

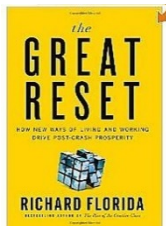
Background and Introduction

Economic restructuring is a constant dynamic throughout the history of human history. This paper, developed for the **Why Entrepreneurship? – Making the Case for Entrepreneurship!** and **Community-Centered Economic Development** papers, provides a summary of regionally based economic crashes created by structural changes in our economy.

Questions and Additional Information

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The Great Reset



In 2010 Richard Florida (author of the *Creative Class* writings) released *The Great Reset – How New Ways of Living and Working Drive the Post-Crash Economy*. While this book is probably not the most read of the many Florida works, we found it very insightful and helpful as we grappled to understand the implications of the Great Recession (2007-2010). In this book Florida documents transformative change that occurred following the Long Depression of the late 1800s and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Bottom line, with traumatic events like depressions and global wars, the “status quo” is up-ended enabling and driving transformative change in economies, societies and governance. We used *The Great Reset* to help us anticipate potential profound change coming out of the Great Recession.

Mega Trends in Global Economic Restructuring

Local Economic Restructuring Events. Higher-impact economic crashes are often driven by global or national forces impacting entire industries and regions. But economic crashes can impact individual communities like the Watts Neighborhood in Los Angeles or what is happening right now in Sidney, Nebraska where the acquisition of Cabela’s Outdoor Outfitters by Bass Pro Shop is creating an economic crash in the small, rural areas of Western Nebraska and Northeastern Colorado.

Framing individual economic restructuring events are mega trends that have transformed world economies over the generations including:

- Hunter and Gatherer Economic Culture
- Settled Agricultural Communities
- Global Trade and Colonization
- First Industrial Revolution
- Urbanization
- Second Industrial Revolution
- Globalization
- World Wars I and II
- Pandemics (i.e. Spanish Flu)
- Natural Disasters
- Information Technology Transformation
- Biotechnology
- Artificial Intelligence

Dominant economic and social activities displaced by innovation and transformation do not go away. There are still isolated “hunter and gatherer” economies and societies in the world. The agriculture and rural economies and societies that dominated centuries of human history are still very important as industrialization and urbanization changed the larger environment. Ultimately these mega trends, driven by innovation and disruption of the status quo, provide a large frame for economic and social crashes.

Regional and Sectoral Restructuring Events. Community-level crashes can devastate a local community. The hollowing out of Detroit has generated massive economic, social and personal adverse effects to core city neighborhoods while the larger Detroit Metroplex has thrived by and large. But regional scale and sector crashes create deeper and wider-spread devastation. Some regions impacted by these transformative changes never really recover to previous levels of prosperity and vitality without massive external intervention. America’s Appalachian region has long been a hard-scrabble landscape. For generations parts of this multi-state region were among the most distressed and challenged regions in America. But massive investment and intervention by the Appalachian Regional Commission (e.g., federal, state and local collaboration) has actually moved many counties from distressed to fairing comparably to the nation.

Crashes

We are using the term **crashes** to describe what happens when massive economic restructuring adversely impacts a community’s or region’s economy and society. An economic and social crash can occur quickly when an entire industry like auto manufacturing in the industrial Midwest contracts rapidly, often followed by chronic and severe distress with associated effects. By effects we mean when economic opportunity erodes significantly, people in a community and region are at-risk and marginalized. Later in this paper we outline how communities and regions manifest their immediate and chronic distress.

A Sampling of Regions and Communities Impacted by Economic Restructuring

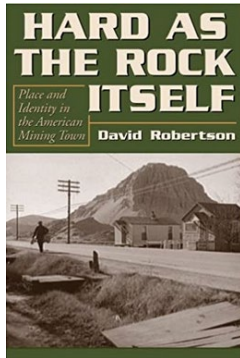
Across America there are entire regions struggling to find prosperity. Let’s review a few case situations to illustrate our point that failing economies are real and widespread making the case for more promising economic development approaches.

Timber and the Pacific Northwest. We begin our tour of failing economies in the Pacific Northwest and its run as a timber economy. Throughout the northwestern United States there are remarkable timber resources. These resources for decades fueled a vibrant lumber economy. Global trade and changes in resource management crashed the timber industry and communities too dependent on timber also crashed.

