

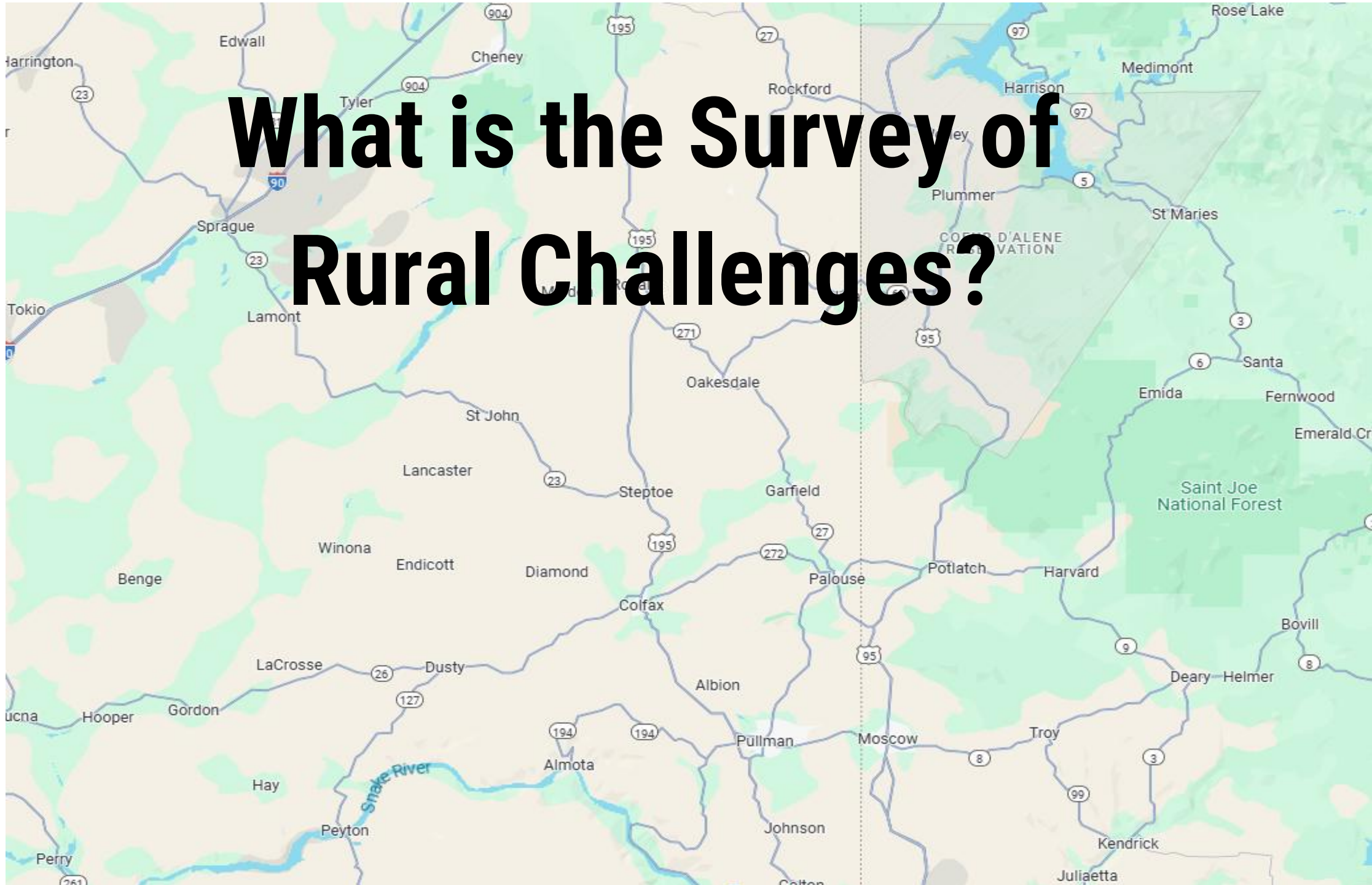
Ten Years of Results

Survey of Rural

CHALLENGES

Deb Brown, SaveYour.Town

What is the Survey of Rural Challenges?



