

A Community Design Resource on the World Wide Web.

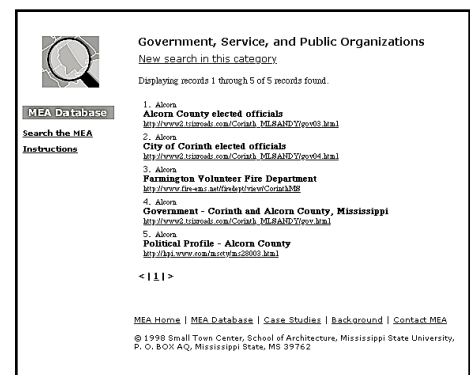
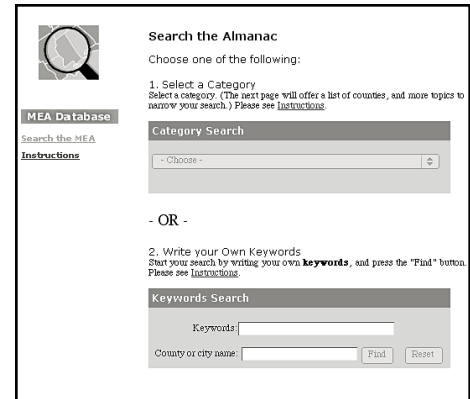
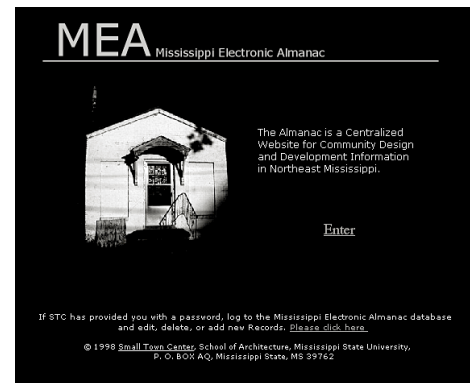
The project was funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission, the CREATE Foundation and the Mississippi State University Office of Research. For further information contact the project director, Nils Gore, e-mail us at info@alamanc.sarc.msstate.edu; or visit the Mississippi Electronic Almanac web-site at <http://alamanc.sarc.msstate.edu>.


Background

The Small Town Center of the School of Architecture at Mississippi State University has developed a centralized information resource for community design in the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) region. This Web-based resource serves as the core of a comprehensive single source for community design and development information for the ARC region of Mississippi and serves as a model for other ARC regions and for other regions of the state. The Almanac is not a mapping or GIS project, although it includes such material, nor is it a bibliographic or indexing project, although it does collect and catalogue information. Instead, it is a web-based compendium of useful and important information from varying sources and of various forms, organized and correlated so that it can be utilized.

This project grew out of the recognition that one of the greatest impediments to successful community design and development is the lack of access to information resources. While numerous state and federal agencies exist to support community development, and while maps, charts, records, plans, aerial photos and other documents exist for all parts of the state and many communities, these resources are widely scattered and for the most part unconnected. Communities, institutions, businesses and individuals seeking to improve their physical environment face an almost insurmountable task in simply getting access to information relevant to their intentions. Once information is obtained it must be coordinated, again a task of often excessive proportions as each document is a unique item in its own format.

Not only do communities face the problem of where to find information they know exists, they also face the problem of not knowing what exists or what might exist. Are there, for instance, case studies of small town redevelopment efforts which illuminate successful strategies and the reasons for their success? Is there a place one can go in order to find out what other communities in the region have done or are doing to improve their towns? If members of a community have questions about development, where can they ask those questions with some expectation of disinterested and unbiased responses? What resources are available for












Appalachian Regional Commission

Welcome

The Appalachian Regional Commission's mission is to be an advocate for and partner with the people of Appalachia to create opportunities for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life.

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mapping a community, what may be mapped, and how are such documents useful?

Project

The Almanac project has focused its attention on 23 counties in Northeast Mississippi: Alcorn, Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, Itawamba, Kemper, Lafayette, Lee, Lowndes, Marshall, Monroe, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tippah, Tishomingo, Union, Webster, Winston and Yalobusha. These counties constitute the north-east portion of the state, and may be distinguished in many ways from the Mississippi delta, the Gulf coast, and the remainder of the state. The economic base, geography, agriculture, demographics, and physical characteristics of these communities create unique problems and opportunities for community development in this region.


The objective of the Almanac is to utilize the design, telecommunications and visualization resources of the Small Town Center to provide three particular kinds of information resources relevant to Mississippi's Appalachian region counties: 1) existing information generated by various public and private agencies, institutions and individuals; 2) new information generated by the Small Town Center which correlates and connects existing resources; and 3) new information resources, particularly digital and visualization resources, which add significantly to the body of information available to assist in community development efforts.

The development of an electronic almanac of the form envisioned involves a number of discrete but interrelated tasks. The Almanac includes the following activities:


- Public Agencies available to serve ARC small town community interests and needs are identified. Descriptions of the nature of these agencies, their mission or goal statements, and the products and/or services they offer are presented.
- Existing physical representations or descriptions of the Mississippi ARC region are identified. Such representations include, but are not limited to, maps, surveys, aerial photography, archival or historical photography, case studies, master plans, zoning ordinances and similar material providing information about the physical nature of the region, counties and communities.
- Professions and professional services relevant to community design and development issues are identified and described.
- Seven communities in the region have been identified as subjects for field analysis and case studies, through the CREATE Common Ground Project. These include Aberdeen, Amory, Corinth, Fulton, New Albany, Okolona and Tishomingo. To date, seventy case studies are presented.

Re-Thinking Downtown Buildings

Case Study #1: Downtown Okolona, Mississippi



There are many empty stores on Main Street. A maintenance program and education on how the buildings could be re-used would be helpful. The buildings need physical attention and the owners need assistance understanding the costs associated with improvements.



In many small towns throughout Mississippi, downtown commercial areas are experiencing a renaissance. Commercial growth at the entrance to many communities have created local citizens to rethink what is important and unique about their towns. Commercial storefront and major architectural buildings found in the downtown are tangible reminders of a prosperous past, and their rehabilitation and reuse can be a sign of hope for future commercial activity in the community.

The traditional commercial storefront can be considered the cornerstone of Main Street. Although downtowns that developed during the same period have similar features, the focus of these

