Strengthening Community in Low Wealth Rural Areas

Comprehensive Community Development 1

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#InvestInRural
**Title of Workshop:**
**Strengthening Community in Low Wealth Rural Areas**

**Note Taker:**
Rose

**Date:**
September 10, 2019

**Note Taker email:**
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**Presenters:**
Melissa Levy, Community Roots (Moderator), Alex Dadok, Fahe, Sheila Pierce, Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Danielle Maiden, NeighborWorks Montana, Carmen Lorentz, Lakes Region Community Developers

**Approx # of Attendees:**
37

**Workshop Description:**
Hear from the 2019 Rural Learning Community members and discover how the work of your peers can help you in your rural communities!

**Key Discussion Points**

**Challenge Statement:**
Improve our ability to assess and map community assets and barriers in the new economy to strengthen community and reduce inequality in rural areas.

Reviewed their Phases and Tasks from the Learning project. Had regular zoom meetings. Assessed tools. Shared stories about communities. Mapped assets and created roadmaps. Introduced their communities and the local programs and challenges.

How do we approach new projects and what are the steps? Two paths - community building resident path and economic development map.

Rural issues that came up:
- Rural poverty - low income and unemployed
- Helping unemployed access available employment
- Opiod use
- Large distances running programs and for resident commutes
- Closed businesses.
- Poor housing stock, manufactured homes.
- Safety
- But also gentrification is an issue in recreation or tourist areas.

Economic development Path - Looking at community assets (and liabilities). Assets including the residents, community leaders. Assess, set outcomes, plan, implement, evaluate.

The two pathway templates are in another document.

**Themes/Overall Impressions**

Rural environments are so different, and there is no one definition or one set of issues or potential solutions.

How do you grow the pie, not just redistribute $.

Looking at the assets to make them into financial assets and to increase visitors and vitality.

Learning to listen to the residents in the community. In a rural community, community buy in can be an asset or barrier - it’s a scare resource that needs to be part of process.
Strengthening Community in Low Wealth Rural Areas

NEIGHBORWORKS AMERICA RURAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

September 10, 2019
Presenters

Alex Dadok
Wiley Faw
Carmen Lorentz
Danielle Maiden
Sheila Pierce
Kevin Smith
David Dangler
Melissa Levy

Fahe, KY
Community Ventures, KY
Lakes Region Community Developers, NH
NeighborWorks Montana, MT
Little Dixie Community Action Agency, OK
Community Ventures, KY
NeighborWorks America, MA
Community Roots, VT
Session Plan

- Welcome and Introductions.
- Share the approach and process for the rural learning community.
- Introduce our communities – A Walk Through Rural America
- Introduce the rural roadmap and context
- Question and Answer – Discussion
What is a learning community?

A topic-based, collaborative forum in which a small cohort of NeighborWorks network organizations came together through a series of virtual and in-person meetings to refine and better understand practices, contexts and trends related to their comprehensive community development efforts. Each Learning Community received coaching from NeighborWorks staff and Subject Matter Experts and was guided by a lead network organization who helped frame the challenge and exploration. Following the exploration phase, the cohort worked to gather the lessons learned and disseminate learnings to the network.
Building Assets: Strengthening Community in Low Wealth Rural Areas

Challenge Statement:
Improve our ability to assess and map community assets and barriers in the new economy to strengthen community and reduce inequality in rural areas.
# Approach

## EXPLORATORY PHASE

### Tasks
- Starting with a community.
- Tackled different roadmap topics on different calls, including reviewing and testing different tools – assessing readiness, asset inventory, etc.
- Regular assignments to use different tools with individual communities.
- Google Group to share resources and pose questions.

## ANALYSIS PHASE

### Tasks
- Second in-person meeting to discuss working group findings and synthesize research. This included learning journey to Millersburg, Kentucky.
- Building out the roadmap with input from each member.
A walk through rural America: Introducing our communities

- Millersburg, Kentucky
- Wytheville, Virginia
- Lochmere Meadows, Tilton, NH
- Antlers, Oklahoma
- Northwoods, Montana
Our Communities

- Northwoods, MT
- Antlers, OK
- Millersburg, KY
- Wytheville, VA
- Lochmere Meadows, Tilton, NH
Antlers Oklahoma

- Downtown
- Location
- County Seat
- Historic Sites
- Tourism
Antlers: Demographics

The City of Antlers, nestled in the Southeast corner of Oklahoma, at the junction of State Highway 3 and U.S. Highway 271. It is the largest city in Pushmataha County, as well as the County seat. The city has a total area of 2.7 square miles and is home to approximately 2,685 residents. Until 2008, Antlers was home to the only red light in Pushmataha County. It now has the only two red lights in the entire county.

