

# Reexamining the Rural– Urban Conundrum

Presented at Rail–Volution: Linking People to  
Opportunity in Small Towns and Rural Regions

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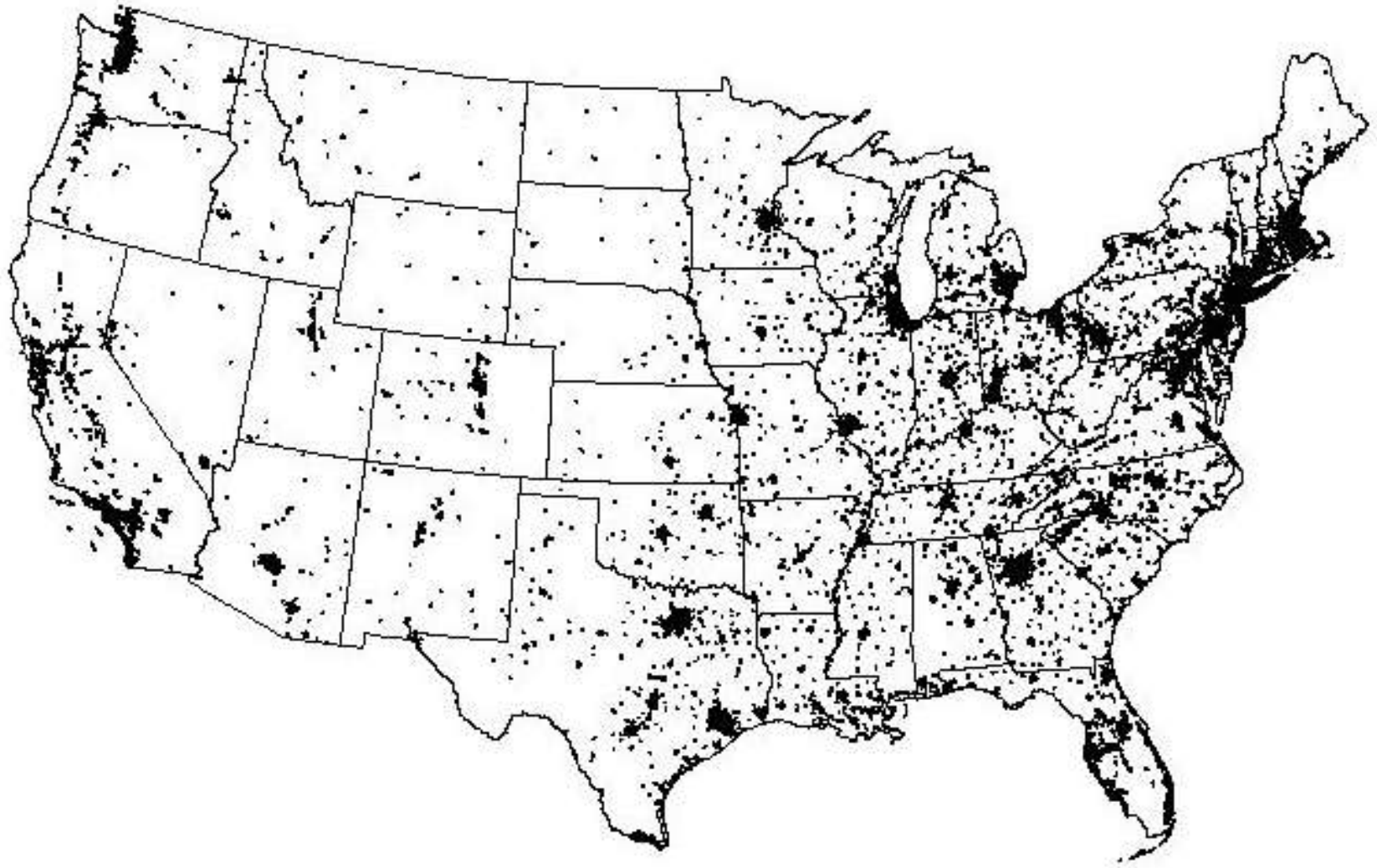
# Two major types of rural definitions

