

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

Building Upon A Community's Assets

(NAPSA)—Beauty, it seems, can be in the area as well as the eye of the beholder. Revitalization efforts generally have a dual benefit. Not only do they help raise the financial prospects of the area in question, but they can also serve as a jumping-off point for projects of greater scope.

For example, when a community decides to put up the money to revitalize—perhaps to clean up its waterfront or promote its business district—the pride in the community such actions generate often leads to interest in sprucing up the downtown area. Before you know it, surrounding communities are sensing the possibilities and launching campaigns of their own.

That's the principle behind a grant program created by the Appalachian Regional Commission. With an eye toward creating jobs by developing the area's cultural, natural and structural assets, \$250,000 worth of grants will be awarded to communities in order to initiate or expand asset-based economic development activities.

Appalachia already enjoys an abundance of natural assets and heritage resources, from its scenic mountains and small towns to its rivers, forests, music and crafts. These wide-ranging resources can play an important role in building a strong and sustainable economy, bringing jobs and prosperity to rural communities while preserving their character.

The grants will be awarded to programs that focus on three aspects of the area's appeal:

- **Cultural Assets.** Projects which develop the culture and heritage of Appalachia can include the creation of heritage trails, the establishment of apprenticeship programs and the utilization of Web-based or traditional retail



Appalachia has great potential for revitalization and a grant program is helping make it happen.

venues to market products as well as to showcase the region's music and narrative traditions.

- **Natural Assets.** Projects developing Appalachia's unique ecological assets and the gateway communities leading there can include white-water rafting, fishing, camping trails and rock climbing. Enhancing Appalachia's natural advantages can also be done through processing specialty food items, specialty fish farming, transitioning to organic products and maximizing sustainable timber harvesting and value-added processing.

- **Structural Assets.** Structural resources such as older buildings and brownfields are often overlooked by communities or perceived as liabilities and finding new uses for old structures is a proven path to economic success. Projects in which communities and businesses integrate development and management practices to leverage what they have—historic buildings, abandoned railroads and old mines—can build and enhance economic vitality.

Information and grant applications are available online at www.arc.gov.