came up and decided "this is our direction." They started with one or two people. It's a lot like a womb that has the right pH factor and whatever else you need for fertility and then the act is, you know, the sperm and the egg coming together. But the important thing was that little group of people with that kind of creative "whatever" happened. And, you know, you can't do that from a textbook.

Others at the San Antonio meeting pointed out that entrepreneurial events sometimes occur when people who normally don't communicate sit down together to share their views—for example, in the course of a communitywide meeting. Luther Propst of the Sonoran Institute described how a promising idea emerged from one such meeting in Teton County, Idaho, where people were concerned about increasing pressure on farmers and ranchers to sell their land for development:

We asked people in the community to come together and focus on what they valued, where they want the community to go in the future, and the kind of steps they want to see to get there. From that discussion came the idea that [farmers in the valley] could build a factory just large enough to accommodate dairy production in the valley and then market specialty cheese and salad dressing products.

The Economic Development Council has taken on the project. They haven't yet built a factory, [but] they've developed a prospectus, run the numbers, and recruited some investors. And—unlike proposals for a national wildlife refuge and unlike the zoning ordinance [that had been proposed]—since this idea has taken hold, not a single family farmer has sold out. Just the idea, and that it's being taken seriously, has provided enough hope for these folks to hang on, because they want to stay in business...

The lesson I take from this quick story is that getting people together who normally wouldn't have communicated has resulted in a program that has the potential for good, year-round jobs... that may also achieve the goal of local environmentalists and the community as a whole: to keep the land in agriculture. So the idea of getting diverse people to cogitate on these ideas led to the kind of economic development that is probably the most effective land-conservation strategy for that valley.

In Flathead Lake, Montana, an entrepreneurial event occurred just after the county planning staff tried to pass an interim zoning plan without public hearings. Residents reacted strongly against the top-down mentality that apparently prevailed in local government. So did a small group of people with diverse interests—environmentalists, the owner of a local ski resort, and real estate developers—who agreed that business as usual in local government was unacceptable. Together, they approached the county planning agency with the idea of vastly increasing opportunities for public participation in Montana's first-ever countywide comprehensive plan. The shotgun marriage between this small group of entrepreneurial leaders produced one of the best-known citizen-driven planning efforts in the West. The resulting Cooperative Planning Coalition raised roughly \$500,000 in private funds and additional public money to develop a comprehensive plan update with far-reaching implications for land use policy.

The conclusion we drew from stories about Teton and Flathead Counties was that a small, creative group of leaders can sound a very loud wake-up call that can, in turn, engage the community spirit and action.

DISCOVERING THE GENIUS OF PLACE

The process depicted in the *Stages of Development* table tends to result when markets work in the absence of significant influence from public policy and community intervention. For example, some towns have few land-use regulations because they haven't been needed in the past. So agricultural land gets turned into residential subdivisions—or doesn't—based solely on the demand for new homes and the supply of willing sellers and investors.

Here in the United States, the default path for how development occurs is that markets take the lead. However, if market outcomes prove unacceptable—that is, if they are sufficiently out of line with what citizens perceive to be the public interest—public policy steps in to influence or explicitly limit the paths markets can pursue. Together, then, markets and policy affect culture, with culture almost always on the receiving end.

Much of our discussion at the San Antonio meeting focused on how people can instead harness culture and history to influence markets and thereby create a *different* path. For many, that path begins and ends with the physical landscape itself. Buddy Milliken, a real estate developer from North Carolina, described it this way:

I started out [in the real estate business] under the illusion that I was developing land. It turns out that the land has been developing me... The landscape is the only really long-lasting permanence to which we can attach our memories, cultural traditions and community-based organizations. All my vivid memories have always been attached to some physical environment. [The problem is that this] environment gets destroyed or altered so frequently it's hard to pass on the traditions and cultural mores that... produce the kind of communities we need.

One after another, people described communities that have crafted their own, very individual responses to growth problems and development pressures. Marty Zeller captured the essence of these stories:

To me, what comes out [of the stories we've heard here] is the "genius of place," the melding of landscape and people, and—if you can tap it—the tremendous power that is unleashed as a result... The idea is that culture can operate on markets and on government.