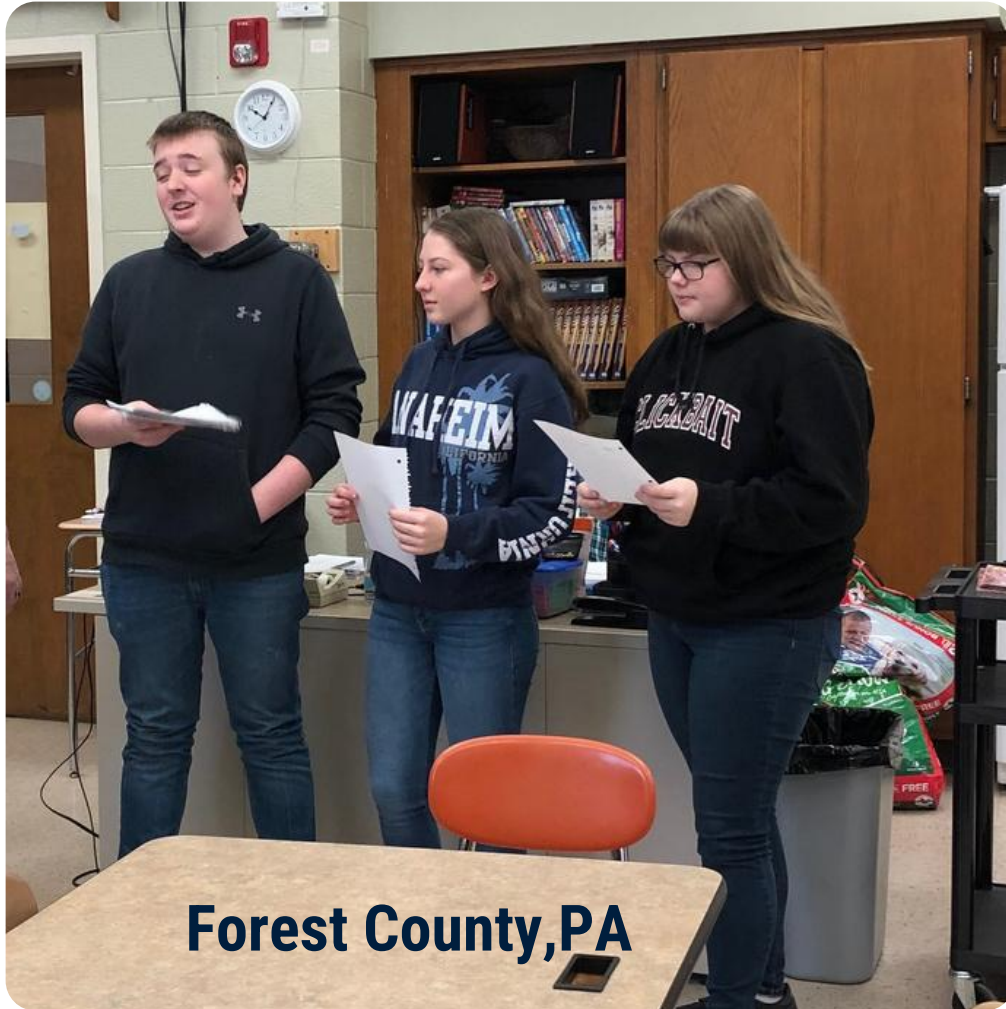
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Persistent Challenges

- Youth out-migration,
- downtown decline,
- workforce shortages and
- struggles with local business marketing

The loss of young people



Forest County, PA

photos by Deb
Brown

- A place to hang out in the Summer²
- park or Zoo
- Bowling alley
- Roller skating rink
- Arcade
- Neater Neighbors with goats²
- Community farm
- Dirt bike track
- Recycled playground
- Community Pool
- Driving range

