

T E N N E S S E E ' S

BUSINESS

**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**

STATE UNIVERSITY

Business & Economic Research Center

**PLANNING
MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**



T E N N E S S E E ' S
BUSINESS

Vol. 21 No. 2 Winter 2013

Business & Economic Research Center

Jones College of Business
Middle Tennessee State University
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
www.mtsu.edu/berc
email: berc@mtsu.edu
615-898-2610

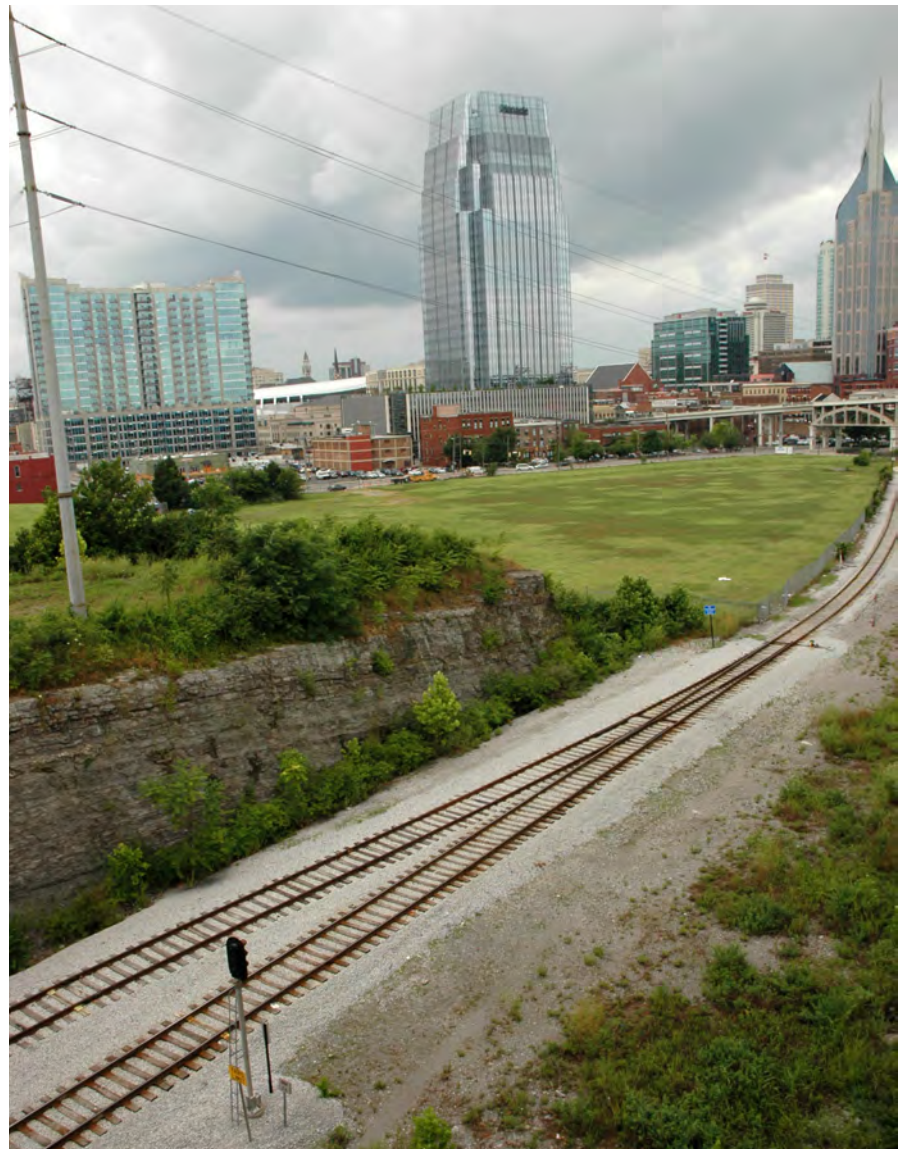
E. James Burton
Dean, Jones College of Business

David A. Penn
BERC Director

Sally Ham Govan
Publications & Web Editor/Designer

Guest Coordinator
Bridget Jones, Executive Director,
Cumberland Region Tomorrow

**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY



Courtesy Rick Bernhardt

Tennessee's Business provides an exchange of ideas in the fields of economics and business among businesspersons, academicians, and government officials. The opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the Business and Economic Research Center, Jones College of Business, or MTSU but are the responsibility of the individual authors. The material may be reproduced with acknowledgement of the source.

MTSU is an AA/EEO employer.

PLANNING Middle Tennessee

■ Cumberland Region Tomorrow: Collaborative Action for Quality Growth	2
• CRT Quality Growth Toolbox Project	6
• Making an Impact: CRT's Quality Growth Tools	8
<i>by Bridget Jones, executive director, CRT, and Kasey Talbott, program and communications director, CRT</i>	
■ Cheatham County Sustainable Tourism: Rural Economic Development Implementation	11
<i>by Richard Quin, Principal, Pawpaw Partners</i>	
■ Columbia, Tennessee, Comprehensive Planning: Neighborhood Revitalization and Infill Housing Choices	16
<i>by Dustin Shane, research assistant, CRT</i>	
■ Metropolitan Nashville: Formulating a 25-Year General Plan	18
<i>by Rick Bernhardt, executive director, Metro Planning Department</i>	
■ Realizing Robertson: Comprehensive Growth and Development Plan	22
<i>by Margot Fosnes, president and chief economic development officer, Robertson Chamber of Commerce</i>	
■ Williamson County Comprehensive Development Plan: Rural Conservation Focus	27
<i>by Joe Horne, director, Williamson County Community Development</i>	
■ Cumberland Region Tomorrow	
• Power of Ten	33
• Tennessee Regions' Roundtable	34
<i>by Bridget Jones, executive director, CRT, and Kasey Talbott, program and communications director, CRT</i>	
■ One Man's Opinion: Jones College Supports Planning	36
<i>by Jim Burton, dean, Jones College of Business, MTSU</i>	

**Thanks go to
Cumberland Region
Tomorrow and
CRT Executive Director
Bridget Jones
for help in coordinating
this issue of
Tennessee's Business.**

CUMBERLAND REGION TOMORROW

Collaborative Action for Quality Growth

by **Bridget Jones**

CRT Executive Director

Cumberland Region Tomorrow (CRT) is a regional collaborative partnership bringing public and private sector leaders and organizations across middle Tennessee together to educate, communicate, and collaborate on shared regional issues and opportunities. CRT's work supports and encourages growth planning with emphasis on land use, transportation, and preservation of the rural landscape and character of the 10-county region's communities.

Through extensive research and involvement of the public, local and state elected officials, the business community, and other stakeholders, CRT has gathered information on what residents of the region value and how they think growth should be guided. This research involved hundreds of the region's citizens in workshops guided by top national regional planning consultants John Fregonese and Associates. The Fregonese-led regional visioning process has been used extensively in regions throughout the nation including Austin, Salt Lake City, and the Chattanooga Region's Thrive 2055 Regional Planning effort as

well as internationally in Australia and Europe in support of successful regional growth planning and implementation efforts.

Results of the middle Tennessee regional visioning project were published in 2003 in the *CRT Report to the Region*. The project revealed that residents in the region wanted to conserve and enhance the region's unique communities and landscapes. By successfully doing so, the region is now maintaining and enhancing its unique regional attributes that provide great quality of life and at the same time support middle Tennessee's economic competitiveness and job opportunities, create quality communities, and ensure wise use of our fiscal and land resources.

CRT believes middle Tennessee can preserve its quality of life and accommodate rapid growth in the region that is sure to come. To do so will require agreement among many key groups to determine the best locations for future growth and development. These groups must work together to learn better ways and change where and how devel-

opment occurs. Updates through new comprehensive plans throughout the region are providing frameworks to guide growth in new ways. New partnerships have been formed, and successful collaboration among groups that have not previously communicated and worked together is occurring. This collaborative action for quality growth is accomplishing remarkable results in local and regional comprehensive planning and implementation that align with regional priorities.

A New Alternative for Regional Quality Growth

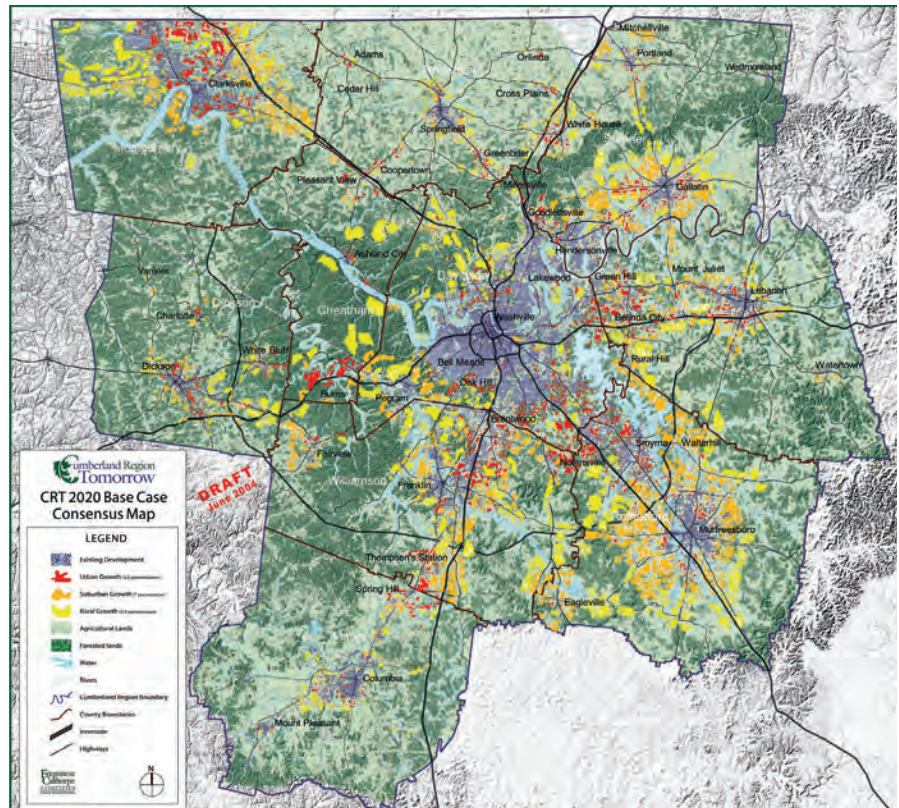
Today the 10-county region is growing at a much faster rate than CRT's Base Case Trends predicted in 2000 when the region's population was 1.4 million. At that time 467,000 new residents were predicted to arrive by the year 2020. Middle Tennessee's current population of nearly 1.8 million residents requires new housing and transportation options and more community services through local and state governments than ever before. Current estimates for the year 2035 predict 1 million new residents for a total population

CRT's work supports and encourages growth planning with emphasis on land use, transportation, and preservation of the rural landscape and character of the 10-county region.

