Floyd County Pre-Assessment Workshop:
Key Takeaways

Intro

PLACE Initiative (PI) is a national nonprofit focused on using the PLACE Principles as a framework for elevating walkable human communities as a climate strategy for equitable outcomes. PI's Climate Receiver Places Project (CRPP) has identified Eastern Kentucky as being a place that will be relatively safer from the worst impacts of climate change (*see Figure 2*), and therefore could be a place well-positioned to receive migrants from places more likely to experience increased adverse impacts, such as storms, extreme heat, and sea level rise..

On Tuesday, March 12th, 2024, a team from PI came to Prestonsburg, Kentucky to meet with the Floyd County BRECC (Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities) group, to conduct a pre-assessment workshop to assess readiness to become a receiver place.

Attendees were asked to list words or attributes that describe their ideal community. The top three words from this exercise were:

Welcoming, Bustling, and *Thriving.*

These encouraging words speak to the desire expressed by participants for a vibrant community with an abundance of assets, and a willingness to share with visitors and migrants.

Next, the **PLACE Principles** were reviewed, and participants were asked to rank them in order of importance (*see Figure 1*). *Advance Economic Prosperity* was the Principle most voted as a top priority.

With the balance of the time remaining, participants worked through the pre-assessment exercise for each of the PLACE Principles, in the order of priority in which they were ranked by participants. Highlights of the assessment follow.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Top concerns identified by workshop participants included: a shortage of available, attainable housing outside of flood plains; a lack of property availability, due to a small number of landowners owning most of the properties; the combination of a lack of active transportation alternatives, and a spread-out development pattern, forces people into automobile dependency, with few viable alternatives; and widespread barriers to entrepreneurial opportunities.

PI recommended solutions such as focusing on building a diverse housing stock, creating a Community Land Trust, promoting food cart pods for social and economic value, and building up the workforce of small real estate developers. For our full list of recommendations and resources, see *page 9*.

PLACE PRINCIPLES RANKING RESULTS

1. Advance Economic Prosperity
2. Create Resilient Infrastructure
3. Support Current & Future Residents
4. Connect Communities
5. Employ Good Governance
6. Establish Partnerships with a Regional Focus
7. Develop Places for People
8. Reduce Hazard Risks
9. Foster Environmental Stewardship

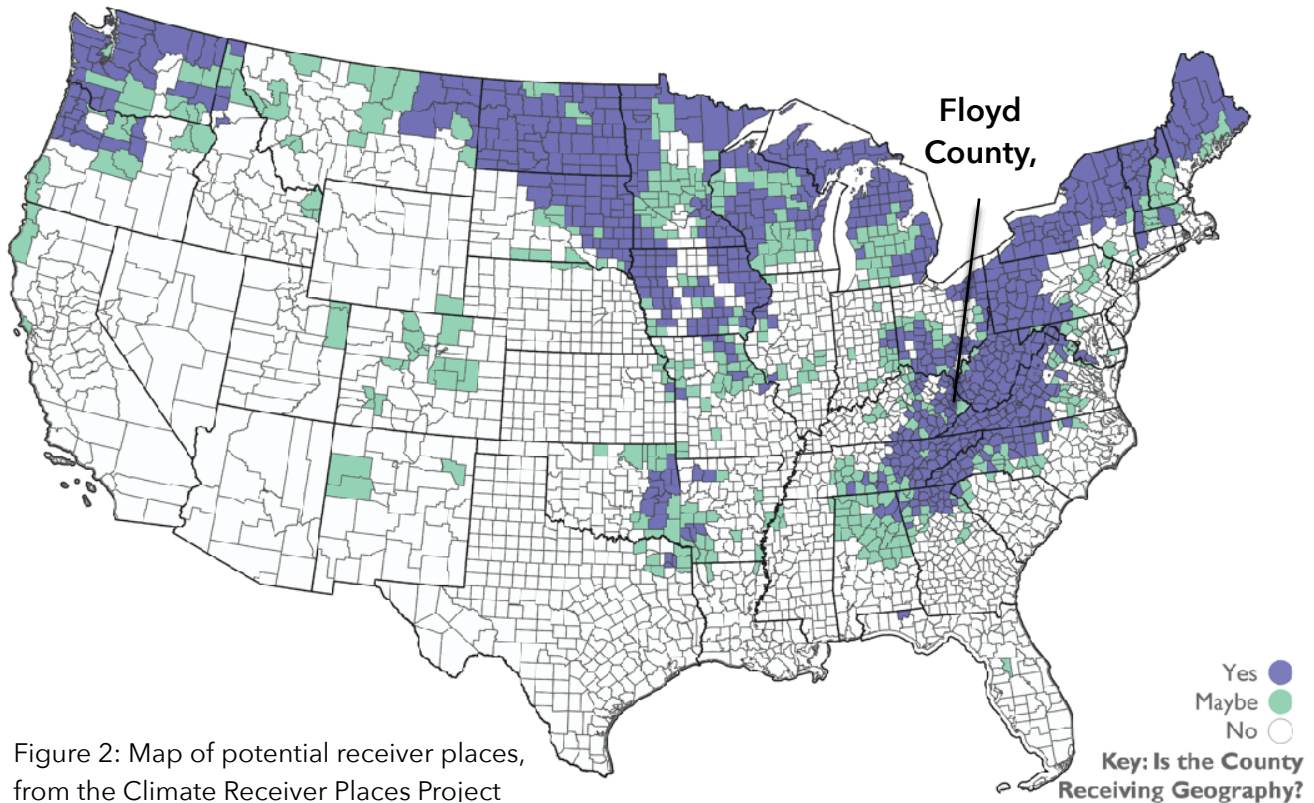Figure 1: PLACE Principles, in order of ranking by workshop attendees.

