

WEEK 01

What Does It Mean to Be Rural?

Rural Planning and Economic Development

PLAC 5500-001 | LPPP 5999-001



Who is in the room?

NAME What should we call you?

SCHOOL + YEAR Your school, program, and year.

SKILLS GIS, sketching, data analysis, writing, design, coding, facilitation, or something else.

WHY THIS CLASS What brought you to Rural Planning and Economic Development?



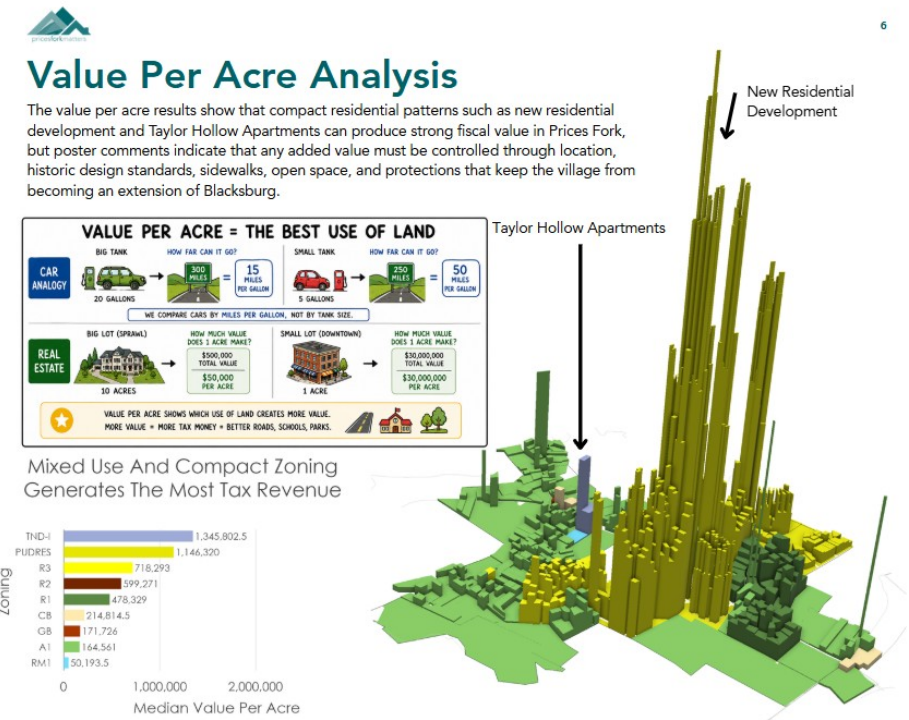
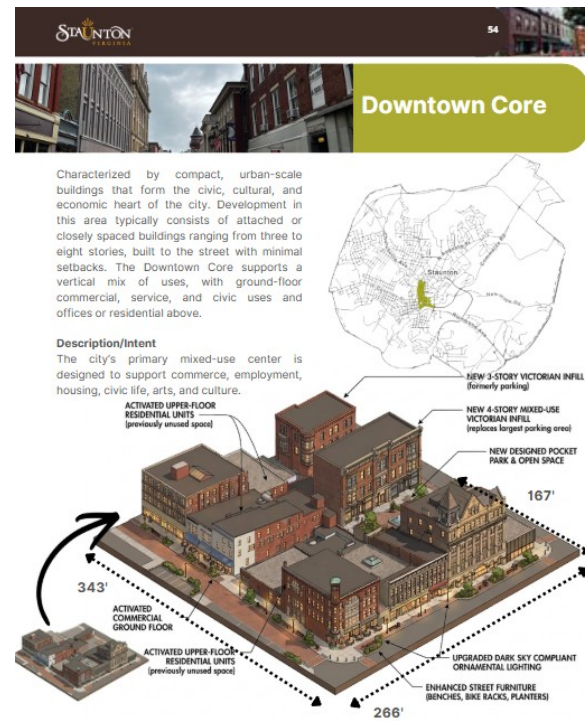
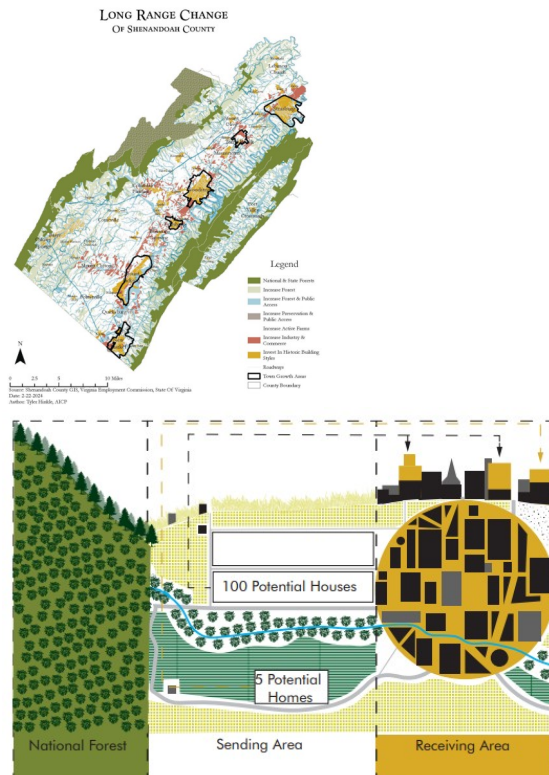
<https://arcg.is/1q4unr>

SHENANDOAH COUNTY Shenandoah 2045 comprehensive planning and town-county collaboration.

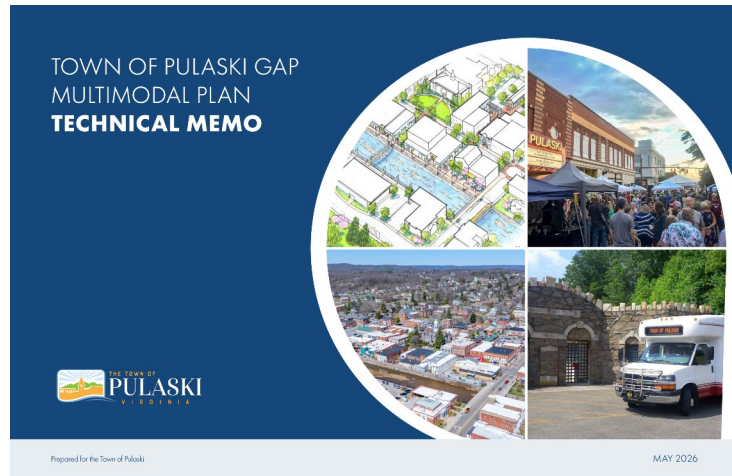
STAUNTON + WAYNESBORO + NEW MARKET Current comprehensive-plan work.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VA County comprehensive plan and village plans.

PENDLETON COUNTY, WV Recreation Economy for Rural Communities planning.

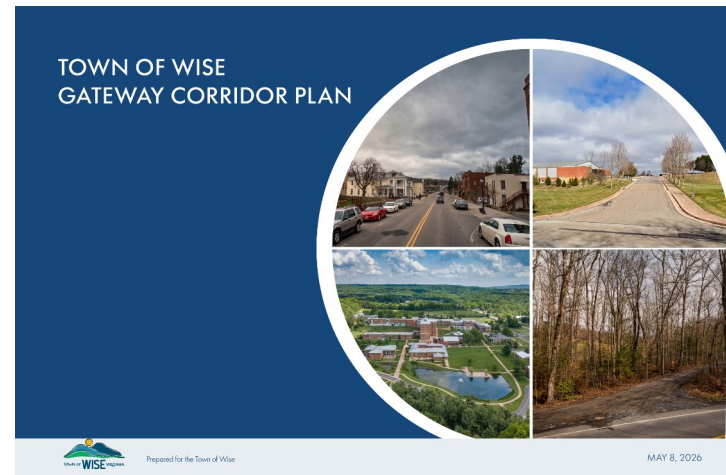


From the comprehensive plan to the street



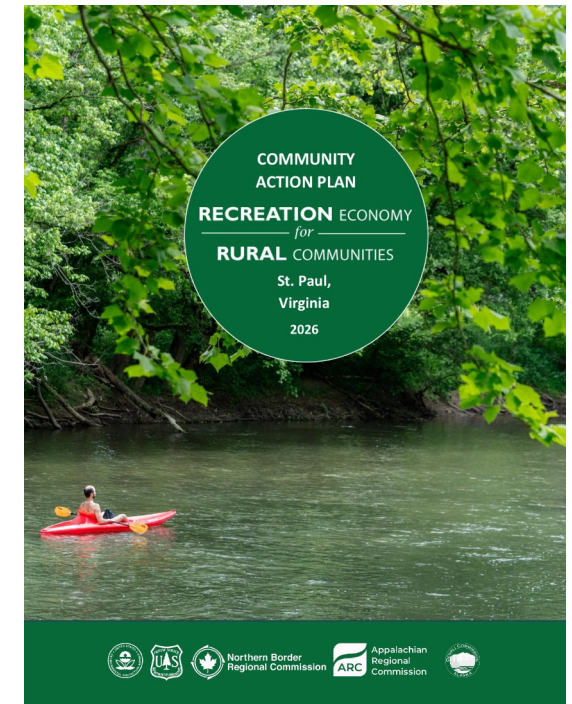
PULASKI

Multimodal plan



WISE

Street corridor connectivity plan



ST. PAUL

Rural economic development and implementation

The basics

COURSE Rural Planning and Economic Development

CREDITS PLAC 5500-001 | LPPP 5999-001 | 3 credits

MEETING Wednesdays, 3:30-6:00 p.m. | Campbell Hall 220C

INSTRUCTOR Tyler Hinkle, AICP | jth4qt@virginia.edu | 540-333-0285

OFFICE HOURS 6:00-6:30 p.m. after class or by appointment

Rural and urban are not opposites

One building standing alone in the countryside is experienced as a work of architecture, but bring a half dozen buildings together and an art other than architecture is made possible. - Gordon Cullen

We will study rural places as part of larger systems of townscape, land, infrastructure, culture, finance, and regional connection.