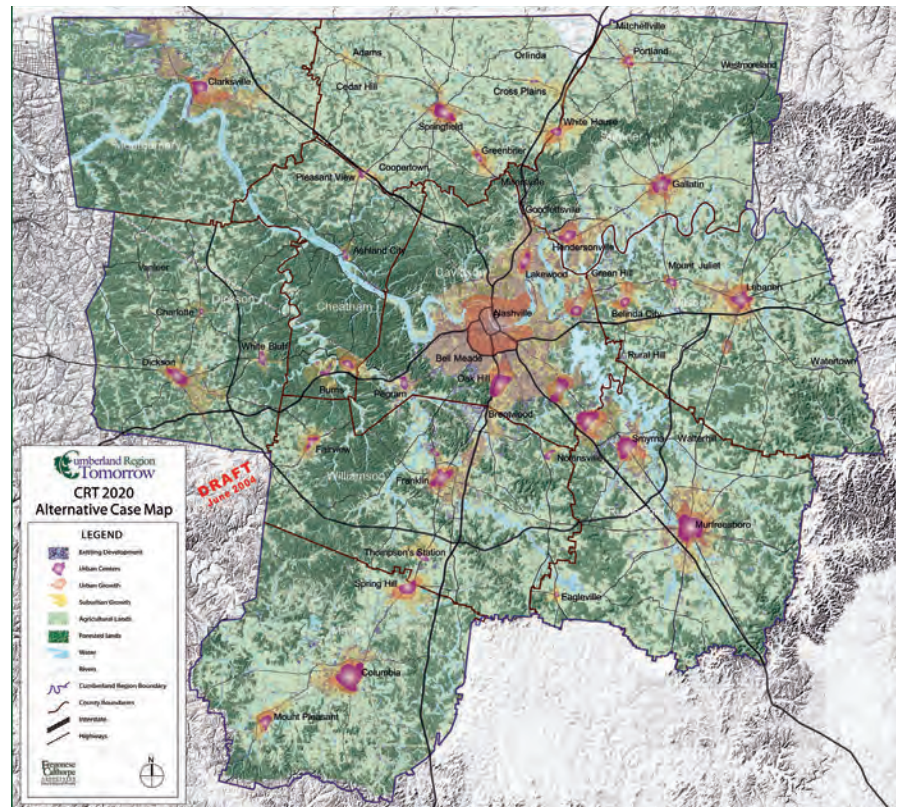
of nearly 3 million expected to call the 10-county region home.

Estimated new infrastructure costs to support these new residents is projected to be \$7 billion by 2020 if the region continues to grow and develop similarly to the 1990s. Based on this information and shared objectives for preferred growth and development outcomes, hundreds of leaders have come together to avoid undesirable fiscal effects as well as unreplacable loss of the region's land, air, water, and our ultimate quality of life that would result if the region does not move from the Base Case to the Alternative Case Scenario illustrated here.

The Base Case scenario was developed by regional citizens during the first series of CRT Regional Visioning Project workshops in the early 2000s. Participants used regional maps and CRT trend data to forecast where growth and development would most likely occur in the next 20 years if nothing was done to change existing growth and devel-



Base Case, 2003



continued on page 4 Alternative Case, 2003

opment practices. Predictions of the Base Case are apparent in sprawl such as development patterns that currently dominate rapidly growing areas of the region. Fiscal difficulties resulting from the cost of community services necessary to support this pattern of growth have occurred in the faster-growing counties of the region, causing new urgency to use comprehensive planning and quality growth practices as a way to a desired future trend.

In order to change, a future view is essential. The Alternative Case incorporates preferences for regional growth and development as recommended by 83% of citizens participating in the second series of CRT Regional Visioning Project workshops. This preferred scenario is intended to illustrate at a high level the concepts of regional distribution of growth and development that accommodates the same amounts of population, growth, and development as the Base Case scenario and answers the workshop consensus for cities that retain their individual qualities while not growing together, more lifestyle and housing options, more access to open space, and less automobile traffic. Specifically, the Alternative Case differs from the Base Case scenario in that it

- uses less land to accommodate projected growth development,
- provides a greater variety of housing types,
- locates jobs in existing centers and downtowns, and
- focuses new jobs on transit lines

Significant savings in infrastructure costs and return on planned regional transit investments are now being realized through implementation of the MPO's 2035 Regional Transportation Plan in concert with aligned local comprehensive plans.

or new industrial sites.

Upon comparison, the Alternative Case is quite different from growth and development patterns in the Base Case. Based on the input of thousands of middle Tennessee citizens and leaders, we know we don't want to be the South's next Atlanta and face the problems that region is now working to resolve.

Quantification of this difference is presented in the *CRT Report to the Region*. This analysis details striking differences between the fiscal, infrastructure, and natural resource effects of the two scenarios, shown in the table.

Significant savings in infrastructure costs along with return on planned regional transit investments are now being realized as middle Tennessee works to implement the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization 2035 Regional Transportation Plan in concert with aligned local comprehensive plans containing quality growth principles and prac-

tices in keeping with the Alternative Case recommendations.

CRT received regional endorsement at the 2003 Regional Planning Summit to continue its work in support of desired quality growth and development outcomes. CRT's work from 2004 until now to create and implement the CRT Quality Growth Toolbox Project is supporting local and regional leaders in accomplishing this change. Integrated local and regional land-use transportation plans and investments are now a reality in middle Tennessee that supports the region's shared goals of economic competitiveness, job creation, quality community development, and wise use of fiscal resources.

CRT's Role

The primary role for leadership in implementing quality growth falls on local governments, state and local incentives, and the actions of developers and consumers in the region. CRT's objectives are to continue regional discussion of quality growth, report on growth-trend data, lead the process to develop tools and resources necessary to implement quality growth practices, encourage collaborative action, and recognize and reward successful examples of quality growth projects in the region.

CRT is supporting progress in middle Tennessee over time by working with the entities that hold responsibility for these goals and strategies and will continue to encourage regional collaborative efforts as needed in support of sound growth planning and implementation. Most

Comparison: Base Case to Alternative Case, 2003

INDICATOR	BASE CASE	ALTERNATIVE CASE
Land we will consume	365,000 acres	91,000 acres
Infrastructure costs	\$6,957,085,995	\$3,406,798,045
New road miles	4,544 miles	2,225 miles
Acres of new impervious surfaces	62,444 acres	35,033 acres
Vehicle miles of travel increase	39 miles	35.9 miles
Density patterns regionwide	1.13 persons/acre	5.8 persons/acre

of the strategies are incremental steps taking place over time in sync with the right regulatory and market environment. CRT's role is to encourage the creation of that environment for regional quality growth.

Think Regionally, Act Locally

CRT's efforts acknowledge that every community is unique, with distinctive characteristics and needs, which is what makes middle Tennessee so special and desirable. In some communities, land and open space preservation strategies may be needed while in others growth planning, downtown revitalization, or improved development practices may be more appropriate. CRT encourages the implementation of these efforts incrementally as appropriate in the communities of the 10-county Cumberland region while balancing local priorities with regional problem-solving and growth-planning needs.

While recognizing this need to respect community individuality and local control, complex issues exist

that cannot effectively be addressed at the local level but rather require a regional or subregional solution. Major infrastructure investments such as transportation and power systems and air-quality compliance are examples of such issues. From Springfield to Columbia and from Murfreesboro to Clarksville, the region shares common problems and opportunities. In these cases, CRT will continue to encourage regional collaborative action and work to build consensus among groups and communities toward mutually beneficial solutions.

Creating More Choices for the Future

The regional quality growth goals and strategies are not aimed toward restrictions or additional layers of government but to help communities and decision makers guide growth and development while creating a broader array of choices. This sentiment for more choice was resoundingly endorsed in all of the public workshops CRT conducted. CRT believes the region can create more

CRT's analysis quantifies and details striking differences between the fiscal, infrastructure, and natural resource effects of the two scenarios, shown in the table.

choices for the future. CRT promotes working together in order to offer a wider array of development types, transportation options, and housing choices and to create more incentives and tools for landowners who desire to continue their ownership in the face of development pressures.

Providing more choices will help the region address air and water quality and quantity issues and the rapid rate of land consumption. Growth will increase the demand for land. While the region's land mass is adequate to meet this demand, it will cost billions of dollars to construct the infrastructure required by sprawling development patterns if we do nothing to change. Now that the regional call for quality growth and development is clearer, CRT continues to lead the region's discussion, continued learning, and implementation toward this end. ■

For more information, see <http://www.cumberlandregiontomorrow.org/resources/regional-visioning-and-scenario-planning>.

QUALITY GROWTH TOOLBOX PROJECT

Resources and Results for Middle Tennessee

by **Bridget Jones**

CRT Executive Director

The CRT Quality Growth Toolbox Project was undertaken to create new education, resources, and successful implementation techniques for the 10-county CRT region of middle Tennessee. The first of its kind in Tennessee, the project supports and accelerates the adoption of innovative professional practices in community development, comprehensive planning, community investment and design, strategic open space conservation, integrated land use and transportation planning, and guided infrastructure investments that support regional and local community and economic development priorities.

More than 150 regional and state leaders were involved in creation of the toolbox. Leading regional and state partner organizations, communities, and companies were involved in creating and piloting the CRT *Quality Growth Toolbox* published in December 2006. Following its release, a regional pilot project was undertaken to create successful community education offerings, resources, and implementation



The project is the key element in the overall regional strategy to encourage growth planning in support of the middle Tennessee region's future livability, sustainability, and economic vitality.

techniques for the 10-county region beginning in 2007 and continuing today. Strategic partnerships formed with the Tennessee Department of Transportation, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Tennessee Wildlife and Recreation Administration, American Institute of Architects (AIA) of Middle Tennessee, University of Tennessee (UT) School of Architecture and Design, Greater Nashville Regional Council, and other important partners made pos-

sible the dramatic results we are now seeing across middle Tennessee.