- Population 2,685
- Median household income $27,000
- Median age 35.6
- Average commute to work 24.6 minutes
- 35.7% Poverty rate
- Located within the 10½ counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Over half the population surveyed are willing to become involved in making a positive difference in the community.
Little Dixie Community Action Agency was founded in 1968 to provide direct services to low-income individuals and families in Southeast Oklahoma. Our mission is to improve the lives of low-income individuals and families through service and collaboration leading to self-sufficiency.

Services Provided:

- Housing Counseling
- Homebuyer Education
- Self-Help Housing
- Small Business Technical & Loan Assistance
- Weatherization
- RX for Oklahoma
- VITA
- Senior Apartments
- Transit
- RSVP
- CASA
- Head Start/Early Head Start/Early Head Start Child Care
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Healthy Start
- Youth First
- Victim Advocacy
- Safe Place Healing Hearts
- Rural IMPACT
- AmeriCorps
- Navigator
- EFSP
- Salvation Army

Antlers Community Members
Wytheville, VA

Population: 8,167
Labor Force: 3,145
Median Household Income: $36,010
Median Property Value: $175,100
Poverty Rate: 24.5%
President & CEO, Andy Kegley

Programs: HOPE, Inc. has addressed a wide range of community needs, from food insecurity to affordable housing provision. HOPE has recently opened a pay what you can community kitchen after observing that 13% of all people and 18% of children were food insecure. In many ways, HOPE represents the model FAHE member, operating in an Appalachian community and finding innovative ways to address the challenges of generational disinvestment.
Resources & Opportunities

Community Programs Incubator
• HOPE, Inc. has been a primary partner in developing a variety of community institutions:
  • School lunch backpacking program for local schoolchildren
  • Open Door pay what you can food kitchen
  • Brock Hughes Free Clinic

Wythe-Bland Foundation
• The Wythe-Bland Foundation has served as a primary benefactor for Southwestern Virginia and has funded 427 grants totaling more than $30,000,000 since its inception in 2005.

Transportation infrastructure
• Wytheville is located at the intersection of two major interstates (I-81 & I-77).
• Centrality of this infrastructure led to development of an industrial park which has attracted major employers such as Gatorade and Amcor Plastics.
NeighborWorks Montana ROC Program

NeighborWorks Montana (NWMT) is a Certified Technical Assistance Provider (CTAP) in the ROC USA network. As a member of the ROC USA Network, NWMT delivers pre- and post-purchase technical assistance, training and financing assistance that gives residents the skills and resources they need to be successful community owners.

From leadership training and development, to loan compliance, to special projects support including community infrastructure, and home rehab and replacement, NWMT is there to support residents as they work to make their communities the places they are proud to call home.
NeighborWorks Montana ROC Program

QUICK FACTS:

• Manufactured housing is the largest source of unsubsidized affordable housing in the US and makes up about 14% of the homes in Montana.

• 35% of manufactured homes are located in manufactured home communities, and about 75% of all manufactured homes are owner-occupied. That means there are over 16,000 homeowners in Montana who own their homes but not the land beneath them.

• This model has been successful in New Hampshire for over 30 years, with not a single loan default.

• There are over 235 ROCs with over 10,000 households in the US.

• Lot rents in ROCs are typically below-market within 5 years of resident purchase- maintaining affordability for residents.
Northwood Community, Inc.
Pablo, Montana

• Resident Owned Community since November 2014
• 44 Manufactured Home Owner Residents
• Located in Pablo, MT on the Flathead Indian Reservation, home of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
• Most residents are very low-income with over 65% of incomes below 30% AMI, 75% of residents incomes below 50% AMI
• 13% of households are older adults and live alone making less than $12,250 annually
• Lot rent is $265 a month
Northwood’s Vision

Infill all vacant lots for full occupancy

Have all resident’s paying timely lot rent payments

Have engaged community members volunteering on projects that relate to their interests

Have active volunteerism and attendance at community events

Have pride of ownership in the community for all residents
Location

- Central New Hampshire
- Minutes from I-93, one of 2 major highways in NH
- Gateway to Lake Winnipesaukee region, a major tourist destination
- Built in a commercial area
- Local economy offers many high-quality work opportunities
Physical Layout

- 47 townhouse style apartments
- Community room
- Community garden
- New playground
Demographics

- Young families
- 30 of the 45 occupied units are single-parent households
- 70% of the single parents are 35 or younger
- 48 kids 13 or younger
- USDA rental assistance – most families very low income (below 30% of area median income)
- Several families want better career opportunities but need education/training and have transportation & childcare barriers
Why Millersburg, KY?

- Closing of Major Industry
- By-pass Built Around Town
- Major Asset in Rapid Decline
- Closing of Local Elementary School
Millersburg | DATA

- Median Household Income $40,144
  - KY Overall Median Household Income - $46,535

- Between 2015–2019, the population declined from 911 to 814
  - 11% decrease compared to Kentucky overall population increase of 3%

- 29.8% Poverty Rate
  - Kentucky Poverty Rate - 17.2%
Poor Housing Stock
(Known for being a drug haven, out of area landlords, a “has been” town)
Where do we begin?
FOCUS
MILLERSBURG | RURAL ROADMAP

Assess

Evaluate / Measure

Triage / Determine Priorities

Plan

Goal Setting / Outcome Setting

Implement
ASSESSMENT / TRIAGE
Mustard Seed Hill | Before
Mustard Seed Hill | After
Mustard Seed Hill | Before
Mustard Seed Hill | After
Mustard Seed Hill | Before
Mustard Seed Hill | After
Mustard Seed Hill | After
Mustard Seed Hill | Before
Mustard Seed Hill | After
Our goal is to bring people to the town

- 2018 – 10,200 unique visitors
- 2019 – 25,000 (Target); 8,000 visitors to date
- 2020 – 40,000 (Target)
- 2021 – 55,000 (Target)
What’s Next?
MILLERSBURG | RURAL ROADMAP

- Evaluate / Measure
- Triage / Determine Priorities
- Goal Setting / Outcome Setting
- Plan
- Implement
- Assess
Outcome

- Rural roadmaps. These include tools and resources that may be helpful at each stage.

- Walk Through Rural America – introduction to five communities throughout the United States and understanding of where they are on the rural roadmap.
What path are you on?

Economic/community development

Community building
Economic Development

Assessment
- Capacity
- Assets
- Staff
- Resources
- Needs

Triage/Determine Priorities
- Target market
- Cash flows/leakage

Build Trust/Community Engagement
- Board/staff
- What rises to the top – survey results
- Agreement
- Highest needs
- Revenue
- Local leadership and resources
- Energy/enthusiasm
- Capacity

Evaluate
- Are we seeing results?
- How would we know we’ve achieved our goals?
- What are the metrics? How often do we need to measure to see progress? Who will measure?

Goal setting/outcome setting
- What is the win-win?
- What is our capacity?
- What are our most critical needs?
- What will make this community healthier?
- What are my potential resources?
- Will progress be measurable?

Plan
- What do we need to do?
- What is the timeframe?
- How do we utilize existing resources/events?
- How do we utilize existing or potential groups?
- How do we educate people on our vision?

Implement
- What needs to be done to achieve our goals and outcomes?
- Who will be responsible?
- In what timeframe?

The cycle continues with the next step:
- How do we utilize existing resources/events?
- How do we utilize existing or potential groups?
- How do we educate people on our vision?
Community Building

Understand the need - Survey/focus groups/community process

Evaluate
- It worked – celebrate!
- It didn’t work – Reflection and redesign strategies.

Analyze/Prioritize Assets (needs, wants, resources, crisis)

- Analyze survey results and data gathered.
- Present survey results.
- Prioritize top community needs.
- Review resources.

Plan

- Start with life safety issues.
- Start with low hanging fruit, like building social capital.
- Identify community members who want to help.
- Work with staff and community leaders to implement actions.
- Submit grant applications if available and oversee grants.

Implement

- Survey residents.
- Perform Community Needs Assessment.
- Utilize local expertise.
- Include an incentive.
- Strategically plan and hold community needs meetings to identify existing resources, gaps and strategies.

Build Trust/Community Engagement

- Open events to the general public.
- Do what you say!
- Be transparent about the vision-successes and roadblocks.
- Get involved with the community leaders - attend council meetings, sit on Visioning Board.
- Host tours/meetings, etc.

- Redo the survey or Community Needs Assessment on a regular basis.
- Create a dashboard to compare survey results year over year.
- Share progress made and challenges with residents, board, community leaders, etc.
- Update the annual action plan and keep working through the list with residents.

- Develop a list of actions to be taken in different timeframes.
- Share the survey results and action plan with all residents, board, community leaders and agency staff.
- Identify roles and responsibilities, as well as timeframe for each action.
Questions Remain

- Rural mentoring opportunities – connecting rural areas/organizations along the roadmaps.
- Case studies/success stories of rural areas/organizations along the roadmap.
- Discussion of how to prepare a rural community for investment.
- Discussion of how to support those communities that are not chosen for assistance.
For more information

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