



# Small Town and Rural Economic Development: A Case Studies Approach

*Scott Loveridge, Peter V. Schaeffer*

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Similar to large cities, rural towns have undergone dramatic change since mid-century. The decline in retailing, changes in manufacturing, and jobs moving abroad have had a tremendous impact. Yet while rural and industrial areas have similar concerns about adjusting to a changing economy, successful urban strategies cannot be blindly transferred to rural areas. Nor can rural areas be considered homogeneous. They differ in ethnic makeup, industrial structure, topography, and natural and human resources. Appreciating the diversity of rural areas, this book presents case studies from different industries, regions, and cultures, providing examples of the activity in small town and rural development, and reflecting on how these strategies might be pursued elsewhere.

This collection provides examples of communities that have attempted to affect their future. Telling the stories of small towns that do not attract the attention of national media, this book celebrates the success, creativity, and vision of rural residents. Also included are examples of less effective rural development initiatives, which can be lessons to analyze and avoid mistakes. Ultimately, what is best in small town and rural development is the result of community engagement. This volume will help people to begin, or strengthen, that process of engagement.

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