Using CRT Principles for Quality Growth and nationally vetted best practices and standards, the Quality Growth Toolbox Project helps counties and cities create updated frameworks to guide growth and development in keeping with local and regional goals and objectives. The project taps the vision of local public and private sector leaders to shape a community-supported vision and action plan for desired growth outcomes. It also brings in expertise from the professional planning and design community to help create and support the local vision through the Quality Growth Toolbox pilot project process.

The project is the key element in the overall regional strategy to encourage growth planning in support of the middle Tennessee region's future livability, sustainability, and economic vitality. CRT researched best practices for growth and development planning from all over the country and compiled them into

a comprehensive set of strategies, tools and resources for local governments to learn and apply. These strategies are presented in chapters of the CRT Quality Growth Toolbox.

- Prologue: Creating Quality Growth in the Cumberland Region
- Reinvesting in Towns, City Centers, and Communities
- Creating a Variety of Housing Choices
- Conserving Our Region’s Land, Water, Natural, and Cultural Resources
- Transportation and Land Use Planning for Quality Growth
- Guiding Infrastructure Investments for Sustainable Growth
- Conclusion: Ensuring Our Economic Vitality Through Quality Growth

Successful implementation of the CRT Quality Growth Toolbox Project has occurred by following the project facilitation framework that describes four specific phases and corresponding actions for each, successfully developed and used by CRT during Quality Growth Toolbox Pilot Project work.

- **Collaborative Leadership**
CRT works with public and private sector leaders as local co-chairs to establish Quality Growth Advisory Committees in each pilot project community. These respected leaders then establish an advisory committee representing key constituent groups and community leaders for leadership and community engagement roles. The co-chairs, advisory committee

members, CRT, and implementation partners work to identify local quality growth goals and objectives based on local issues and opportunities. This collaborative leadership team guides and implements all project efforts.

- **Visioning and Consensus**
Quality growth co-chairs, advisory committee members, and CRT inform key stakeholders of the focus and opportunities and organize and host local visioning and design workshops, guest lecturers, community outreach and engagement, community roll-out events, and other project outreach efforts.
- **Program Action**
Quality growth co-chairs, advisory committee members, CRT, and implementation partners determine appropriate program actions and organize Quality Growth Toolbox training and technical assistance services including CRT Quality Growth Project management services, visioning/design workshops, local Quality Growth Toolbox training presentations and sessions, and other targeted education, training, and technical assistance actions deemed necessary to support successful comprehensive planning, community, and economic development actions.
- **Strategic Implementation**
Quality growth co-chairs, advisory committee members, CRT, and implementation partners arrange for and organize planning, design, and implementa-

tion resources including

- grant funding for comprehensive plan development and implementation;
- project planning and funding through TDOT, metropolitan planning organizations, rural development and other state regional agencies;
- community design and planning assistance through AIA Middle Tennessee, UT, and other design and engineering partners; and
- professional support of local quality growth pilot project goals, objectives, and successful implementation.

The CRT Quality Growth Toolbox Project supports and accelerates the adoption of innovative professional practices in community development, comprehensive planning, community investment and design, strategic open space conservation, integrated land use and transportation planning and guided infrastructure investments for sustainable development.

The first of its kind in Tennessee, both in quality growth resources and creative collaboration among local, regional, state, and national partners, CRT Quality Growth Toolbox project implementation has set a new standard of practice that is supporting successful middle Tennessee growth and development implementation efforts. ■

For more information on the CRT Quality Growth Toolbox:

- cumberlandregiontomorrow.org
- 615-986-2698

CRT'S QUALITY

MAKING AN IMPACT

by Kasey Talbott

*CRT Program and
Communications Director*

Greenprinting helps communities make informed quality growth and conservation decisions, providing planning decision makers with consolidated GIS data that can be analyzed to develop the best possible development scenario.

Cumberland Region Tomorrow (CRT), a regional quality growth collaborative partnership in the 10-county middle Tennessee region, has gained a reputation for providing tools and resources that help communities implement quality growth planning and development that makes wise use of fiscal resources, enhances economic competitiveness, and provides more choices and a higher quality of life for citizens. One of CRT's most well known tools is the award-winning Quality Growth Toolbox, which has assisted numerous communities in pursuing quality growth strategies and policy implementation. However, CRT offers other tools that communities can use to achieve more specific outcomes as well.

Greenprinting

One such tool is the GIS GreenPrint Tools for Quality Growth. Four years ago the term "greenprinting" was mostly a foreign concept in middle Tennessee. Greenprinting has gained prominence as an additional tool in helping the planning sector to make decisions that ensure access to and knowledge of critical lands for conservation. Greenprinting is the creation of scenarios that help communities make informed quality growth

and conservation decisions. It provides planning decision makers with consolidated GIS data, which can then be analyzed to develop the best possible scenario for development.

In 2006, CRT introduced the concept of GIS greenprinting to the 10-county middle Tennessee region in the Quality Growth Toolbox chapter "Conserving Our Region's Land, Water, Natural, and Cultural Resources." This new tool was the first of its kind in Tennessee and is the most comprehensive set of consolidated GIS planning information now available in Tennessee. This web-based tool allows for free access to both laypersons and planning experts to navigate, analyze, and compare large sets of data layers from the parcel to regional scale.

To date, the GIS GreenPrint has been used as a comprehensive planning tool by several communities in the 10-county region leading to comprehensive plans and policies that support local open-space conservation priorities. One such plan is the current Robertson County Comprehensive Growth and Development Plan.

Robertson County

The Robertson County Comprehen-

GROWTH TOOLS

IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

sive Growth and Development Plan is an intergovernmental initiative of the county and the cities of Adams, Cross Plains, and Coopertown to create a long-term vision and strategic plan for the county's residents. The 2040 Vision Plan is designed to build off the desire of citizens to retain the rural, agricultural economy that is unique to Robertson County while managing encroaching growth from the Nashville metropolitan area and capitalizing on opportunities for economic development as outlined in the Realizing Robertson's Future Economic Development Plan.

CRT first began working with Robertson County with the 2006 release of the CRT Quality Growth Toolbox and partnered with American Institute of Architects (AIA) of Middle Tennessee to fund and implement the region's first quality growth pilot project in the county. This collaborative partnership led to the AIA 150 Blueprint for America Visioning Workshop for Robertson County and produced a 2007 summary report titled "On Preserving Open Space and Revitalizing Historic Town Centers," which led to broad consensus among Robertson County citizens "to maintain the agriculture landscape and encourage future growth

around existing town centers and infrastructure" and recommended that the county create a Comprehensive Growth and Development Plan.

In 2012, completion, adoption, and implementation of a comprehensive growth and development plan was formally called for by the Robertson County, Adams, Coopertown, and Cross Plains commissions and city councils. Consultants for the Robertson County Comprehensive Growth and Development Plan are currently using CRT's GIS GreenPrint data to compile and analyze the county's key natural, cultural, agricultural, and historical assets. This information will be used to create a plan that guides growth and development while protecting these assets. "To have all of this data in one place and to be able to show it so clearly is an amazing asset for us as we work with Robertson County leaders in achieving their growth and development goals," said Carey Hayo of Littlejohn Engineering.

Statewide Implementation of GIS GreenPrint Data

Using the GIS GreenPrint Tools for Quality Growth as a basis, the

continued on page 10

The CRT Quality Growth Planning Audit, to be released in 2013, seeks to identify planning policies and tools being implemented in all 56 local government municipalities and counties within the 10-county middle Tennessee region.

Knoxville and Jackson regions are discussing creation of a similar GIS GreenPrint tool to aid in their regional planning and implementation efforts. CRT is working closely with these organizations through the Tennessee Regions' Roundtable to aid in the development, funding, and implementation of a GIS GreenPrint tool for each region.

CRT Quality Growth Planning Audit

CRT's latest tool is being developed for release in 2013. The purpose of the CRT Quality Growth Planning Audit is to provide an updated inventory list of quality growth planning implementation based on CRT's Quality Growth Toolbox tools and strategies within the 10-county middle Tennessee region. Specifically the report seeks to identify planning policies and tools being implemented in all 56 local government municipalities and counties.

The audit will help local and regional elected officials and decision makers to monitor the progress of local planning in the middle Tennessee region and identify "quality growth gaps" that can help local, regional, and state policymakers create incentives for more quality growth planning and implementation.

The Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC) has partnered with CRT to help implement and validate the report. "This audit will be an asset for middle Tennessee. CRT has provided a great service for the planning community to measure our progress as a region," said GNRC

Deputy Executive Director of Research and Planning Tim Roach.

Quality Growth Principles

The CRT Quality Growth Toolbox is based on the CRT Quality Growth Principles.

- Guide region's growth with comprehensive community plans
- Update zoning, subdivision, and building codes to implement community plans
- Use design to protect and enhance our region's diversity of community character
- Redevelop and strengthen our region's cities, towns, and rural communities to ensure a range of unique lifestyle choices
- Create a variety of housing choices for our region's diverse workforce
- Conserve our region's land, water, natural, and cultural resources for our future economic, health, and social well being
- Link land use and transportation planning to promote an integrated framework to guide growth and development
- Guide public and private investment to efficiently use pre-existing infrastructure and developed land
- Think and act regionally to ensure our future livability and economic vitality

Using these principles a set of 52 quality growth tools and strategies was developed. The Quality Growth Planning Audit evaluates each community by its current policies, ordinances, and zoning addressing this set of criteria. CRT also looked at

phases of implementation and when it occurred. The final document will provide a snapshot report for each community to review and compare its progress with others in the region and analysis on overall progress in the region.

Nashville General Plan

In 2012, the Metropolitan Nashville Planning Department requested the Quality Growth Planning Audit data for the research phase of the Nashville General Plan, a three-year process to update the vision and policies for growth and development for Davidson County into 2040. CRT provided data collected on the six counties surrounding Davidson as part of the plan's regional focus. This information will help the Nashville 2040 General Plan develop growth and policies that complement bordering local community policies.

"Davidson County is not an island. We have to be aware of how our neighbors are planning to grow and develop. This helps us as a region better coordinate land-use decisions and policies, which ultimately leads to a more effective and efficient government for everyone," said Metropolitan Nashville Planning Department Executive Director Rick Bernhardt.

By providing each community with up-to-date progress reports on planning and development in the region, CRT helps communities share resources and learn from each other, fostering a greater sense of regionalism and leading to more quality communities, wiser use of fiscal resources, and more economically vibrant communities. ■



The currently underutilized Bull Run wetland area will be highlighted on a new watchable wildlife trail.