Genius of place lives in the physical landscape that forms and sustains community habits and culture. Respect for the land helps people hold on to this genius. Zeller described a community where the approach to managing growth came straight from landscape, culture and values:

The project that I'm working on is up in the Elk River area of northern Colorado, a very beautiful agricultural area. Like a lot of the West, it's been discovered. People are coming in and land-use patterns are changing. There's the feeling that eventually the condos are going to come your way and you're going to sell out. So there's real disinvestment going on in the agricultural community itself.

*In this particular valley, there are nine large ranches. One of those is owned by guest ranchers, who after 15 years of working very hard on the business are finally able to make a very good living. They took a look around the valley and thought, "What could threaten what we're doing here?" There was nothing internal that could threaten it because business was going well. What **was** changing was the character of the valley. People who came to that guest ranch were drawn to the pristine character and agricultural nature of the valley. And the owners began to realize how fragile that relationship was... That encouraged them to look at the future of the valley.*

*Out of a strategy of interacting with all the neighbors came a common set of principles that people in the valley share, articulated in something called the Elk River Valley Compact. The principles are related to preserving the culture and the landscape, encouraging families to live in the valley, and encouraging people to take conservation actions: If they **have** to develop, do it in a very limited fashion. If they have to sell, they should consult their neighbors. The idea was to "culture" and nurture the agricultural system that was already there.*

This had a ripple effect throughout the rest of the county, where people in all the other valleys were having similar problems... that led to people saying we ought to think about our open lands a little bit differently. The county then initiated an open-lands planning process... The whole idea was to engage people in the rural areas of the county and then to discover the genius of those places. That's led to a menu of options that people are considering right now that really comes out of the culture of these ranchers.

NURTURING GENIUS AT THE GRASSROOTS

In some communities, the genius of place is being carefully nurtured. The Penn Center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, is an organization that taps genius by nurturing historical traditions. The Center's former director, Nina Morais, put it this way: "Somewhere in your history is the key to what you must do."

The original Penn School, founded by Northern abolitionists as a school for freed slaves, provided Sea Island natives with the education they needed to control their own future. The modern Penn Center built from this tradition when it began a project to help Island residents benefit from local economic development, something that has not happened on neighboring Hilton Head Island. Morais described the Center's approach:

Understanding the issues and the leadership we had to work with, we looked for our inspiration in the island history. We started the Penn School for Preservation and advertised it up and down the island as "starting the old Penn school all over again." On the islands... the history of the Penn School is well known and it is an enormous source of pride, so everyone rallied around.

The parallels between the old school and our new center are deep. The questions we're asking today are just modern versions of those [that motivated the first Penn School]. The first is, "Can we find economically viable alternatives to destructive development?" And the second is, "Can island natives master the technical information and develop the leadership skills they need to gain control over their own destiny?"

In March 1994, we graduated our first class of 37 people... When these people entered the school six months before, they were a collection of individuals in vague agreement that something was wrong on the island. When they graduated, they were an effective team with a coherent, persuasive plan. When they entered the school, their only strategy was to oppose destructive forms of development, like widening the highway. By the time they graduated, they had taken on the complicated, affirmative task of implementing an economic development and land-use strategy that could actually preserve their own community. It's a miraculous transformation.

We would ask the group, for example, “What do you really love about Missoula?”

You can’t tell people’s political ideologies when you ask questions like that.

—DAN KEMMIS, MAYOR OF MISSOULA, MONTANA

As mentioned earlier, we spent much of the meeting in San Antonio talking about how civic capacity building and community-based economic development lay a foundation for the other strategy—managing land use and resources. We learned that, to a large degree, which of the first two strategies works best in laying that foundation depends on local context. In some places, the *first* step must be to build the broad-based, political will to make hard decisions about growth and development.

For purposes of the meeting, we defined a community’s civic capacity as *the ability to engage a broad range of its residents in cooperatively addressing issues*—in this case, issues related to rapid growth. Without a base of civic capacity, people in communities undergoing rapid change are often polarized. They feel helpless and alienated, and political will is splintered. Participants described three ways to build civic capacity:

- community roundtables
- educating for political participation
- direct attention to racial and ethnic issues

UNPRECEDENTED CONVERSATIONS: BUILDING TRUST WITH A COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

Many rapidly growing, high-amenity communities are increasingly polarized—between newcomers and long-term residents, wealthy and poor, environmentalists and property rights advocates. Over and over at the meeting, we heard that people are desperate to find common ground between these extremes.