Watts Neighborhood in Los Angeles. During World War II the Watts Neighborhood in central Los Angeles boomed as a working and middle-class African American community. Drawn by available and good jobs in war related industries in LA, African Americans migrated to take advantages of these opportunities. Racial red lining forced African Americans to live in specific neighborhoods like Watts. As industrial activity moved out of the big cities, this community experienced decline. Over time Watts became known for its gangs, drugs, violence and failure. Many African American families then migrated to other communities in LA where there were greater opportunities. Today Watts is seeking a new formula for success as a Hispanic majority and minority Black community.

Mining in the Rocky Mountain West. Mining has a long history of boom and bust cycles. It is a natural resource extractive industry. Once favorable deposits are mined and markets change, entire communities can collapse. This was the case with Colorado communities like Telluride and Aspen. When these were booming mining towns, fabulous wealth was created. These were also single-industry towns always vulnerable to collapse. Finally, they did collapse and were eventually revitalized by tourism driven by their natural beauty and snow skiing. Not every mining community found a way forward as any historic map of the Rocky Mountain West will show ghost towns or places that were once thriving and now are gone.

Ultimate Boom to Ultimate Bust



David Robertson, in his book *Hard as a Rock Itself, Place and Identity in the American Mining Town*, includes the Tri-State Mining District (i.e., Kansas, Arkansas and Oklahoma) as one of his case studies. For over 100 years this region was a major supplier of lead and zinc. It was prosperous and generated amazing wealth during its century-long run. Beginning in the pre-World War I period, lead and zinc deposits were discovered, and mining began. During World War I this region was referred to as the “arsenal of democracy” as it produced inputs for the bullets and shells essential for the war effort. Production continued through World War II and the post-war period for a time. Today, this district has economically collapsed, and many communities are environmental death zones.

Farming and Ranching in the Great Plains. Within America’s vast Great Plains Region (e.g., from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains) bison and grass have been replaced with intensive and commodity-based production agriculture. This region is very productive but is overly dependent on the single industry of agriculture. Because much of this agriculture is commodity based, producers and the communities that rely on them are “price takers.” A commodity-based economy is always vulnerable to market changes.

Dairy and Wisconsin. Historically, family-scale dairy operations are like family-farm scale hog production, a high-value farming activity with potential for value-added activities such as cheese making. Regions of the country such as Wisconsin, parts of New York and rural California with heavy concentrations of dairy operations, supported thriving communities. As is the case with much of agriculture, small-and medium-sized and family-operated dairies are being forced to the sidelines as automation, low prices and intense competition are driving consolidation and closures. The ripple effects of dairy industrialization are impacting related communities just as has been the case with corn, soybean and cotton production areas.

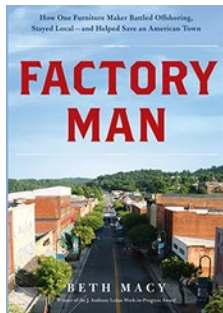
Auto Making and the Rust Belt. Following World War II and way into the 1970s, America’s automobile industry was king worldwide. But as the world recovered from World War II, other nations like Japan, Korea and Germany began to challenge American automakers’ dominance. At the same time auto manufacturing was moving south in the United States. Combined, these two trends resulted in massive consolidation in the industrial Midwest, costing these communities hundreds of thousands of good jobs. For a deeper look at the impact of a community losing a major auto plant, check out Janesville, Wisconsin.

Atlantic City, New Jersey. Failing economies can hollow out communities like Detroit and Atlantic City. Atlantic City had been struggling to find the formula for prosperity for decades. As a community it bet on gaming as a pathway forward to revitalization. For a while this strategy worked creating economic activity, jobs and local taxes. However, changes in state gaming laws that expanded gaming throughout the United States negatively impacted Atlantic City.

Apparel in the South. Southern U.S. apparel manufacturing grew as northern manufacturers sought lower cost labor, land and less regulation. But the apparel boom in the south was short-lived as lower cost production areas in the world drove offshoring and loss of plants and jobs in the south. International competitors in Mexico, Latin America and the Far East began to rapidly capture the apparel manufacturing market.

Fisheries in New England. Nearly every natural resource extractive industry in the United States is struggling and is undergoing massive restructuring. This has occurred with the northern Atlantic fishing industry and its coastal communities that are dependent upon generations of family-owned fishing companies. As is often the case, these economic activities do not disappear, but the level and profitability of these activities diminish, adversely impacting the vitality of the communities and regions dependent upon them.