Figure 2: Map of potential receiver places, from the Climate Receiver Places Project

Key: Is the County Receiving Geography?
Yes
Maybe
No

Map Version 2.0. Meta-analysis based on data from Four Twenty Seven and ProPublica, March 2022. This map displays receiver places selected by PLACE Initiative. Places are color coded based on county-level climate risk score on a scale of 0-14 (14 being the highest risk), and sized based on municipal population. Greyed out counties follow the receiving geographies outlined in the County Map of Receiving Geography. Risk score does not include local flood risk.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Principle: Advance Economic Prosperity

Broadband

In terms of the existing resources available to support economic advancement, participants stated that in general, **the county has relatively good high-speed internet access** in most populated areas. However, "last mile broadband" is sometimes lacking in highly rural areas with only a cluster of homes.

New development

Of the many barriers identified to economic advancement, the **availability of property** was identified as potentially the most serious. Participants stated that, essentially, only hillsides are available to develop, and that most other build-ready spaces are already spoken for. While potential properties to develop exist, many are tied up with vacant owners, coal companies, or others who have no interest in selling for a reasonable market-adjusted rate.

Food industry

Perhaps related to this, participants express that it is easier for **food industry entrepreneurs** to open food trucks and sell at festivals than to own a restaurant; yet, while there are lots of festivals, there are not enough to maintain a business, meaning this is not yet a sustainable business model.

Education and employment

Educational opportunities, including vocational training, was also identified as an area for improvement. While local educational and training opportunities exist, the community perception is that people who graduate from these programs leave the area, for lack of local employment opportunities and

because finding housing is a problem, even when a job is available.

Getting younger people to stay in the area, and thus avoid a **brain drain**, is thus triply difficult: there's not sufficient demand for new graduates in terms of new jobs; even if there is a job, there's insufficient affordable housing available; and even where there is a job and an affordable home available, there is not enough nightlife or things to do in the area to keep young people interested in staying and building a life. This is slowly beginning to change in places such as Pikeville, which has one brewery, and a little beginning of something happening, with a large hospital medical program, new trainees, money— all downtown, all walkable.

Principle: Create Resilient Infrastructure

Water & sewer

Participants expressed that currently, infrastructure is not consistently sustainable or resilient, due to a number of overlapping and complicating factors, beginning with the fact that most communities were built within the **flood zone**. The sense in the room was that former coal communities can boom, if efforts are made to update infrastructure and build homes above the flood line.

In terms of tap water, participants expressed that good tap water is widely available and wells are not generally relied upon, even in rural areas. However, outside of city limits, there are issues with lines breaking and deferred maintenance. Moreover, it can be difficult to find information about pipes or water pressure, as **there is no centralized water district**. This leads to self diagnosis being the primary method of determining water system adequacy in any given location,

Figure 3: Rosenberg Square, an inviting public space in Prestonsburg, KY.

leading to varying results. Further, some participants expressed that in many areas that the water quality is poor and the taste is unpleasant, due in many cases to historical incidents that may or may not remain relevant.

Regarding sewage and stormwater systems, in general, **outside of cities, people don't have access to adequate sewage facilities**. Where there is no sewer access, in rural areas people use a septic system for toilet water, but other greywater goes directly into the stream, as people can't afford the roughly $50,000 cost to pay professionals to come and properly install a septic system of sufficient size.

To dispose properly of packaging and waste from consumption, **solid waste pickup is widely available**, but **there is no streetside pickup for recycling in most places**. There may be some rural places without even roadside pickup available for solid waste, but data on this is limited.

Zoning and Building Codes

When **new development** occurs, or new construction of any sort, **it goes largely unregulated**. Most of the counties in eastern Kentucky do not have any sort of adopted zoning code, so the consensus from residents was that any legal use is allowable on any

property. There is no building code enforcement outside of cities; within city limits, there are building codes in effect and building permit application pathways.

Transport

In general, public transportation systems have fallen out of use. Attempts to revive Floyd County's countywide bus system not yet come to fruition, and there is no existing passenger rail service. Yet, railroad tracks serve most communities in Coal Country, as the railroads were the primary way to move coal to markets from the mines. In the past, passenger service was provided with passenger cars attached to the freight train, but passenger service was eliminated prior to the 1970s.

