



# Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Rural Planning, Zoning, and Development Codes

*U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

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Most rural communities want to maintain their rural character while also strengthening their economies. Many fast-growing rural areas are now at the edge of major metropolitan regions and face metropolitan-style development pressures. They seek to manage new growth in a way that promotes prosperity yet is sustainable over the long run. But even slow-growing or shrinking rural areas, which often suffer from faltering economies and population decline, might find that their growth management policies are not resulting in the prosperity they seek. Fortunately, a variety of proven tools and strategies can help rural communities thoughtfully consider how and where to grow. For example, communities that want to maintain their rural character and economic vitality could decide to adopt mixed-use zoning for their Main Street buildings and commercial areas, policies to better manage stormwater runoff, and design requirements for complete, connected streets. Strategies like these are used in communities of all sizes around the country. Small towns and rural areas generally have fewer financial, technical, and staff resources to draw on in responding to development proposals and growth pressures than their urban and suburban counterparts. As a result, rural communities need to identify strategies that they are able to implement with their resources. This publication provides a range of strategies that focus on key issues that rural communities face. It is intended to provide smart growth policy options that communities can implement. These policies can help small towns and rural areas ensure that their development is fiscally sound, environmentally responsible, and socially equitable. This publication is a companion to “Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Urban and Suburban Zoning Codes.”

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