Things kids said they want

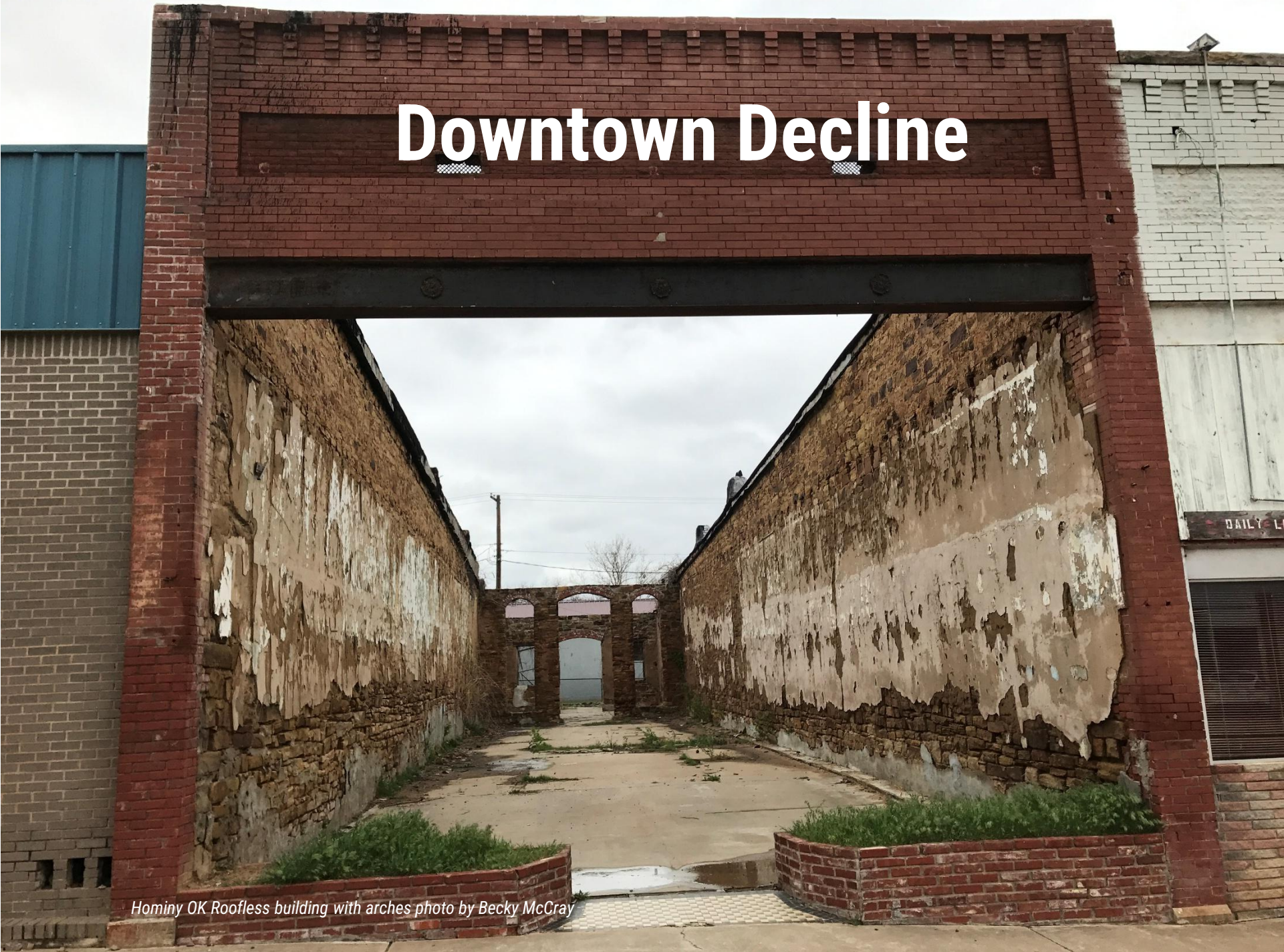


A photograph of four people standing on a stage. From left to right: an older woman with short blonde hair wearing a patterned beige jacket and dark pants; a woman with short grey hair wearing a bright yellow shirt, white pants, and a colorful lei, with a name tag that says 'Tammy'; a young man with short brown hair and glasses wearing a blue and white plaid shirt and jeans, with a yellow name tag; and a young woman with long brown hair and glasses wearing a blue and white patterned cardigan and jeans, holding a microphone and with a yellow name tag. The background features a large, stylized number '4' in orange, white, and teal. The foreground shows the backs of the heads of audience members.

Idea Friendly Teens

Downtown Decline

Hominy OK Roofless building with arches photo by Becky McCray



Colfax Mercantile Business Incubator



photos by Sarah McKnightt

COLFAX
MERCANTILE
MON-THU 10*6
FRI-SAT 10*9ISH
SUN CLOSED
#THELITTLETOWN
THAT COULD

A photograph of the Single Hill Brewing building, a modern structure with a dark roof and brick lower walls. The building's name is visible on the roofline. In the foreground, a group of people is walking along a sidewalk, and there are large planters with greenery and orange flowers. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

**Old Way:
Propose it
to the board**

Propose to the board
Take a vote
Refer to subcommittee
Order a feasibility study
Expert reports back to
subcommittee
They vote and sent to full board
Board votes
Add to 5 year plan

New Way: Start a homebrew group



Workforce



Photo from Unsplash

702 kids and 400 were at risk in San Saba TX

Blue Collar Career Fair!

