

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

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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) ■

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