Rural Economic Development Implementation

Cheatham County Sustainable Tourism

by Richard Quin

Principal, Pawpaw Partners

Sitting literally on Nashville's doorstep, quiet Cheatham County might as well be a world away. Rich in scenic beauty and blessed with numerous natural

and cultural resources, the county maintains its essentially rural character and has a relatively small population of about 40,000. The county's geography presents a challenge, however. The Cumberland River bisects the country from east to west; only one bridge connects the two halves of the county by road.

The southern half is further divided by the Harpeth River, which flows northwest and north to join the Cumberland just below Ashland City. Another challenge is the county's shape; Cheatham County is not a large county, but it is elongated, and

continued on page 12



Crowds flock to Art in the Park, a local crafts festival in Kingston Springs.

Due to its geographic impediments, rural setting, small population, and lack of large employers, Cheatham County faces unique economic issues.

continued from page 11

a drive from north to south can take almost an hour.

Due to its geographic impediments, rural setting, small population, and lack of large employers, Cheatham County faces unique economic issues. The county has the highest external commuting rate in the state of Tennessee; a full 82.5% of workers travel outside the county to work, most in adjoining Davidson County. Many workers formerly engaged in agriculture or employed in local manufacturing industries have been forced to join the com-

muter workforce in order to earn a living. Cheatham County workers spend a sizeable proportion of their time commuting, with more than a third taking over 30 to 45 minutes to reach their job, considerably higher than the national average. Rising gasoline prices only increase the burden on the commuting workers.

Only 3,300 of the approximately 21,000 skilled workers in Cheatham County are employed within the county. The low daytime population increases the economic stress on businesses and restaurants. Cheatham County has the highest retail leakage rate of any county in

Tennessee, with a current rate of 68% according to Site To Do Business Online. The only product that experiences a zero retail leakage percent in the county is gasoline.

With so many workers and so much consumer spending heading out of county, community leaders are looking for ways to bring revenue into the county. One obvious way is to focus on Cheatham County's outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

By developing the county's tourism industry and targeting specific new businesses related to the county's recreational and cultural resources, local jobs can be created. In addition to creating new jobs, additional tourist spending will boost revenues at other county businesses such as restaurants, service stations, shops, and lodging. Increased sales taxes will help schools and public services while reducing the need for property tax increases.

Recognizing the need for more economic development opportunities within the county, Cheatham Vision was funded and launched in 2010 by local business leaders with the intent to improve Cheatham County's economy and overall quality of life. Later that year Cheatham Vision released Open for Business, a three-year economic, business, and workforce development plan. One of the specific projects detailed in the plan was to identify, develop, and market the county's cultural and recreational assets to a local, regional, and national audience in order to generate jobs, positive economic activity,

and increased sales tax revenue.

In early 2012, the Cheatham County Chamber of Commerce formed a collaborative partnership with Cumberland Region Tomorrow (CRT) and with their assistance applied for and secured a Rural Business Enterprise Grant through the Tennessee Rural Development Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The grant provides funding for an eight-month project to inventory, access, and document all existing and potential tourism and recreational resources in Cheatham County and to develop a sustainable tourism plan with specific emphasis on enhancing the county economy by targeting specific business types to attract even more tourists, sportsmen, and recreationists.

CRT was contracted to provide consulting services to complete needed resource assessment, provide technical analysis, perform gap business and incentive analysis, coordinate community engagement, and generate the final deliverable, a sustainable tourism strategy. In addition, CRT agreed to coordinate with state-level rural economic development partner agencies including the Tennessee Departments of Agriculture, Tourism, Wildlife Resources, and Economic and Community Development so that Cheatham County objectives align with state rural economic development objectives and incentives to ensure successful implementation.

CRT agreed to coordinate the effort, envisioning a three-part project. The first would be a comprehensive



The Cumberland River Bicentennial Trail, heavily used by walkers and cyclists, traverses natural areas bordering its namesake river.

Leaders are looking for ways to increase revenue. An obvious way is to focus on the county's outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

inventory of all of the county's existing and potential tourism resources. Second, a review of the inventory and accompanying demographic research would lead to a gap analysis study that will identify additional tourism-related businesses. Finally, the plan would provide a toolbox of ideas for enhancing existing resources and recruiting new businesses to create a robust tourism infrastructure. CRT would bring to the project its extensive experience in quality-growth planning and provide technical assistance through its GIS GreenPrint Tools for Quality Growth, a GIS-based planning decision-making tool through which

resources are being mapped and evaluated for inclusion in the plan.

To conduct the field inventory and write the tourism plan, CRT brought in its longtime collaborator, Nashville-based natural and cultural resource planning firm Pawpaw Partners. This small company had worked with state scenic byway and interpretive trail projects and recently completed a sustainable tourism plan for the three-county Tennessee Highlands area in the Upper Cumberland.

continued on page 14

“This is a true rural economic development project aimed at improving the Cheatham County economy by developing and enhancing a tourism and recreation industry based on its unique natural, cultural, and recreational resources.”

—Bridget Jones, CRT Executive Director

continued from page 13

The Pawpaw team conducted a detailed field inventory over the summer, recording more than 40 natural, cultural, or recreational areas that were already attracting tourists and recreational users or that they felt had the potential to draw others if properly marketed. These sites included the popular Harpeth River State Park, where tens of thousands of paddlers crowd the historic Narrows of the Harpeth section each summer, the Cheatham Dam reservation and its heavily used campgrounds, and AdventureWorks, a popular private facility offering zip-line tours, corporate team-building, and other outdoor adventure opportunities.

The more popular sites were already well known, but the Pawpaw planners saw great potential in lesser-used areas. Infrequently used sites such as the Bull Run Recreation Area, leased by Ashland City from the Corps of Engineers, and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency’s (TWRA’s) Dyson Ditch Refuge are teeming with wildlife and could be featured on a “watchable wildlife”

tour of the county. “Birdwatchers and other wildlife enthusiasts spend more per person than virtually any other group of tourists,” reported Pawpaw resource specialist Sherry Beard, “and we see great potential in drawing them to Cheatham County’s outstanding collection of natural areas.”

One of the county’s greatest opportunities is monetizing the tremendous resources of the Cheatham Wildlife Management Area (WMA), which along with other areas and refuges under its administration occupies more than 26,000 acres of the relatively small county. Purchased and maintained for public hunting lands, the main area occupies a long stretch of upland forest and fields on the ridges between the Harpeth River and Sams Creek. While hunting draws the most users, the WMA is also rich in non-game wildlife; for instance, some woodland areas in the WMA are managed to provide habitat for the Cerulean warbler, a beautiful, tiny, neotropical songbird whose worldwide numbers are fast declining. Tennessee Department of Environment and Conser-

vation and TWRA staff members have discussed ways to make the WMA more accessible outside of hunting season, but since the area funding is almost entirely from hunting-license fees, the needs of the hunter will always come first. Still, TWRA is beginning to allow other uses; the rugged Muddy Buddy bike ride and run series is now held at the WMA and drew more than 3,000 visitors in 2012.

CRT and Pawpaw, along with the Chamber and other business leaders have looked at each of the county’s four incorporated communities and determined recommendations for a specific marketing strategy for each. Ashland City will be promoted as a recreational center, Kingston Springs for its historic character, and Pleasant View for its agricultural heritage. Pegram, just west of the Bellevue section of Nashville, will be marketed as a center for local arts and crafts, building on the popular Harpeth River Gallery, which features the work of numerous regional craftspeople, and Fiddle and Pick, which offers concerts and training in traditional and regional music. A new monthly West 70 Arts Cruise along U.S. 70 through the community debuted this summer and already draws numerous artists and hundreds of new visitors.

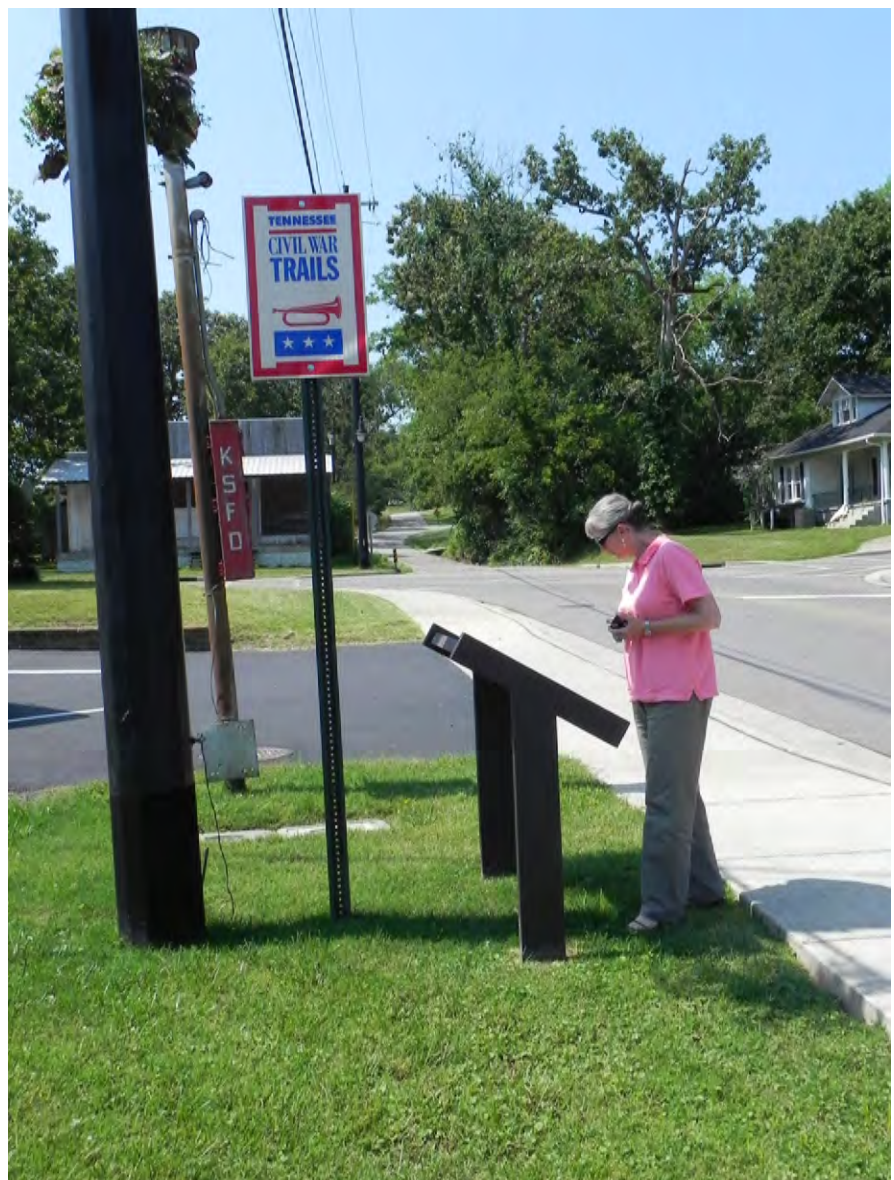
Pawpaw resource economist Angela Riffe interviewed owners of tourism-related businesses and surveyed visitors at various venues. This and other data she has collected is being analyzed by Cheatham Chamber, economic officials, and CRT to help determine what gaps

“By enhancing Cheatham County’s tourism industry and by targeting specific new businesses related to the county’s recreational and cultural resources, new, and more important, local jobs can be created, and revenue can increase. In addition to new jobs, additional tourist spending will boost revenues at other county businesses such as restaurants, service stations, shops and lodging, and also increase sales taxes.”