High demand, high paying jobs are out there



Photo by Deb Brown

Effective Marketing

Take good pictures and tell your story

Photo from
Mohawk Towpath



Make the community a part of your business



Sandy Springs Brewing Company added an event.

January 14 at 6:00 AM · 🌐

Tell your story in the details of this colorful spring wreath. You will have many options to customize your wreath with ribbon, hearts and letters. Final touches include packages and hops bouquet in the bike basket!



TUE, FEB 5 AT 6:30 PM EST

Wreath Make and Take with Carla

Sandy Springs Brewing Company · Minerva, OH

★ Interested



Who's your audience?

Curb Appeal Is marketing too



photo by Deb
Brown



Signage



You can pee here.



Photo from Rose Ellis Facebook page

**Change your
windows more
often.**

**Retail
Service
Empty Buildings**

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Fast Moving Concerns

- The housing crisis,
- lack of adequate childcare, and
- lack of support for small businesses



Housing Crisis

Rural Studio



Photo by Rural
Studio



The big takeaway? If we want to solve rural housing shortages, we need creative, community-driven solutions like this- ideas that challenge the status quo, work within local realities, and bring new partners to the table.



Photos by Rural
Studio.org

Adaptive Reuse

Grandpa built this



photo from Franklin County Assessor

Borden Hotel, Whitehall MT



A feasibility study showed they needed apartments, community spaces, and retail.

Borden Hotel

Whitehall, MT

**Historic tax credits would
cover 25% of the costs
Financing the rest was
possible because of rents of
the spaces**

During construction
locals gave tours and kept
the energy level for the
project high



photo from High Plains Architects

Childcare



photo shared by
parkviewpointeseniorliving.com

Parkview Pals

parkviewpointeseniorliving.co

Lack of support for small businesses

“Chamber of Commerce only cares about the big money businesses/industry and is stuck in the 70's 80's way of doing business.”



photo by CWizner Pixabay



Support your local businesses

Not another pitch or loan



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Slow Building Challenges

- The lack of volunteers,
- The pressure from online competition on local businesses, and
- The lack of usable commercial buildings have risen to greater importance.