- ▶ U.S. Census Bureau
  - Urban and Rural Areas
- ▶ Office of Management and Budget
  - Core Based Statistical Areas – Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Areas

# Urban and Rural Areas

- ▶ The U.S. Census Bureau defines urban areas:
  - Core blocks and block groups with population density of 1,000 people per square mile.
  - Surrounding blocks with overall density of 500 ppmi<sup>2</sup>
  - Range in size from 2,500 people to nearly 2 million people.
  - **Rural** is everything that is not urban.
- ▶ Based on the 2000 Decennial Census:
  - 59 million people live in rural areas (21%)
  - 222 million people live in urban areas (79%)

# Census Defined Urban Areas



# Is all urban the same, though?



New York–Newark  
Population 1.8 million



Hermann, MO  
Population 2,515

**If these are the official definitions of urban and rural, why are we still talking about it?**

# Pitfalls to using this definition

- ▶ Boundaries are only defined every 10 years.
- ▶ Urban area boundaries don't align with boundaries of cities and towns.
  - There is no governmental jurisdiction over Census defined urban areas.
- ▶ Very limited data at the sub county level makes it difficult to understand conditions and trends, and therefore to target resources.
  - The most comprehensive data is at the county level.
- ▶ Most agree that some “urban” places are really much more rural in character – but what's the right population threshold?

# Core Based Statistical Areas

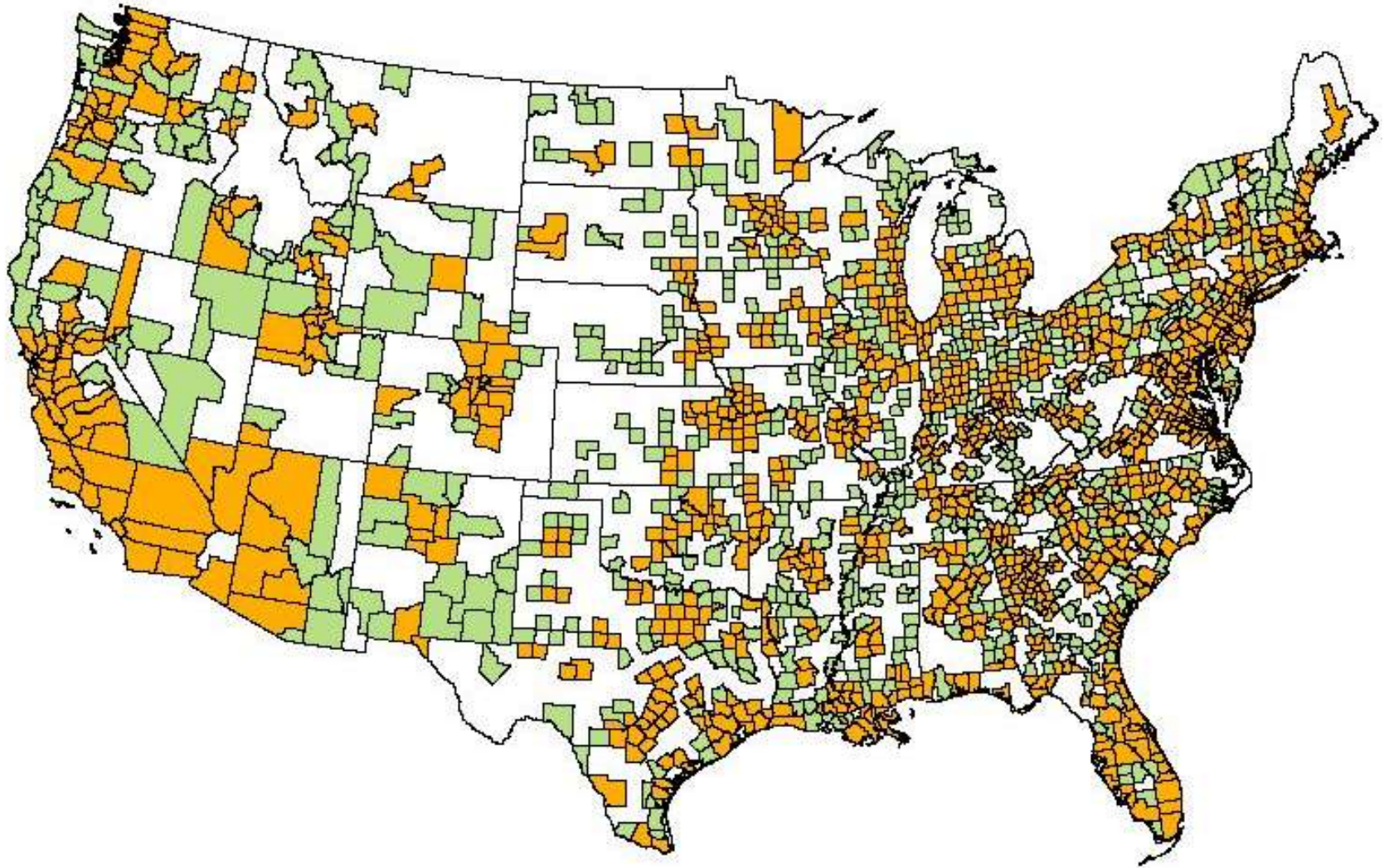
- ▶ Defined by the Office of Management and Budget.
- ▶ Designed to be **functional regions** around urban centers.
- ▶ Classification is based on counties.
- ▶ Three classifications of counties:
  - **Metropolitan, Micropolitan, Noncore**
  - Based on size of urbanized area/urban cluster in central counties and commuting ties in outlying counties.

