



# YOUR TOWN: Citizens' Institute on Rural Design

# Update

Design Program - National Endowment for the Arts

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## *From the Editor*

In November 2005, the Your Town co-directors—the Faculty of Landscape Architecture at SUNY ESF in Syracuse, the Carl Small Town Center at Mississippi State, and Shelley Mastran—issued an RFP for proposals to produce Your Town workshops in 2006. We were pleased to receive 13 very competitive proposals. In December we selected four sites for this year's workshops: Bogalusa, Louisiana, produced by Louisiana and Mississippi Main Street Programs (April 23-25); Eureka Springs, Arkansas, produced by the city of Eureka Springs (August 13-15); Blairsville, Pennsylvania, produced by the Blairsville Improvement Group (August 24-27); and Spartanburg, South Carolina, produced by Upstate Forever (September 13-15).

The workshop in Bogalusa in April focused on rebuilding small town Main Streets damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Katrina (see the article on the workshop in this newsletter). The Your Town in Eureka Springs will concentrate on designing an Arts and Culture District in downtown Eureka Springs, a tourist-dependent Victorian gem of a town in the Ozarks. The challenges will be appropriate infill development, walkways, signage, parking, and streetscape design. The Pennsyl-

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## ■ Your Town: Bogalusa, Louisiana

Along a rural highway in Louisiana, just south of the Mississippi state line, a Your Town workshop was held for the Hurricane Katrina-damaged town of Bogalusa, Louisiana. The workshop, located at a remote wooded retreat setting, was held April 23-25 and was organized by Louisiana Main Street in conjunction with the Mississippi Main Street Association. The workshop dealt with how to rebuild and reconstruct after a hurricane—specifically how to bring economic development back into a damaged area and address future growth.

The speakers for the conference included Lauren Adkins, with the

National Main Street Center, speaking on Design Changes in Rural America; Pam Breaux, with the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism speaking on cultural development opportunities across the state; and Richard Hawks, Faculty of Landscape Architecture SUNY/CESF who described the Your Town program and set the stage for the workshop.

The town of Bogalusa grew around a lumber mill, which is sited in the physical center of the community. The mill still functions and serves as the major employer of the area. A creek, named the “Bogue Lusa,” runs east to west along the top of the mill site and further



*A workshop participant presents her team's proposal for Bogalusa*

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vania workshop will focus on downtown improvements that will help prepare the community to become a Pennsylvania Trail Town along the State Millennium Trail from Pittsburgh to Harrisburg. Finally, the Spartanburg workshop's focus is abandoned big-box retailers and commercial corridors, as well as the development of non-residential design guidelines.

After this year's workshops have taken place, we will be issuing another RFP for workshops in 2007. Next year, we would like to reach out particularly to the western United States. We are especially interested in states that have not previously hosted a Your Town workshop (Nevada, Utah and Washington). If you know preservation, architecture, landscape architecture or planning professionals in the western states, please send us their e-mail addresses, so we can add them to our RFP solicitation list. If you are interested in being on our e-mail list to receive the RFP, please contact me at:

[shellmast@comcast.net](mailto:shellmast@comcast.net).

Shelley Mastran, Editor

## News from Your Town Communities

**Alabama Your Town** – The next Your Town -Alabama workshop is June 21-23, 2006. Ed McMahon will deliver the keynote address. Information about the workshop is on [www.yourtownalabama.org](http://www.yourtownalabama.org). All alumni—some 450 people—are invited to join this 14th class for a rejuvenating experience with Ed and to encourage newcomers to Your Town to have faith in themselves and their dreams for their communities.

**Driggs, Idaho** – Building on the success of Your Town, the cities of Driggs and Victor, Idaho, were selected in early 2006 to receive technical planning assistance from the EPA's Smart Growth Implementation Assistance program. The goal of this project is to provide Driggs and Victor with policy and code options that encourage compact, mixed-use development and walkable neighborhoods along the Hwy 33 corridor (Main Street in each town) and prevent placeless auto-oriented sprawl. The assistance will include policy and code audits and an analysis of the market conditions for smart growth development.

Driggs has also recently adopted a new set of Commercial Design Standards and Guidelines. This 70-page appendix to the Zoning Ordinance is a giant leap forward in protecting the unique character of the historic small town.



*New standards require that new and infill development downtown should respect the historical narrow lot width and building fronts.*

## We Want Your Success Stories

If you have success stories related to a Your Town workshop, please send us an e-mail with details! For our new web site, we would like to include positive developments that may have been initiated by a Your Town workshop and help other communities with innovative ideas for small towns across the country.

**Kiowa County, Colorado** – In July 2005, several towns in Kiowa and Crowley counties officially designated a 110-mile segment of Highway 96 as the Prairie Horizons Trail. This trail is a segment of the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail that crosses the country from Astoria, Oregon to Yorktown, Virginia. Every spring

## News from NEA: Grant Opportunity, Deadline August 14, 2006

The Design program at the National Endowment for the Arts is welcoming grant applications for “Stewardship,” geared toward projects that protect, share, or celebrate our collective design heritage. These include, among other initiatives:

- Historic preservation activities.
- The exhibition and publication of the design of the past.
- Education and outreach that bring established design practices to American communities.
- Conferences, symposia, and other gatherings that promote the heritage and conservation of design.

Community efforts similar to the Your Town workshop, or that develop from such a workshop, may be applicable. The deadline for Stewardship applications is August 15, 2006.

To apply, first visit <http://www.arts.gov/grants/apply/GAP07/FAQs.html> to learn about the process and application forms. Then, if you plan to apply, please contact design specialist Susan Begley (202-682-5796) to discuss your project before applying.

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*(Bogalusa continued from page 1)*

divides the town into distinct quadrants. As the city grew, civic functions were separated from the traditional shopping area.

The workshop was a great success with the creative contribution of thirty-one participants, who were divided into five small groups that developed strong design solutions to strengthen the connections among the town’s fragmented areas. In addition to linking the governmental buildings with the traditional shopping area, many of the groups recommended the creation of a linear green space along the creek. One group created puzzle pieces out of the different segments of the town that they united into one clear community vision through an entertaining performance piece. Another of the small groups presented new lyrics to a Beatles song, “Come Together, Bogalusa, Right Now!” Their song described how the town needs to connect its disparate parts both physically and socially.

The Mayor of Bogalusa concluded the workshop with a pledge to commit necessary resources to develop ideas discussed during the Your Town workshop. We hope that some of the recommendations will become a reality and that the participants from other towns will use the ideas generated for topics of community meetings in their own towns. Hopefully, the workshop will inspire other hurricane-damaged towns to develop thoughtful and creative ways of moving ahead.



*Participants enjoy the serenity of the Solomon Episcopal Center retreat where the workshop was held*

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## Receive the Newsletter Electronically

We are trying to phase out of delivering this newsletter by regular mail, but for many of you (early workshop attendees), we do not have an e-mail address. If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please send your e-mail address to the Editor at: [shellmast@comcast.net](mailto:shellmast@comcast.net).

## Your Town Web Site

The Your Town program has a new, independent web site. Check it out: [www.yourtowndesign.org](http://www.yourtowndesign.org). The web site is a work in progress, so please let us know how you think we might build and improve it.

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