Volunteers - We are tired



photo by
Canva

Kill the committees



Let go of control



Beating the Online Competition – Do the easy part first

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4.9 ★★★★★ 21 Google reviews

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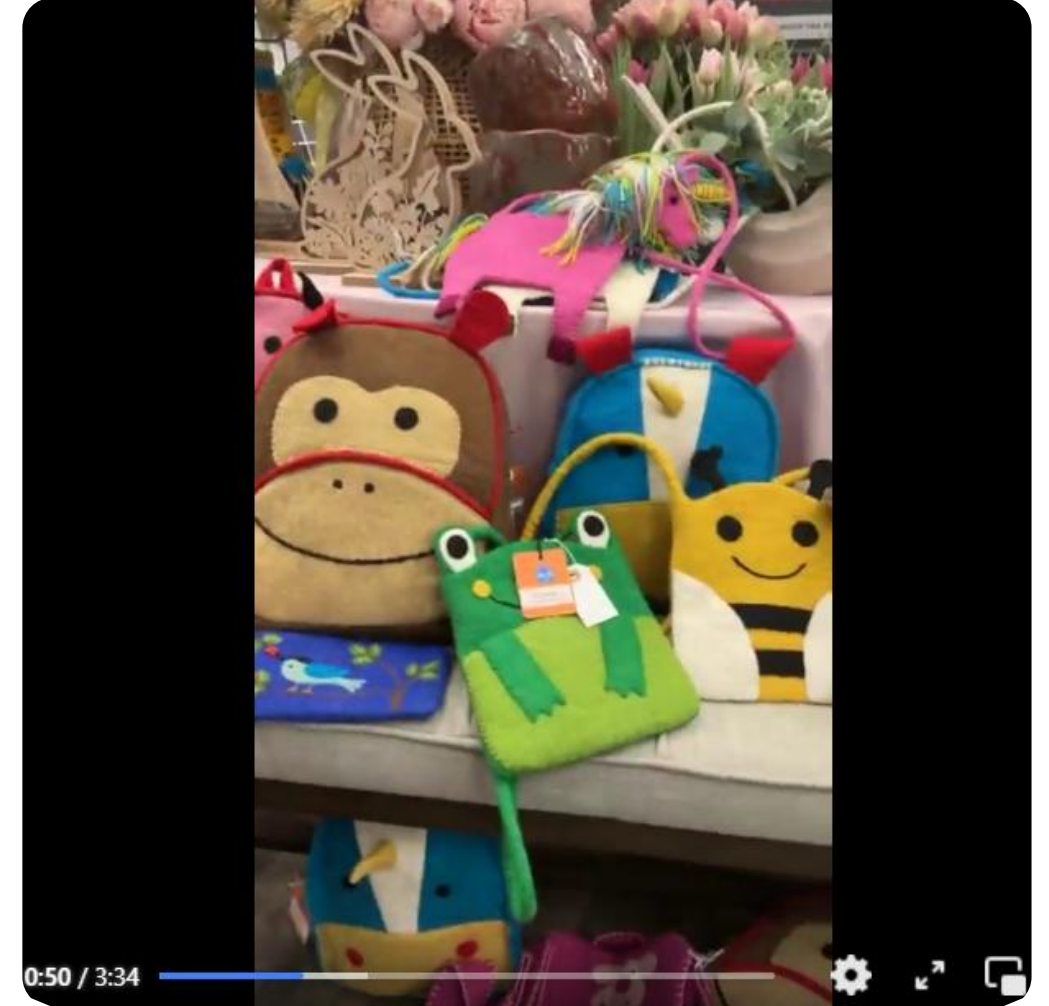
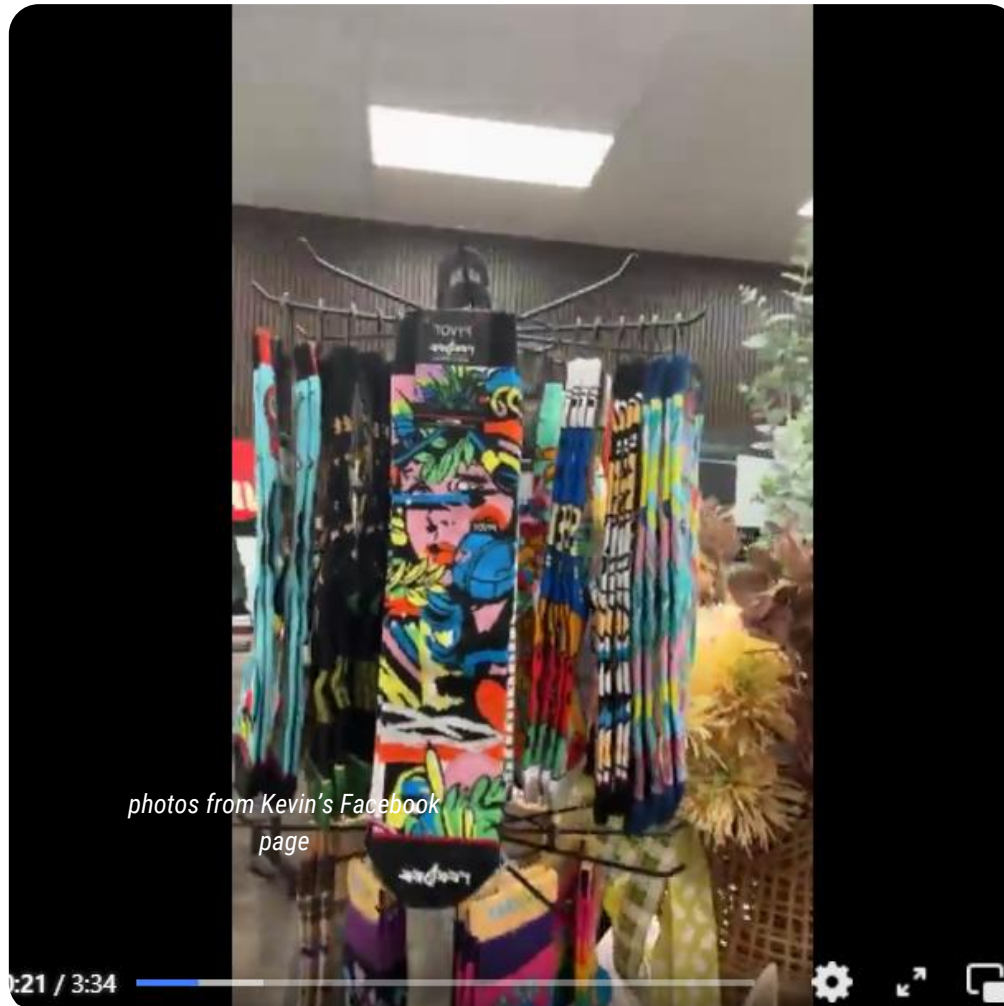
Address: 631 2nd St, Webster City, IA 50595

