

Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge 2020 – 2022 Awardees by Region

Northeast

2020

- The Pennsylvania Downtown Center is using a \$140,000 grant to provide technical assistance to help develop a plan to support downtown revitalization in the city of New Castle, the town of Shirley, and the boroughs of Clarion, Emlenton, Mapleton, Mt. Union, and Reynoldsville in Pennsylvania. Funds are being used to develop community assessments, action strategies and annual work plans.

2021

- Conservation Fund is using \$113,000 to assist the city of Madison and Boone County in West Virginia engage with USDA Rural Development and other partners to meet community needs and overcome barriers to developing an outdoor recreational economy. The Madison-Boone Resource and Recreation Action Plan will strengthen recreational options and community health, protect natural and cultural resources and enhance the community's character.

2022

- Hailstone is using \$250,000 to create a written placemaking plan that will be used as the outline/roadmap for Columbia County to bring to implementation and funding to projects identified in plan. This project will invite coordination between municipalities and identify assets that the county can use to promote arts and culture while also creating pedestrian and bike friendly intersections within communities.
- Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, Inc. is using \$173,033 to develop a strategic plan to identify implementable placemaking projects in four target communities in the Mohawk Valley Region of upstate New York. The expected result of this project is to help solve problems, create effective new projects and strategic plans, and build more creative and equitable places to live, work, and play in the Town of Minden, Village of Fort Plain, Village of Palatine Bridge and the Village of Nelliston. This project will serve the community by creating a placemaking plan to identify and prioritize regionally significant projects.

South

2020

- Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development is using a \$215,000 grant to help develop a plan to support rural tourism opportunities in the cities of Lonoke, England, Stuttgart, and Helena-West Helena, Arkansas.

2021

- Auburn University is using a \$247,960 grant to develop a Placemaking Action Accelerator Plan. The university will focus on key priorities, including housing, economic development, expanded broadband access, preservation and enhancement of active greenspaces, historic sites and structures, community amenities, and community-led health and wellness initiative. The placemaking project will support public input sessions and capacity assessments. It will help develop placemaking action plans for the towns of Newbern, Greensboro, Moundville, and Uniontown, along with Hale County in Alabama. Funds also will help the university implement technical assistance, create a process map that other counties in the region can use, and outline plans to host an annual placemaking summit with county stakeholders.
- Center for Habitat Reconstruction Inc. is using its \$171,295 grant to support rural communities to identify and map their assets, challenges and opportunities. The center will focus on ways communities can use vacant and abandoned spaces. The center will organize planning activities to create placemaking plans, outline community-wide goals, strategies and tasks. The center also will help communities plan, assess and prioritize pilot placemaking projects. This assistance will help strengthen and expand partnerships to create and implement the plans. The center will help the communities improve the economy and social and cultural vitality through Innovation Seed Grants, and will expand access to broadband in rural areas. The assistance will benefit La Boca, Palmas Altas, Punta Palmas, and Verdum coastal communities in the municipality of Barceloneta, Puerto Rico.

- Communities Unlimited (CU) is using \$250,000 to provide training to communities in Texas on how to apply for USDA and philanthropic funds to implement placemaking strategies. CU will leverage its relationships with the TLL Temple Foundation, St. David's Foundation, and local governments and partners to create four diverse leadership teams. The teams will work to enhance broadband access in each community, convert vacant and abandoned properties into pocket parks and community gardens, create recreational spaces, and support small business solutions that enhance quality of life. The assistance will benefit people in McDade, Luling, Martindale, San Augustine, and Wortham, Texas.
- Foundation for Puerto Rico (FPR) is using \$250,000 to provide technical assistance and training to create a plan with actionable strategies to design distinctive public spaces, events and revitalization efforts that contribute to the community's well-being. This project will engage residents, local small business owners, community-based organizations, state government agencies, and the municipality of Naguabo to develop a Route 191 ("Destino 191") Placemaking Plan. The plan will include community-based assessments of crucial infrastructure including water, health and emergency services, power utilities, broadband access and roadways. FPR will also mentor the community working group as it implements one of its placemaking projects within the 24-month performance period. The assistance will benefit people in the municipality of Naguabo, Puerto Rico.

