

RURAL

This Resource Guide was developed for Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation whose primary goal is to implement healthy eating and active living policy- and environmental-change initiatives that can support healthier communities for children and families across the United States. This Annotated Resource Guide provides a listing of relevant websites, guidance documents, tools, and case studies that may be helpful for community partnerships working in rural areas to facilitate healthy eating and active living. This Guide is divided into the following categories:

- A. Definitions of “Rural”**
- B. Rural Smart Growth**
- C. Joint Use**
- D. Case Studies**
- E. Transportation**
- F. Community**
- G. Trails**
- H. Healthy Eating**
- I. Assessment and Measurement**
- J. Media and Communications**
- K. Policy**

This guide was created in August 2011 and will be updated periodically.

A. Definitions of “Rural”

Defining the ‘Rural’ in Rural America

Amber Waves – June 2008

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/June08/Features/RuralAmerica.htm>

This article provides explanations behind multiple definitions of “rural.” In fact, there are more than two dozen definitions of the term “rural”! Questions of appropriate urban boundaries, population size limits, and multiple measures for “rural” are explored. This article can also be downloaded as a PDF.

What is Rural?

Rural Assistance Center – March 2010

http://www.raonline.org/info_guides/ruraldef/

This is a page on the Rural Assistance Center’s website dedicated to explaining what “rural” means; a FAQ about related issues is also provided. Practical questions, such as, “Which definition of ‘rural’ should I use?” are answered, and additional sources are provided.

B. Rural Smart Growth and Economic Development

Smart Growth Checklist

New York State Department of Transportation – August 2008

https://www.nysdot.gov/programs/smart-planning/repository/SGCheck_Development_Print.pdf

This tool was developed by the New York State Department of Transportation. It is a user-friendly checklist that will allow you to see if a proposed project will benefit the wellbeing of your community based on Smart Growth principles. Smart Growth is planned growth or development that integrates economic development and job creation along with quality of life issues. The goal with Smart Growth is to preserve and enhance both the natural and built environment. This checklist will help you discover if your project is in line with these ideas.

Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities

International City/County Management Association – 2010

http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/301483/Putting_Smart_Growth_to_Work_in_Rural_Communities

International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has released a new report, “Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities,” which focuses on how to adapt smart growth strategies to rural communities. Funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Sustainable Communities, the report examines the challenges rural communities face, including rapid growth at metropolitan edges, declining rural populations, and the loss of working lands. It highlights smart growth strategies that can help guide rural growth while preserving the unique rural character of existing communities. The report focuses on three central goals: 1) support the rural landscape by creating an economic climate that enhances the viability of working lands and conserves natural lands; 2) help existing places to thrive by taking care of assets and investments such as downtowns, Main Streets, existing infrastructure, and places that the community values; and 3) create great new places by building vibrant, enduring neighborhoods and communities that people, especially young people, don’t want to leave. Featuring case studies from across the country, the report highlights how local governments, states, and non-profit organizations have successfully implemented smart growth strategies to support rural lands, revitalize existing communities, and create great new places for residents and visitors. The report includes useful approaches toward Buy Local campaigns, investing in existing places and resources, rural policy change, and the development of great neighborhoods in rural areas. The publication also includes several short case studies of successful instances of rural smart growth. This resource is also full of useful citations that could be useful in exploring the issues further.

Healthy Rural Communities: A Resource and Action Guide for North Carolina

North Carolina Smart Growth Alliance – July 2004

<http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/events-resources/resources/healthy-rural-communities-resource-and-action-guide-north-carolina>

This guide was developed specifically for North Carolina by the North Carolina Smart Growth Alliance, but there are many useful sections that are more general in nature and much of the information is transferrable to other settings. There is a strong focus on how sprawl affects urban, rural, and fringe communities. One section describes in detail how principles of Smart Growth can be applied to rural communities. This guide also provides further resources for rural communities and small towns in NC

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(Leadership training, technical assistance opportunities, and useful websites) that are seeking to apply concepts of Smart Growth in their rural settings.