Six chapters

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | What does it mean to be rural? | 4 | Rural by Design: Recreation, Conservation, the Countryside, and the Threat |
| 2 | Small Town Feel: Comprehensive Plans, the People, and Their Connections | 5 | The Cost: How We Financially Plan to Remain Rural |
| 3 | The Townscape: An Ancestral Solution to Sustainable Living | 6 | How does the past inspire the future? |

What you should be able to do by December

READ	Analyze urban form and identify how to improve it.	PRESENT	Communicate with officials and community representatives.
DRAW	Sketch and map urban settings and general strategies.	RESOLVE	Process conflicting information and reach a responsible resolution.
ANALYZE	Evaluate resources, risks, and methods for protection or improvement.	DELIVER	Work as a team to meet professional deliverables.
PLAN	Compile a community planning document tailored to a real need.		

No books to purchase

BRING Trace paper, color markers, and an engineering scale for workshops.

PROVIDED Digital readings, free courses, videos, modules, examples, and project resources.

READINGS The Concise Townscape, Rural by Design, Strong Towns 101, and the other sources listed by week.

OPTIONAL BONUS An exceptional personal sketchbook may earn up to two bonus points.

Lecture, discussion, workshop, studio

PREPARE Complete the assigned reading or viewing and bring your seminar brief when scheduled.

DISCUSS Explain what you think, listen to other interpretations, and revise your position when evidence changes it.

PRACTICE Learn methods through in-class demonstrations and applied assignments.

BUILD Use class time to move the community project forward with your team.

DOCUMENT Keep handwritten notes and a lived experience journal throughout the semester.

Where the grade comes from

55%	Team Community Planning Document
12%	Seminar Briefs and In-Class Discussion
12%	Four Individual Applied Assignments
11%	Lived Experience Journal and Final Paper
10%	Attendance and Participation

Write it. Bring it. Defend it. Revise it.

SIX BRIEFS Normally 100-300 words, each developing a claim, evidence, and a question or implication.

TWO POINTS EACH One point for depth and preparation. One point for substantive in-class contribution.

LIVE EXPLANATION Explain your point in less than three minutes and extend or revise your thinking during discussion.

AI Outlining or editing assistance is permitted when disclosed. Your reflection and argument must remain yours.

Track what changes in your thinking

JOURNAL PART 1 Due October 7. Worth 3%.

JOURNAL PART 2 Due December 17. Worth 3%.

FINAL PAPER A thesis on the future of rural spaces and their urban places, grounded in a case-study community. Due December 17 at 5:00 p.m. Worth 5%.

SOURCE MATERIAL Briefs, private reflections, observations, notes, and visuals can all feed the journal and paper.

Four ways to practice the work

SERIAL VISION Read how a place is experienced in sequence.

CONSERVATION Analyze natural systems, working lands, recreation, hazards, and code implications.

VALUE PER ACRE Use the provided 3D model, parcel, zoning, and tax data to compare land-use productivity.

INDIVIDUAL CHOICE Choose an applied method from the course and produce an original analysis or design approved for your learning goals.

A real product for a real client

TAILORED SCOPE Each team follows the needs and constraints of its community partner.

PROGRESSIVE SUBMISSIONS Work plan, document architecture, substantive draft, staff review draft, final product, and presentation.

ONE UPLOAD One team member submits each percentage review and final document in Canvas.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY Every student remains responsible for the work, sources, AI disclosure, and contribution record.

What completion means

- 20% | SEPT. 23** Work plan, existing-document synthesis, SWOT, methodology, visual system, and place-reading evidence.
- 40% | OCT. 7** Working introduction, document architecture, diagnosis, assembled evidence, and identified skills or assets.
- 60% | OCT. 21** Text-first substantive draft, alternatives, preferred direction, feasibility screen, and draft graphics.
- 80% | NOV. 11** Staff-review draft with placed graphics, implementation path, and revision log.
- 100% | DEC. 9** Client-ready product, presentation, supporting files, limitations, and next steps.

August and September

AUG. 26

Initial project ranking due at the end of class.

SEPT. 16

Seminar Brief 2 due at the start of class.

SEPT. 2

Seminar Brief 1 and revised project ranking and role statement due at the start of class.

SEPT. 23

Work Plan, 20% of total project, due in Canvas by noon.

SEPT. 9

Team agreement and partner work plan due at the start of class.

SEPT. 30

Serial Vision and Seminar Brief 3 due at the start of class.

October

- OCT. 7** 40% project submission due in Canvas by noon;
Journal Part 1 due at the start of class.
- OCT. 14** Conservation Analysis and Seminar Brief 4 due at
the start of class.
- OCT. 21** First Substantive Draft, 60% of total project, due in
Canvas by noon.
- OCT. 28** Seminar Brief 5 due at the start of class.

November and December

NOV. 4

Value Per Acre Analysis and 3D Rendering due at the start of class.

NOV. 11

Staff Review Draft, 80% of total project, due in Canvas by noon.

NOV. 18

Individual Assignment 4, Individual Choice, due at the start of class.

DEC. 2

Seminar Brief 6 due at the start of class.

DEC. 9

Final Product and presentation due; one team member uploads by noon.

DEC. 17

Journal Part 2, final paper, and optional sketchbook due by 5:00 p.m.

August and September

AUG. 26

What Does It Mean to Be Rural? Introductions, syllabus, ruralism, Appalachia, and project preview.

SEPT. 2 | VIRTUAL

On the Origins of Ruralism: From Antiquity to Appalachia. Community conversations and final project votes.

SEPT. 9

Small Town Feel: The Comprehensive Plan and Third Spaces.

SEPT. 16

Small Town Feel: Awakening the Power of Communities.

SEPT. 23

Townscape workshop and Work Plan review.

SEPT. 30

Townscape: Villages, hamlets, and the New Ruralism.

October

- OCT. 7** The Countryside: Territories and Green Infrastructure.
- OCT. 14** The Countryside: Conservation, Recreation, and Rural by Design.
- OCT. 21** The Threat and the Strong Towns framework.
- OCT. 28** The Cost: The Government Provides Services.

November and December

NOV. 4	The Cost: Economic Development and local revenue.	DEC. 2	On the Future of Rural Places.
NOV. 11	The Cost: The Community Finances the Rest.	DEC. 9	Final team presentations.
NOV. 18	Community Projects Studio: From Draft to Decision.	DEC. 17	Individual journal and paper closeout.
NOV. 25	No class. Thanksgiving break.		

What A, B, and C work mean

A Outstanding content and execution that far surpass the requirements.

B High achievement that goes beyond the requirements.

C | UNDERGRADUATE Adequate work that fulfills the requirements.

C | GRADUATE Inadequate work that does not fulfill the requirements.

RUBRICS You are graded against stated criteria, not prior technical skill, handwriting, drawing ability, or charisma.

Show up ready to work

STUDIO EXPECTATION Attend every scheduled meeting, arrive prepared, and remain reliable to your team and client.

ABSENCE Communicate as early as possible and arrange approved make-up work when needed.

VIRTUAL CLASS Join on time, keep your camera on when practicable, participate in breakout work, and respond when called upon.

ACCOMMODATIONS Religious observance, disability, illness, family circumstances, privacy, and access barriers receive reasonable consideration.

Communicate before a problem becomes a crisis

LATE WORK Three percent is deducted immediately, then three percent for each additional day.

EXTENSIONS Serious medical or family circumstances require early written communication and a proposed completion schedule.

ALTERNATIVE ASSIGNMENT Personal-belief requests must be submitted at least four weeks before the deadline.

INCOMPLETE Reserved for medical emergencies or extenuating family circumstances and requires school approval and a work plan.

Drafts are not public until the client approves them

AGREEMENT Every team prepares an internal agreement and a partner work plan before substantive work begins.

SCOPE + DATA The partner work plan defines scope, source limits, review points, and public-sharing permissions.

PORTFOLIOS Authorized work may be used in portfolios after client staff approve public sharing.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE Accuracy, reliability, communication, teamwork, and respect for client limits are part of the work.

Pledge your work and disclose your help

THE PLEDGE I pledge that I have neither given nor received help on this examination (quiz, assignment, etc.).

SIGN IT The pledge must be written and signed on quizzes, examinations, individual assignments, and papers.

COLLABORATION Collaborate only when the assignment explicitly permits it. Cite sources and people consulted.

WHEN IN DOUBT Ask before submitting.

Civility, recording, and communication

CIVILITY Do not disrupt others or withdraw from required group work.

COURSE RECORDING Class sessions may be recorded for enrolled students. Course recordings cannot be reproduced or shared.

STUDENT RECORDING Students may not record class in any form without instructor authorization.

COMMUNICATION Check UVA email and Canvas frequently. You are responsible for information sent through official channels.

Use the tool. Own every decision.

PERMITTED Brainstorming, organizing, coding, analyzing, designing, and revising when the use is disclosed.