Phone: (515) 832-1219

Hours: Open · Closes 1 PM · More hours

Try something new

Be engaging, give an experience, local products



Lack of usable buildings

Two solutions:

Shared spaces

Empty building registries

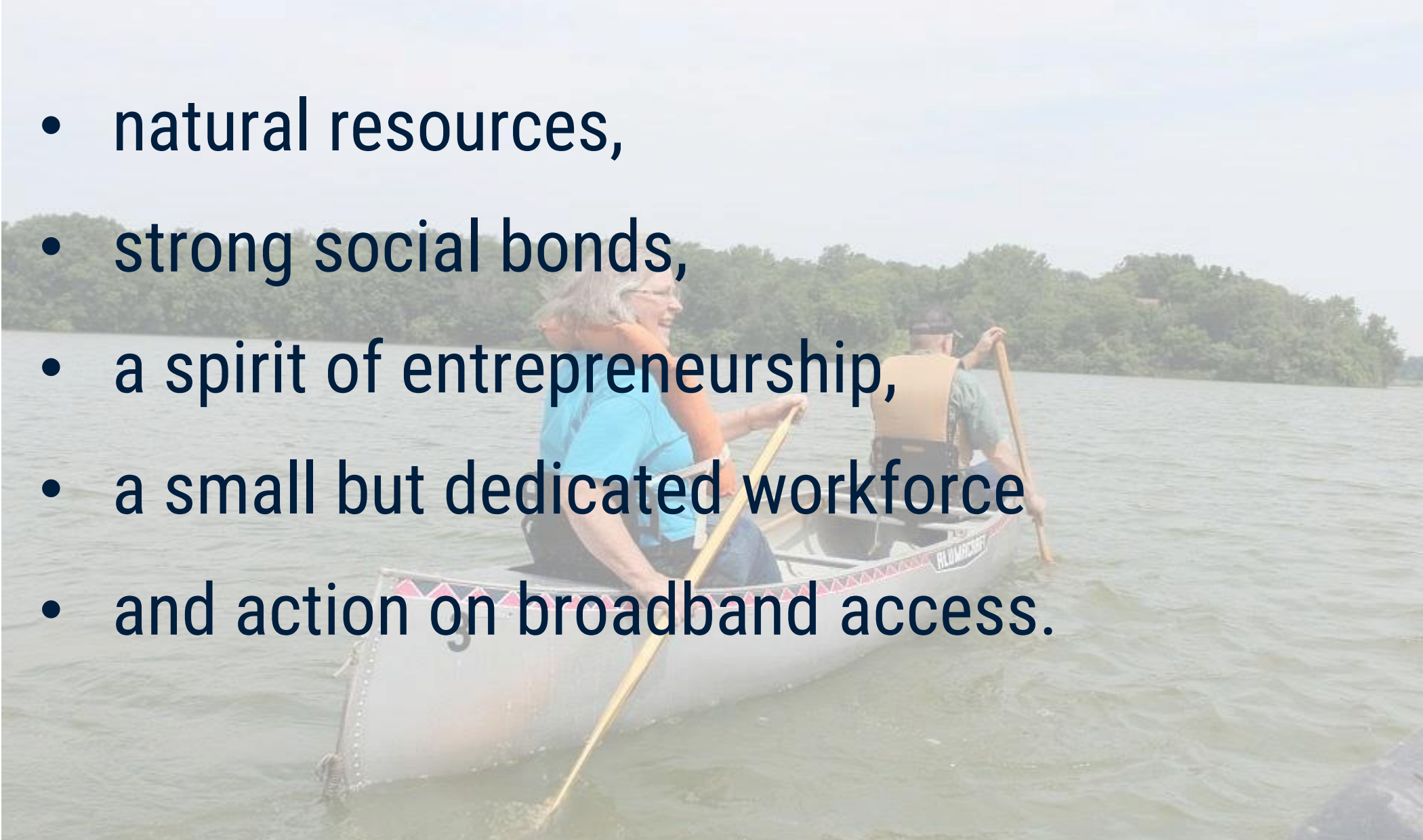


Empty lot and empty building, Ardmore, Oklahoma. Photo by Becky McCray

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Appreciating Assets

- natural resources,
- strong social bonds,
- a spirit of entrepreneurship,
- a small but dedicated workforce
- and action on broadband access.