Dan Kemmis described the Missoula Community Roundtable, a local innovation that uses dialog to mediate conflict and build consensus about the future. The roundtable was organized after years of conflict over development in Missoula. After what already

seemed like one battle too many, a new one surfaced when a convenience store was proposed for a residential neighborhood:

*A proposal had been made to build a SuperAmerica store at the corner of Fourth and Chestnut in Missoula, and this divided the community in a way we thought only Missoula could be divided. This residential community just went haywire over the proposed zoning change and the City Council split on it... The neighborhood then got together and decided to put the zoning issue on the ballot, so we had **the whole city** voting about a SuperAmerica.*

I was opposed to the SuperAmerica, but also mildly skeptical of the idea of making decisions like that by a citywide vote. Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce got involved and decided to make it an issue of whether the city was pro- or anti-business... This was the level at which we were conducting politics in Missoula.

A little while after the vote on the SuperAmerica, two citizens from the opposing sides of the political fence—one of whom was Dan Kemmis—began to talk about planting “a seed of change” in the city’s political culture:

The head of the Chamber of Commerce and I ran into each other on the street and were comparing notes when we both noticed we weren’t looking one another in the eye. Finally... we got around to saying there really ought to be a better way to do this... then we said, “Well, what is it?” And then, “Well I don’t know, but I wonder if there’s anybody else that thinks the way we do.”

The background was that Missoula had just torn itself apart over and over again over these polarizing issues, many of them much more serious than a SuperAmerica. We found between the two of us we were just literally sick of it and didn’t believe the community’s interests or our own particular constituents’ interests were being well served by it. We ended up agreeing to invite one more person to a conversation about this issue.

So we each invited one other person whom we trusted and whom we thought would be interested in such a conversation. The four of us sat down and found that we all felt the same way about what was happening in Missoula. And gradually we expanded the group. We did it very slowly actually, and just kept doing it by geometrical progression for a while.

The subject of the discussion was really how we “do” politics in Missoula. What started to emerge was that each side had thought they were always the “victims” of the way the political system worked—and the other side was really in charge. It took a lot of time for people to believe the other side actually felt put-upon, and actually believe that there could be a better way of doing things.

Most of these people had only dealt with each other as enemies and only when they were spouting ideology. We would ask the group, for example, “What do you really love about Missoula?” You can’t tell people’s political ideologies when you ask questions like that. And to hear each other talk about something like that was educational and trust-building.

At that time, the community was beginning to be faced by what many people thought was going to be a seven- or eight-year, polarizing situation: a serious proposal to develop a destination ski resort just south of Missoula. So we invited both camps in, and said, “We want both of you to come and talk about this issue, but we would like you to talk the way that we’ve been practicing. Don’t talk to us as if you’re preaching to the choir or to enemies, but talk to us in a way that you would persuade your neighbors.”

Eventually, the Roundtable members convinced both sides to cooperatively address the ski resort issue in a way that would help the community rather than tear it apart. That process set a precedent:

Now, when a tough issue comes up, we almost automatically convene something like a small-scale roundtable to look at the issue. And people are very used to convening all of the parties; they’re not uncomfortable with doing it—the way they used to be 15 years ago.

EDUCATING FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Like other stories we heard at the meeting, Kemmis’ example was encouraging and optimistic. But not every community may be ready for a roundtable. In some places, more groundwork is necessary.

Several meeting participants build civic capacity by developing people’s capacity to take part in the political process. Nina Morais, for example, explained that the Penn Center’s Sea Islands Preservation Project educates residents to be an informed, political force. She argued that in many rapidly growing places, people lack basic information and political skills, and therefore cannot participate effectively in making decisions about development.

