

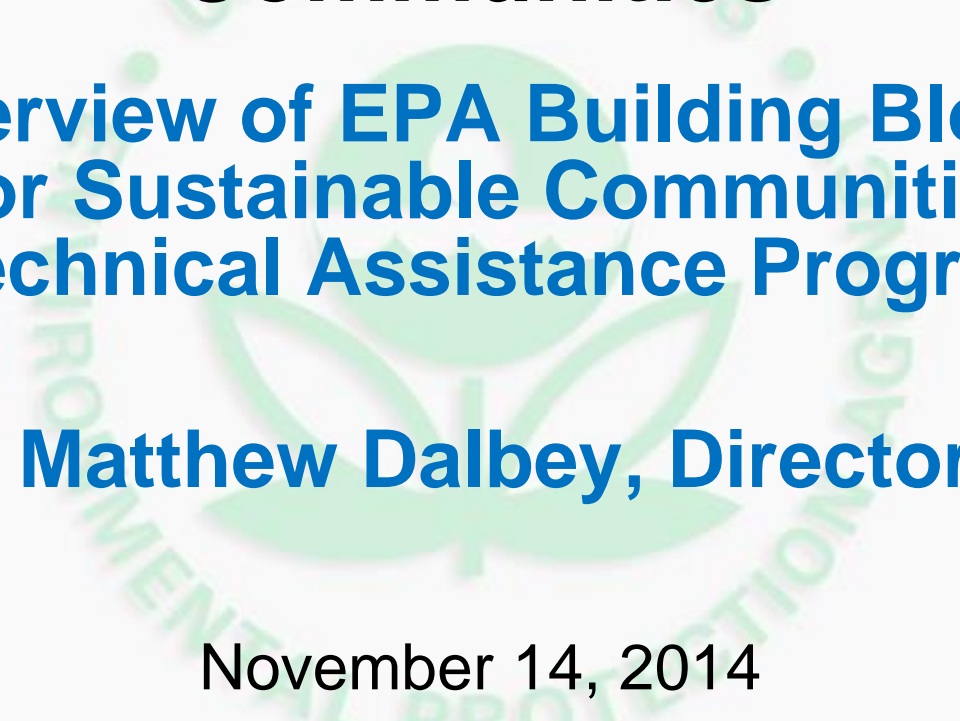


US EPA Office of Sustainable Communities

Overview of EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Technical Assistance Program

Matthew Dalbey, Director

November 14, 2014



EPA's Smart Growth Program



Since 1996, we have been working to address growth and development challenges by:

- ✓ Changing the conversation
- ✓ Working with the willing
- ✓ Working with partners to change the rules



Changing the Conversation



- Annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference
 - Baltimore, Maryland: January 29-31, 2015
 - www.newpartners.org



- National Award for Smart Growth Achievement – since 2002
- More than 150 publications providing research and guidance on all things smart growth

Helping the Willing



- Technical assistance to state and local governments
- Multiple approaches:
 - Cutting-edge issues (SGIA)
 - State policy change (GICD)
 - High visibility design projects (GAC)
 - Tools to address common barriers (Building Blocks)
 - Climate initiatives
 - Partner with other federal agencies and initiatives on technical assistance (FEMA, USDA, ARC, SC2)



Working with Partners



- HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities
- MOA with FEMA
- Projects with USDA, ARC, DRA
- Work with GSA on federal siting
- Interagency initiatives—SC2, Urban Waters, AGO





Smart Growth

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Big challenges + limited resources + a huge
demand for new approaches

EPA Program Overview



- Provides quick, targeted technical assistance to communities on a specific subject using a “tool.”
 - “Tools” have demonstrated results and widespread application.
 - Recent Building Blocks tools helped communities with regional planning, green infrastructure, and transportation options.
- Helps selected organizations, local governments and tribal governments implement development approaches that **protect the environment, improve public health, create jobs, expand economic opportunity, and improve overall quality of life.**



The Beaverton (Oregon) Urban Redevelopment Agency used Building Blocks assistance to help develop a plan for green infrastructure and downtown redevelopment.

Leveraging Federal Investments



Building Blocks maximizes coordination with federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities programs to:

- Amplify investments across programs to connect dollars.
- Prioritize strategic planning for sustainability projects across programs.
- Pilot or create a streamlined version of a larger effort to test out public policies for maximum efficiency.

These benefits can be realized through coordination of federal programs that address climate resilience and adaptation.



Building Blocks Tools

Photos: Top – AECOM; Bottom – Kevin Perry

How We Define a Tool



A tool includes:

- A **'homework' assignment/self-assessment** that draws out data or information that can be analyzed.
 - Generates baseline information about a community and its challenges
 - Gets the conversation going
- An **agenda, presentation, or exercises** that help facilitate discussion, resulting in potential next steps for policy change.
- An **action-oriented process** (not just a series of presentations) that moves the ball forward!