—Darwin Newton, Cheatham Recreation Visitors Board Chairman and CRT Board Member

can be filled to complete the tourism infrastructure in the county and will provide local leaders the demographic and economic data needed to expand existing and recruit new businesses. Possibilities include the county’s first high-end hotel, incubator space for artists, outdoor outfitters, and agritourism resources.

The Cheatham County Sustainable Tourism Plan will be completed this winter, and county business owners and residents will have a chance to offer their input in upcoming public open houses. In addition to the targeted business recruitment strategy, the plan will provide the Chamber and economic development leaders with new marketing tools for the Vision Cheatham Tourism Cluster along with new watchable wildlife and motorcycle tours, enhanced ecotourism, and a new arts initiative. Thousands of new visitors will soon discover this quiet county right on Nashville’s urban edge and support local economic and community development objectives through innovative planning and marketing strategies completed through this first-ever Tennessee project. ■



Heritage tourists are drawn to the new Tennessee Civil War Trail.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Neighborhood Revitalization and Infill Housing Choices

by **Dustin Shane**

CRT Research Assistant

The Columbia Housing and Redevelopment Corporation (CHRC) is more than just another housing authority. This relatively small agency has received national awards due to its large accomplishments and even hosted Sandra Henriquez, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). One of the main reasons for CHRC's notoriety is that it is the only comparably sized public housing authority in middle Tennessee that also serves as a redevelopment agency. This distinction, along with great leadership and vision, allows CHRC the power to actively pursue revitalization city-wide and has made CHRC and the City of Columbia a model for incorporating infill housing as part of neighborhood-revitalization efforts.

CHRC along with partners in the private and public sector has created a successful model for addressing neighborhood revitalization, infill redevelopment, and creating housing choices and opportunity through

In 2008 Columbia received a \$519,000 HUD grant to replace blighted east Columbia homes with pre-built housing.

the Columbia Comprehensive Plan. Here are a few lessons learned that many communities can incorporate.

Add Housing Options to Comprehensive Plans

The redevelopment process in East Columbia began with Columbia's portion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan in 2008 and 2009. The comprehensive planning process was instrumental to providing up-to-date maps, data, and statistics for both the county and municipalities, including Columbia, Mt. Pleasant, and Spring Hill. By capitalizing on existing information obtained through the Joint Comprehensive Plan, the City

of Columbia funded an additional \$10,000 investment toward the East Columbia Redevelopment and Urban Renewal Plan.

Identify Housing Needs

In 2008 Columbia received a \$519,000 HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) grant to replace blighted homes in east Columbia with pre-built housing. Thanks to previous data collected through the Joint Comprehensive Plan, the City of Columbia was able to demonstrate abnormally high home foreclosure rates within particular neighborhoods in its grant application. Columbia also leveraged the Joint Comprehensive Plan recommendations to apply for and receive one of only two HUD Community Challenge grants awarded in the state. The \$250,000 grant funded Columbia's James Campbell Boulevard Strategic Corridor Plan.

Design to Create Attractive Communities and Housing

Good design is critical to the devel-



Columbia Boulevard 2050 Plan

opment and redevelopment of communities, particularly when providing a variety of housing types. A broader range of housing types that maintains the character and architectural style of an existing neighborhood not only looks better but enhances overall property values. The City of Columbia chose a type of cottage style, pre-built housing made in nearby Pulaski, Tennessee, for the East Columbia neighborhood. The pre-built homes are not only cost effective but also blend well with the existing housing stock. These homes will eventually replace several dilapidated structures under the NSP implementation.

Use Incentives to Promote Housing Choice

Incentives can be used to encourage the creation of a range of housing choices with the right design in the desired locations that matches those needs. Incentives may include increased density levels, tax benefits, infrastructure improvements, and quick approval for developments

Under CHRC’s plan, lower-income single-family homes will eventually replace dilapidated structures and act as catalysts for additional neighborhood reinvestment.

that meet specified guidelines. As a redevelopment agency, CHRC can use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to encourage development in certain areas. TIF districts use property or sales tax revenues in a defined area to enable private development to occur. The total tax revenue base attributable is established when a TIF district is formed. As redevelopment occurs, the added tax value, or tax increment, is placed in a special fund used to pay redevelopment costs such as infrastructure improve-

ments within the TIF district.

Under CHRC’s plan, lower-income single-family homes will replace blighted structures and act as catalysts for additional neighborhood reinvestment. CHRC’s partnership with GAP Community Development Resources of Franklin also provides a homebuyer assistance education program for new homeowners.

CHRC Executive Director Trent Ogilvie admits that more work remains but is confident that CHRC’s unique approach will continue to carry the city forward: “We’ve shown how redevelopment can be inclusive of the residents and representative of their wishes. We’ve generated excitement and optimism within this community again.”

Ogilvie also expressed interest in sharing CHRC’s innovative approach with other communities within our region. Full contact information can be found at <http://www.chrc-tn.org>.

METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE

Formulating a 25-Year General Plan

by Rick Bernhardt
Executive Director
Metro Planning Department

You don't have to be an economist to realize that Nashville is a growing and economically healthy city. Just walk around downtown, and it's obvious this is a place

where good things are happening.

Fifty years ago, when the local city and county governments were combining to form Metro Nashville, that



Photos Courtesy Metro Planning Department

View of downtown Nashville and Shelby Avenue pedestrian bridge

By 2040, the region will include at least 12 counties with a total population of over three million. The Nashville 2040 General Plan will serve as a guide for community decisions.

downtown area was the core of a much smaller region. Nashville's center city was the hub, the region was essentially within Davidson County, and outlying counties and communities largely thought of themselves as independent entities and went their own way on economic and development issues.

Today that core is expanding past the 440 loop, and the region, the area where each community's economic decisions and activity directly affect its neighbors, includes Davidson and its six adjacent counties. By 2040, the region will include at least 12 counties with a total population of over three million. Rutherford and Williamson counties will each have over a half-million residents. People of color will be in the majority, driven largely by rapid growth in the Latino community, with that growth resulting more from an increased birthrate than from immigration.

With those challenges in mind, Nashville is beginning the process of developing a bold new General Plan to move the city forward over the next 25 years. In an effort initiated by Mayor Karl Dean and co-sponsored by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, the Land Trust for Tennessee, and Nashville for All of Us, the Nashville 2040 General Plan will serve as a guide for community decisions that

will affect Nashville and its surrounding region over the coming quarter-century. The General Plan will provide a vision and direction on issues including but not limited to infrastructure investments, economic development, equity, youth and senior services, future land use and zoning, historic preservation, and the environment.

Our most recent General Plan, Concept 2010, was adopted in 1992, and the process of updating it to reflect current vision and priorities for the future is expected to take three years. The General Plan update will involve substantial participation from the diverse communities of stakeholders that are part of the city of Nashville. This participation will take many forms throughout the process, from conversations with individual community members to understand their vision for the region (over a thousand have already been completed, in person and by phone) to community workshops to creative forms of online engagement. The process will then move to creating a foundation for discussing critical General Plan issues and applying the ideas and direction that will grow from those conversations.

General Plan update activity is currently concentrated on background research, collecting relevant background reports, engaging key stake-

holders and groups, and conducting interviews and polling to get the "pulse" of the city. Once this data collection and stakeholder recruitment is well underway, work will begin on creating white papers that will establish the foundation (best practices, current state of Nashville, and recommendations) for discussing critical General Plan topics. In 2013, the community engagement process will begin with a speaker series on key General Plan topics.

Our objectives for this three-year process include the following:

- Developing a consensus 25-year Metro-wide vision to support economic development, achieve the efficient provision of public services, expand the application of environmentally sound and sustainable development practices, increase neighborhood livability, and expand education, housing, and employment opportunities for all residents.
- Developing critical white papers on strategic issues and opportunities.
- Establishing goals, objectives, and appropriate measures to achieve the vision.
- Creating guiding policies for each objective: specific tools for policymakers, appointed and

continued on page 20



Rush-hour traffic on Interstate 40 entering downtown Nashville



Bike path in east Nashville residential/commercial neighborhood

The General Plan will provide a vision and direction on issues including infrastructure investments, economic development, equity, youth and senior services, future land use and zoning, historic preservation, and the environment.

continued from page 19

- elected officials, to use when considering long-term investments and budgetary decisions and creating supplemental plans.
- Generating a Community Development plan designed to address strategic issues and goals and built on the fundamental principles of our *Community Character Manual*, the basic document that guides local land-use policy.
- Providing strategic design for

critical areas of the county including critical corridors, economic centers, targeted redevelopment areas, and targeted new-growth areas.

The creation of the General Plan, and the final product, will differ in two vitally important ways from the previous plan.

First, varied and diverse community input is a much larger part of the planning process. While the genera-



New multifamily residential development near downtown core

tion of Concept 2010 included significant public guidance and comment, we are currently reaching out to many specific demographics that may not have even been present in the early 1990s.

Second, this General Plan is based on a much more regional view, with greater recognition and understanding of how Metro Nashville and its surrounding communities and constituencies must cooperate to build a stronger and more vibrant future for

all of middle Tennessee.