This is especially true where long-term, low-income residents are shut out of the political arena by powerful politicians and developers. In these cases, educating and organizing residents helps create a more level playing field. Antonio Delgado, who is developing a comprehensive plan for Taos, New Mexico, explained his views on educating for political participation:

The underlying goal is a community’s right to self-determination... but you need a bottom-up approach. In Taos, many people have not been allowed to participate in the past... When I think of leadership, I think about generating a new cadre of individuals who’ve never been involved in the process. When I talk about educating, it doesn’t

necessarily mean education in the planning process, it means educating people in getting involved, coming aboard, and being a lifetime participant in these sorts of endeavors... You begin on the ground level with getting people involved, particularly those who've never been involved, who've never been invited.

CONFRONTING RACIAL AND ETHNIC CONFLICTS

For people to cooperatively address growth-related issues, racial and ethnic differences must be confronted head-on, no matter which civic capacity-building process you use.

Newcomers, often wealthy and white, are either unaware of or insensitive to their impact on long-term residents who are low-income and Native American, Black, or Hispanic. Antonio Delgado described it this way:

I'm very interested in incorporating race and ethnicity into planning models, because the newcomers who arrive in these rural settings bring with them cultural baggage. Part of that cultural baggage is bias and misperception, particularly about people of color who live in rural areas. Racial discord and divisions won't go away by making believe that they're not there. They're not going away, in fact they'll probably increase, unless you do address the harsh racial realities that exist in the United States.

COMMUNITY-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We can't ignore the fact that this economy shapes people, and either arms them or disarms them in terms of being able to be part of the community. It's our desire to create a model of doing business in a way that we generate community, not just economic wealth.

—MARIA VARELA, GANADOS DEL VALLE

Sometimes, building civic capacity, by itself, is not the most critical first step to dealing with growth. When high-amenity communities are being torn apart by economic

changes—especially when changes come in the form of newcomers from a different class and racial or ethnic group—an immediate focus on how to capture economic opportunity for more than a few may be a better place to start.

In communities where new development and newcomers severely threaten an existing economic way of life, it's no surprise that economic insecurity and disparity lead to political polarization. Civic dialog, a sense of community, and consensus are the farthest thing from people's minds when they can't feed their families.

For this reason, several people at the meeting focus their efforts on providing economic opportunities for long-term and low-income residents. As Maria Varela explained it:

We want to create jobs that socialize people to develop their capacity as citizens. We can't ignore the fact that this economy shapes people, and either arms them or disarms them in terms of being able to be part of the community.

Ganados del Valle, an agricultural development corporation with which Varela has been involved for many years, is a good example of how economic opportunity can lay the foundation for civic capacity. Ganados is based in a small, primarily Latino town about two hours from both Santa Fe and Taos. Poverty rates are very high, but the town has a history of indigenous land ownership and subsistence agriculture. Local residents have often organized *against* outside threats to the traditional way of life, such as proposals to build a ski resort and private-jet airport:

We realized that we were very good at saying "no," but we didn't have the words that would be powerful enough to say what we wanted, we hadn't demonstrated what could be done.

We were very interested in the fact that pasture after pasture was becoming empty because people could no longer afford to raise sheep. We thought that this is where we could start.

If anybody had done a feasibility study or a business plan, they would have told us we were destined to fail because of what was happening to lamb consumption and the ability to add value to wool. But in this community's way of thinking, these were things that have been done for generations. So we began with our sheep flocks and started working on how to add on value to our wool by organizing a spinning and weaving cooperative.

Today we have five businesses. The spinning and weaving cooperative, called Tierra Wools, now employs 25 women and is in the process of spinning off from under our nonprofit umbrella. The women will own this business, which is worth probably about half a million dollars. We have Pastores Lambs, which direct-markets lambs... We

have Pastores Feed and General Store, which helps the growers and also markets nonwoven arts and crafts that are part of the culture. We have a wool-washing and a wool-manufacturing enterprise. And we have a business that makes doormats and other products entirely out of recycled tires and other materials. We now employ between 50 and 60 people and are probably the largest private year-round employer in our community...

It's our desire to create a model of doing business in a way that we generate community, not just economic wealth... So personal, human development is a very important part of our work... We've discovered that while we might recognize the skills people are learning at Ganados, they still feel deficient because they don't have a degree... So we're creating a work-based college program. Since our staff is about 99% from the community, we're using this staff as a group of leaders that we can develop. We have people who want to run for the school board, for example, and they'll understand the issues by coming through our organization.