NOT PERMITTED Inventing sources, fabricating evidence, replacing observation or client judgment, exposing confidential information, or replacing your explanation.

DISCLOSE Identify the tool, task, what you verified or changed, and your final reasoning.

BE READY TO EXPLAIN Purpose, inputs, steps, alternatives, limitations, verification, and implications.

Use support early

ACCESSIBILITY Contact SDAC and the instructor when a disability or course-material barrier affects learning.

SAFETY UVA provides reporting and support resources for discrimination and power-based personal violence.

MENTAL HEALTH CAPS, the A-School embedded counselor, Batten staff, TimelyCare, and the HELP Line are available.

DUTY TO CARE Faculty and staff will connect distressed students with qualified support when needed.

What needs clarification before we break?

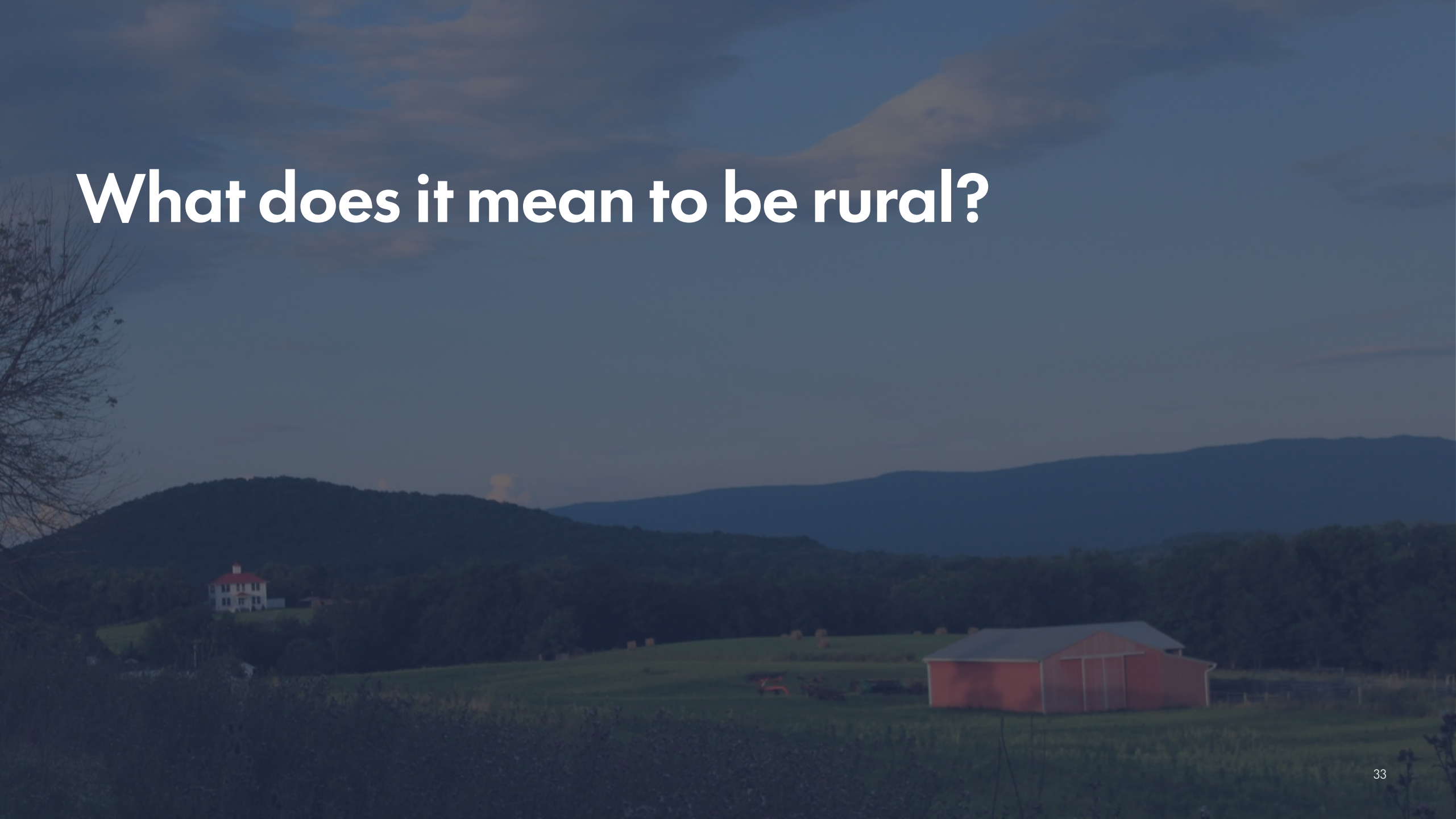
ASK NOW Course expectations, grading, deadlines, assignments, client work, attendance, Honor, AI, recording, or support.

CHECK LATER The full syllabus and readings are posted in Canvas.

15 minute break

When we return: What does it mean to be rural?

What does it mean to be rural?



What does 'open and rural' mean?

CAC, 2008 "The meaning of 'rural' conveys physical and visual attributes such as working farms, with large tracts of open, undeveloped land, and retaining a mostly open appearance."

LANDSCAPE Farm fields, pasture, woodland, scenic ridges, clean water, dark skies, and room for rural recreation.

SETTLEMENT Low-density residential development persists while services and commerce remain compact in and around existing towns.

LOCAL BALANCE Businesses are in balance with the community while policy supports agriculture and open space.



What is suburban?

SEPARATED Single-purpose districts separate homes, jobs, shopping, and civic life.

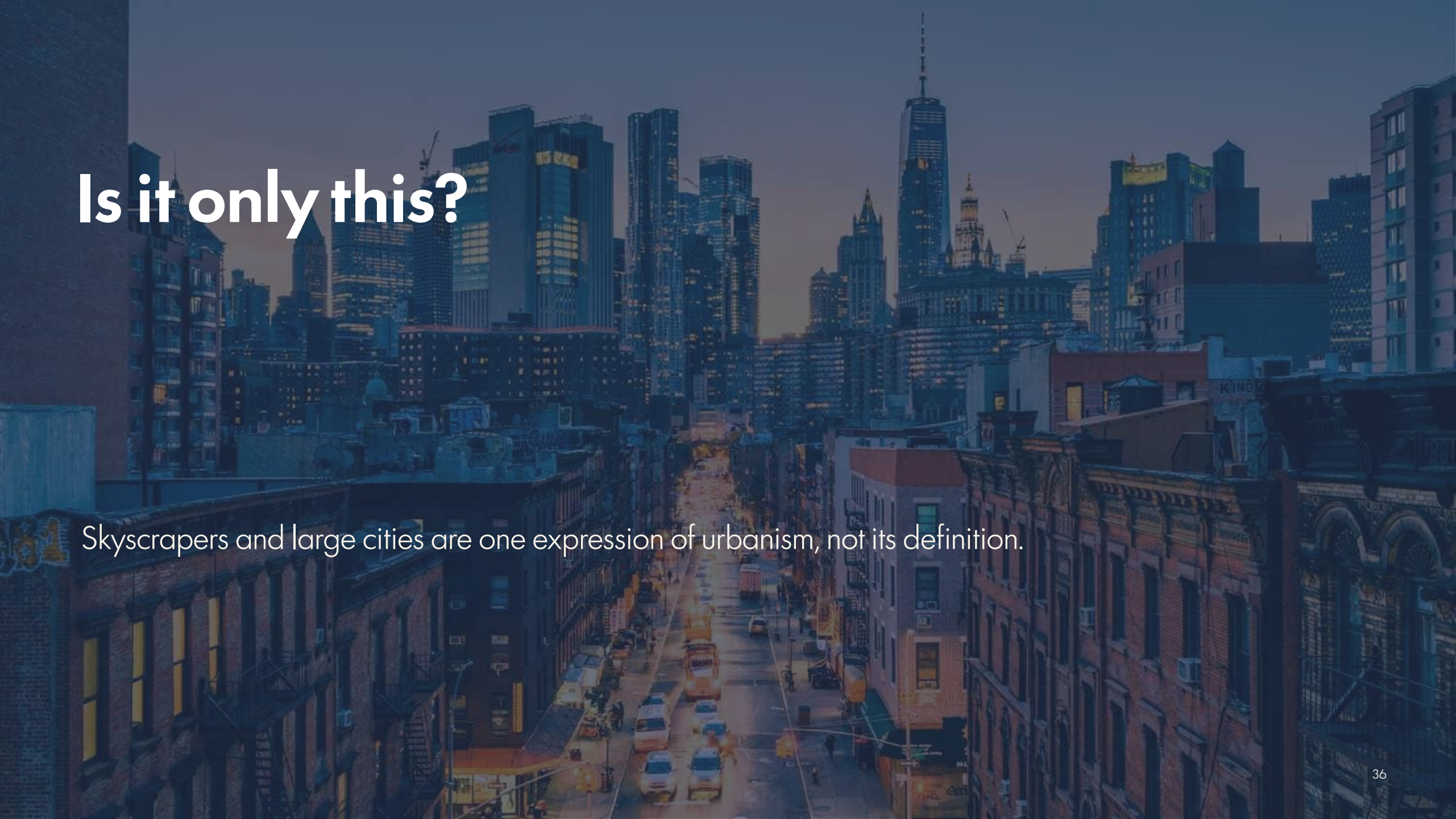
AUTO-DEPENDENT Commuting, cul-de-sacs, high-speed roads, and large parking fields organize daily life.

REPETITIVE Cookie-cutter buildings and isolated projects are delivered as finished products.

