

Improving Quality of Life



Rural Housing and Economic Development

A significant gap in knowledge about the relationship between housing and rural development has existed. In response, the Regional Rural Development Center Directors commissioned a set of papers by experts in different areas, which resulted in a co-edited book published by Routledge, documenting the relationships between development and housing. For more information, visit: <https://www.routledge.com/Rural-Housing-and-Economic-Development/Albrecht-Loveridge-Goetz-Welborn/p/book/9781138040199>

Albrecht, D., Loveridge, S., Goetz, S., Welborn, R., eds. (2017) *Rural Housing and Economic Development*.

New York: Routledge. Chapters include:

1. Rural housing and economic development
2. The role of housing in rural behavioral health
3. Are rural areas underserved by HUD's subsidy programs?
4. What drives spatial variation in housing cost-burdens among rural low- and moderate-income renters?
5. Reinvesting in rural America through affordable mortgage finance
6. National rural housing policy and programs: opportunities and challenges
7. Sustainable housing development: The Hopi way
8. Examining the housing dilemma in the rural South's Alabama Black Belt and Mississippi Delta regions
9. The people left behind: a look at rural housing policy implications at the half-century mark
10. Manufactured home living across rural America
11. Housing challenges and policy implications of shale oil development in rural communities
12. Growth, development, and housing stock quality in the administrative U.S. Appalachian region
13. Meeting rural housing needs through local community development
14. Home improvement investment in rural America: spatial pattern and determinants

Infrastructure Investments in Rural Regions:

The Southern Rural Development Center, in strong working partnerships with USDA Rural Development and Cooperative Extension successfully launched the Stronger Economies Together (SET) initiative which continues, with over 100 multi-county regions now working together more closely. Through the SET process, regions have been able to identify common needs and opportunities and successfully garner funding to capitalize on their regional interests. To date, regions in the SET process have leveraged the \$3.9 million USDA investment to over \$754 million, much of which has gone to support efforts to improve regional infrastructure (including water, energy systems, utilities, and broadband), transportation, and public safety (fire trucks, police cars, and equipment). Visit the website at: <http://srdc.msstate.edu/set/>

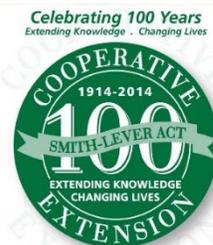
Research on the Opioid Epidemic

The overprescribing of opioid-based painkillers may be the main driver of the increased abuse of opioids in rural America, but recently published research by the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development suggests that other factors, including declining farm income, extreme weather and other natural disasters, may affect a crisis that is killing thousands of citizens and costing the country billions of dollars. The Penn State press release describing this research is available here: <https://goo.gl/vg9Lmg>. Additionally, we are continuing to explore the availability of treatment facilities in rural areas, and their roles, in addition to examining the cause and effect between addiction and local economic conditions. Another paper currently in review is "Explaining Spatial Disparities in Drug Overdoses, 1970-2014."

Rural Health-Economic Development Workshop and Activities:

http://ncrcrd.msu.edu/uploads/files/Workshop_Information_and_Agenda.pdf

The relationship between health and economic activity is bi-directional. Communities lacking economic opportunity tend to have a greater proportion of their population struggle with mental and physical health challenges. Social factors such as living in poverty increases the risk of poor health. And yet mental and physical health challenges can and do affect community life, including economic development. For example, the opioid epidemic and other addiction problems are a growing concern nationwide, making it more difficult for those affected to be fully engaged in employment and other economic activities. Also, there are important linkages between drug abuse and other mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, which can inhibit economic productivity of households and communities. This workshop explored the interrelationships between health and community economic development across three themes: Community-level issues in behavioral health; Healthcare costs and access; and Food and health. The objectives of the workshop were to identify gaps in the knowledge and programming interconnectedness of health and community/economic development, develop partnerships among professionals who work in health, those that work in community/economic development, inclusive of both research and outreach specialists; and encourage collaborations to target research and programming need areas and form interdisciplinary grant teams. Currently three related funded projects are underway: 1) Investigating Innovative Models of Mental Health Care for Farmers and Farm Families; 2) Rural Economics: Health Insurance Coverage and Access to Care; and 3) Rural Quality of Life Indicators Project.



Civil Dialogue on Race Relations

The Southern Rural Development Center co-sponsored Coming Together for Racial Understanding, a 20-state pilot initiative designed to foster civil dialogue around issues of race and ethnicity. The process engages Cooperative Extension Service, and community partners to explore one of two different approaches to dialogue, both processes culminating in a community change process. The first cohort groups are currently in the process of organizing pilot programs within in their communities, and there is a second national training slated for Fall 2019.

Regional Rural Development Centers: www.rrdc.info