USING STRATEGIES IN CONCERT

To me, what comes out [of the stories we've heard here] is the "genius of place," the melding of landscape and people, and—if you can tap it—the tremendous power that is unleashed as a result.

—MARTY ZELLER, CONSERVATION PARTNERS

Everyone at the meeting focuses on at least one piece of the civic capacity building and community economic development strategies and substrategies we've been discussing here: building awareness, leadership, broad-based capacity and economic opportunity. With these pieces in place, participants argue, managing land use and other resources becomes a much more realistic goal.

Whether the three strategies listed in Table 2—managing land use and resources, building and maintaining civic capacity, and diversifying/restructuring local economies—are more effective when used together is something that we still don't know much about. Using them together is a new, holistic approach with which just a few groups around the country are experimenting, notably, the Penn Center in South Carolina, the Nature Conservancy on Maryland's eastern shore, and Ecotrust in the Pacific Northwest.

But the stories people told in San Antonio supported what we suspect is true: Where people's economic livelihood is collapsing and politics are completely polarized, growth management is infeasible. Land-use plans and the like invoke the most anger and bitterness in places where small-town life is changing too quickly, where putting food on the table has become next to impossible. Dedicated, passionate people like those who came to San Antonio are patiently trying to diffuse that fury, town by town, conversation by conversation.

WHAT'S NEEDED?

Somewhere in your history is the key to what you must do.

—NINA MORAIS, PENN CENTER

Several questions remained or surfaced by the end of our meeting. They cut to the heart of how individual communities can achieve sustainable, equitable growth:

- Which strategy do we start with, economic opportunity or civic capacity? This question asks for strategic knowledge: What is the relationship between the two strategies? It also asks a situational question: Which strategy is best used under which circumstances?
- Do we always need a strategy to deal with economic equity issues, or are there places or times where this doesn't matter as much?
- Given differing viewpoints about growth, how do we make decisions collectively and then abide by them? Are there successful, reliable ways to discover *common* or *collective self-interest* in communities, so that it may guide decisionmaking during times of rapid change?
- Are the strategies we have delineated sufficient to change our communities from the inside?

At the end of our meeting, people suggested specific actions to help answer these questions about community-level strategies. Essentially, they want more connections with each other, and more information and knowledge, tools, trust and money with which to work—a blueprint for assisting people who live and work in rapidly growing small towns. We elaborate on each of these actions below.

CONNECTIONS

A number of suggestions were made that involved peer exchange, support and learning opportunities. Several people contended that practitioners need ongoing opportunities to compare notes, provide mutual support, and talk about new strategies and expertise. Examples of successful models included Urban Land Institute workshops held across the West, the Land Trust Alliance conference, and the San Antonio meeting itself. These kinds of gatherings recharge burned-out practitioners, spawn new program efforts, and build a national base for action. Practitioners can use these meetings to understand the broader context for their work, make connections and explore new strategies.

There were also several variations on the peer exchange idea. It was suggested that people in communities where growth pressures are just beginning would welcome a chance to learn from more experienced community leaders. Another idea was to form a “circuit-riding team” of experienced practitioners. These people could regularly visit a set of communities over three to five years to offer perspective and suggestions about changes over time. Finally, Buddy Milliken proposed that practitioners need to communicate in an ongoing, informal way—for example, by using electronic mail.

Several participants were interested in developing working relationships with environmental groups. Luther Propst suggested that rural practitioners try to identify common goals and integrate their work with local branches of national organizations. Maria Varela pointed out that environmental groups should learn to work not only with people of color who are victims of environmental racism (like residents of poor neighborhoods that have become toxic waste dumps) but also with those who own and control resources.

INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

People want case studies that are captured in written form and can be shared more broadly than personal exchanges allow. The following specific kinds of stories were recommended:

- well-written, concise success stories that analyze why a particular strategy worked and that emphasize the practical implications for people who want to attempt similar work
- stories that illustrate how land and resource management, economic development and community capacity building can overlap and work together (*Nina Morais suggested that a source book of these cases, as well as other meetings to highlight multifaceted strategies, would help to legitimize work like that currently under way at the Penn Center*)

- narratives that provide the basis for developing policy by showing which strategies do and do not work (*Chellie Pingree observed that such stories would encourage more objective thinking about complex issues, and show how biased and subjective policymaking can harm community-based efforts*)

Two suggestions were made about the need for better data and information. Kurt Culbertson pointed out that people in small communities need reliable and accessible data that can be used for land-use and resource planning. At a broader level, one participant suggested that a central resource center or clearinghouse could provide information to practitioners and act as the switching point for the kinds of materials that were suggested earlier in the discussion.

TOOLS AND TRAINING

People want practical guides and curricula that would help them get up to speed on the economic context for community efforts and basic community development techniques. We heard requests for:

- a detailed curriculum on how to educate and involve the public in planning processes and techniques
- an analysis of economic development that is deeper than existing materials but also brief and clear enough for busy practitioners
- a useful model of the new economy, including topics such as rural-urban connections, aggregation of capital and the role of land
- a method of teaching basic organizing techniques

Maria Varela suggested that people in rural communities need effective ways to teach economic literacy more than they need written materials. Books are too static, she argued, and often describe trends that are already over.

People in towns where growth is just beginning or just around the bend need tools to help them visualize, rather than just talk about, different types of development. Various computer programs may now make this possible. On a related theme, Paul Larmer suggested that people at the meeting should think about capturing their own stories on video, as a way of reaching a broader audience.

Economic development, capacity building and growth management practitioners also need training in specific techniques and skills, including communications and public relations, strategic planning, and facilitation and conflict resolution.

TRUST

People are determined to legitimize their work. Written materials, meetings and attention by national-level organizations like REPP can help raise awareness about the value of work that doesn't fit neatly into funders' existing program categories. Maria Varela pointed out that organizations like REPP can also make the case that community organizations need core funding from foundations and others for general support. Such funding would free staff to undertake more of the creative and responsible program design activities they are good at. Both of these ideas suggest the need for a greater degree of trust and understanding between funders and community groups.

CONCLUSION

Connections among practitioners, access to information and knowledge (especially, “what works”), tools and training, trust and money: These are the resources that would help people who live and work in rapidly growing small towns. However, adequate experience, information and funding are simply not available in every community in which they are needed. We think the involvement of regional and national organizations in providing such resources is justified for two reasons.

First, people at the San Antonio meeting made it very clear that larger-than-local forces are behind many of the problems in rapidly growing rural communities. In parts of the country like the Rocky Mountain states, for example, growth is a regional phenomenon. Planning across county and state boundaries is needed to address issues including transportation, water, land use, and service provision. Individual local governments cannot solve these problems in isolation because the causes lie beyond their borders and the impact of their decisions spills over to other localities.

Second, communities rich in natural and cultural resources are a national treasure. We all lose when they are left unprotected, when gateways to our national parks are given over to strip malls, when cultural traditions are destroyed, and when long-term residents in places like Los Ojos and St. Helena Island are impoverished. The market alone will not ensure that these communities and their resources are sustained for future generations.

The San Antonio meeting helped us articulate important questions about sustainable and equitable development in high-amenity rural communities. It also gave us a blue-

print for specific actions to answer these questions and assist practitioners. Finally, it helped us understand the need for action and analysis by regional- and national-level organizations to help people from disparate places learn from each other through meetings, publications and other media. Communities in the path of development deserve attention. We should start by working with the practitioners themselves, for they have tapped the essential impulses that transform individuals and communities.

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THE RURAL ECONOMIC POLICY PROGRAM (REPP)

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Established in 1985 at The Aspen Institute, the Rural Economic Policy Program (REPP) fosters collaborative learning, leadership and innovation to advance rural community and economic development in the United States. REPP aims to help rural decisionmakers better understand how local choices and opportunities fit into the larger economy, and to speed the adoption and application of public and private initiatives that will sustain rural progress and improve the lives of rural people. Headquartered in Washington, DC, REPP is funded by The Ford and W.K. Kellogg Foundations.

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