This is essentially a new and complex approach to two simple questions: what is our community's vision for its future, and how do we achieve it? We have just begun the process of answering that question in our current social and economic context. With appropriate public and private input and the contributions of experts in many disciplines, we will form a plan that will shape the future of not just our city but our region. ■

**The General Plan update
will involve substantial
participation from the diverse
communities of stakeholders
that are part of the city of
Nashville.**

REALIZING ROBERTSON

Comprehensive Growth and Development Plan

by Margot Fosnes

*President and Chief Economic
Development Officer, Robertson
Chamber of Commerce*

In July 2012, Robertson County embarked on a journey with two desired endpoints. The county wants to accelerate its economic development and create high-wage jobs and at the same time preserve its rural culture and important agricultural landscapes. At first glance the two might seem somewhat contradictory, but that is the very essence of what makes our community spe-

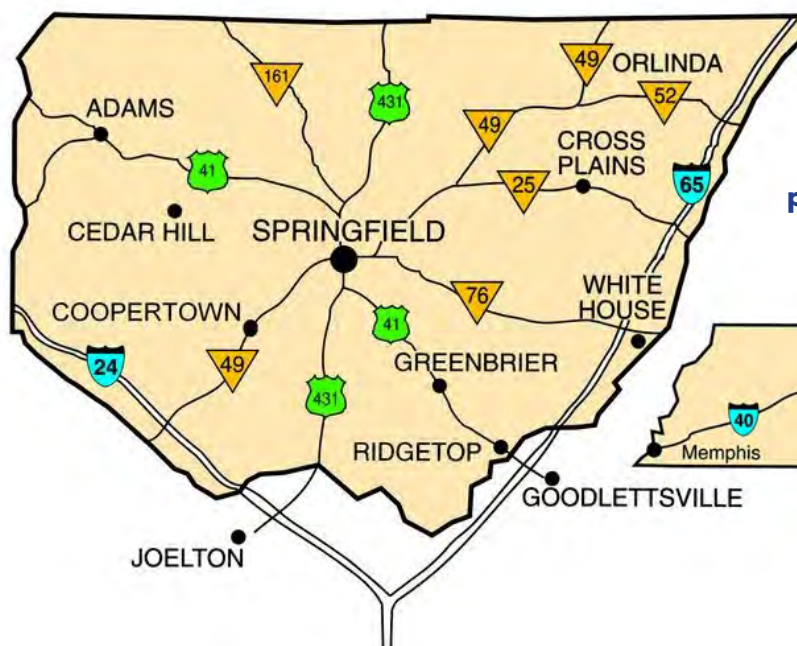
cial and why our journey will serve as a road map for many other communities in the years to come.

Robertson County sits just north of Nashville, bordered by Interstates 24 and 65. Long known as the home of the “World’s Finest Dark-Fired Tobacco,” agriculture is still a critically important part of our economy, bringing in more than \$115 million annually from sales of primary agricultural products and services. Our 1,400 farms cover 230,000 acres, create over 1,700 jobs, and place us fifth in the state of Tennessee in market value of products sold.

Home to 11 different incorporated municipalities ranging from densely populated urban areas to rural hamlets and bedroom communities, Robertson County provides a quality of life that attracts families looking for affordable homes and a small-town culture within a 30-minute drive of the world-class city of Nashville.

But there is much more to Robertson County than farmland and quaint country lifestyle. The county seat of Springfield anchors a diversified manufacturing presence, with Elec-

continued on page 24



**Robertson County wants to
accelerate economic development
and create high-wage jobs but
preserve rural culture and agricultural
landscapes.**





Photos courtesy Margot Fosnes

Springfield will soon put in service a new 1.5 million-gallon water tower south of the city to manage growing demand along the Highway 431 corridor.



A dark-fired tobacco “smoking barn” in eastern Robertson County.

With this steady base of employment and a median household income that ranks seventh in the state, our county of nearly 70,000 would seem fortunate and well positioned, but a closer look at statistics and patterns reveals some alarming facts.

continued from page 22

trolux Major Appliances as the largest employer. Producing gas ranges by the millions with an employee base of over 3,000, the Springfield facility recently completed an expansion that made it the company’s Research and Development Center and Purchasing Headquarters for cooking products in North America, as well as the Global Development Center for electronics worldwide.

Robertson County is also home to automotive suppliers Johnson Electric, IAC, Kyowa America, Schrader Electronics, and Martinrea Fabco and other manufacturers including Unarco, Bath Fitter, Werthan Packaging, and Olhausen Billiards. Our location between two major inter-

states has made the county a preferred destination for logistics and distribution centers, the largest being Macy’s Logistics, occupying a million square feet along the I-65 corridor and serving as the fulfillment center for *Macys.com* and *Bloomington.com* for much of the U.S.

NorthCrest Medical Center in Springfield has also become a major economic driver, employing nearly 700 directly and hundreds more indirectly through physician practices and other medically related services. NorthCrest has positioned itself as a regional medical center for the northern middle Tennessee and southern Kentucky market.

With this steady base of employment and a median household income that



McCauley Aerial Photography

Exit 19 along the I-24 corridor is the proposed site of a new industrial and technology park.

ranks seventh in the state, our county of nearly 70,000 would seem fortunate and well positioned, but a closer look at statistics and patterns reveals some alarming facts. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, more than 70% of employed Robertson County citizens leave the county each day to go to work, one of the highest out-commute rates in the state. County and municipal budgets are stretched thin to provide the infrastructure to a population that has grown more than 20% over the past decade, and significant new road improvements and transit alternatives have not kept

pace with the demands of commuters. Lack of a consistent, reasoned plan for the projected future population growth of 40% in the next decade threatens the open spaces and rich farmland that define the character of Robertson County.

Our journey to addressing these issues has two paths that are unquestionably linked. The first is development of a comprehensive growth and development plan, a project approved by the Robertson County Commission in August. The impetus for creating this plan came from

a series of workshops held in 2007 with county citizens who shared their concerns and opinions about future growth and development. The majority who attended these workshops expressed the same general feeling about what they want for our county—to maintain our rural open spaces and farmland while encouraging future growth around existing town centers and infrastructure.

With technical support and guidance from Cumberland Region Tomor-

continued on page 26

row, a USDA Rural Development Grant, and the partnership of three of our municipalities, Littlejohn Engineering Associates has begun work on a plan that will guide future growth in such a way as to preserve our agricultural heritage, sustain the open spaces, and allow county and city governments to be good stewards of the county's financial resources while providing necessary services and infrastructure to support a growing population. The plan is expected to be completed by the fall of 2013, followed by a revision of land use and zoning ordinances and regulations to support the implementation of the plan.

The second path is focused on economic growth and insuring a vibrant employment picture for Robertson County residents. In March of 2012, economic development leadership kicked off a campaign to raise private funds to implement a comprehensive strategy to create quality jobs, retain and expand our existing business base, improve education and workforce training, address transportation and infrastructure projects, and grow our local economy. The strategy was developed based on a series of visioning sessions facilitated by Byrne Allen Corporation of Atlanta involving over 125 community and business leaders. The product of those visioning sessions was vetted through nearly 100 confidential interviews with key stakeholders who prioritized initiatives and suggested measurable goals, appropriate funding levels, and an implementation timetable.

Goals include competing for 100 corporate recruitment prospects through 2015, providing retention and expansion guidance for existing industries, creating a business-education partnership to enhance workforce quality, and adding 400 jobs generating \$38 million in direct economic impact.

With 52 investors committed to providing more than \$1.2 million in funding, Realizing Robertson's Future (RRF), a four-year economic, business, and workforce development plan for Robertson County, launched in July. Measurable goals include qualifying and competing for at least 100 corporate recruitment prospects through 2015, partnering with every existing Robertson County industry to provide retention and expansion guidance, create a vibrant business-education partnership to enhance the quality of our workforce, and create 400 new jobs generating an estimated \$38 million in direct economic impact.

Target industries for corporate recruitment include agribusiness and research, polysilicon users seeking to locate close to the Hemlock Semiconductor facility in nearby Clarksville, logistics/distribution,

healthcare/medical support and development, and automotive suppliers. With a proactive approach focused on sectors that will take advantage of our competitive assets and complement our vision for the future, it is hoped that Robertson County can transform its future and provide opportunities for all of our citizens within our community.

A key component of Realizing Robertson's Future is support for the Robertson County Comprehensive Growth and Development Plan and advocacy for the efficient development of infrastructure to ensure effective transportation, information, and water delivery systems critical to maintaining and enhancing our county's quality of life and supportive of the growth of Robertson County businesses. Economic development leadership recognizes the importance of participation and support for the growth plan project, and RRF investors have budgeted a matching grant of \$50,000 for the implementation of the recommendations developed in the growth plan.

Robertson County is poised to experience the most prosperous and successful decade in its long and storied history. With the commitment and involvement of both its public and private sector leadership, there is a plan in place to participate in the growth and development coming to the middle Tennessee region and to protect and preserve the qualities that make it a place we all want to call home. We hope that our journey will provide an example for other growing, rural communities across the state of Tennessee. ■



Photos courtesy Joe Horne

Where town and country meet

Williamson County Comprehensive Development Plan

RURAL CONSERVATION FOCUS

by Joe Horne

Williamson County Community Development Director

In 1970, Williamson County was something of a typical middle Tennessee county. Rural in nature and temperament, the county's population numbered about 34,330. Its municipalities included Franklin, Fairview, newly incorporated Brentwood, and the sleepy community of Spring Hill, straddling the Maury County line with a population of 685. However, according to one chronicler, "By the late 1960s it was evident that Williamson County and Franklin were in the path of mammoth sprawl emanating from Nashville."

Since the county's population is expected to be 418,990 by 2030, maintaining the rural landscape is going to be increasingly difficult.

While the term *sprawl* means many things to many people, the adjective *mammoth* appears to be entirely accurate in this instance. The population of Williamson County between 1970 and 2010 rose at the astounding rate of 430.7%, or 147,853 people,

to a population of 182,183. According to Woods Poole Economics, this population is projected to increase to 258,480 by 2020, or an increase of 41.9%.

Clearly, this type of growth is not without consequences. Some of these consequences, such as increased traffic congestion, can be described as largely self-evident. However, other consequences are somewhat more subtle. One of these is the loss of the rural landscape, which statis-

continued on page 28

tically can be articulated in several ways. According to the 1969 Census of Agriculture, about 273,692 acres (73.4% of the land area) of Williamson County were classified as agricultural. Using the most recent Census of Agriculture (2007), this figure has declined to a total of 161,851 acres, a decline of 41% of agricultural lands in the county. By way of normalizing these numbers, during this same time agricultural lands in Tennessee declined by only 27%.