Offered to 20-25 communities:

- Bikeshare Planning
- Supporting Equitable Development
- Infill Development in Distressed Cities
- Sustainability Strategies for Small Cities and Rural Areas
- Flood Resilience for Riverine and Coastal Communities



Tool 1



Bikeshare Planning

Tool Topics

- Feasibility
- System planning
- Financing/business plan
- Operations
- Social equity



Tool 2



Supporting Equitable Development



Tool Topics

- Housing
- Commercial business areas
- Access to jobs
- Environmental Justice
- Community identity

Tool 3



Infill Development in Distressed Cities

Tool Topics

- Policies
- Partnerships
- Perception
- Funding



Tool 4



Sustainability Strategies for Small Cities and Rural Areas

Tool Topics

- Economy
- Engaging community
- Improving health
- Natural habitats
- Agriculture
- Housing
- Revitalizing town centers
- Preserving cultural resources
- Transportation
- Infrastructure
- Energy efficiency



Tool 5



Flood Resilience for Riverine and Coastal Communities

Tool Topics

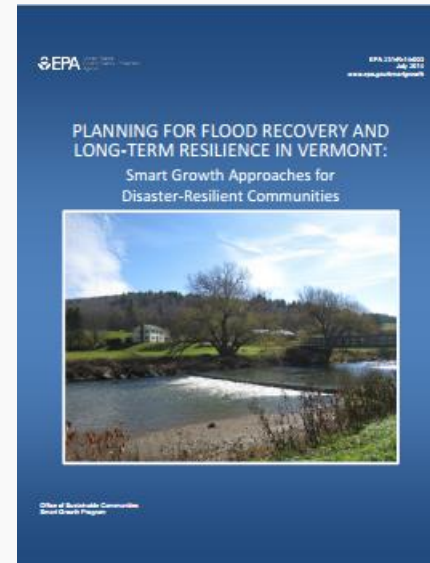
- Protecting vulnerable populations
- Encouraging safer development
- Land conservation



State of Vermont (2012-2013)



Issue: After Tropical Storm Irene, Vermont wanted to add resilience measures into local development regulations, state and local policies, and hazard mitigation plans.



Result: Checklist tool developed from EPA project

- Implementation of strategies has already started.



in Perry

Vermont SGIA: Flood Recovery and Resilience



The state of Vermont requested assistance from EPA to:

1. Identify smart growth strategies to help communities become more resilient to future flooding through their **local plans, policies, & regulations**
2. Assess the degree to which **state agency programs & policies** help or hinder resilience

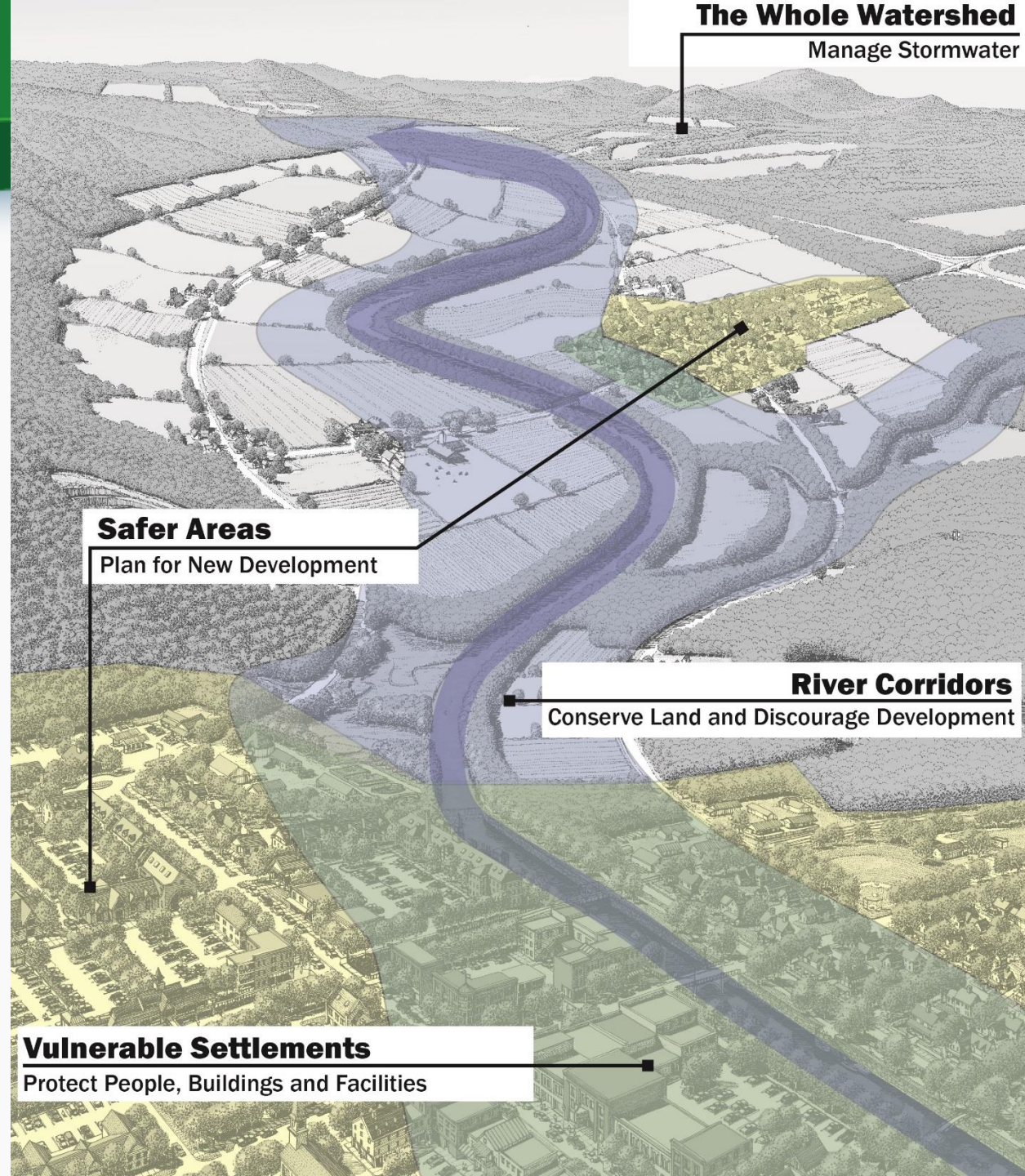
Where and how we build our communities will affect our ability to withstand future floods.