- Washington, D.C.-based Housing Assistance Council (HAC) is using \$250,000 to assemble a diverse group of up to 12 communities, and to develop plans to create a more connected rural America through enhanced telecommunications infrastructure. HAC will select the communities during the first phase of its cooperative agreement. It will use the funds to structure placemaking engagements and create high-quality curricula, site visits, community stakeholder engagements and instructions. It also will use the funds to create innovative strategies that tie into larger community development planning goals and activities, and develop best practices and resources to make quality of life improvements.
- Kentucky Highlands Center for Development is using \$250,000 to convene public, private and philanthropic partners to help expand capacity for broadband access to enhance the quality of life for people who live in public housing. The assistance will benefit people in Bell, Clay, Harlan, Knox, Leslie, Letcher, Perry and Whitley counties in Kentucky.
- University of Tennessee is using \$248,821 to support the Tennessee RiverLine Community Planning Initiative. The initiative supports investments to help rural communities along a 652-mile stretch of the Tennessee River. The funds will expand the Tennessee RiverLine's capacity to offer planning and programming efforts in nine rural communities that lack access to local capacity-building. The community planning initiative and the placemaking project proposals will advance the vision of Tennessee RiverLine, and help drive economic development, public health, environmental stewardship and equitable access across these rural communities. The assistance will benefit the city of Clifton, and Roane, Hardin and Stewart counties in Tennessee; the cities of Bridgeport and Guntersville, and the Shoals area in Alabama; and the city of Calvert, and Paducah and McCracken counties in Kentucky.

2022

- Building Community Workshop is using \$249,980 to develop a plan that will address housing issues in Denison, Port Lavaca, and Hidalgo County, Texas. The expected result of this project is to build capacity among three rural Texas counties that are facing challenges in bringing affordable housing to their communities. This project will also help develop a housing guide for each county and provide support in understanding the needs, challenges, and opportunities as they relate to broadband access in each county.

- Chattanooga Area Regional Council of Governments is using \$250,000 to develop a place-based plan that will implement coordination of a regional placemaking and tourism development program by developing and marketing public arts, heritage tourism and outdoor recreation development in four counties. The region to be served includes Sequatchie Valley Region of Southeast Tennessee (Grundey County, Bledsoe County, Sequatchie County, and Marion County, TN). This project will implement the coordination of a regional placemaking and tourism development program, within the Sequatchie Valley, by developing and marketing public arts, heritage tourism, and outdoor recreation development in their region.
- Communities Unlimited is using \$250,000 to identify three diverse leadership teams, enhance broadband access, equity and/or education in each community, identify vacant and abandoned properties for pocket parks and community garden enhancements, identify potential recreational spaces, and support small business solutions that enhance quality of life. This includes potential transportation options in the communities through technical assistance and capital. The expected result of this investment will create capacity and sustainability in rural communities and connect them with a network of funding agencies. The communities of Hollandale, Gore Springs, and Coahoma Mississippi will benefit from this project by receiving technical assistance to develop a place-based plan that will serve as a guide for future development of these communities.
- The Conservation Fund is using \$202,396 to convene a coalition of diverse partners and stakeholders to craft a Placemaking Plan that: 1) identifies and prioritizes the protection of multiple at-risk Civil Rights and Black History sites in the Black Belt region of central Alabama; 2) outlines the community's goals and actionable strategies for maximizing these community-based assets to support greater social and cultural vitality for these rural communities; and 3) builds the coalition of partners and momentum needed to advance the plan's goals and objectives. The project will provide planning, technical assistance, and capacity building support for stakeholders working across Dallas, Lowndes, and Perry counties to advance placemaking goals that center the African American experience and drive sustainable economic development opportunities for all.
- Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham is using \$250,000 to coordinate outdoor recreation planning to develop an ecotourism target industry in the City of Dora, the town of Parrish and the Town of Nauvoo in Walker County, Alabama. The expected result of this project is to develop Economic Development Strategic Plans for each target community. This project will serve each target community by identifying their individual strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) through a detailed survey that will evaluate ways and methods to

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

leverage existing assets that may be used to grow the communities outdoor recreational economy.

- Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc. is using \$247,864 to provide the capacity and resources for Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc. to partner with local leaders in Selma, AL, Pine Bluff, AR, and Rutland, VT to develop Placemaking Plans centered on tech innovation hubs. By centering tech innovation hubs in the Placemaking Plans, the project will lay the groundwork for equitable, sustainable, and thriving live-work-play ecosystems that can support scalable tech entrepreneurship with the necessary foundational elements.
- University of Georgia is using \$249,980 to utilize the Institute of Government's Planning Rural Opportunities for Prosperity and Economic Leadership (PROPEL) model. The PROPEL model utilizes six elements (data analysis, citizen input, asset-based strategy development, plan implementation and support, connections with university researchers, impact evaluation) to help rural communities develop and implement a placemaking strategy based on their unique needs and goals. In addition, the PROPEL Placemaking Collaborative has three main objectives; build the capacity of rural community leaders for placemaking and community planning, develop a community placemaking strategy and assist communities with implementing their community placemaking plan.

- Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development is using \$249,386 to implement the Arkansas Delta Rhythm and Bayous Placemaking Initiative (ADRBPI) project with local and multijurisdictional efforts to improve quality of life, rural economy, and e-Connectivity in four Delta communities. Through the ADRBPI project, Winrock and project partners will strengthen the capacity of the rural, Delta communities of Gould, Dumas, McGehee, and Dermott, Arkansas. ADRBPI will deploy a tiered technical assistance approach to generate innovative placemaking strategies. To help execute these strategies, Tourism Amenity Site Plans will be developed by Crafton Tull, e-Connectivity Assessments will be conducted by Connected Nation, and Innovation Seed Grants will be leveraged by each community. USDA RD staff will play a substantial role throughout this project, including convening city planning meetings, participating in the completion of assessments, and providing technical assistance about programs and services that can help with the implementation of placemaking projects.

West

2020

- Tolani Lake Enterprises in Winslow, Arizona is using a \$215,000 grant to provide technical assistance to develop a plan to support Tribal lands and tourism for the Navajo Nation's Cameron Chapter in Coconino, County.

2021

- Hawaii County is using \$225,000 to develop and implement a Strategic Placemaking Implementation Plan that brings to life its Kīlauea Recovery and Resilience Plan. The plan is a community-sourced, regional placemaking blueprint that reimagines Puna district, and identifies key social and economic development opportunities following the devastating 2018 Kīlauea eruption. Funds will help the county build capacity and establish a collective action structure to support long-term implementation of the placemaking plan. The county will expand partnerships and resource opportunities, and will provide spaces to develop and leverage adaptive funding and financing mechanisms. The assistance will benefit people in Puna district in Hawaii County.
- Enterprise Center Partners is using \$250,000 to help Anahola, Hawaii expand housing opportunities, including rental properties for older adults, workforce housing and affordable homeownership properties. Enterprise Center Partners will use USDA Rural Housing Service programs and resources to expand housing opportunities.

Funds also will be used to help increase economic opportunities and expand small businesses by developing a plan to build or improve a farmer's market, café, and infrastructure to support rodeo activities. Funds also will be used to help increase farming and ranching activities, including individual micro-growing activities to help people increase their income and food sovereignty. Funds will be used to increase recreation and tourism by connecting resources to Kumu Camp and other local recreation facilities and trails in Anahola.

- Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation is using \$246,310 to create a plan for Applegate Valley to make the community vibrant and livable. Funds will be used to build a community action team to implement projects in Jackson and Josephine counties in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California.

2022

- Rural Community Assistance Corporation is using \$227,045 to provide planning support, technical assistance and training to three communities in California; Clearlake, Fort Jones and Mora, with the goal of improving the social, physical and economic well-being of each community. The expected result of this project is to build the capacity of each community by planning for and implementing placemaking projects and providing training to community leaders and entrepreneurs to manage the identified projects. This project will serve the community by assessing local placemaking capacity and opportunities to support implementation of previously identified Community Economic Development priorities. This project will receive support from all three targeted communities.
- Rural Development Initiatives, Inc. is using \$250,000 to plan and implement a Placemaking Learning Tour and Mentor Match entrepreneurship training for Latinx and youth populations in Othello, WA. The expected result of this project is to develop an understanding of successfully implemented placemaking projects, innovative broadband activities and ag-tech models of thriving food and agriculture-based economies in Northwest Washington. This project will serve the community by developing a plan and curriculum on becoming a food business mecca to support local small businesses and to foster a food related community gathering space.