Natural resources

Do you have a list?



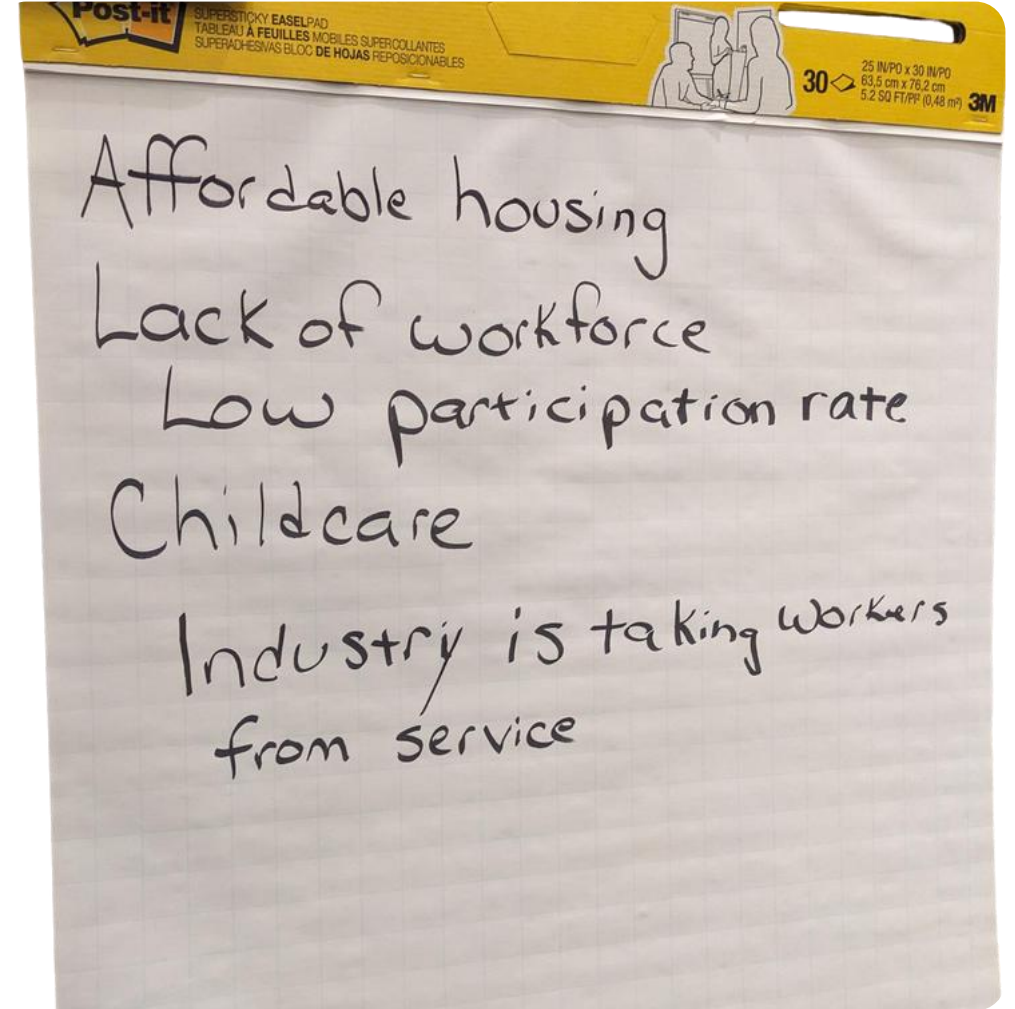
Connection to community

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photo by Deb
Brown

Workforce



Broadband



photo by Deb
Brown

Rural broadband is no longer just a wish list item. With the right investment, leadership, and community focus, it can become a powerful asset that attracts new residents, supports local businesses, and opens up opportunities that were previously impossible.

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Demographic Shifts

photo by WaywardShinobi from Flickr



Newcomers

are part of the demographic shifts we are seeing.