DISPERSED Development spreads continuously along highways and consumes rural territory without creating an urban place.

SEGREGATED Income, housing type, age, and opportunity are often separated spatially.





Is it only this?

Skyscrapers and large cities are one expression of urbanism, not its definition.

What about this?

A main street, village center, market, or crossroads can be urban while standing inside a rural landscape.

Urban exists at every size

MIX Different uses operate at different times.

BALANCE Homes, businesses, institutions, and civic spaces support one another.

LAYERS Buildings from different eras create adaptability and memory.

ENCLOSURE Buildings frame streets and public space.

EXCHANGE Markets connect rural production with customers.

MEETING Locals and strangers encounter one another.



What rural character protects

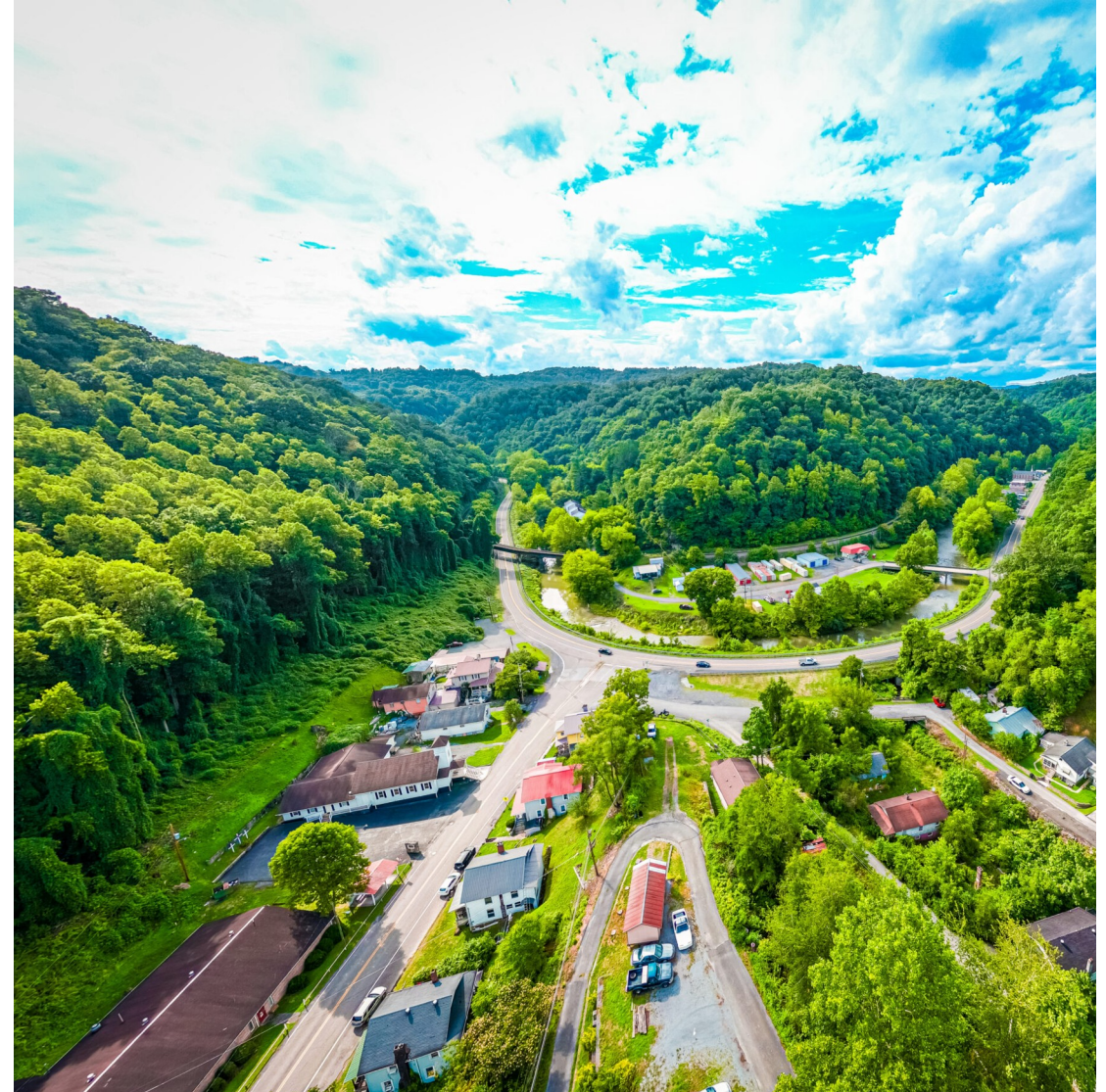
WORKING LAND Farms, pasture, cropland, silviculture, and other productive landscapes remain visible and viable.

OPEN LAND Large undeveloped areas support ecology, recreation, water, and dark skies.

CLEAN EDGES Towns and villages end clearly instead of dissolving into continuous roadside development.

COMPACT SERVICES Water, sewer, institutions, and commerce concentrate where they can be sustained.

COOPERATION Towns and counties plan one connected territory together.



Rural is not one landscape

Working lands | Islands | Deserts | Tundra | Jungle

Farms and silviculture are active systems

PRODUCTION Food, fiber, timber, energy, and ecological services connect rural land to distant markets.

STEWARDSHIP Management decisions shape soil, water, habitat, fire risk, and viewsheds.

INFRASTRUCTURE Roads, processing, storage, labor, broadband, and utilities determine whether working land remains viable.

SETTLEMENT Compact towns preserve more productive land while providing markets, services, and housing.



Scarcity and access shape settlement

ISLANDS Harbors, fresh water, landing points, and limited buildable ground pull settlement together.

DESERTS Oases, wells, shade, and trade routes concentrate people around scarce water.

TUNDRA Stable soils, sheltered coasts, rivers, and seasonal transport corridors organize settlement.

JUNGLE Rivers provide movement, food, water, and clearings through dense vegetation.

LESSON Clustering is often an adaptation to landscape, not a rejection of rural life.



Settlement forms where relationships intersect

WATER Reliable supply, river crossings, confluences, harbors, and flood-safe ground.

MOVEMENT Road crossings, passes, rail stops, landings, and trade routes.

WORK Mines, farms, mills, forests, ports, markets, and employers.

SHARED SYSTEMS Schools, worship, government, utilities, safety, and health services.

SOCIAL LIFE Family networks, exchange, identity, mutual aid, and public gathering.

LAND LIMITS Slope, soil, hazard, ownership, and protected resources narrow where construction is practical.



Compact places keep rural territory rural

Density belongs in towns, villages, and hamlets so that working lands, forests, watersheds, and recreation remain intact.

Slope and water force density

NARROW VALLEYS Steep slopes leave limited buildable benches and valley floors.

SHARED CORRIDORS Roads, rail, streams, utilities, and development compete for the same narrow space.

CONFLUENCES Where waterways and routes meet, settlements become natural exchange points.

HAZARD Flooding pushes growth toward higher ground while slope limits that higher ground.

RESULT Many Appalachian towns are remarkably dense because geography gives them little room to spread.



Density does not make a place metropolitan

DENSITY Describes how closely activity and buildings are arranged.

URBAN FORM Describes streets, blocks, public space, mixed uses, and enclosure.

RURAL CONTEXT Describes the wider territory, production systems, access, and regional relationships.

APPALACHIAN REALITY A compact town can be intensely urban in form and deeply rural in economy, identity, and landscape.



A community with a rural landscape helps define its identity. This is here, that is there.



Communities serve as market places for food grown or made in open working lands like farms.



Communities should have a blend of fabric with some historic and some built decades ago.



Communities have a good blend of public spaces including internal and external spaces like parks.



Buildings with detailed facades and breaks in monotony are more interesting than monotonous flat buildings.



Streets should feel like an outdoor room, enclosed by a sense of hereness with closure through taller buildings.