Walkability throughout the county is relatively low, as has been the case with many American cities, there was no forward planning about it in past decades. Major connective roads throughout the county often lack sidewalks, shoulders, and bike lanes, making them unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists. Fortunately, the Prestonsburg downtown core has adequate sidewalks and crosswalks for pedestrians.

The Mountain Parkway highway is currently undergoing a major expansion resulting in the new four-lane highway terminating in Prestonsburg. This will be a major advancement in bringing more jobs and opportunity to the Floyd County, as companies from other parts of the state will be able to access it much more efficiently. On the other hand, the new highway will not bring any new bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure, further cementing the need for a need for a car to get around the region.

With no sidewalks or shoulders on most roads in the county, pedestrians are forced to walk on the white lines, and it's not perceived to be safe to bicycle between communities due to a lack of dedicated facilities.

Further, for facilities such as women's and homeless shelters located outside of the existing walkable centers of places, their residents without cars must walk across mud or grass and through parking lots to get to any destinations.

While the government's investment into Appalachian Kentucky through the Mountain Parkway highway is a big step in the right direction for advancing opportunity, more foresight is needed to ensure that new infrastructure also caters to those without access to cars. Elevating this as an infrastructure priority for the community and the government will make the county more environmentally sustainable and more welcoming to pedestrians and cyclists.

Agricultural

Agriculture, though a major potential source of revenue for the region, is often ***limited by accessibility issues***. There is arable land, but much of it is either inaccessible due to the landscape, or prone to flooding. As a result, the flood prone land is often used for feedstock farming, like hay and corn, rather than produce or other agricultural products for direct human consumption.

Some farmers markets do exist; while the scale is small and has gone through several stages, state organizations do exist that work to help connect farmers with markets.

Principle: Support Current & Future Residents

Housing affordability

While available financing resources like the USDA's low-interest single-family loan programs for very low to moderate-income homebuyers are extremely valuable, there is a **distinct lack of available homes**.

The shortage of available homes drives up prices and in turn, the proportion of residents' incomes being spent on housing.

Workshop attendees stressed that building more homes should be a top priority in Floyd County to lower the housing cost-burden and increase opportunities for folks to find appropriate places to live.

Many folks are able to access financing to purchase a home, but suitable homes to purchase are simply not widely available, especially not in location-efficient places outside of flood zones.

Principle: Connect Communities

Transportation options

There is little active transportation infrastructure in place to support pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users getting to everyday destinations, like grocery stores.

Though downtown centers of towns have sidewalks, there are not typically any small markets or grocery stores to shop at. In most parts of the county, residents rely on large superstores like Walmart, or discount retailers such as Dollar Tree for their grocery needs. These stores are usually located on highways and are not generally accessible by foot from the homes of the residents they serve.

Overall, residents voiced that currently, **a personal car is needed to get around most of the county, as well as most of the state**.

Principle: Employ Good Governance

Local governance

Like many places, perceptions of civic engagement were mixed, and vary resident-by-resident depending on their personal experiences and level of involvement. Some participants expressed that there is *little positive civic engagement* within local government. Many residents are jaded and cynical about the potential for positive change, as they feel that little has been done up to this point, and that many plans end up sitting on a shelf.

Some participants expressed that many properties within the county have been abandoned by people who no longer live there, or by businesses who no longer use them, yet there could be more coordinated, active efforts to acquire such properties for reuse or redevelopment. Some key players within the community are already working on this issue.

Overall, residents expressed a sense of distrust of outsiders and government, and a weariness with past efforts that have fizzled out, rather than resulted in a meaningful improvement to the quality of life.

However, grassroots efforts like *BRECC* group have been effective in *mobilizing a strong team of Floyd County locals* who are passionate about making change through their local government. One example of their work is the Long Term Recovery group convened to aid in recovery efforts from recent years' floods. This group continues to be very active in strategizing solutions and holding space for civic engagement, and represents a sense of hope for the community.

This points the way forward for positive civic engagement in the future, for local government to play an active role in economic development, and for local residents to rebuild trust in local government through interaction and participation. Further, through **regional coordination**, local governments may be able to work together to devise force multipliers that allow the community to achieve more ambitious goals, sooner, than if they were to act alone, in isolation.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS, RESOURCES, & TOOLS

Market Supply and Market Demand

In the wake of devastating floods that have ravaged the communities of eastern Kentucky, leaving many without adequate housing options outside of flood-prone areas, it's clear that there is pressing need for innovative solutions. The discussions held during the community pre-assessment workshop highlighted the urgency of addressing this critical issue.

The Floyd County community finds themselves at a crossroads, where the demand for adequate, appropriate, location-efficient housing far outstrips the available supply. This presents a formidable challenge that demands collective attention.

One key takeaway from the workshop discussion is the recognition that there are diverse needs among the population, necessitating a multifaceted approach to housing solutions. While the community must strive to retain the essence of the "holler," of homesteads and a traditional way of life, it's
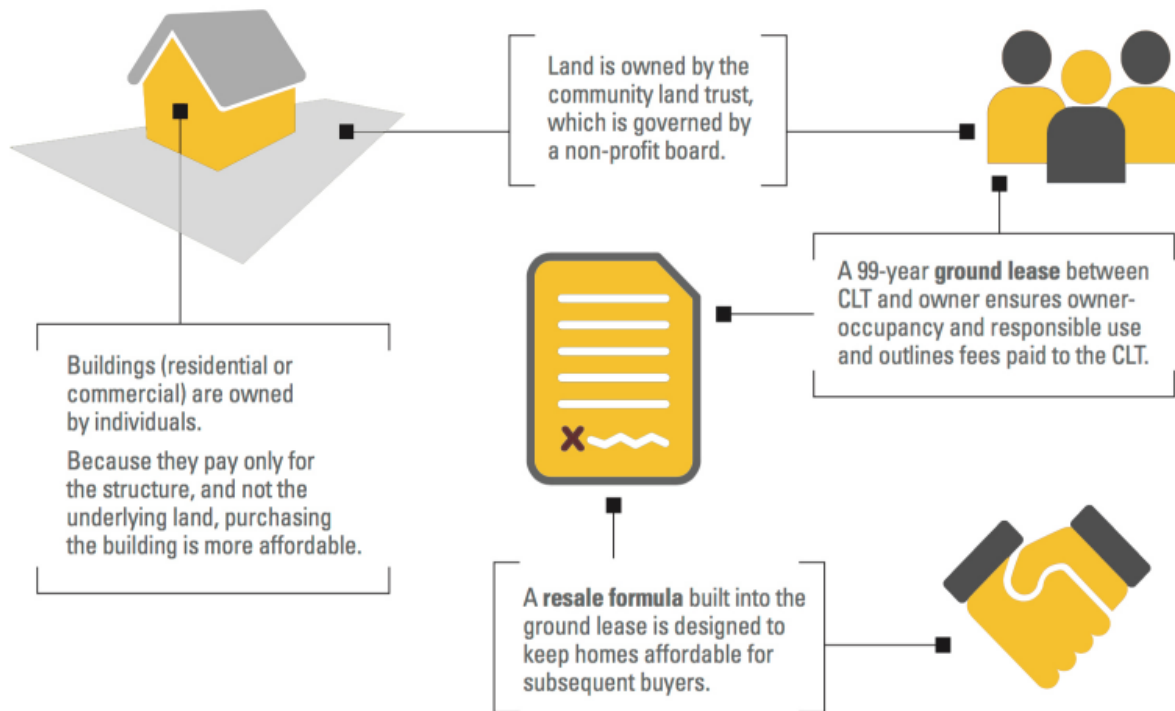
Figure 4: Diagram explaining how Community Land Trusts function. *Source: City of Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint, hype://www.austintexas.gov/blueprint*

evident that the current systems require augmentation and support from alternative models. The community can aim for a better balance between preserving their heritage and embracing new strategies for sustainable development.

Central to PLACE's recommendations is the concept of **tailoring housing options to meet the specific needs of different segments within the community**. We recommend a community planning effort that is underpinned by a market segmentation approach to measuring supply and demand by product type, in order to ensure that outcomes include housing solutions accessible to all price points and market segments.

Whether it's through the creation of affordable housing initiatives, the revitalization of existing structures, or the development of innovative housing typologies, new housing must bridge the gaps that currently exist.

Floyd County's vision is one of complete communities where every generation can find a place to call home. By aligning community efforts and harnessing their collective wisdom, the Floyd County community can pave the way for a brighter, more resilient future for eastern Kentucky.

Resources ⭐

Untapped Opportunities in Rural America Housing

This article describes the challenges and opportunities associated with rural housing development and highlights the potential for generating a cycle of economic growth through the introduction of more housing choices. It also references the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) financing products and/or incentives that can be leveraged for rural housing development.

Figure 5: Local ice cream shop The Scoop, in Prestonsburg, KY. *Credit: The Scoop Facebook page.*

Property and Development

In order to help break through the log jam of property unavailability, a ***Community Land Trust (CLT)*** is recommended. The CLT will need to be sufficiently capitalized to engage in land and site acquisition, so it should be paired with a ***Seed Fund***: a source of low-interest locally-controlled patient capital that can be used to fund community-identified priorities, in advance of their becoming attractive to other funders or lenders. Finally, a ***community planning effort*** is needed to identify those places best suited to receive growth, and those properties or sites that should therefore become the top priorities for acquisition by the CLT. PLACE Initiative can provide assistance to deliver the planning effort, and assist with spinning up the CLT and seed fund.

Resources ⭐

Grounded Solutions Network

The Grounded Solutions Network is America's coalition of Community Land Trusts. Grounded Solutions Network supports strong communities from the ground up, working nationally, connecting local experts with the networks, knowledge, and support they need to help promote housing solutions that will stay affordable for generations.

