Thesis Questions Effectiveness of Green as Post Disaster Economic Recovery Approach

MSED student, David “Sam” Leiva successfully defended his thesis A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF GREEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS A POST- DISASTER RECOVERY APPROACH: THE CASE OF GREENSBURG, KANSAS FIVE YEARS LATER.  After being decimated by a tornado in 2008, Greensburg was rebuilt using the latest green planning approaches garnering international attention.  Millions and public and private funds were invested in green economic development for this small rural Kansas community. It is held up as the model disaster recovery approach by the planning community and the federal government. Disaster impacted communities such as Joplin, MO and Yazoo City, MS have looked to Greensburg for recovery inspiration.

A case study approach with extensive key informant interviews and review of ICMA economic indicators were examined pre and 5 years post disaster to provide a mid-term economic development evaluation of the recovery.  The research found that beneath the coating of eco-friendly public buildings and energy-efficient homes propped up by unprecedented financial, technical and federal support, stirs a quiet brewing storm of smaller tax rolls, an empty business incubator, failed business park, decreasing revenue streams, growing consumer debt, increased number of mortgages past due by 90 days, and a clock ticking until 2018 when homeowners must pay the full property tax rates that have been delayed by a decade.