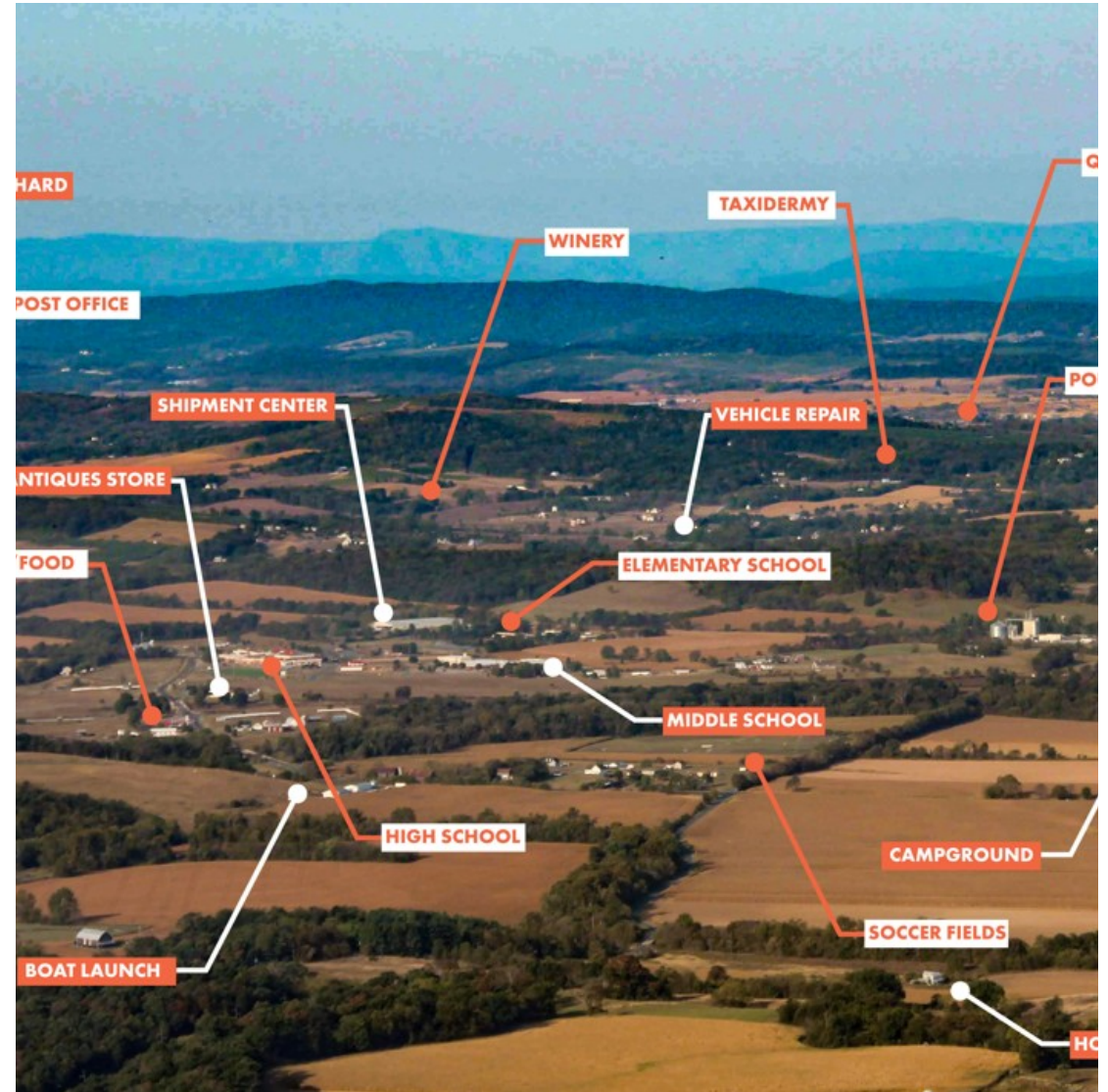
Rural production and urban exchange depend on one another

RURAL Produces food, timber, energy, water, recreation, ecosystem services, and cultural landscapes.

URBAN Concentrates markets, services, housing, institutions, infrastructure, and public life.

SUBURBAN Can weaken both when it consumes rural land without producing a complete urban place.

PLANNING Should strengthen the relationship instead of treating rural protection and town development as competing goals.



Test the categories against places you know

PLACE Name one place you know well.

TERRITORY What makes its wider landscape rural or not rural?

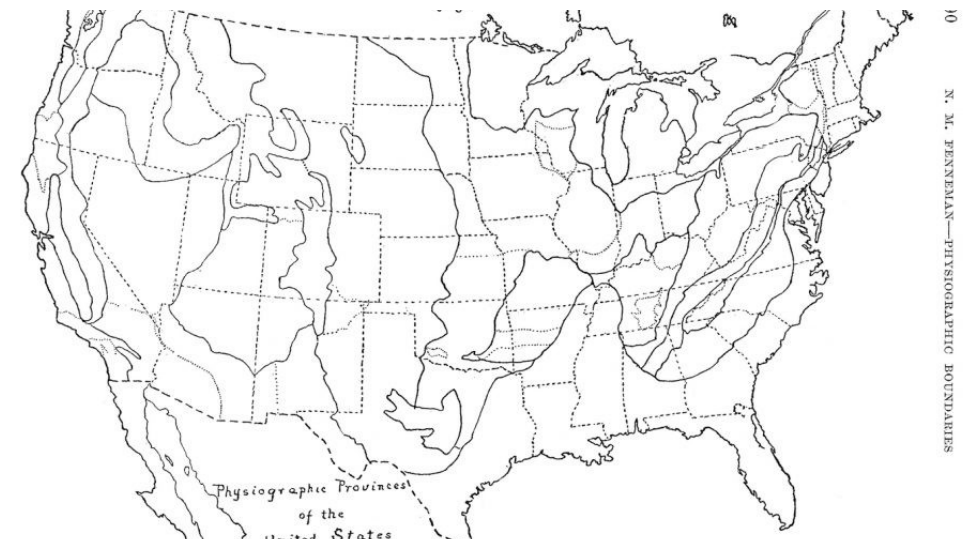
FORM Where does urban form appear, regardless of population?

PATTERN Where does suburban development interrupt the relationship?

CAUSE What made people cluster there: water, route, work, institution, safety, or land constraint?

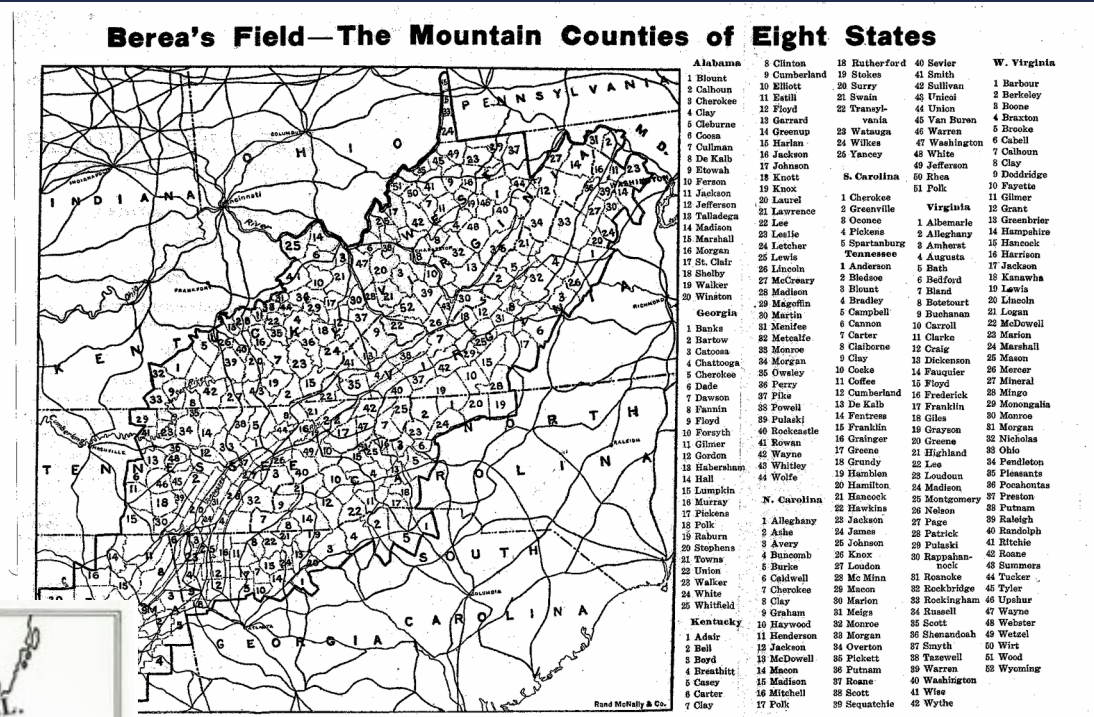
A region changes with the question

1896 Berea cultural region and 1914/1917 physiographic boundaries show that culture and landform produce different Appalachias.