WELCOME NEWCOMERS

CONNECTING PEOPLE



BUILDING COMMUNITY

Photo provided by Red Lodge Community Foundation

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The External View

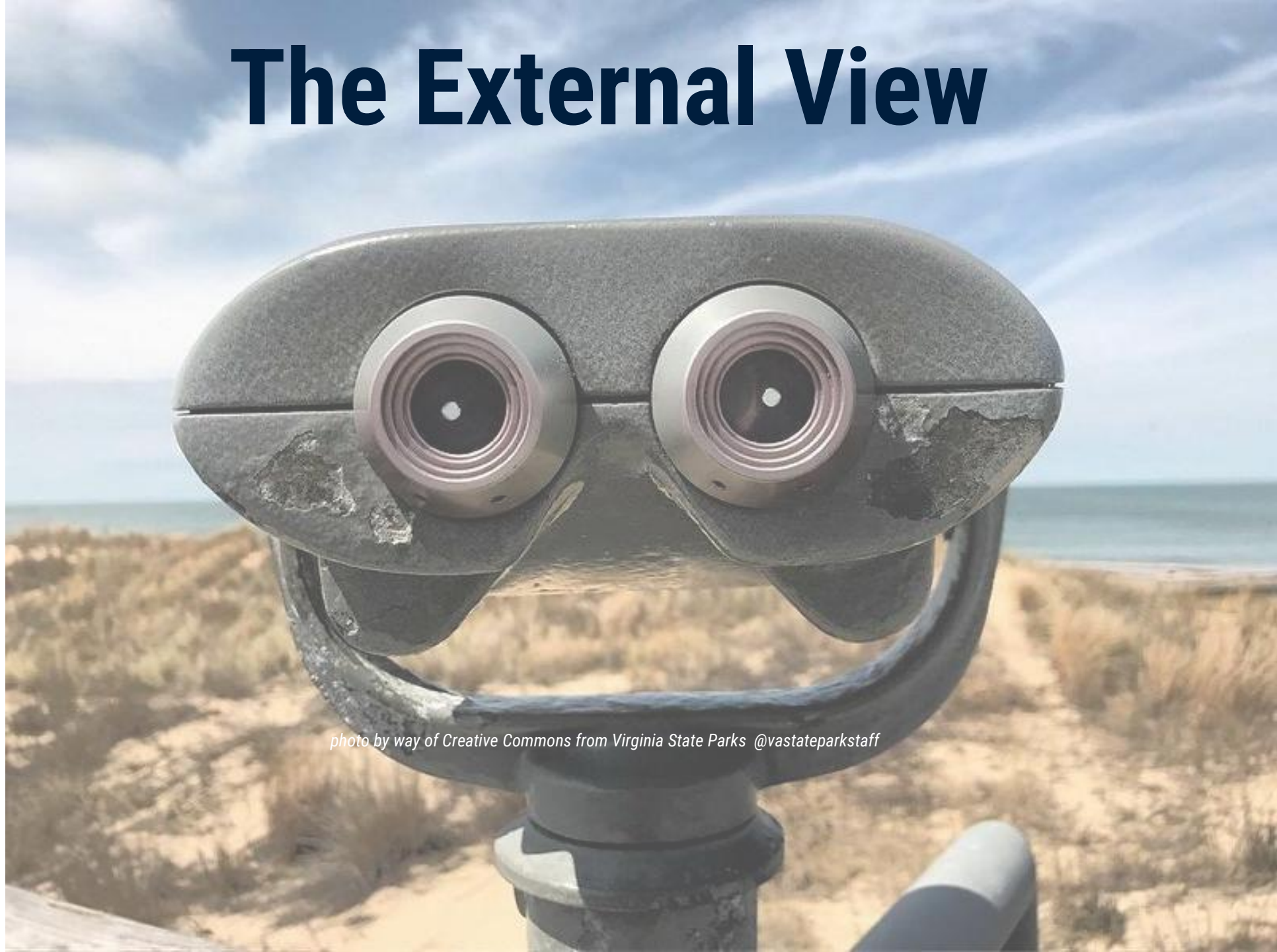


photo by way of Creative Commons from Virginia State Parks @vastateparkstaff

Outside media, big government and agencies often have the wrong impression of what rural really is.



Using Local News



Engage with communities

Build partnerships and involve local voices



Highlight Success Stories

Share positive narratives of rural achievements



Challenge Stereotypes

Efforts to dispel negative stereotypes of rural areas

We take action



photo by Deb
Brown

Culture



photo by Gregory
Lakes

www.SurveyofRuralChallenges.com

Iowa State University said after a 20 year study, the small towns that will survive are those that are open to new ideas and have newcomers be a part of the decision making.

IDEA
Friendly