The Collapse of Furniture-Based Economies



Beth Macy, in her book the *Factory Man*, chronicles the story of Bassett Furniture Company and the demise of mass furniture making in America. Restructuring of furniture making is a long story as epicenters of furniture making in the Northeast and Midwest moved to labor sources and lower-cost manufacturing climates in the southeast (e.g., Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia). In a remarkable short period of time, hundreds of furniture manufacturers and hundreds of thousands of related jobs were destroyed beginning in the 1980s. Changes in international trade and the emergence of cheap Asian furniture destroyed entire communities and industries.

Textiles and Furniture in the Southeast. Beginning in the post-World War II period, the South emerged as fertile ground for mass manufacturing rooted in semi-skilled labor. Compared to New York City, Chicago or other industrial communities in the Northeast and Midwest, the South offered lots of low-cost labor, land, incentives and industry-friendly environments. Certain industries like textiles, apparel, furniture and carpets all gravitated to new locations in the south whether in the Virginia-Georgia corridor or in the deep south states. Bottom line in what amounts to about a generation, the South began to lose its competitive edge and American companies began to offshore manufacturing operations to developing countries where costs and regulations were lower, and incentives were higher.

How Crashed Regions Manifest Distress

Crashed economies create crashed societies with profound implications. Next let's explore what happens when a community or regional economy crashes.

The Great Irish Famine (the Great Hunger)



Between 1845 and 1849 Ireland experienced what is referred to as the Great Famine or the Great Hunger. Overly dependent upon the potato as a food staple, the potato blight destroyed the ability of Ireland to feed its rapidly growing population. The impacts were profound with an estimated one million Irish residents dying and another million residents emigrating. Overall, Ireland's population contracted rapidly by 20% to 25% during this period. Lacking a sufficient safety net, death, survival and emigration is how this society dealt with this crash. For American communities in the Post-World War II period, the governmental safety nets (such as income assistance, Medicaid, food assistance (SNAP), unemployment benefits, work retraining, housing assistance, etc.) mitigated the dramatic effects of outright death. Nevertheless, with the most American recent crashes, communities and regions are witnessing rising deaths due to crash-related at-risk behavior and dropping national life expectancy rates punctuating how local and regional crashes are now impacting national wellbeing indicators.

When an economy crashes and moves into a period of chronic and severe distress, often the embedded societies associated with these economies also crash. Then there is a progression as residents and societies cope with crashed economies including the following major immediate structural reactions.

Rising Generational Poverty. A crashed economy or even an under-performing economy creates less and weaker economic opportunities for residents. Under these circumstances poverty typically rises. If there is family and social "stickiness" (residents who tend to stay and not emigrate), multi-generational poverty can root (versus more short-term poverty when someone is unemployed for a brief period of time). This multi-generational poverty has been the case in Appalachia, the Black Belt and core city neighborhoods that have significantly higher poverty, and particularly deep poverty rates.

Chronic and Severe Unemployment, Under-Employment and Workforce Disengagement.

Unemployment and poverty are very connected. Living with safety nets can enable survival but rarely creates prosperity. Neighborhoods, communities and regions that have crashed or crashing economies create unemployment, under-employment and often workforce disengagement.

When these conditions persist over years, we see chronic and severe outcomes. This reaction to a crash is particularly devastating in communities and regions dependent upon one or two major sources of economic activity. If the only really good jobs are in the coal mines and those jobs disappear, there are fewer options for meaningful work that can produce a living wage. In turn, over time these conditions can erode the vitality of families and entire societies as residents shift from meaningful and respected work to other pursuits like gangs, substance abuse and criminal behavior.

Mullen and Macke Family

Family was always so important to my Dad. He was one of seven brothers. These brothers and their wives were like a deeply connected clan. As a young child my Dad and Mom were doing very well in Sterling, Colorado. They owned a business and were middle class. But Dad was driven to be closer to family and we moved to Mullen, Nebraska (population of 459 in 2017). Mullen is a wonderful ranching community, but economic opportunity is limited. As a kid I was not fully aware of what was happening

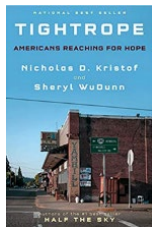
but now I understand that no matter how hard my folks worked, they fell further and further behind. When we moved to Ogallala, Nebraska (population 4,538 in 2017), I remember a borrowed farm truck and a gift from Father Whalen in Ogallala--we could live free in the abandoned rectory if we would fix it up. At that point we were poor, but not generationally poor. Dad and Mom believed that there were more economic opportunities in Ogallala. With resilience and hard work, they rebuilt their lives and once again afforded me and my siblings a middle-class life.

