



# CREATING SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

## ASEEDS INITIATIVE IN DUCK HILL, MISSISSIPPI

EPA offers a range of technical assistance programs that support community revitalization by investing in emerging community-based organizations. This fact sheet highlights how the community of Duck Hill, Mississippi combined EPA technical assistance with other funding to help build a culture of health, trust and sustainability.



### BACKGROUND

In 2018, the Duck Hill community received a two-year, \$300,000 grant from the Southeastern Sustainability Directors Network and the Kendeda Fund. The grant focuses on supporting community development, addressing environmental hazards and improving quality of life in this rural community of about 1,100 people. Local organizations began working together. They formed the Achieving Sustainability through Education and Economic Development Solutions (ASEEDS) Initiative, a comprehensive, community-driven initiative focused on public health, sustainability and economic vitality.

### APPROACH

Early on, ASEEDS adopted EPA’s Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model to facilitate community building, goals setting and partnerships. Through this collaborative planning approach, ASEEDS identified five community goals (see box at right).

### COMMUNITY GOALS

1. Defend against extreme weather events and/or other environmental hazards.
2. Empower residents to become involved in achieving community resilience.
3. Improve public health and overall quality of life.
4. Increase social and economic opportunities.
5. Create a model that people can use in places like Duck Hill.

### LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES

In 2018, EPA selected Duck Hill as one of 13 communities to participate in the Local Foods, Local Places technical assistance program. Local Foods, Local Places helps cities and towns across the country protect public health and the environment. The program engages with local partners to reinvest in neighborhoods as they develop local food systems. EPA provided a consulting team to Duck Hill, and a steering committee was formed that included residents and representatives from public health, academia, elected officials and 11 federal agencies. The nine-month planning process focused on solving food desert issues in Duck Hill and nearby towns. Outcomes include:

- Hosting a two-day planning workshop with 125 participants in June 2018.
- Developing the Duck Hill Local Food and Economic Development Action Plan, currently in the implementation phase.
- Starting a community garden with plans for a community farm to provide food for area schools and the Head Start program.

For more on EPA’s Local Foods, Local Places program, please visit <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/local-foods-local-places>.

### ECONOMIC IMPACTS



Supported a minority contractor – **\$117,000 contract.**



Supported a minority subcontractor – **\$14,000 contract.**



Hired **four** local residents at **\$15 per hour.**



Paid **18** youth creek rangers stipends of **\$10 per hour.**



## STORMWATER FLOOD MITIGATION

To mitigate severe flooding in Duck Hill, ASEEDS installed over 1,000 feet of grey and green infrastructure, installed a water diversion system at the community gym, and mitigated flooding in seniors' homes.

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP – CREEK RANGERS PROGRAM

The ASEEDS Creek Rangers Program focused on creek restoration and engaged youth in activities including community events, community service, S.M.A.R.T. (Science, Math, Art, Reading and Technology) curriculum and installing greenspace at Binford High School.

## ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCY PLANNING

ASEEDS and partner EcoAdapt engaged residents in a resiliency planning process focused on climate change. Outcomes include hosting a 50-participant workshop, developing the Duck Hill Community Climate Assessment, Adaptation and Resiliency Plan, approval of the Sustainable Duck Hill Resolution for the City of Duck Hill and organizing two meetings with clergy for strategic discussion on the role of the African American church in combating climate change.

## CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

ASEEDS supported a reuse visioning process for the vacant Binford High School building. A design workshop helped community members consider reuse opportunities for the area.

## OUTCOMES

By 2020, ASEEDS led several successful projects and increased quality of life in Duck Hill by reducing flooding, investing in youth leadership, and facilitating community planning for food security, placemaking and resiliency. Throughout this work, ASEEDS invested in community wealth-building through community hiring and contracting.

The ASEEDS Initiative has accomplished its goals through several strategic partnerships. Project partners include:

- Southeastern Sustainability Directors Network
- Town of Duck Hill
- Action Communication and Education Reform
- Mississippi State University College of Architecture, Art and Design
- Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks
- State Bank and Trust
- North Montgomery Citizens United for Prosperity



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### EPA Region 4

<https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-epa-region-4-southeast>

### EPA Office of Community Revitalization

<https://www.epa.gov/community-revitalization>

### Duck Hill Community Action Plan

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/LFLPDuckHillMS.pdf>