Placemaking, Music, and the Food Industry

Strategies to support food industry growth could include those to support the development of ***food cart pods***, such as identifying ***commissary kitchens*** that could provide shared business space support for the back-end of food carts and food trucks; identifying walkable locations for food cart pods where they can be supported by

sufficient levels of foot traffic, and can play a beneficial role in supporting surrounding land uses; and engaging in a community planning effort to identify how to make tweaks to land use and transportation policies and practices to better support a full food industry economic spectrum, including food cart pods, locations for brick and mortar restaurants, and locations where additional homes could be built for employees and customers within walking distance.

Music is another important element of elevating local cultural identity. The combination of a local food and music culture is powerful for building up a sense of place, providing the social framework for placemaking, for building around a culture. Providing smaller music venues in established places, in a walkable context with other businesses within walking distance, provides opportunities for music to drive local economic growth through spinoff and supportive economic activities.

Adding additional housing opportunities in existing walkable places could thus grow the economy by giving people a place to live there in a format that supports local businesses and contributes to cultural preservation and placemaking.

Boosting the local food and music industries can also support the continuous creation of vibrant public spaces, encouraging community interaction and socialization. Revitalizing communal areas can foster greater willingness to embrace living within walking distance of public spaces where people want to gather and socialize. This elevation of the commons can be especially important for youth, the elderly, and others who want social interaction but may not have easy access to an automobile for transportation.

Resources ⭐

Mountain Arts Center

The Mountain Arts Center provides a venue for bluegrass, gospel, rock, and country music. It plays an important role in providing a larger venue for larger/destination acts. However, it is not located in a walkable context, and does not hold regularly-scheduled/weekly events, so it should be supplemented by local venues in a walkable context holding weekly/regularly-scheduled shows.

Figure 6: Image from Incremental Development Alliance

Marketing and Place Identity

Floyd County is full of great assets like Jenny Wiley State Park, the Prestonsburg Passage Rail Trail, the Country Music Highway Museum, the Middle Creek National Battlefield, the Mountain Arts Center, and plentiful hiking and mountain biking opportunities that can be leveraged in a comprehensive marketing strategy for the county to bring in tourism and new permanent residents.

The marketing strategy can be a highly personalized narrative including stories of long-time residents, businesses, former coal miners, families, and other diverse types of residents. It should identify a **strong place identity** that is unique but welcoming to outsiders. A marketing campaign could be funded by the state tourism entity, or by the county, or by a collection of counties making up the region. Funds could flow from a local hotel tax, one that also applies to Airbnbs and other lodging providers.

A cohesive marketing pitch should tell the story of why Floyd County is a great place to visit and to live; it should control the narrative, tell stories of local people, and support the local businesses in the community.

Resources ⭐

Can mountain biking change a rural economy? This blog article thinks the answer is yes, especially in eastern Kentucky and surrounding areas. This is a great example of how to tie local business opportunities to marketing.

The Housing Crisis and Small Developers

While workforce development should be a critical component of Floyd County's economic development strategy moving forward, it raises additional challenges, because the current housing stock can't well support a growing population.

More housing is needed to make Floyd County affordable and accommodate all of the demand, but for developers to build, there must be a workforce available to construct the housing.

We propose a double-edged solution that **builds up the workforce of both developers and tradespeople within the community**. First, creating or supporting a technical training school or program(s) can train general contractors, plumbers, electricians, heating/cooling technicians, concrete specialists, and other trades. TheTEK Center is one existing resource within the county which offers courses in heavy equipment operations, electrical, industrial mechanic, and plumbing. With further support, the TEK Center could expand its course offerings or capacity to even better support workforce development.

Along with building the labor force, Floyd County can work with organizations like the **Incremental Development Alliance** (Inc Dev) to bring a small developer training bootcamp program to the community. Inc Dev offers two day workshops in which people interested in pursuing small development, and who have a potential project in mind, can bring their ideas, design site plans, complete financial feasibility analyses, and present their ideas to peers and seasoned small developers. PLACE Initiative can also assist in facilitating training bootcamps.

Small developers, those building single-family homes and "Missing Middle" housing, are the type of developers that Floyd County needs to grow the housing stock, while providing local jobs, enriching the local economy, and maintaining a sustainable growth pattern.

A market segmentation housing demand analysis can help to dial in the specific product to offer and the price points that the local market can support. This is important information to developers, to determine who to build for, what to build, and where.

Small projects are also critical to help build a feedback loop, to provide housing to support growing a local workforce. Pairing this with local workforce development initiative can provide homes and jobs for graduates of technical training programs to produce general contractors, plumbers, electricians, and the other trades required to construct new housing. Providing housing and jobs in this way can help to build feedback loops from the bottom up in support of the local development and financial ecosystem that is critical to deliver new homes in the region.

Small Developers and the Local Finance Ecosystem

To support small developers, a model such as or similar to a **Community Land Trust** could be implemented, providing access to affordable land and protecting it from speculative interests, thereby fostering long-term stability and affordability in development projects. The land trust could acquire larger sites, then break them into smaller parcels for individual small developers to build on, lowering the barriers to entry and providing support for new projects. This should be combined with a **seed fund** to provide financing for the first projects of a new type in each local area, in order to prime the market by providing comps (comparable sales) that

Figure 7: Illustration of a greywater landscaping system. *Credit: Paul Kearsley*

can make it easier for future projects of a similar type to obtain conventional financing.

Modular Homes

In addition to building up the workforce necessary to produce more site-built homes, Floyd County could also take steps to increase the modular/prefabricated housing stock. By creating a new factory for modular homes within the community, new local jobs would be created with minimal commute times. Module designs should reflect local architectural traditions, modified appropriately to reflect the increasing demands placed on structures by a changing climate.

Resources ⭐

Incremental Development Alliance

Inc Dev is a national organization dedicated to empowering small-scale developers and fostering sustainable, community-focused development practices. Through education, training, and advocacy, Inc Dev equips individuals and communities with the tools and knowledge needed to revitalize neighborhoods, create affordable housing options, and promote economic diversity.

Figure 8: Waterways like this one in Fleming-Neon, KY can be adapted to better manage stormwater and mitigate floods.

Freddie Mac 2- to 4-unit Mortgage Products

The Freddie Mac 2-4 Unit Mortgage product offers financing solutions tailored specifically for small multi-unit properties, those consisting of two to four units, plus commercial space not exceeding 25% of total building floor space. Designed to assist investors, homeowners, and even small developers alike, this mortgage option provides flexible terms and competitive rates for those looking to purchase or refinance residential properties with multiple units.

Budding small developers can utilize this product to finance the acquisition, construction, or renovation of small-scale two to four-unit residential properties, allowing them to effectively manage their project budgets and cash flow.

Stormwater, Sewers, and Health

Floyd County could consider offering, by itself or through a partnership, an educational Greywater Workshop to teach residents about the benefits of greywater systems and how to install one. Greywater systems can be cheap to install; they can drain to wood-chip-filled trenches surrounding fruit and nut trees that can in turn provide shade on the house and yard, helping to reduce the ambient peak temperature on hot days. Paired with a septic system for blackwater, this could provide a way to increase health outcomes by decreasing water pollution as well as decreasing exposure to extreme heat, especially for rural properties that currently have greywater systems that drain directly into local waterways.

To reduce the severity of future storm events, a whole-of-the-watershed approach is needed to create resilience collectively, one that combines engineered stormwater system solutions with natural system solutions. Natural solutions include: using beavers and other strategies for restoring wetlands where excess water can pool and be absorbed; restoring riparian vegetation areas to slow down runoff before it enters waterways; and replanting watershed areas that have been disturbed by human activities with forests and vegetation to catch and prevent silt-laden runoff from overwhelming local rivers and streams.

Resources ⭐

Oasis Design Greywater Central

This website offers a wide variety of greywater resources, including common greywater mistakes and best practices, FAQs, greywater system examples, information on policy, and additional external resources.

Rainwater in Context

CNU's *Rainwater in Context* project works to institute rainwater management practices for skillful coordination of high-performance rainwater solutions and walkable places to benefit each other, creating vibrant green

Figure 9: Landscape model of Wayland, KY. Open hillsides like shown here could be terraced for agriculture.

communities and protecting entire regions from flooding and disaster.

NACTO Urban Street Stormwater Guide

The *Urban Street Stormwater Guide* illustrates a vision of how cities can utilize one of their best assets—streets—to address resiliency and climate change while creating public spaces that are truly public, and nurturing streets that deliver social and economic value while protecting resources and reconnecting natural ecological processes. While it is focused on cities, many of the strategies in the guide are perfectly appropriate for small towns and other places.

Revitalizing Sustainable Local Agriculture Systems

Prior to the coal boom, Appalachian Kentucky had a rich agricultural industry, employing long-term stewardship practices to protect the land and maintain its productivity.

These, and new practices can be reinstated to once again establish a strong agricultural presence, attract agricultural migrants, and increase the local production of goods, strengthening the economy.

Regenerative agricultural techniques, such as targeted grazing, terracing, silvopasture, hedgerows, and related strategies can be employed to transform more land into suitable farmland and to employ resilient farmland management techniques. This could become a draw for the region, to provide opportunities for people to move to the country, homestead, and become contributing members of the local agricultural economy.

To manage agricultural fields in the floodplain, farmers can use century-old terracing techniques to prevent flooding and facilitate farming of slopes. Terraces can intercept, detain, and safely convey surface runoff, reducing erosion potential, and retaining soil on farms so it doesn't wash away to downslope streams, rivers or lakes.

To mitigate risk, increase economic opportunities, and provide for sustainable farming, agricultural cooperatives are a popular crop and livestock production model worth considering. Co-ops are specific organizations that are owned and operated by their members. Agricultural cooperatives unite single growers to boost their business productivity and increase yields.

The vast swaths of forests in Eastern Kentucky provide an opportunity to collect and market foraged products; this highlights the importance of managing forests and other foraging areas sustainably.

Resources ⭐

Agricultural Terraces

This web page from NC State University features content, reviewed by the USDA, concerning agricultural terraces.

<u>Agricultural Cooperatives</u>

Cooperatives help build sustainable communities in rural areas, allowing growers to enter a bigger market to sell their goods and buy input supplies at lower prices. More opportunities means more economic development and more benefits for rural population welfare.

Compared to individual farmers, co-op member farmers are more economically protected, face lower risks, and can play multiple roles, producing goods and rendering various services as both owners and users at the same time.

Ag co-ops can sell their products while avoiding middlemen fees, increasing farmer profits. Co-ops can also provide a framework for receiving agricultural migrants, who can join the co-op and contribute to the long term stewardship of the land to make it more productive.

<u>The Appalachian Woods Alliance (AWA)</u>

The AWA works with stakeholders in southern and central Appalachia to make sustainable forest management the new norm in the region, providing pathways for foraging and sustainable forestry.

Renewable Energy and Electric Transport

Appalachian Kentucky is primed to go through a solar energy boom, which can happen in two ways.

One option is to promote small scale solar energy, where every building gets its own solar panels, and smallholder farmers use agrivoltaics to sustainably integrate solar production with agriculture. This could be supported by the Commonwealth of Kentucky through financing, tax credits, or guarantees.

Alternatively, the majority of the region's solar power could be generated in a few large operatives, for the sole benefit of outsiders and large corporations. This would be replicating the top-down nature of the coal economy; workshop attendees expressed a strong negative reaction to perpetuating this extractive model.

To ensure that renewable energy production benefits the local economy in a regenerative and sustainable way, renewable energy production should be locally-controlled and used to benefit local populations through energy bill reductions and increased grid reliability.

Electrical cooperatives could be one way to allow local communities to come together to build and operate renewable energy generating, storage, and distribution systems for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

Floyd County should also consider planning for electric car charging stations that are built around micro-grids, powered by renewable energy, rather than being linked to the regional corporate-owned system.

Resources ⭐

<u>Growing Plants, Power, and Partnerships Through Agrivoltaics</u>

Agrivoltaics, the co-location of solar energy installations and agriculture beneath or between rows of photovoltaic panels, can increase agricultural productivity, while adding to farm revenue from electrical power sales back to the grid.

America's Electric Cooperatives

Electric cooperatives helped to electrify rural America 75 years ago. Now, they will electrify vehicles, homes, water heaters, and provide a path toward a cleaner, more sustainable future. Electric co-ops are a time-tested solution to bring power sustainably and affordably to rural places.

Microgrids for EV charging using renewable power

Microgrids powered by renewable energy can increase grid reliability, reduce power waste, and decrease costs in comparison to business-as-usual power grids. They can power homes, businesses, and electric vehicles from renewable sources.

NEXT STEPS

PLACE Initiative's assessment tools are intended to assess a community's strengths and weaknesses, to evaluate its readiness to be a receiver community, to set the stage for future planning efforts, such as community-driven plans for resilient communities, and to support these efforts with professional expertise and services, such as policy guidance, spatial analysis and mapping, and implementation frameworks, that will be critical to their success.

No place has yet finished the work of adapting to be ready for what a future with a changed climate may hold in store. Every place has work to do. Floyd County possesses a number of assets, and also faces a number of challenges. On balance, however, the opportunity exists to increase resiliency, provide for sustainable local economic, environmental, and social solutions, and

2. COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES GUIDE
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CLIMATE RECEIVER PLACES PROJECT AT THE

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ultimately to welcome new residents and businesses as a climate receiver place.

Regardless of what kinds of solutions Floyd County decides to pursue as a result of this assessment, ***PLACE Initiative can help to achieve them***.

The arc of PI's engagement runs from pre-assessment and assessment efforts to identify strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities; through community planning workshops to map out and advise on solutions; to implementation support, ideally paired with building a community of practice that includes other receiver places to form a mutually-supportive cohort. PI offers not just the organization itself, but also its international network of practitioners, which it will plug into projects as appropriate to provide solutions to problems identified through assessment and planning processes.

Pre-Assessment Workshop

The objective of this phase of workshops is to get a general, qualitative understanding of the most pressing issues in each community, and evaluate community interest in proposed interventions.

Prior to the first in-person workshop, for the first part of the assessment, participants will be asked to complete a brief online survey that will allow us to plan a more relevantly focused pre-assessment.

During the Pre-Assessment, community members will be asked to rank and prioritize the nine PLACE Principles to uncover their top priorities that should be addressed during the Comprehensive Assessment process.

The Pre-Assessment also begins to identify the key team members to build a strong, local coalition that will make the planning process a success. Another of the objectives is to determine other stakeholders that may be left out of the planning process and ensuring that

they gain representation during the workshop series. This attempts to advance equity within planning, a discipline which has been historically and detrimentally exclusionary. By elevating the voices of underrepresented groups throughout the project, the community can co-create solutions that work for everyone and that produce equitably shared benefits.