Outmigration. Emigration or outmigration has long been a way to cope with economic and social crashes. The Irish Potato Famine drove one million Irish residents to leave what knew and loved to unknown parts of the world. Today's refugees, whether from Central America or the Middle East, are emigrating out of desperation in hope that somewhere else can offer hope and opportunity.

For some time now in rural America we reference "brain drain" or the idea that the "best and brightest" leave for greener pastures in the cities, while those who stay behind are somehow less capable. *This is personal with me because during my senior year, my high school guidance counselor made the statement that he thought I was smart enough to get out and that I should consider joining the military or maybe college. My parents thought the same and encouraged me to leave even though that was not my first choice.* Our field experience challenges the "brain drain" theory. What we have observed is those who leave have the capacity to vision an unknown future and are willing to take the risk by leaving. In fact, some of the "best and brightest" choose to stay and find a way to their futures.

Beyond Poverty and Unemployment – Societal Impacts

Chronic and severe poverty and unemployment create impacts that adversely affect the wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and entire regions. When economic crashes occur, there are a whole set of societal impacts as well. The following list provides a sampling of the fallout that can happen to residents and a community when there is an economic crash.



Tightrope – Americans for Reaching Hope

There is extensive research and writings on the rise of at-risk residents driven by fundamental changes in American society and economy. Researchers and authors Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn have recently published a powerfully important new book titled [Tightrope – Americans for Reaching Hope](#) about the crisis in working-class America. We recommend this book as essential background reading.

Language. This is a sensitive topic. For some we are in denial. For others we see this as a personal failure issue. Ultimately, we are talking about our neighbors in crisis and suffering. We are trying to find the right language to describe what is happening. We all need some grace and help in finding the right words to describe this work.

Personal and Community Threats and Adverse Impacts

The Mental Health Connection. Some at-risk persons have mental health challenges. There is a powerful connection between mental health and at-risk behavior. As an example, veterans' groups, the Veterans Administration and communities across America have come together to address homelessness. This has been a comprehensive strategy that has required other players and solutions like

veteran courts, counseling, peer support groups and so much more. Chances are good that mental health is an issue and opportunity for this initiative.

Personal Costs. There are powerful ramifications both personally and at the community level with at-risk residents. First and foremost, this is a personal tragedy impacting millions of Americans nationwide. At-risk residents, their families and immediate communities are experiencing profound costs including:

- Loss of personal and economic self-sufficiency
- Rising homelessness
- Dramatic increases in substance abuse
- Rising risky behavior (e.g., drinking and reckless driving)
- Increasing criminal behavior and incarceration
- Domestic violence
- Damaged and often destroyed families
- Ultimately, rising premature death and disability

The book by Kristof and WuDunn graphically illustrates with real people and communities these tragic events playing out. All communities, including those residents not at-risk are also impacted by this trend. The larger community, state and national players have strong self-interests in finding and supporting better solutions to turn the tide on rising at-risk residents.

Hardship Related Transfer Payments. One illustration of the cost of at-risk residents are Hardship Related Transfer Payments. Hardship Related Transfer Payments include Medicare, welfare and unemployment assistance. Largely paid by federal and state governments, not local communities, this is just one indicator of the seriousness of at-risk resident trends. Based on our work throughout the continental United States, we are finding counties where Hardship Payments rank in the top ten, top five and even top three sources of household earnings. Reflecting both structural changes and the legacy of the Great Recession, in many cases Hardship Payments have increased by double digits representing one the fastest growing sources of household earnings for these communities.

Community Costs. Communities are also being impacted dramatically by this trend. We believe there is strong self-interest for local and regional communities to band together to find pathways to solutions. Some of the community costs connected to this community threat include:

- Lost community opportunity
- Community financial costs
 - Healthcare
 - Crime
 - Law enforcement and courts
- Loss of community hope and optimism
- Challenges and stressed institutions
 - Neighborhoods
 - Schools
 - Criminal Justice
 - Healthcare including mental health

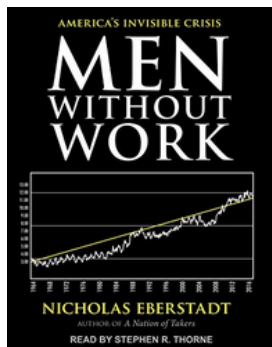
There are many causes for the at-risk resident trend. Next, we will explore some of the larger drivers moving more Americans into the at-risk world.