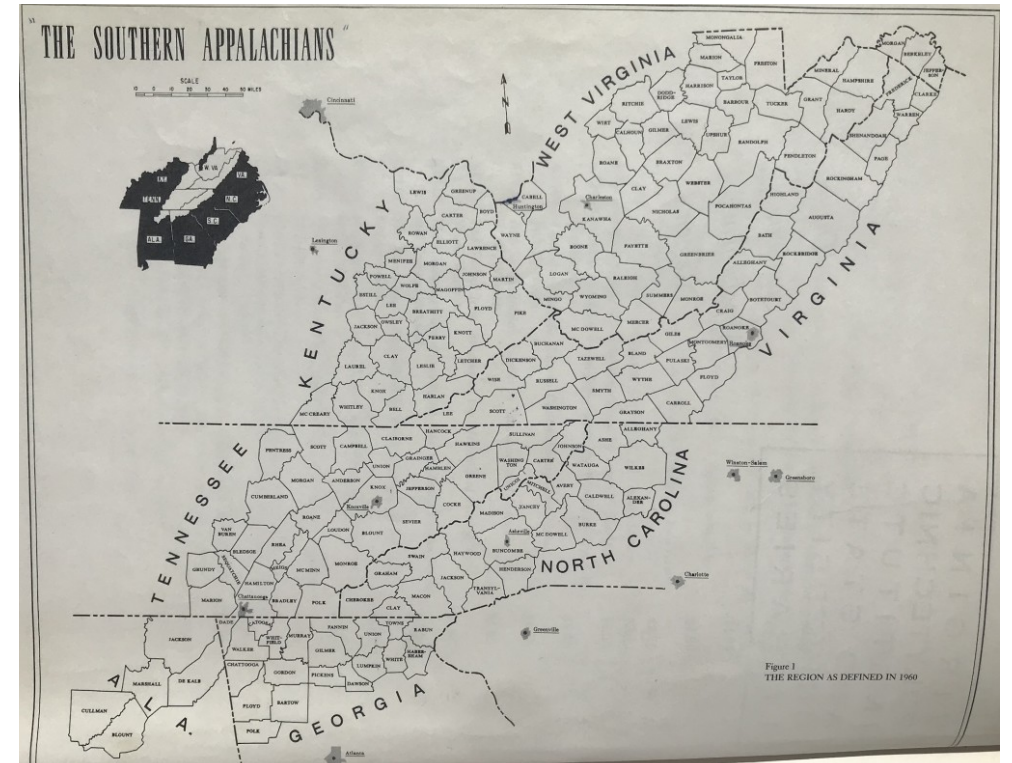
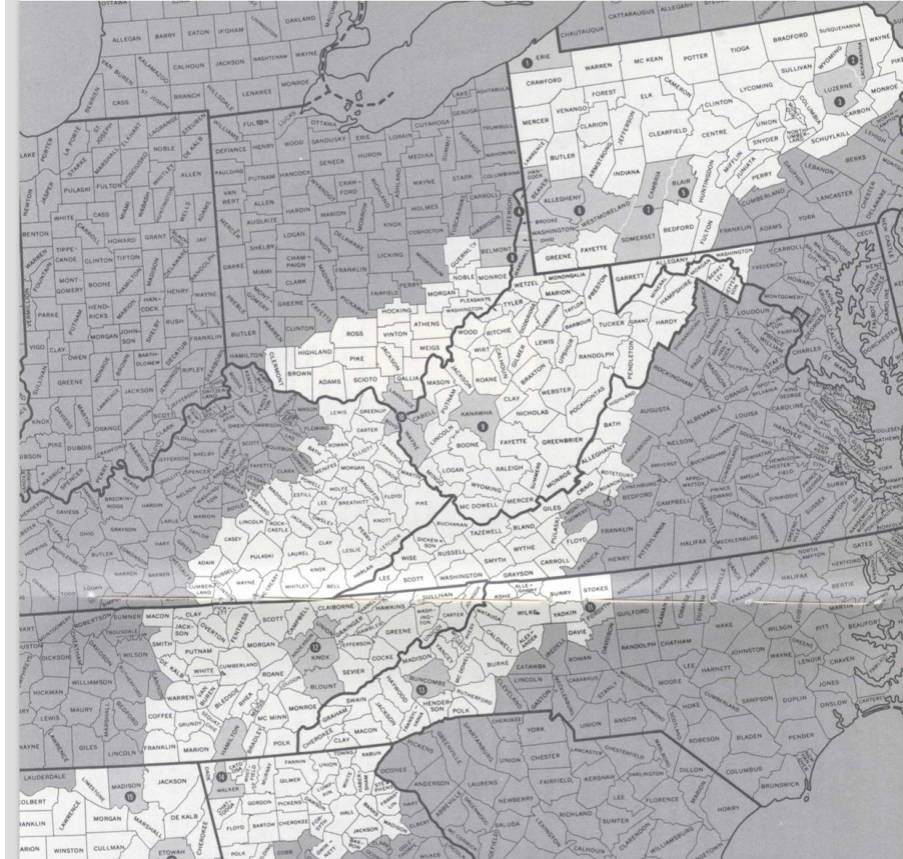
Institutions draw regions for action

Berea's 1918 admissions geography, Campbell's 1921 cultural region, and the USDA's 1935 research region linked boundaries to institutional missions.



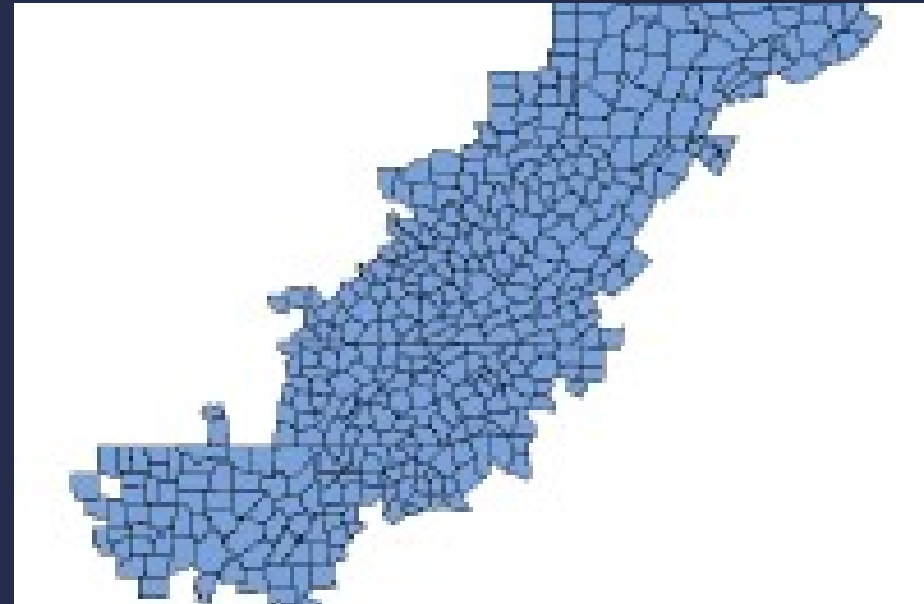
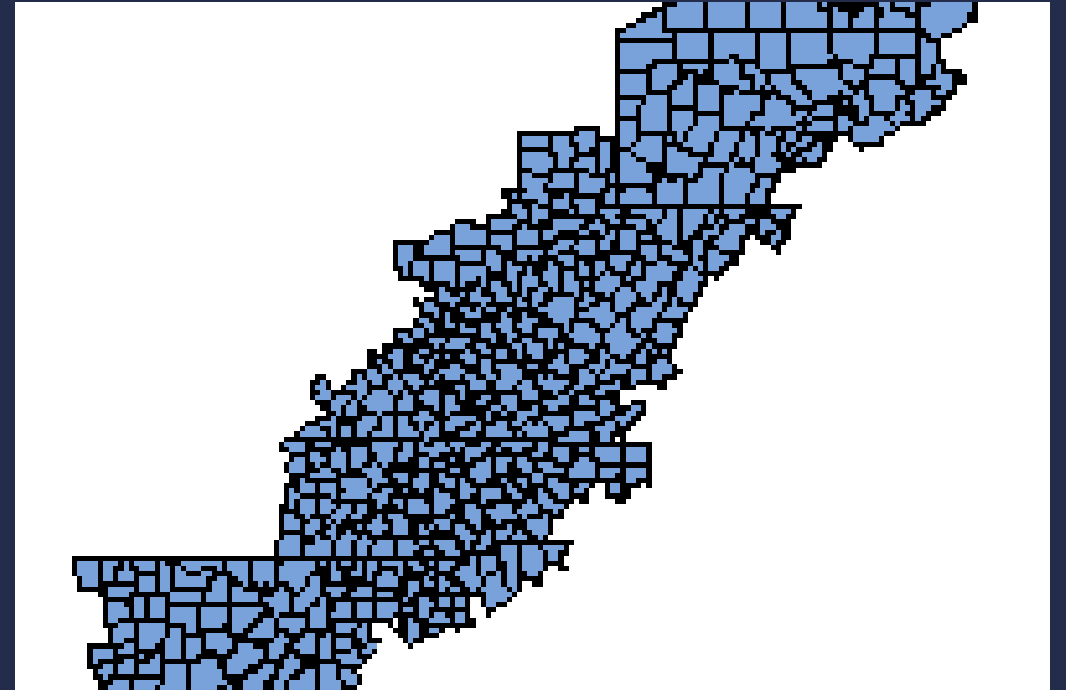
Programs and distress redraw the map

The WPA divided rural cultural regions for relief planning. The 1962 Ford survey and 1964 President's commission narrowed Appalachia around socioeconomic conditions and federal action.



A contested idea becomes policy geography

The Appalachian Regional Commission transformed a changing regional concept into an administrative boundary used for investment, data, and eligibility.



Micropolitan possibility: city living on a small scale

MICROPOLITAN A small regional center can gather jobs, services, culture, and civic life without becoming a large city.

HUMAN SCALE Walkable downtowns, mixed uses, and public spaces make the smallest cities both micro and cosmopolitan.

RURAL RELATIONSHIP Their compact cores serve a much larger countryside of farms, forests, towns, and recreation landscapes.

PLANNING QUESTION What should grow stronger in the center so the surrounding territory does not have to become suburban?



A community with a rural landscape helps define its identity. This is here, that is there.



Communities serve as market places for food grown or made in open working lands like farms.



Communities should have a blend of fabric with some historic and some built decades ago.



Communities have a good blend of public spaces including internal and external spaces like parks and squares.



Buildings with detailed facades and breaks in scale are more pleasing than monotonous flat buildings.



Streets should feel like an outdoor room, enclosed by a sense of hereness with closure through taller buildings.