Smart Growth at the Frontier: Strategies and Resources for Rural Communities

Northeast Midwest Institute - 2002

<http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/events-resources/resources/smart-growth-frontier-strategies-and-resources-rural-communities>

This report was released by Northeast-Midwest Institute and can be accessed on Active Living By Design's website. The Institute is dedicated to revitalization and development of northeast and Midwest communities. The report provides information on promising rural growth strategies; development that links natural resource protection with resort and residential development; efforts to maintain farm and forest land; and work to coordinate regional development.

This is Smart Growth

Smart Growth Network – 2006

http://www.smartgrowth.org/pdf/this_is_smart_growth.pdf

This report was published by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the Smart Growth Network. Using many different examples from a wide range of places, this resource illustrates the use of Smart Growth principles in rural, urban, and suburban settings. This publication provides a plethora of examples, and includes pictures! While the majority of this particular resource does not focus on rural areas, and annotated bibliography, which includes resources specific to rural areas, is included at the end.

N.C. Rural Economic Development Center, Inc.

<http://www.ncruralcenter.org/>

This website provides several resources and will be most useful to North Carolina communities. First of all, the website links to the Rural Data Bank, which provides demographic data on every county in North Carolina. Secondly, the website has a lengthy Rural Resource Guide with links leading to other resources applicable to communities in North Carolina. Finally, the NC Rural Center is a grant making organization and receives proposals for projects that improve physical infrastructure, contribute to economic development, and build community capacity, among other things.

C. Joint Use

Opening School Grounds to the Community After Hours

Public Health Law and Policy – January 2010

http://www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning/products/joint_use_toolkit

Created by Public Health Law and Policy, this toolkit is designed to help increase physical activity through joint-use agreements. The toolkit offers guidelines and templates for joint-use agreements based on PHLP's successful experiences with such agreements in CA. This toolkit includes a checklist for developing and negotiating joint-use agreements; model language; community profiles; and tips for overcoming obstacles.

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D. Case Studies

Communities on the Move – A summary of the Fit Together Initiative in NC

Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of North Carolina – May 2010

<http://www.bcbsncfoundation.org/fittogether>

This document is the final report of the three-year Fit Together initiative in North Carolina. Five case studies of rural NC communities are included in this report, each of which details the community's use of Active Living By Design's 5-P model for community action (including preparation, promotions, programs, policy, and physical projects) and lists the resources used. This grant report also includes lessons learned from these five rural communities.

Applying Smart Growth Principle to General Plan Update, Kings County Moves toward a Healthier Future The California Endowment

http://www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/institutes_programs/CCROPP/activities/success_stories/kern.pdf

This case study, published by the California Endowment and California State University –Fresno, highlights cross-pollination between public health and city planning, and explains the significance of resident participation in the General Plan update. The final version of the new General Plan incorporated health and the built environment. This case study also highlights the collaborative visioning process that occurred before the adoption of the new General Plan.

Rails to Trails Case Study: Manchester, NH

Rails to Trails – July 2008

http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/whatwedo/case_statements/Manchester%20NH%20Case%20Report%20revised%20June%2026.pdf

This is a case study of how old rail lines are being converted to trails in and around Manchester, NH. For some, the trails serve as an alternative to driving to commercial centers. History of the trail plan, regional development issues, time and funding constraints, and the concept of "mode shift" (changing transportation mode norms) are all discussed in detail.

Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative: Working Across Geography to Cultivate Meaningful Community Change

Prevention Institute – May 2010

<http://preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-270/127.html>

This initiative was inspired specifically by the fact that this region in Iowa was an agricultural hotbed, and yet only 1% of food being purchased in the area was produced locally; subsequent efforts by the initiative address physical activity and healthy eating. The case study describes how partners have been connected across large rural areas; how schools were used to develop the initiative; and future plans.

Other case studies of W.K. Kellogg Food and Fitness Initiative sites can be found here:

<http://preventioninstitute.org/component/taxonomy/term/list/106/127.html>.