Causes or Drivers of the Crisis

Structural social, economic and political change is disruptive. *Disruptive* is a sanitized descriptor, and by disruption there can be profound effects impacting individuals, communities and families. Our world is constantly undergoing transformation involving structural changes often driven by innovation and technology. Our human economy has undergone numerous revolutions as we progressed from hunters and gatherers, to farmers, to industrialization, and now rapid change enabled by information and biotechnology.

For rural communities and regions often overly dependent on one or two major industries (e.g., agriculture, manufacturing, mining, energy, forestry, tourism, etc.), economic restructuring in these industries can create very disruptive change. In other work we have done as part of the Lilly Endowment GIFT VII planning grants in Indiana, we have talked about major trends at work creating structural change including automation, outsourcing, offshoring, trade policy, electronic commerce and the gig economy. For Jay County, two of its most important legacy industries (i.e., agriculture and manufacturing) are experiencing massive structural change. A primary impact of this restructuring is the loss of lower skill jobs and in some cases, the real compensation reduction for the jobs remaining. Dislocations from manufacturing job losses and changes have created chronic poverty and underemployment, deepened poverty including generational poverty and increased at-risk behavior by those impacted by these changes.

The Male Breadwinner Crisis



Structural change and job dislocation in more traditional male-dominated industries like manufacturing, mining and timber have generated a crisis for many who have lost their ability to serve as their family's breadwinner. Unfortunately, this crisis is not new. When the traditional way of life and male roles among America's Plains Indians was dramatically and rapidly destroyed, social order quickly evolved into chaos with alcoholism and other high-risk coping behaviors. For over a century, Native communities have been working hard to recover with much yet to be done. The same is true for African American communities. The Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles was a thriving middle-class Black community. But when the industrial jobs that supported these communities left, there was a societal breakdown resulting in cultures of substance abuse, violence, gangs and pre-mature deaths. These two cultures survived in part due to women keeping things together. For further reading on this topic, see *Men without Work, America's Invisible Crisis* by Nicholas Eberstadt, 2016. Templeton Press. ISBN13: 978-1-59947-469-4.

When people in communities lose purpose and the ability to support themselves, at-risk behavior generally follows. At-risk behavior – drugs, violence, workforce disengagement, etc. – then creates sub-communities that are deeply challenged. Multigenerational poverty for example requires extraordinary support to break the cycle and return to greater personal, family and community wellbeing.

Distressed communities produce distressed residents. Distressed communities are created by chronic and severe unemployment, multigenerational poverty and/or have high rates of outmigration. For those with courage and pathways to leave, leaving can be a way out. Since the late 1970s income and wealth inequality has increased steadily and significantly in the United States. More and more Americans are living on the edge or one paycheck from crisis. We now have record numbers of our neighbors who are working poor or low income or have dropped out of the workforce. Creating comprehensive pathways to personal and community health and wellbeing may seem a bridge too far. But as is the case with all overwhelming challenges, there are emerging solutions. The question is whether the scale of these challenges is so great that we become unable to act.

Beyond Emigration and Outmigration

Whether the economic crash is sudden (e.g., a major employer closes shop) or slow developing (e.g., increased automation and displacement of workers over time) some parts of America deal with these crashes through emigration (e.g., moving from one country to another) or outmigration (e.g., moving from one part of America to another state or community). America is full of migration trends. Here are a few major ones to provide a context for our discussion:

- **Western Migrations.** From America's first European settlements, there is a long history of western migrations. As European-Americans and new waves of immigrants came to America, these western migrations continued and grew. These migrations also drove genocide and displacement of indigenous people. Following the Civil War, veterans and other eastern residents flooded into the Great Plains and points west driven by federal policies like forced reservations for Native Americans, the Homestead Act and later the Kincaid Act.
- **African American Migration from the South to the North.** Beginning with Reconstruction following the Civil War and the emergence of a Jim Crow South, two trends combined to drive a massive African American migration from the South to North and from rural areas to cities. Industrialization in the North and cities in the South created new demands for labor. Many employers, while still discriminating based on race with wages, actively sought African American workers to fill their growing workforce needs.
- **Rural to Urban Migrations.** Since the turn of the last century (e.g., 1800s to the 1900s) there has been a massive and continued rural to urban migration. As urban areas, and particularly metropolitan corridors, have grown, significant geographic areas of what was once rural America have become suburbanized and urbanized.
- **Farm to City Migrations.** The combined trends of urban industrialization and the automation of natural resources industries like farming drove a massive migration of farm and ranch residents into area towns and cities. In my home state of Nebraska, small cities like Norfolk and Columbus grew large manufacturing and logistics industry bases through home-grown and attraction efforts. Thousands of relatively well-paying jobs were created since the 1930s in these cities. Farm and ranch-based workers displaced by automation or seeking greater economic opportunity migrated by the thousands from the countryside and smaller villages to these regional employment hubs. Between the 1930s and well into the 1990s this farm to city migration undermined the viability of more rural counties and villages driving growth in larger, but rural centered small cities.