These trends are little different from that observed by national commentators. The American Farmland Trust (AFT) has noted that “every minute of every day, we are losing more than an acre of agricultural land to development.” Citing the 2007 National Resources Inventory (NRI), the AFT noted that nationally about 4,080,033 acres of farmland were converted to “developed uses” between 2002 and 2007.

Statistics of this type are not always enlightening. It is certainly beyond the scope of this article to critique the market forces that contribute to this loss of rural landscape, or whether this loss of rural areas is a precursor to future food production shortages. After all, prior to and since 1970 this country as a whole has become less rural and more suburban (and urban) in nature. With any amount of change, something is invariably given up. In responding to the market forces and demographics contributing to these outcomes, it is perhaps the role of planning to offer choices rather than dictate solutions.

Williamson County Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2007

In his seminal work *Performance Zoning*, planner Lane Kendig coined the phrase “borrowed open space.” In this context, it refers to areas such as farms, natural areas, and historic sites that contribute to the rural landscape that are valued aesthetically but clearly owned by a third party. Short of actual ownership, which would be cost prohibitive and also politically prohibitive, it is extremely difficult to maintain this rural landscape in a county undergoing the growth pressures outlined earlier.

The Williamson County Comprehensive Plan (2007) did not occur in a vacuum; it was the result of considerable community outreach and comment. As a result of this process, it was concluded that:

Rural areas are highly valued by the citizens of Williamson County for their historic and environmental resources with an agrarian character that serve as a strong complement to the growing urban and suburban communities in Williamson County. The Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives are clear in calling for the Rural Areas to be preserved as low density with a rural character and rural levels of public services.

The tension facing Williamson County is a classic balancing act between the desire to maintain the rural landscape and offering incentives to the property owners to maintain this rural character. Both the

2007 Comprehensive Plan and the 1988 Comprehensive Plan it updated developed a series of policies to protect the rural landscape. Some policies were regulatory in nature, but most sought to create a subtle set of incentives and disincentives geared to maintain the rural landscape.

Rural Preservation Efforts in Williamson County

In addition to those by Williamson County, other rural preservation efforts underway include the Greenbelt Law and efforts by the Land Trust for Tennessee.

The Agricultural, Forest, and Open Space Land Act of 1976

This is commonly known as Tennessee’s Greenbelt Law. Specifically, it was intended to:

- encourage continued production of valuable food and fiber;
- prevent loss of family farms due to higher taxes based on speculative rather than use values; and
- provide relief from urban sprawl and provide green spaces for enjoyment of people who would not normally have access to such areas.

The law allows for preferential property tax treatment for farms, forested areas, and open space. Upon sale, these properties are subject to roll-back taxes for the prior three years.

Despite a recent series of negative news articles questioning its equity (see “Cash Crop: Tax Breaks Sprout for Tennessee Farmers,” *Commercial Appeal*, October 14, 2012), it seems intuitive that this law pro-



Land Trust for Tennessee protected property, Leiper's Fork

vides incentive for properties to remain rural in character. According to the office of the Williamson County Property Assessor, Williamson County has 4,153 parcels classified as greenbelt, comprising some 165,969.94 acres in 2012.

The Land Trust for Tennessee

This organization is dedicated to protecting “Tennessee’s natural and historic landscapes and sites through donations of conservation easements that protect important land resources.” A conservation easement is a “voluntary contract between a landowner and a land trust, government agency, or other qualified organization in which the owner places

permanent restrictions on the future uses on some or all of his property.” This type of dedication not only protects the property from future development but offers potential tax advantages to the grantor.

Within the state of Tennessee, the Land Trust has preserved more than 84,000 acres in permanent open space. Of that figure, Williamson County boasts 42 properties totaling 5,621 acres under conservation easement protection; this is the most in the state of Tennessee.

Efforts of Williamson County Government

With its adoption of the 2007 Com-

prehensive Plan, Williamson County reaffirmed its commitment to preserve the rural landscape while meeting the land needs for the anticipated growth over the life of the plan. The plan projects a range of acreage needs for growth over this 20-year period, ranging from 24,500 to 46,000 acres. Strategies were developed for not only the “preservation of the rural landscape” but the continuation of agricultural and equestrian uses as well as preservation of environmentally sensitive areas. Specifically, these strategies and techniques are incorporated in the newly adopted Williamson County

continued on page 30



Alpaca farm, west Williamson County

continued from page 29

Zoning Ordinance (2013). Not all of these strategies and techniques are new; many were parts of prior zoning ordinances and were further refined by Williamson County's subsequent experiences and those of other communities.

Large Lot Zoning

Since 1988, a sizable portion of unincorporated Williamson County has been zoned to allow one dwelling unit per five acres. Predominantly these properties are located in the sparsely populated parts of the county and are characterized by large tracts of lands, including farms, homesteads associated with farms, large-lot single-family properties,

and wooded and forested areas. These areas are also typified by what can best be described as a "rural level of infrastructure." Generally, sanitary sewer is not available, water service (if available) lacks sufficient fire flow, and the roads are sub-standard in width, composition, or alignment. Currently, 158,626 acres are subject to this density requirement in unincorporated Williamson County.

Voluntary Agricultural District

The 2013 Zoning Ordinance provides for the development of a voluntary agricultural district. Under this provision, a landowner restricts the use of his property to uses classified as agricultural. In addition to traditional agricultural uses, uses

such as farm wineries, rural retreats, and bed and breakfasts are allowed in this district. It is anticipated that this district will be used in concert with properties under conservation easements.

Agri-Tourism and Related Uses

Agri-tourism is defined as "any structure, land, or combination thereof used for tourism or educational purposes as it relates to an active agricultural use." Such uses might include demonstrations of crop and livestock production in an effort for visitors to experience farm life. The intent of these policies is beyond that of education; they are intended to provide the family farmers the opportunity to produce income from their property beyond

that of strictly agriculture. A notable example of this is a pumpkin patch established on a family-owned farm that is a popular destination during the weeks leading up to Halloween.

A closely related variation of this concept is the farm winery. Arrington Vineyards is one such example. At its location, Arrington Vineyards grows the grapes, bottles the resulting wine, and serves samples to its customers. Moreover, there is a retail component plus the opportunity for events on site. At this writing, Arrington Vineyards is the only such facility in Williamson County; however, a number of requests have been received to expand this category to include the distilling of spirits.

The 2013 Zoning Ordinance also has categories devoted to rural retreats and conference centers. The former might include event venues for weddings, reunions, and family gatherings. Conference centers would include space for corporate retreats and meeting rooms. Primarily, these uses are subject to strict performance standards and restricted to large parcels in an effort to minimize impact on neighbors and the rural landscape as a whole.

Residential Business

This category was established in the 1988 Zoning Ordinance and carried forward in the 2013 Ordinance. It allows small, owner-operated businesses on parcels in excess of five acres, subject to strict performance standards. This use is more intensive than a home occupation (e.g., home office), with a maximum number of employees not to exceed

three. Approval of this use is subject to a public hearing. Historically, this category has been found to be a good relief valve, again widening the number of uses available to property owners in the rural areas of Williamson County.

Conservation Subdivisions

Per the 2012 Zoning Ordinance, a conservation subdivision is “the division of land into two or more lots, building sites, or other divisions along with additional area set aside for open space for conservation, recreational or other rural purposes.” While this approach is not exactly new in Williamson County (the first dates back to 1972), the regulations for these uses have been refined and restated. This approach yields additional open space, opportunities to protect agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands while allowing the developer the same number of lots (albeit smaller lots) at theoretically lower costs due to shorter runs for roads and utilities. The resulting open space can be held privately (owners’ association), publicly (governmental entity), or by a third party such as a land trust. Since 2003, about 2,265 acres have been placed in permanent open space, largely under the control of various owners’ associations. This approach borrows readily from ideas espoused by Randall Arendt in his book *Rural by Design*.

Techniques Under Consideration

The 1988 Zoning Ordinance contained a provision for transferable development rights (TDRs). This involves the transfer of density from a sending area (an area one wishes

to preserve) to a receiving area (an area one wishes to have additional development, such as a freeway interchange). While this was available from 1988 to the present, no applicants exploited this, likely due to the lack of sewer connections in the unincorporated county and the fact that residents in the receiving areas tend to be less than enthusiastic about the additional density.

During the development of the comprehensive plan, significant discussion occurred regarding the purchase of development rights (PDRs). This practice simply means the rights to develop the property are purchased by a governmental or not-for-profit entity, and the land becomes permanent open space. Since the time of adoption of the comprehensive plan in 2007, much of the discussion in this area has been silenced due to the lack of a funding source and the bottoming out of the real estate market in 2008. Whether this notion will be renewed is simply speculative at this time.

Conclusion

We recognize this place is going to grow. We just have to figure out how we can preserve the ambience.

—Mayor Vince Parmesano, Sheperdsville, West Virginia, as quoted by Tom Daniels in *When City and Country Collide*

The policies discussed herein share one value, that of choice. While

continued on page 32



View from Pull Tight Hill, near the Bethesda community

continued from page 31

the large-lot zoning is restrictive in nature, the wide number of use options available on these properties at least partly offsets these restrictions. Given that the residential population of Williamson County is expected to be 418,990 by 2030 (Woods and Poole Economics, 2012), maintaining the rural landscape is going to be increasingly difficult. At best, the listed techniques can only influence the timing and extent of development. This seems to be a pessimistic assessment; however, the efforts to date indicate that pressure on the rural landscape can be mitigated and to some extent balanced against the property rights of those currently owning the land. ■

Sources

- American Farmland Trust (<http://blog.farmland.org>).
- Arendt, Randall. *Rural by Design*. Chicago, Planners Press, 1994.
- Census of Agriculture, 1969, 2007.
- Crutchfield, James A., and Holladay, Robert. *Franklin: Tennessee's Handsomest Town*. Franklin, TN, Hillsboro Press, 1999.
- Comptroller of the Treasury of the State of Tennessee. "Greenbelt." Presentation to Tennessee Farmland Legacy Conference. Montgomery Bell State Park, Dickson, TN. 9 October 2008.
- Davidoff, Paul, and Reiner, Thomas A. "A Choice Theory of Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 28.2, 103–115.
- Daniels, Tom. *When City and Country Collide*. Washington, D.C., Island Press, 1999.
- Kendig, Lane. *Performance Zoning*. Chicago, Planners Press, 1980.
- Land Trust for Tennessee (www.landtrusttn.org).
- Mello, Caitlin. Communications and executive coordinator, Land Trust for Tennessee. Telephone interview. 9 November 2012.
- Perrusquia, Marc, and Smith, Grant. "Cash Crop: Tax Breaks Sprout for Tennessee Farmers." *Commercial Appeal*, 14 October 2012, web edition.
- United States Census 1970, 2010.
- Williamson County Assessor of Property Office. 2012.
- Williamson County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, adopted 16 August 2007.
- Williamson County Comprehensive Plan, adopted 18 April 1988.
- Williamson County Zoning Ordinance, adopted 18 April 1988.
- Williamson County Zoning Ordinance, adopted 14 May 2012.