Midwest

2020

- McClure Engineering Company is using a \$215,000 grant to develop a plan to support housing, workforce and broadband development in the city of Sheffield, Iowa, and the cities of Atchison and Iola in Kansas. McClure is providing support through partnerships with the capacity-building organizations Sheffield Betterment Foundation and Thrive Allen County.
- Pierce County, Nebraska is using a \$215,000 grant to develop a plan to support outreach to students and recent graduates for rural entrepreneurship opportunities in the agricultural sector in Pierce and Madison counties.

2021

- Bowling Green State University (BGSU) is using \$248,938 to facilitate public engagement and partnership development to help rural communities build their capacity to implement placemaking projects. The university will help communities implement projects that create a unique sense of place that enhances the quality of life for rural residents, and attracts and retains workforce talent. Funds also will be used to help develop a comprehensive placemaking strategy for each community that identifies ways to expand or reimagine community assets or amenities. The strategy will prioritize actionable placemaking projects and outline an implementation strategy for each project. BGSU will provide capacity through its students and staff to help communities begin priority placemaking projects, which also will provide students with meaningful applied learning experiences. The assistance will benefit people in Logan, Ashland, Union, VanWert, Williams, Lucas, Wood, Ottawa, Wyandot, Richland and Crawford counties.
- Multicultural Initiative for Community Advancement (MICA) Group Inc. is using \$248,676 to develop a community broadband placemaking action plan to help enhance the quality of life for people in the Lower Sioux Indian Community in Minnesota, and the Pawnee Nation and Cheyenne Arapaho Tribe in Oklahoma. MICA will develop the plan in conjunction with planning sessions and workshops with leaders in Tribal governments, education, health, the arts, cultural and historical preservation, natural resources, business, and representative end-users. MICA Group Inc. will help communities apply for infrastructure grants.

2022

- Board of Regents, University of Nebraska is using \$247,938 to provide the necessary technical and financial assistance to create an actionable placemaking plan for the Knox Co., Nebraska area. The proposed project will create an actionable placemaking plan through asset and infrastructure mapping, strategic planning, and capacity building. This community and economic development effort will focus on tourism, recreation, and planning technical assistance for Knox County area communities, assisting in COVID-19 economic recovery, and capitalizing upon recent regional investments in recreation and broadband infrastructure. Population will be served by this project through the development of a place-based plan that will define the tourism strategy for the region and county, analyze tourism assets and supporting infrastructure, create detailed narrative about opportunities in the region, communities will be trained for placemaking implementation, and communities will have identified USDA grants to target identified projects.
- CHM, LLC. is using \$250,000 used to develop a strategic plan and implement technical assistance in two rural communities located in Kansas and Mississippi to strengthen place-based economic development, build cross-sector partnerships, and improve quality of life for current and future residents. The expected result of this investment is to analyze broadband capacity for rural residence and businesses, develop strategies to improve local housing market, develop new or enhanced cultural and recreational amenities, strengthen workforce development, and establish peer exchange network. The project is designed to assist Emporia, KS and Tunica County, MS with building robust and sustainable economies through strategic investments in infrastructure, partnerships, and innovation.
- Headwaters Regional Development Commission is using \$206,113 to develop a plan that will address quality of life issues in Bemidji, Minnesota's Ridgeway Neighborhood. The expected result of this project is neighborhood revitalization through community engagement and multi-sectoral and multi-jurisdictional partnerships. This project will serve the community by providing opportunities and resources to create a web of support services which will increase individual and community resilience and empower neighborhood residents.
- Ho-Chunk Nation is using \$249,112 to develop a plan to enhance the capacity of broadband connectivity in Jackson County, Wisconsin. The expected result of this project is improvement in virtual education, remote job accessibility and telemedicine. This project will serve the community by designing placemaking activities that will address the need for delivery of broadband services in Ho-Chunk nation.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

- Trustees of Grinnell College is using \$197,153 to assess community needs and priorities to create a vision for Iowa communities in community placemaking-informing the work for the next decade. The Build a Better Grinnell 2030 Placemaking Planning Project will identify community needs and aspirations to shape and inform future work as community partners collaboratively strive towards a thriving Grinnell area for 2030 and beyond. The project steering committee relationships will be leveraged for planning and implementation activities to better understand community needs and serve the community in years to come.