# Core Based Statistical Areas

Metropolitan

Micropolitan

Noncore



Usually, metropolitan is equated with urban and nonmetropolitan is equated with rural.

So, if metropolitan is urban, then...

This is urban:



Los Angeles, California  
Population 1.2 million

# And so is this:

Armstrong County, Texas  
Population 2,071

Part of the Amarillo Texas  
Metropolitan Area



**And if nonmetropolitan is rural,  
then...**

This is rural:



Loving County, Texas  
Population 55

And so is this:



Paducah, Kentucky  
Population 48,035

# Most Counties are Urban and Rural!



## Coconino County, Arizona

Population 127,450

Flagstaff Metro Area

**Most metropolitan areas contain rural territory and rural people.**

**In fact...**

**Over half of all rural people live in metropolitan counties!**

### **Distribution of Population - U.S. Total**

	<b>Urbanized Area</b>	<b>Small Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Metropolitan</b>	192,064,228	10,338,988	30,176,724	232,579,940
<b>Micropolitan</b>	255,305	14,976,437	14,299,972	29,531,714
<b>Noncore</b>	18,588	4,704,763	14,586,901	19,310,252
<b>Total</b>	192,338,121	30,020,188	59,063,597	281,421,906



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A RUPRI RURAL POLICY BRIEF

Rethinking Federal  
Investments in Rural  
Transportation:  
Rural Considerations  
Regarding Reauthorization of  
the Surface Transportation Act

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April 2011

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# RUPRI's Rural Regional Innovation Principles

- ▶ Recognizing and valuing the interdependence of rural and urban economies and regions, and the vital contributions that rural people and places make to national prosperity and well-being, particularly through the stewardship of the nation's natural and cultural resources.
- ▶ Encouraging systems-based and collaborative approaches to the design and delivery of public services in rural areas, across jurisdictions and sectors, as a direct, pragmatic response to the challenges of long distances, low densities, limited institutional capacity, and declining fiscal resources.
- ▶ Identifying, valuing, and stewarding economic, social and environmental assets of rural regions to create new economic opportunity for all rural people, particularly those in regions of persistent poverty and disinvestment.

# RUPRI's Rural Regional Innovation Principles (2)

- ▶ Focusing on innovation and entrepreneurship as the key to rural economic development, to ensure that rural regions and communities are not only maximizing their economic competitiveness, but also their resilience in the face of natural and economic challenges and/or disasters.
- ▶ Providing the complement to metropolitan economic clusters that thrive on proximity and the strength of interactions, through supporting and growing economic activities that need and value space.