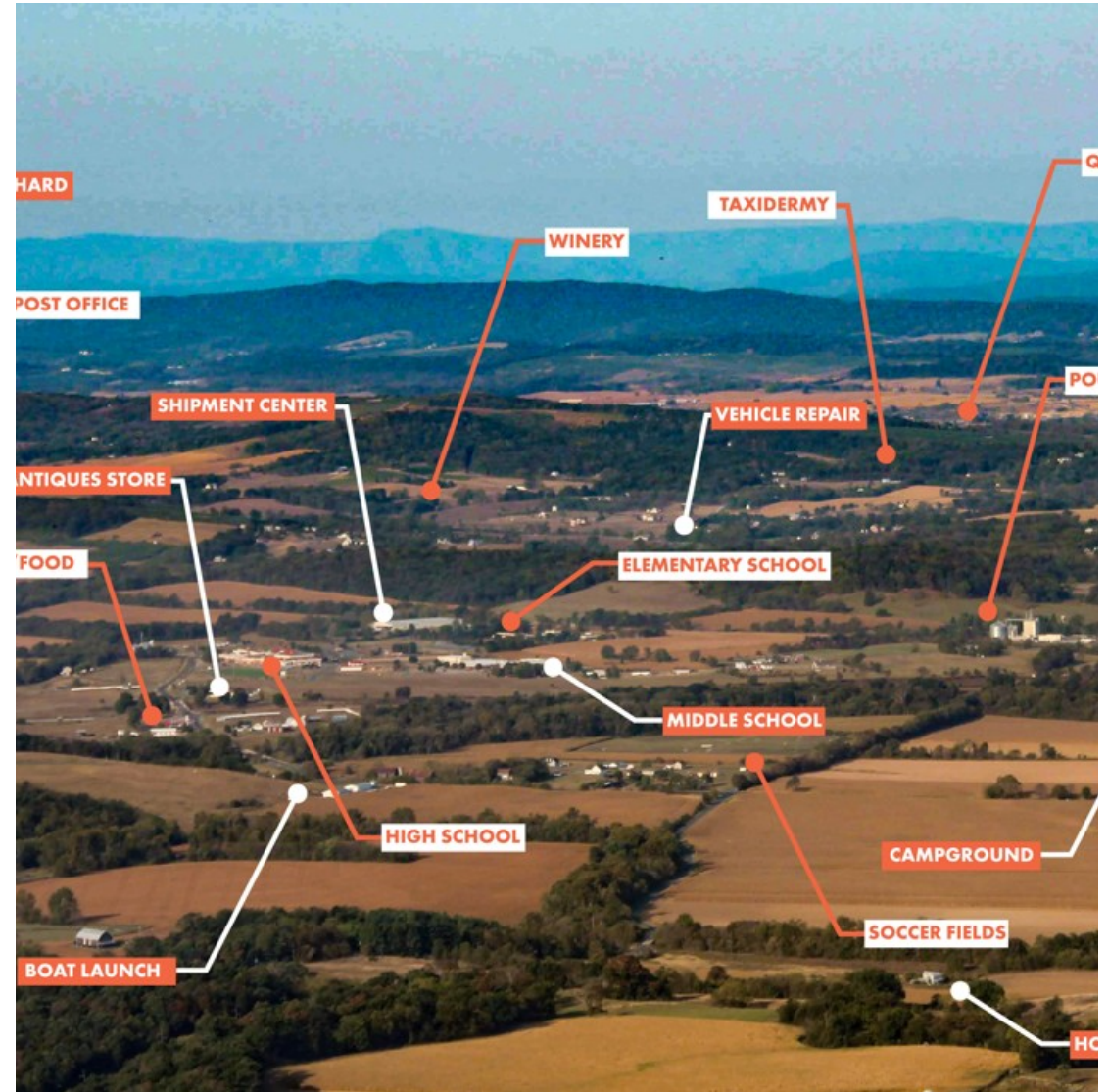
Grow local: production and exchange need one another

GROW LOCAL Food, timber, energy, water, recreation, skills, and entrepreneurship become a local economy when they have local routes to value.

BUY + MAKE LOCAL Compact towns concentrate markets, services, institutions, repair, housing, and public life close to the people who use them.

PROTECT THE EXCHANGE Working land and walkable centers reinforce one another; neither is a leftover landscape for the other to consume.

AVOID THE TRAP Suburbanization can weaken both by consuming rural land without producing a complete place or a durable local economy.



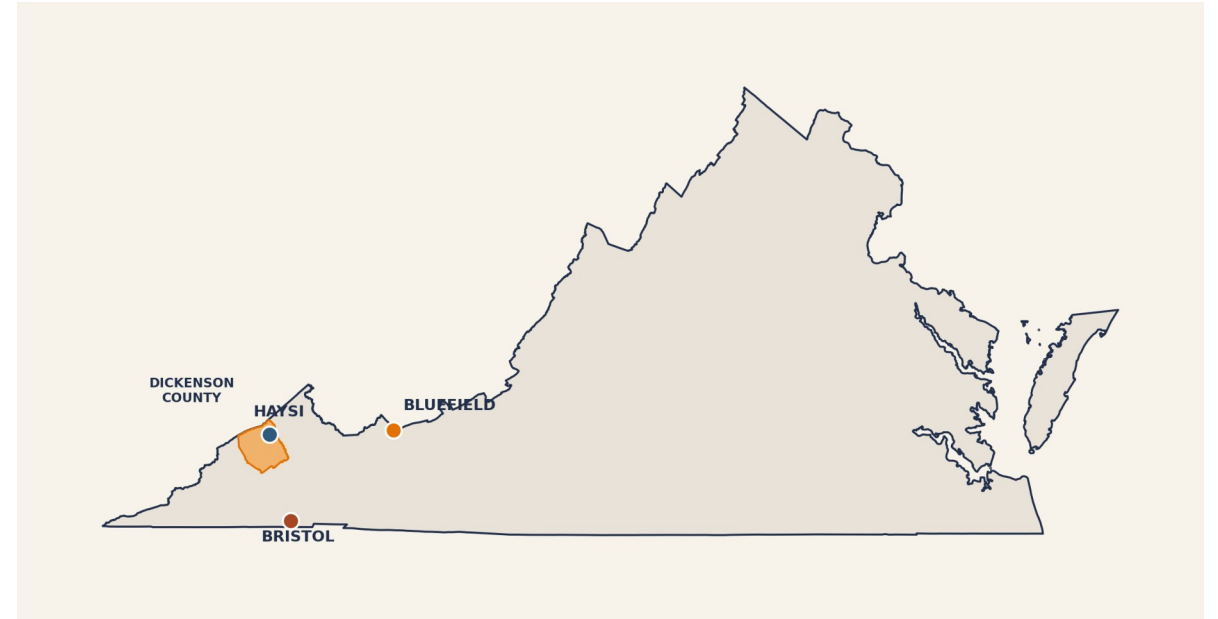
Three Virginia relationships. One shared classroom.

Before we pitch any project, locate the places and understand the scale of the communities that have invited us in.

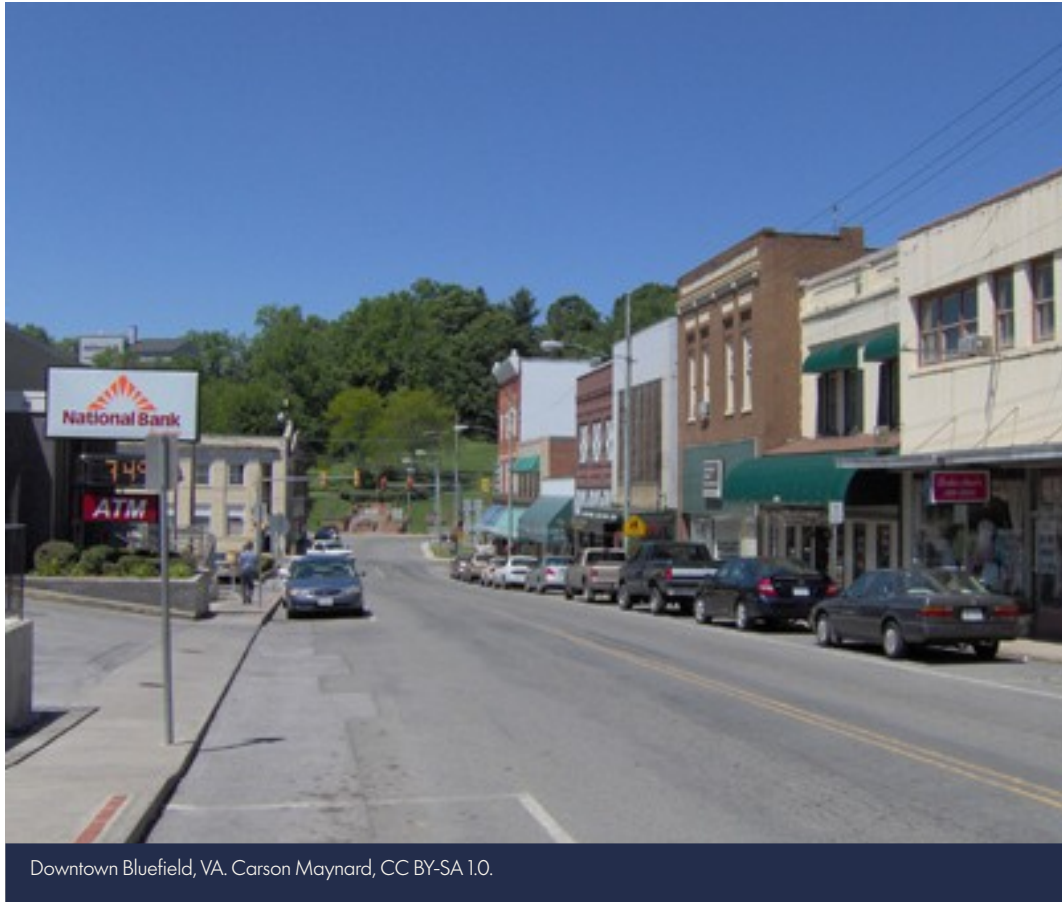
BLUEFIELD A border town in Tazewell County.

DICKENSON + HAYSI A mountain county and a river-confluence downtown.

BRISTOL A border city with a shared downtown corridor.



Bluefield, Virginia



A small border town beside the City of Bluefield, West Virginia. Its historic commercial core, utility systems, and relationship with Bluefield University make local planning inseparable from regional connection.

