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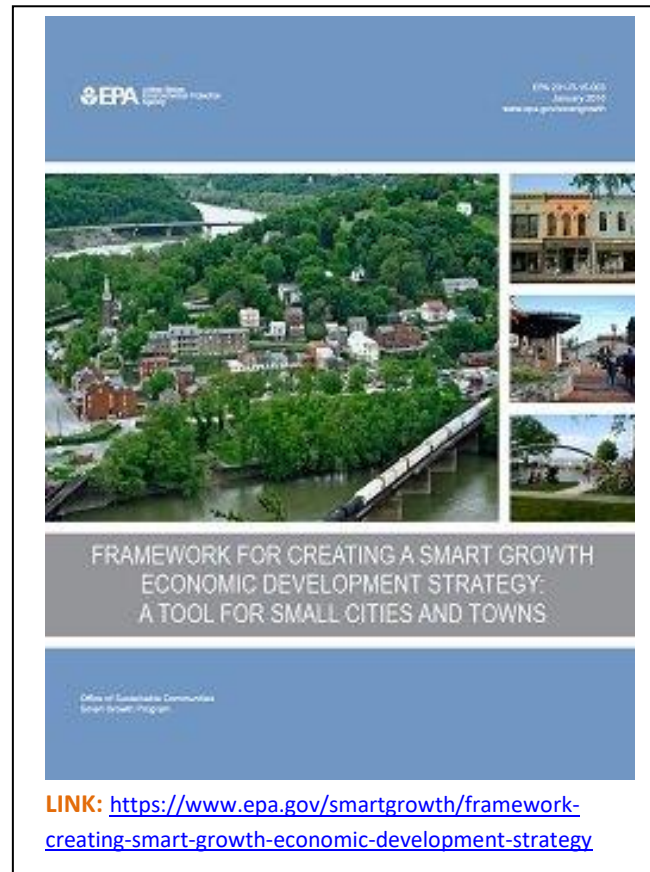
Smart Growth in Small Towns and Rural Communities.

Background.

Small towns and rural communities throughout the United States are looking for ways to strengthen their economies, provide better quality of life, and build on local assets. Many rural communities and small towns are facing challenges, including rapid growth at metropolitan edges, declining rural populations, and loss of farms and working lands.

Slow-growing and shrinking rural areas might find that their policies are not bringing the prosperity they seek, while fast-growing rural areas at the edge of metropolitan regions face metropolitan-style development pressures.

Smart growth strategies can help rural communities achieve their goals for growth and development while maintaining their distinctive rural character.



- Planning where development should or should not go can help a rural community encourage growth in town, where businesses can thrive on a walkable main street and families can live close to their daily destinations.
- Policies that protect the rural landscape help preserve open space, protect air and water quality, provide places for recreation, and create tourist attractions that bring investments into the local economy.
- Policies that support walking, biking, and public transit help reduce air pollution from vehicles while saving people money.

EPA Resources.

- [Cool & Connected: Nine Actions for Success](#) (2020): Specific actions small towns could take to use broadband to revitalize downtowns, create economic opportunities, and protect the environment.
- [Framework for Creating a Smart Growth Economic Development Strategy: A Tool for Small Cities and Towns](#) (2016): Step-by-step guide to building a place-based economic development strategy. It is intended for small and mid-sized cities, particularly those that have limited population growth, areas of disinvestment, and/or a struggling economy.
- [Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities](#) (2015): Can help a community assess its policies, programs, and codes to determine whether they support the type of development the community wants.
- [How Small Towns and Cities Can Use Local Assets to Rebuild Their Economies: Lessons From Successful Places](#) (2015): Includes case studies of small towns and cities that emphasized their existing assets and distinctive resources to build their economies.
- [Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities](#), EPA and the International City/County Management Association (2010): Focuses on smart growth strategies to meet three main goals: support the rural landscape by keeping working lands viable and conserving natural lands; help existing places thrive by taking care of investments and assets; and create great new places by building lively and enduring neighborhoods where people want to live.
- [Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Rural Planning, Zoning, and Development Codes](#) (2009): Provides policy options that can help rural communities strengthen their economies while preserving rural character. Topics include fiscal impact analysis, commercial development, wastewater infrastructure, rural roads, and efficient development patterns.
- The [American Indian Environmental Office](#) leads EPA's efforts to protect human health and the environment in federally recognized tribes.
- [Green Building Tools for Tribes](#) offers resources to help tribes develop, implement, and enforce culturally relevant green building codes, policies, and programs.
- *Supporting Sustainable Rural Communities* (2011): Developed by the HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities to explore how the Partnership could contribute to more resilient economies, healthy environments, and quality of life in rural America. Includes case studies of how federal assistance has helped rural communities. It is available in the EPA Archive. Click on **SEARCH EPA ARCHIVE** and type or copy and paste the title into the search box.

LINKS: <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-small-towns-and-rural-communities>
<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth>