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# News Release

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## **Obama Administration to Help Five Small Communities Revitalize Downtowns through Broadband Service**

### *Cool & Connected to Leverage Internet Investments in Five States*

WASHINGTON – May 5, 2016 – Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced the selection of communities in five states that will participate in the Cool & Connected planning assistance program, an innovative initiative to help people use broadband service for downtown revitalization and economic development.

"Broadband has helped rural communities across the country gain access to improved health care, open the door to educational services and expand business and social opportunities," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "The new Cool & Connected program will help these small-towns use broadband to provide new opportunities for people and businesses in rural areas."

"Cool & Connected supports community revitalization in rural America," said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "By supporting economic growth through broadband investments, rural communities are creating vibrant, thriving places that improve human health and the environment."

Partner communities will receive direct technical assistance from a team of experts to develop strategies and an action plan for using planned or existing broadband service to create connected, economically vibrant main streets and small-town neighborhoods. By combining broadband service with other local assets, such as cultural and recreational amenities, this assistance can help communities attract and retain investment and people, revitalize downtowns, diversify local economies, and improve walkability.

### **Cool & Connected Pilot Phase Partner Communities**

- **Georgetown, Del.**, will explore strategies to leverage new broadband infrastructure serving county facilities to provide public internet access, and to attract and retain businesses downtown.
- **Leon, Iowa**, will develop a strategy for implementing a free Wi-Fi zone in its downtown square to draw more economic activity and provide low-income residents with internet access.
- **Montrose, Colo.**, will combine its new broadband service with other downtown assets, (including a farmers' market) to promote local food access, accelerate main street development, and attract visitors.
- **Toledo, Wash.**, will utilize their new broadband network to support business and tourism downtown that will build on Vision: Toledo - a grassroots coalition of people committed to community revitalization.
- **Tullahoma, Tenn.**, will receive technical assistance to market downtown Tullahoma as a free Wi-Fi zone and develop a physical work-share space to complement new infrastructure investments, and add to the growth of downtown businesses.

Cool & Connected is one of the Obama Administration's community-based initiatives that are helping rural communities develop competitive advantages. In these places federal experts are working side by side with residents and local leaders to create customized solutions; bolstering coordination across agencies and improving how we interact with communities as a 'one Government' partner.

USDA support is provided by the Rural Utilities Service, which provides critical infrastructure including electricity generation and transmission, water and waste water facilities and telecommunications for rural America. Since 2009, USDA has awarded \$6.7 billion for almost 550 projects to improve telecommunications infrastructure in rural communities. EPA support is provided through the Office of Sustainable Communities, which helps communities develop in ways that protect public health and the natural environment by creating walkable, livable, economically vibrant communities, and supporting reinvestment in existing neighborhoods.

For more information on Cool & Connected: <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/cool-connected>

For information on USDA Rural Utilities Service: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/agencies/rural-utilities-service>

For information on EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities: <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth>

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