# RUPRI's Rural Transportation Policy Goals

- ▶ Building **capacity** to support local engagement in planning, decision-making and resource allocation
- ▶ Encouraging **innovation** and integration for effective rural transportation outcomes
- ▶ Shifting **resources**, where appropriate, to address the most pressing rural needs and opportunities
- ▶ Creating **integrated** regional planning and implementation
- ▶ Supporting greater attention to **rural “placemaking,”** through quality of life investments

# Indiana's Stellar Communities

*A first of its kind collaboration between:*

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA)  
Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority  
(IHCDA)  
Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)



# Introduction

- ▶ The Stellar Communities program is a multi-agency partnership designed to fund comprehensive community development projects in rural Indiana communities.



# Stellar Funding

- ▶ OCRA: CDBG allocation (built into Consolidated Plan)
- ▶ IHEDA: CDBG–Disaster, CDBG, HOME Investment Partnership Program, Indiana Community Development Fund, Low–Income Housing Tax Credit (RHTC)
- ▶ INDOT: Transportation Enhancement Grants, Standard Federal Transportation Funding



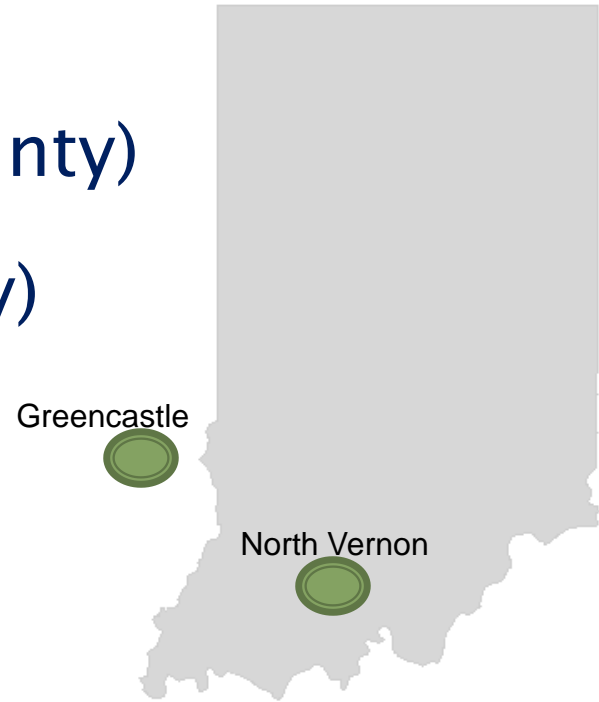
# Strengths

- ▶ Indiana's Stellar Communities Program is a comprehensive community development program focusing on:
  - Regionalism
  - Creating expedited physical transformations
  - Cultivating Relationships/Partnerships
  - Utilizing shared resources
  - Engagement of the community in planning process
  - Acceleration of community economic goals



# Indiana's First Stellar Communities

- ▶ **North Vernon (Jennings County)**
- ▶ **Greencastle (Putnam County)**



# City of North Vernon

- Arvin Redevelopment site – 3.5 Acre Brownfield site, clearing the way for private investment
- Carnegie Library Restoration
- Depot Events Center Renovation
- Downtown Streetscapes
- Historic Uptown Streetscape improvements and home owner repair improvement in the Irish Hill neighborhood
- Close Short Street to construct pedestrian-friendly plaza space
- Main Street Development – mixed use for both commercial and residential development



# Background

- ▶ Primary goal of the Stellar Communities project is to capitalize on Muscatatuck Urban Training Center (MUTC).



## Stats:

- 1,000 acres
- 120 facilities
- 1 mile of tunnels
- 380 acre lake
- 16,000  
trained/yr

# Background



## MUTC Needs:

- ▶ Homes for soldiers
- ▶ Hotel/Conference center

## North Vernon Opportunities:

- ▶ Community appeal for defense industry
  - Quality of life
  - Trails
  - Downtown revitalization
  - Eliminate blight

# Preparing for Stellar



- ▶ Park Theatre restoration and White Front Café were lead projects.
- ▶ Comprehensive Plan in 2009 created a specific downtown strategy.
- ▶ Stellar Communities was seen as the “One Chance” to meet all the needs outlined in the Comp Plan.