Outmigration and associated depopulation, whether in upstate New York or Nebraska has undermined rural community vitality and even viability. When rural communities or even cities like Akron, Ohio or Detroit, Michigan experience chronic and severe depopulation, there are a series of impacts that can challenge and undermine these communities and their ability to return to greater vitality, demographic health and prosperity.

Two Powerful Migration Trends

[Ben Winchester](#) with the University of Minnesota, Randy Cantrell formerly with the University of Nebraska and others are documenting an important counter trend to the larger rural to urban migration trend. Their work documents a counter trend where 30-year-olds are moving back to rural communities. Some are returning home wanting to raise their children in places like they were raised, others are coming home to run farms and small businesses or care for aging parents or grandparents. There are many motivating factors. This trend is an opportunity for rural communities prepared to welcome and enable these 30-year-olds to return to rural America.

At e2 we are seeing a second counter trend where retiring Boomers are moving from larger cities to more rural communities. Our insight is based on our field observations. We do not have the statistical evidence that Ben and Randy have with respect to returning numbers of 30-year-olds. Nevertheless, we believe this trend is real and accelerating. In America 10,000 Boomers a day are retiring, and significant numbers are migrating in retirement. Not all of these retiring Boomers fit the idea of moving to retirement communities in Florida, Arizona or California. Rather they are seeking community with appropriate amenities where costs are lower, congestion is limited and for some, they are wanting to return to their roots. Combined, these two counter migration trends represent a huge development opportunity for rural America.

The following is a short list of what can happen to rural communities and entire rural regions when there is either sudden or chronic and severe outmigration and resulting depopulation:

- Markets contract undercutting consumer spending which adversely impacts the viability of local businesses.
- Available workforce contracts undermining the potential labor force for area employers that need workers.
- Tax bases can be eroded undermining the ability of city, county, schools and other local government agencies to sustain needed and desired services.
- The community can experience disinvestment with unkept houses, vacant houses, vacant and deteriorating commercial buildings, eroding public infrastructure from sidewalks to water systems.
- Rural communities can experience eroding disposable personal income and household wealth.

- Often those leaving are not the best and brightest, but rather those who are risk takers. This can result in more insular and extremely conservative communities that are threatened by change and slow to take the actions needed for renewal.
- There is also a psychological set of impacts where community attitudes turn negative and a sense of hopelessness roots in the community culture.

A Culture of Hopelessness

For communities and regions experiencing chronic and severe outmigration and depopulation, a culture of hopelessness can root. When this happens, it can lock a community down. Not only does the community have less capacity to envision and sustain a renewal strategy. Powerful forces within the culture of hopelessness can prevent a community from even trying. In extreme cases substantial and sustained external assistance may be needed to support the nucleus of community leaders and residents who are committed to necessary change. Just as it has possibly taken decades to devolve into a culture of hopelessness, a generational commitment is required to move these communities to greater vitality and prosperity. The good news is this transformation from hopelessness to genuine hope is demonstrated in “turn-a-round” rural communities across America.

Every year across America rural communities wait with concern about what their Census population estimate will be. The reality is not that the estimate will show population loss, but how much. Outmigration and depopulation are not destinies for rural communities. Across rural America there are communities and even entire regions that are finding the formula for greater success and revitalization and prosperity. These communities and regions have taught us a lot and continue to inform us as to the essentials for returning to demographic health and renewal.

Conclusion

We hope our paper on economic crashes provides valuable historical insight and can help your community and region in rural America make the necessary commitments for economic and social renewal. Without question this is hard work. But we firmly believe, based on the lessons from communities navigating these waters, that renewal is possible for most rural communities and regions. Additionally, particularly for rural areas largely dependent on narrow economies (e.g., single industries, a few major employers, etc.), economic diversification is foundational. Drawing from lessons learned from more successful rural communities, we believe that entrepreneurship is the single greatest opportunity and pathway to grow a more diverse, resilient and prosperous rural community and region.

We welcome your thoughts. Weigh into this conversation by contacting Don Macke at don@e2mail.org.