E. Transportation

Rural Safe Routes to Schools: Diverse Community Roundtable Meeting Notes

Safe Routes to School National Partnership – January 2007

<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/local/4317/4345>

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This webpage provides a summary of a National Safe Routes to School conference call focused on developing Safe Routes to School in rural areas given that the usual approach to Safe Routes to School in more urban areas does not typically work in more rural areas. New ideas, such as Safe Routes to Bus Stops and Walking from Bus Stops to Schools, and best practices, such as working with existing trails committees and through existing programs, are discussed.

The Rural Monitor – Fall 2006 issue

<http://www.raonline.org/newsletter/web/fall06.html>

This issue of *The Rural Monitor* focuses on rural transportation issues and discusses some feasible approaches to improving rural transportation systems.

F. Community

Healthy Communities, Healthy People

Center for Rural Affairs – September 2009

<http://files.cfra.org/pdf/Healthy-Communities-Healthy-People.pdf>

This document was produced by the Center for Rural Affairs. The resource focuses on policy and environmental change to increase healthy eating. The document describes the model of the community health committee, supported by a regional “circuit rider” (a person who serves as a liaison between the federal government and local committees), in order to increase opportunities for community-led initiatives for active living and healthy eating.

Rural Obesity: Strategies to Support Rural Counties in Building Capacity

Leadership for Healthy Communities – January 2008

<http://www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=235>

This publication describes the Rural Obesity Initiative and the lessons learned from this project. It includes sections on the background of the National Association of Counties (NACo) initiative; the unique nature of obesity in rural America and the challenges of implementing commonly promoted best policies and practices in these areas; the rationale for increasing funding for obesity prevention in rural communities in America; recommendations for how the funders can support rural communities; efforts to develop successful obesity prevention policies and programs. The results of the NACo Rural Obesity Survey are also included.

Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity in Rural America

Center for Rural Affairs – January 2009

<http://files.cfra.org/pdf/Nutrition-Physical-Activity-and-Obesity-in-Rural-America.pdf>

This brief article by the Center for Rural Affairs synthesizes research on issues of physical activity and obesity in rural America. Additionally, historical reasons for the high prevalence of obesity in rural areas are explored. General suggestions and resources are provided for increasing active living and healthy eating in rural areas.

G. Trails

Rails to Trails Website

<http://www.railstotrails.org/index.html>

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The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy advocates for trail use and trail building; encourages trail use; and provides technical assistance for trail builders. Particularly useful on the website are the: Trail-Building Toolbox (how-to regarding rails-to-trails), the Library (fact sheets and reports), and the TrailBlog (trail highlights).

Two Successful Rural Trails

Alberta TrailNet Society – January 2000

<http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/2trails.pdf>

This document explains the process of building and managing two rural trails in Alberta, Canada. One of the trails described uses an active irrigation canal alignment and the other was converted from an abandoned rail line. This document provides information on each step of trail planning, including qualitative research exploring residents' interest in the trails.

Nebraska Rural Trails: Three Studies of Trail Impact

National Trails Training Partnership – October 2001

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/adjacent/NebRuralTrStudy.html>

At the above website, you can read the executive summary or download the full report on Nebraska Rural Trails. The National Trails Training Partnership presents information here about documenting the impact of Nebraska's developing trail system, using surveys to learn more about usage patterns, public safety, property values, and community quality of life along three rural rail-trails. Issues around rural landowner's views of rural trails are discussed in depth.

Six Myths of Community Trails: The Case of Bonneville Shoreline Trail

National Trails Training Partnership – December 2006

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/adjacent/mythsbonneville.html>

This webpage debunks six myths about community trails, based on the specific case of Bonneville Shoreline Trail. Issues around liability, safety on and around the trails, property values, and funding are addressed.

The Impact of Trails on Single Family Residential Property Values

National Trails Training Partnership – 2008

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/littlemiamipropvalue.html>

This dissertation addresses the impact of trail development on property values. As the author states, "Across the United States, many conversions of abandoned railroad rights-of-ways into trails have faced opposition from surrounding property owners. Much of the opposition derives from the fear that developing trails would cause a decrease in property values because of loss of privacy, increase in noise, traffic, litter and crime." The subsequent analysis actually indicated that the closer a property was to the trail, the higher the property value; conversely, a location further from the trail meant a decreased property value.