# Project Overview



## Goals:

- High impact
- Contiguous area
- Comprehensive
- Eliminate blight
- Pedestrian orientation
- Public space

# North Vernon City Hall

- ▶ Restoration of former Carnegie Library into New City Hall



## Program Benefit:

Government buildings are not eligible for federal funds. IHEDA waived match so project could be completed with local funds.

# Short Street Plaza

- ▶ Creation of a public plaza in the downtown.



**Program Benefit:**  
Project would have been opposed because of parking issues if attempted alone. By completing it as part of the larger program, parking issues can be addressed elsewhere.

# Irish Hill Housing

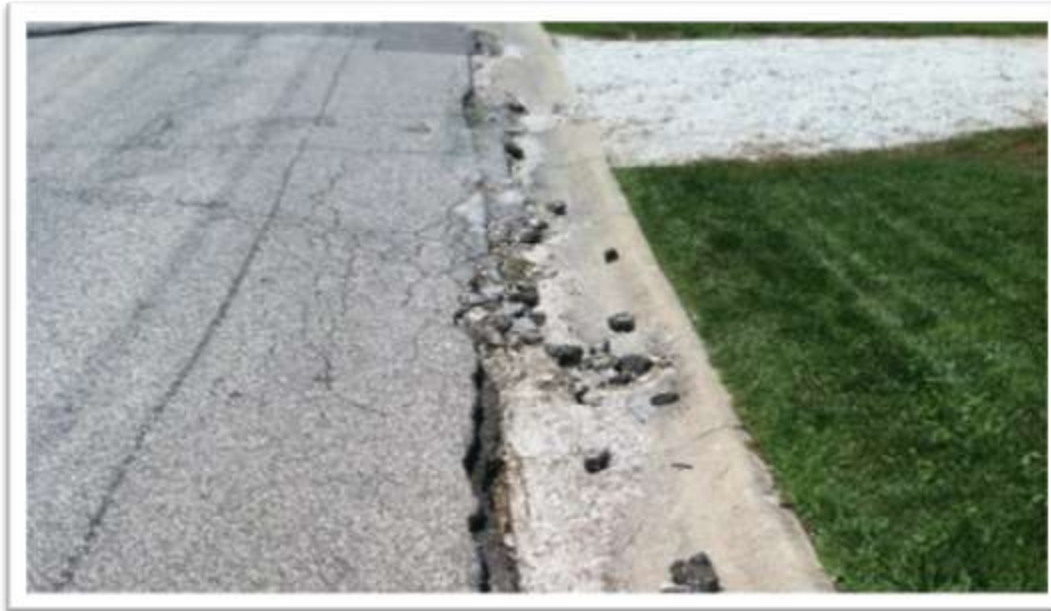
- ▶ Housing improvements in this downtown neighborhood.



**Program Benefit:**  
Combining this with street and sidewalk work will have a transformative impact on the neighborhood.

# Irish Hill Streets and Sidewalks

- ▶ Neighborhood street and sidewalks improvements.



## **Program Benefit:**

City would not have been competitive for grant funds without Stellar.

# Main Street Mixed-Use

- ▶ New mixed use development in the downtown.



**Program Benefit:**  
Before Stellar investment, City would not have been able to attract the attention of developers for this project.

# Arvin Brownfield Remediation

- ▶ Acquisition and clean-up of this downtown brownfield.



**Program Benefit:**  
The City simply did not have the resources to buy and demolish this 4 acre property. With Stellar, the City will be able to prepare the site for private redevelopment.

# Downtown Streetscape

- ▶ Creation of a pedestrian oriented streetscape downtown.



## Program Benefit:

This \$7m project was too complicated and expensive for the city to take on themselves. It would have taken 10+ years to complete on their own.

# Depot Events Center

- ▶ Acquisition of Depot and restoration into an events center.



**Program Benefit:**  
City has repeatedly been unable to acquire the property from the railroad in the past. Stellar provides the funding and influence to get this done.