Comprehensive Assessment

The Comprehensive Assessment allows an opportunity to dive deeper into the topics discussed at the pre-assessment workshop, including utilizing the PLACE Community Assessment Tool. This tool combines the qualitative assessment work of the pre-assessment workshop with a quantitative ranking system, resulting in preparedness scores for each PLACE Principle, as well as for every contributing sub-category of assessment within each principle.

The Comprehensive Assessment is completed over two separate five hour workshops to allow for appropriate time to address all nine

PLACE Principles, with the depth and nuanced required for innovative, place-based strategies.

The Assessment Tool guides communities through critical questions within each of the principles to evaluate the extent to which they are already in place, and prioritize which potential changes are most valued by the community for near-term future implementation. The assessment is meant to guide communities toward solutions proven to bring long term stability and sustainability, not to create quick fixes that lead to longer-term problems.

The Tool emphasizes the underlying connections between elements of our cities and towns that we may often overlook, like the relationship between our street grid system and the success of small businesses, or the relationship between our zoning laws and our housing affordability. By drawing attention to these hidden connections, PLACE's assessment tool can help towns, cities, and counties better understand what kinds of changes need to be made to achieve a certain result, and can identify a clear path forward to get them there.

The Community Assessment Tool increases local capacity by breaking down key issue areas, such as economic development, environmental stewardship and resilient infrastructure, into over 1,000 individual performance metrics to evaluate their community's strengths and weaknesses. Once complete, the Assessment Tool will assist local leaders to invest in the strategies, projects, and programs for inclusive and sustainable community development.

The outcome of the Community Assessment Tool is a fully customized Community Assessment Reports that will provide a roadmap for the next phase of the planning

Figure 10: Art used to activate an alley in Pikeville, KY.

process. The Assessment Reports will identify key strengths, weaknesses, and focus areas to prioritize investment to the needs and desires of each community.

Community Workshop Series

A comprehensive three-part Community Assessment workshop series can take communities from the Pre-assessment through completing the PLACE Community Assessment Tool.

Facilitated by members of PI, each five-hour workshop will lead the community members

Figure 11: New solar panels installed next to the abandoned coal works in Lynch, KY point the way towards one small piece of a just transition for coal communities: renewable power.

through an in-depth process to assess the existing strengths and weaknesses of their place.

Each worksop builds upon the feedback from the earlier phases to create a customized experience based on the community's own needs, desires, and priorities.

Note: In the future, the community will also be able to choose to undertake any of the three steps on their own using PI's Open Source Tools on our website.

Other Offerings…

After the workshop series, PI can provide *Community Planning Assistance* and a full range of technical assistance to help you develop a customized *PLACE Action Plan*.

Some of the potential offerings include:

- Community Planning Guidance, such as, facilitating public workshops and charrettes, as well as drafting Community Action Plans, Comprehensive Plans, and Specific Area Plans.

- Technical Assistance, such as urban design services, scenario planning models, advanced carbon accounting, and GIS mapping.

- Near and long-term Implementation Assistance, such as Project Management, Coalition Building, and Fiscal Sponsorship, to complete projects that support the focus areas of the PLACE Principles.

Additional capacity building tools and materials are currently in development and will be available in the near future!

CONCLUSION

Floyd County, and the greater Appalachian Kentucky region has faced a handful of economic and social challenges over the last several years. Spurred by the economic downturn of the dwindling coal industry and exacerbated by devastating floods and continuous disinvestment, making meaningful gains in community economic development has not been easy. However, the community maintains a hopeful belief that there are real solutions to the problems they are facing, and collaborative community planning groups like the Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities group are working to initiate some of these necessary changes.

The Floyd County Pre-Assessment Workshop facilitated by PLACE Initiative revealed key community strengths and ideas that can be leveraged for positive change, and also identified areas for improvement. While the community welcomes population growth and tourism, a shortage of developable land and housing poses a significant barrier.

At the core of PLACE's recommendations lies the idea of market-segmented housing options to meet the needs of various groups within the community. Whether through establishing affordable housing programs, rehabilitating existing buildings, or pioneering new housing models, the objective is to close the gap between existing housing supply and demand, and keep up with the needs of both existing and future residents. Securing safe, attainable housing for all current and future residents will be the first step in furthering the identified economic development strategies that will help the community blossom.

By aligning its efforts and leveraging the collective insights of its community, Floyd County has the potential to forge a brighter, more resilient future for Appalachian Kentucky.

PLACE Initiative looks forward to working further with Floyd County and other Appalachian communities to map out and implement a just transition from the coal-based economy of the past, to a diversified, locally-driven economy fostering vibrant, inclusive, walkable communities.
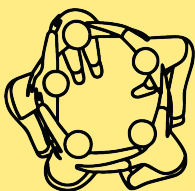
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