Photos: Top – Jeff Knight, The Valley Reporter;
Bottom – Lars Gange and Mansfield Heliflight

Flood Resilience Checklist: *Framework*



- Reviewed local plans, policies, and regulations, including:
 - Local comprehensive plans
 - Local Hazard Mitigation Plans
 - Development regulations
 - Building codes
 - Stormwater management ordinances
 - Regional plans
- Developed strategies for increasing flood resilience, using a new framework



Flood Resilience Checklist: A Tool for Communities



- Based on the framework that we used to assess local plans, policies, and regulations in two Vermont communities
- Strategies in the checklist are described in more detail in the report
- Full Vermont SGIA report and Flood Resilience Checklist available at:
http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sgia_communities.htm#rec1



Flood Resilience Checklist

Is your community prepared for a possible flood? Completing this flood resilience checklist can help you begin to answer that question. This checklist was developed as part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Smart Growth Implementation Assistance project in the state of Vermont. More information about the project can be found by reading the full report, *Planning for Flood Recovery and Long-Term Resilience in Vermont*, found online at www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sgia_communities.htm#rec1.

What is the Flood Resilience Checklist?

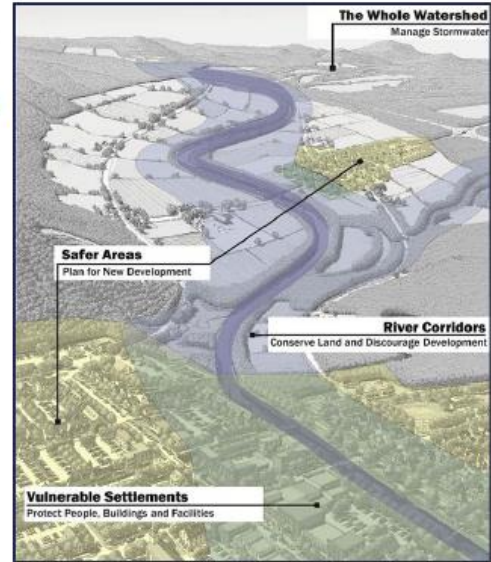
This checklist includes overall strategies to improve flood resilience as well as specific strategies to conserve land and discourage development in river corridors; to protect people, businesses, and facilities in vulnerable settlements; to direct development to safer areas; and to implement and coordinate stormwater management practices throughout the whole watershed.

Who should use it?

This checklist can help communities identify opportunities to improve their resilience to future floods through policy and regulatory tools, including comprehensive plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, local land use codes and regulations, and non-regulatory programs implemented at the local level. Local government departments such as community planning, public works, and emergency services; elected and appointed local officials; and other community organizations and nonprofits can use the checklist to assess their community's readiness to prepare for, deal with, and recover from floods.

Why is it important?

Completing this checklist is the first step in assessing how well a community is positioned to avoid and/or reduce flood damage and to recover from floods. If a community is not yet using some of the strategies listed in the checklist and would like to, the policy options and resources listed in the *Planning for Flood Recovery and Long-Term Resilience in Vermont* report can provide ideas for how to begin implementing these approaches.



The graphic shows a map of a river system with four labeled areas: "The Whole Watershed" (Manage Stormwater), "Safer Areas" (Plan for New Development), "River Corridors" (Conserve Land and Discourage Development), and "Vulnerable Settlements" (Protect People, Buildings and Facilities). Arrows point from each label to its corresponding area on the map.

This graphic illustrates the four categories of approaches to enhance resilience to future floods. Credit: Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

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July 2014

How to Apply?



Key Focus Areas for Letter of Interest

1. Nature of the challenge
2. Relevance of the selected tool

BE SPECIFIC!!!

3. Plan for engaging traditionally underrepresented communities
4. Capacity for implementation
5. Leveraging other federal funding

Key Dates



- **Deadline for Applications: November 20**
- **Mid-December** – Announcement of selected communities
- **February through July 2015** – Community workshops

<http://epa.gov/smartgrowth/buildingblocks.htm>

Questions? Contact Sarah Dale at dale.sarah@epa.gov.