THE POWER OF TEN

In 2009, Cumberland Region Tomorrow (CRT) formed a partnership with the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Tennessee Department of Transportation to identify and drive action toward regional issues of concern and opportunities for the 10-county middle Tennessee region. This partnership resulted in formation of the Power of Ten Regional Summit, which annually brings together targeted stakeholders and decision makers from across the region and state to address middle Tennessee's shared issues of regional importance. The summits provide opportunities for policymakers and regional leaders to share best practices and to learn from other peer regions and state and federal experts about issues related to quality growth and regional implementation.

Since 2009, over 50 organizations from the private, public, university, and nonprofit sectors have signed on as sponsors and partners. Annual Power of Ten summits serve as the platform for education, collaboration, and regional calls to action

by Kasey Talbott
*CRT Program &
 Communications Director*

**The 2013 Power of Ten
 Regional Summit
 will be May 1 at War
 Memorial Auditorium in
 Nashville [10power.org].**

related to middle Tennessee's continuing growth and development.

CRT conducted research for the 2009 Power of Ten Regional Summit. Survey results helped to identify and focus the conversation on collaboration and set the stage for consensus on six issues of regional importance:

- Transportation/Transit
- Land Use/Quality Growth/Sustainable Development
- Infrastructure
- Open Space Conservation
- Air/Water Quantity and Quality
- Economic Competitiveness

Eighty-one percent of respondents felt regional collaboration was critically important for the region's future. Nashville Mayor Karl Dean called for formation of a Middle Tennessee's Mayors Caucus and a private-sector Transit Alliance in 2009, which continues to provide leadership on regional transportation/transit today.

The MPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, released at the 2010 summit and adopted by the Middle Tennessee Mayors Caucus later that year, set new policy for transit funding and development in the region.

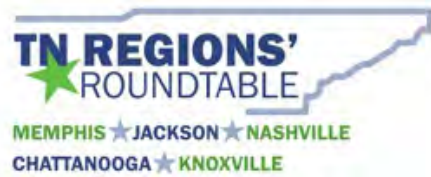
The 2012 summit focused on "Capitalizing on Regional Collaboration for Economic Competitiveness." Over 375 attendees representing local, regional, and state-level business, nonprofit, and government sectors heard updates from Tennessee Cabinet Officials along with Corporate and Regional Elected Officials and Executives about middle Tennessee's progress on the key issues of Regional Economic Competitiveness and Transportation/Transit. ■

Tennessee Regions' Roundtable

In June of 2011 a network of lead regional organizations, state and federal agency advisors, affiliate agency partners, and philanthropic leaders came together to form the Tennessee Regions' Roundtable, the first integrated statewide network of its kind. Its purpose is to advance local, regional, and statewide quality communities principles and practices through knowledge and resource sharing, education, communication, and collaborative efforts.

Using a model first introduced by Cumberland Region Tomorrow (CRT) in 2000, the roundtable is a strategic partnership of regional organizations, state government advisors, affiliates, and funders working to expand CRT's established regional quality growth, expertise, and resources into other regions of west, middle, and east Tennessee. Collaborative work is underway to identify, create, and implement additional education and technical assistance resources to build internal and external capacity of practitioners and public and private sector decision makers and leaders.

These efforts are intended to support the roundtable's long-term objective



to build out the learning capacity and collaborative systems of a network of regional organizations and create new regional capacity and synergy through shared knowledge, technical assistance and resources, outreach and communications, and diverse organizational affiliations.

Quality Communities Education Series

One specific project of the Tennessee Regions' Roundtable is the Quality Communities Education Series that will address the interconnected topics of land use/transportation, community design/redevelopment, natural infrastructure/open space conservation, and funding/implementation of particular interest to local, regional, state, and community leaders. Each course will

- begin with a discussion on why the topic is important,
- provide strong economic data to build the case for adoption of

- new knowledge and practices,
- directly focus on the integral connection between health and the built environment. and
- work to create informed community decisions and actions resulting in communities built to support active lifestyles that improve the health of Tennesseans.

Many examples exist of communities successfully implementing new quality communities practices. These will be illustrated in the community success stories and case studies series being developed to support the education series training sessions. The success stories and case studies will be presented at all Quality Community Education courses to show how this work is being done successfully across the three grand divisions of the state. The stories will also be used in local, regional, state, and national media outlets and Tennessee Regions' Roundtable partner networks.

The education series is one of six strategically focused projects funded through a grant provided by the Surdna Foundation that seeks to foster sustainable communities

The Quality Communities Education Series will address land use/transportation, community design/redevelopment, natural infrastructure/open space conservation, and funding/implementation of particular interest to local, regional, state, and community leaders.

by Bridget Jones, CRT Executive Director

guided by principles of social justice and distinguished by healthy environments, strong local economies, and thriving cultures. The grant is geared to institutionalize sustainable communities and quality growth practices across Tennessee and build capacity within Tennessee Regions' Roundtable partner organizations for successful implementation.

CRT has realized great success through its Quality Growth Toolbox effort that is now supporting successful region-wide implementation across 10 counties in the middle Tennessee region. This joint venture between CRT and Tennessee Regions' Roundtable partners from Southeast (SETDD) and Southwest (SWTDD) Tennessee Development Districts, Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization, Sustainable Shelby, Urban Land Institute of Memphis, Tennessee Department of Transportation, University of Tennessee Institute for Public Service (IPS), and other government leaders will build upon successful results in the other regions.

The series will directly address and improve the connection of community planning, design and development, funding policies, and community and economic development

outcomes in keeping with the objectives of all of these organizations and take advantage of this new regional leadership network for implementation across Tennessee.

This work has begun with expansion of CRT's Quality Growth Toolbox Training Workshops into the Chattanooga region through the Tennessee Regions' Roundtable. This collaboration with the SETDD is the first replicated community education effort through the new education series. Additionally, the CRT GIS GreenPrint Tools for Quality Growth, an online GIS-based planning decision making tool, is being shared for replication with the Jackson region.

Plans are underway for the SETDD Green Infrastructure Handbook and SWTDD's Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Community and Economic Development Leadership Workshop Series curriculum to be developed and added to the education series and expanded into the Memphis, Jackson, Nashville, Chattanooga, and Knoxville regions. Continuing education credit through current CRT partnerships with UT's IPS, Municipal Training and Advisory Service (MTAS), and County Technical Assistance Ser-

vice (CTAS); American Institute of Architects (AIA) Middle Tennessee; and American Planning Association will be obtained for these and all additional planned courses.

New Courses

Requests from state, regional, and local partners for the creation and implementation of additional education, technical assistance, and implementation resources have established the need and basis for the following new courses that build upon CRT, SETDD, and SWTDD offerings, focusing on successful community implementation, as part of the education series:

- Reinvestment Readiness/Tennessee Main Street and Downtowns/Main Street 101 (2014)
- Context Sensitive Solutions/Complete Streets Toolbox (2013)
- Tennessee Farmland Legacy Partnership Toolbox for Rural Economic Development (Spring 2014)
- CRT Sustainable Tourism/Rural Economic and Community Development Toolbox (Summer 2013) ■

For more information, contact Bridget Jones at 615-986-2699.

JONES COLLEGE SUPPORTS PLANNING

MTSU's Jones College of Business has been privileged to house the Jennings A. Jones Chair of Excellence in Free Enterprise, the Jennings and Rebecca Jones Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning, and Leadership Middle Tennessee (LMT).

Free Enterprise

The first Excellence in Free Enterprise chairholder was Joe M. Rodgers, ambassador to France during President George H. W. Bush's administration, successful businessman, advocate for traditional values-based organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), and spokesman for the free enterprise system and middle Tennessee economic development. With an international network of associates, he was able to bring widely recognized political and business leaders to middle Tennessee. The second and current chairholder is Aubrey B. Harwell Jr., managing partner of Nashville's Neal and Harwell and national expert in corporate crisis management and white collar criminal defense. He is involved in educational, civic, philanthropic, and cultural organizations such as Meharry Medical College, Easter Seals, Community Foundation, Tennessee Performing Arts Center, and BSA. His contacts in the venture capital community have been instrumental

by **Jim Burton**, Dean,
MTSU Jones College of Business

I am grateful for the privilege of working with these great leaders, genuinely nice people dedicated to the betterment of middle Tennessee, successful in business and active in civic/cultural/educational projects.

in the advancement of a significant number of start-ups, contributing to the region's economic development.

Urban and Regional Planning

The first holder of the Jennings and Rebecca Jones Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning was Earl Swensson, FAIA, founder of Earl Swensson Associates, Nashville architects and planners. Swensson's imprint on Nashville is known through such signature buildings as the Bell South tower, Opryland Hotel, and Lowe's Vanderbilt Hotel. Swensson was a founder of LMT and of Cumberland Region Tomorrow. He is involved in civic and cultural organizations and an advocate for the sustainability of middle Tennessee's quality of life. Currently

vacant, the chair continues its focus on issues of regional importance, last year hosting Joan Fitzgerald, Northeastern University's director of law and public policy, and planning to welcome in spring 2013 Susan Whitaker, Tennessee Commissioner of Tourist Development.

Leadership Middle Tennessee

LMT's first chair, Marvin Runyon, was the driving force in creating this regionally focused organization. Based on his storied career at Ford, Nissan, TVA, and the U.S. Postal Service, he had a passion for well-run organizations, well-trained leaders, civic involvement, and sustainable communities. Under its second chairman, legendary Clarksville businessman Jack Turner, LMT grew alumni support and solidified regional corporate importance as a training ground for well-connected, well-rounded leaders. Turner has enjoyed success in his insurance agency and his family business, Ajax Turner Co., beverage distributors. He is an advocate of U.S. soldiers and their families, a civilian advisor to the Pentagon, and a philanthropic supporter of organizations such as the Community Foundation. LMT's current chair, Seab Tuck, founder of Tuck-Hinton Architects, intends to solidify LMT's financial and organizational foundations to make it self-sustaining for the long term. ■