Case Studies of Water Trail Impacts on Rural Communities

University of Oregon – September 2002

<http://www.rivernet.org/resource-library/case-studies-water-trail-impacts-rural-communities>

This dissertation proposes that water trails are one method of rural economic development and can also contribute to increases property values and improved quality of life in rural areas. Water trails draw

tourists, who pay a significant amount of money – spent in local communities – per day for water trail activities. The dissertation includes a literature review, three case studies, and conclusions and analysis.

H. Healthy Eating

Healthy Mobile Vending Policies

National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity – September 2010

<http://www.nplanonline.org/nplan/products/healthy-mobile-vending-policies>

This short publication by NPLAN proposes that mobile food vendors – such as fruit/veggie stands on rural roads - are one approach to providing fresh fruits and vegetables to areas that may not be in a position to attract a full-service grocery store at the moment.

Bring Fresh Produce to Your Setting

Eat Smart, Move More NC

<http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/FreshProduce/FreshProduce.html>

This product developed by Eat Smart Move More of North Carolina presents multiple options for ways of bringing fresh produce to your particular setting. Options presented include: farmer's markets, mini mobile markets, community-supported agriculture (CSA), and cooperative produce delivery. Approaches to establishing such arrangements are also discussed.

Rural Realities

Rural Sociological Society – dates vary

http://ruralsociology.org/index.php?L1=left_Home.php&L2=staticcontent/Publications/Ruralrealities/publications.php

Rural Realities is a publication of the Rural Sociological Society and covers a variety of rural issues. Topics such as rural food deserts, rural poverty, and food systems are covered.

I. Assessment and Measurement

Rural Active Living Assessment (RALA)

Active Living Research – June 2009

<http://www.activelivingresearch.org/node/11947>

The RALA tools include three components: Town-Wide questions (18 questions on town characteristics and an inventory of 15 recreational amenities), Program and Policy (20 questions), and Street Segment (28 questions) Assessments. These three assessment instruments are designed to be used together and together provide a comprehensive measure that addresses many unique factors believed to be important to active living in rural communities. The RALA tools were developed with significant input from rural residents using an evidence-informed framework; they were designed to balance the needs of practitioners (e.g., user-friendliness) and researchers (e.g., reliable measures). The components capture specific physical activity amenities, programs and policies, as well as built environment features. The RALA Codebook provides users with a practical and simple guide for implementing the tool in rural communities across the U.S.

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Rural Healthy People 2010

Southwest Rural Health Research Center

<http://www.srph.tamhsc.edu/centers/rhp2010/>

This project began because of the challenges faced by rural areas when trying to meet Healthy People objectives. Rural Healthy People 2010 is a supplement to Healthy People 2010 and is for rural communities, administrators, health practitioners and other leaders in rural areas and covers health issues that have been identified as priority issues by rural health leaders. It describes promising interventions for rural communities that are currently being tested and tried across the U.S.

J. Media and Communications

Center for Rural Strategies

<http://www.ruralstrategies.org>

The Center for Rural Strategies is a helpful resource for many issues in rural areas, including issues beyond active living and healthy eating. The Center works on multiple projects, including bringing broadband to rural areas; rural community development; and the preservation of the Community Reinvestment Act. The Center has a strong focus on media and communications. On a related note, the website has an informative and well-done blog that could be a helpful model for others.

K. Policy

Healthy Counties Database

National Association of Counties

<http://www.naco.org/programs/csd/Pages/HealthyCountiesDatabase.aspx>

The Healthy Counties Database is a project of the National Association of Counties, with the support of Leadership for Healthy Communities, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This database allows the user to search for model policies, programs and initiatives that have been developed or implemented by counties across the U.S. in an effort to promote wellness and prevent childhood obesity.