
Big Ideas, Small Town: Rural Placemaking

Jonathan Q. Morgan, Ph.D.

IEDC WEBINAR

July 18, 2019



True or False?

- **People** go where the **jobs** are.
- **Jobs** go where the **people** are.
- People go where they want to live.
 - How can you ensure your community is a **place** where people want to be?



What is Placemaking?

- A concerted effort to create a high-quality community with the amenities, infrastructure, and opportunities that residents, workers, and firms desire.



What is Placemaking?

- A targeted effort to improve and revitalize a particular area:
 - Downtown, main street
 - Waterfront property
 - Vacant industrial facility
 - Distressed neighborhood



Rural Placemaking

- Sense of place
- Memorable experiences
- Emotional attachment
- Well-designed, functional, and attractive physical spaces
- Connectivity



Placemaking Tools

- Quality of life amenities
- Downtown (re)development
- Historic preservation
- Arts and culture
- Tourism development
- Resident and retiree attraction



Placemaking Targets

- Arts and crafts trades
- Agriculture and local foods
- Tourism, recreation, and sports
- Cultural attractions
- Creative sectors
- Craft breweries



Placemaking Examples

- Ayden, NC
- Bakersville, NC
- Edenton, NC



Placemaking in NC

AYDEN (Pitt County) – Population 5,143

- Comprehensive strategy for *downtown revitalization*
- Partnered with Main Street Program
- Improved streetscapes and expanded a façade grant program to attract businesses
- Branding: downtown Ayden is “Close to home, close to your heart”

Placemaking in NC

BAKERSVILLE (Mitchell Cty) – Pop. 445

- Building social capital to *leverage natural, creative, and cultural assets*
- Rhododendron Festival (Roan Mountain)
- Penland School of Crafts
- Cane Creek Walk provides access to catch-and-release trout fishing
- Physical improvements, jobs, business creation, and place identity

Placemaking in NC

EDENTON (Chowan County) – Pop. 4,708

- *Residential development through historic preservation*
- Partnered with Preservation NC to transform a blighted cotton mill village
- Used CDBG funds to upgrade water/sewer
- The unique and historic mill homes have attracted artists and entrepreneurs



Homegrown Tools

- New partnership b/w UNC SOG, NCGrowth-Kenan Institute, NC Rural Center, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, and EDA
- Updated and new case studies of small town economic development
- www.homegrowntools.unc.edu

Contact Information

Jonathan Q. Morgan, Ph.D.
UNC School of Government
CB# 3330, Knapp-Sanders Bldg.
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
919-843-0972
morgan@sog.unc.edu