2024 ACS POPULATION

4,979

MEDIAN AGE

42.2 years

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$54,041

Bluefield, Virginia

FIELD PHOTOS



Bluefield, Virginia

FIELD PHOTOS



Dickenson County + Haysi



Dickenson County Courthouse. Nathan Yates, CC BY-SA 3.0.

An Appalachian Plateau county of narrow valleys, ridges, and distinct towns. Haysi, population 519, sits at a river confluence and is one of four separate Dickenson project geographies.

2024 ACS COUNTY POPULATION

13,733

MEDIAN AGE

46.1 years

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$47,254



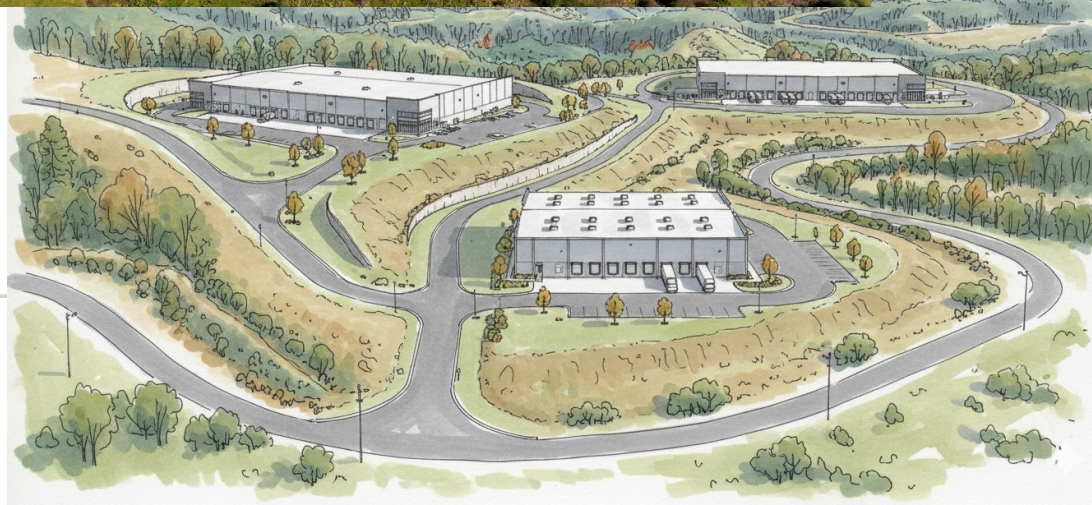
Dickenson County, Virginia

FIELD PHOTOS



Dickenson County, Virginia

RED ONION VISUALIZATION PHOTOS



Clintwood, Virginia

FIELD PHOTOS

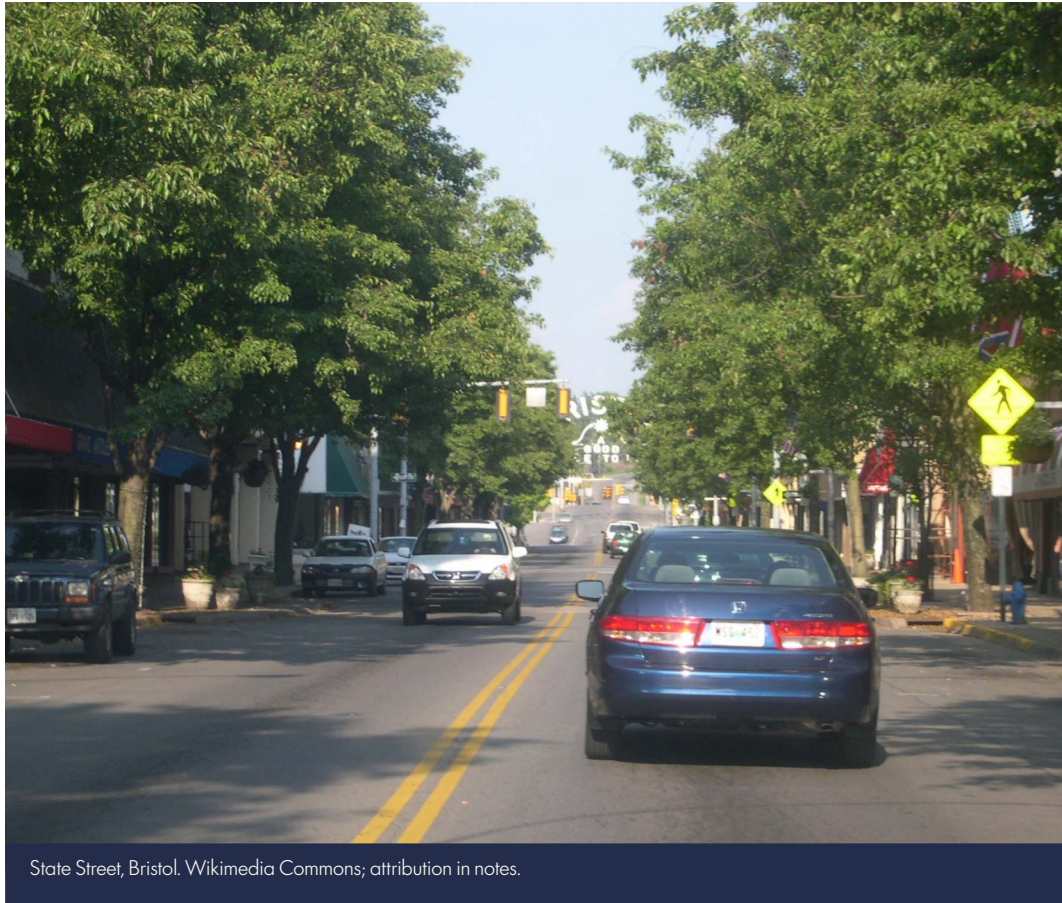


Haysi, Virginia

FIELD PHOTOS



Bristol, Virginia



State Street, Bristol. Wikimedia Commons; attribution in notes.

Bristol's State Street is both a downtown main street and the Virginia-Tennessee boundary. That shared condition makes public space, commerce, culture, and coordination visible in a single corridor.

2024 ACS POPULATION

16,849

MEDIAN AGE

43.4 years

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$50,404

Six possible project responsibilities

BLUEFIELD

One integrated comprehensive plan, with client-approved GIS, sidewalk, code, design, utility, and university workstreams.

HOUSING + INDUSTRIAL

Connected layouts, infrastructure, market, and visual questions.

HAYSI

Downtown concept and implementation assistance.

WORKFORCE + OLD SCHOOL

A workforce hub and feasible reuse of the returned school property.

DOWNTOWN BUILDING

Mixed-use rehabilitation, brownfield, reuse, and funding questions.

BRISTOL

A contingent, bounded assignment only if the City confirms a usable scope.

Listen before you vote

FIRST

Bring Seminar Brief 1 and your definition of rural, urban, and Appalachia.

THEN

Listen to Bluefield, Dickenson, and, if confirmed, Bristol representatives.

FOCUS

The instructor will provide formal project-needs material; community conversation is for active listening.

FINAL VOTE

Submit your individual rank-choice vote at the end of Week 2. Teams are announced in Week 3.

Six possible client projects

- 1 Bluefield, Virginia comprehensive plan
- 2 Dickenson: Haysi concept and implementation work
- 3 Dickenson: Downtown mixed-use building rehabilitation / brownfield study
- 4 Dickenson: Housing layouts plus industrial park renderings
- 5 Dickenson: Workforce Development Hub plus old-school reuse
- 6 Bristol, Virginia: scope to be determined

Bluefield, Virginia: one comprehensive plan

THE PRODUCT An adoptable comprehensive plan that fits Virginia law and responds to local needs.

THE WORK Existing-plan review, public engagement, GIS, sidewalk inventory, zoning and subdivision code assistance, chapter design, utilities mapping, and Bluefield University coordination.

THE CONTEXT Bluefield, West Virginia's recently adopted plan is adjacent context, not the client or jurisdiction.

THE TEAM The largest team, with integrated workstreams contributing to one plan.

Dickenson County: four projects

HAYSI Advance the earlier concept toward usable plans, implementation steps, and possible cost information.

DOWNTOWN BUILDING Study rehabilitation of a mixed-use building with storefronts and approximately nine or ten apartments, including brownfield and funding considerations.

HOUSING + INDUSTRIAL PARK Test alternative housing layouts and expand the industrial park renderings for implementation and marketing.

WORKFORCE HUB + OLD SCHOOL Advance the Workforce Development Hub and explore feasible reuses for the returned old-school property.

Bristol, Virginia: TBD

CURRENT STATUS Bristol is a project option, but the detailed client scope is not yet confirmed.

POSSIBLE SCALE Plan for a small team and a limited, feasible semester product.

DO NOT INVENT The class will use the scope Bristol confirms, not assume a deliverable in advance.

NEXT STEP Hear from Bristol in Week 2 if representatives and a usable scope are available.

Virtual class: listen before you choose

FIRST Students present Seminar Brief 1 and bring their definitions of rural, urban, and Appalachia into the history discussion.

THEN Community representatives speak for at least one hour. Listen for what residents and local partners say they want.

DO NOT INVENT SCOPE The instructor will provide the formal project-needs material.

FINAL QUESTIONS Use the final group period to compare interests, skills, and questions.

FINAL VOTES Submit final project rankings at the end of class. Teams are announced the following week.

BEFORE CLASS Complete the Week 2 readings and arrive ready to discuss and listen.

Questions?