

Background

The Knoxville region, nestled in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains is a wonderful place to live but like many other regions has its challenges. Residents struggle with poor air quality, sprawl, high transportation and housing costs, and a prevalence of obesity well above the national average. The region is also one of the most challenging places in the country to live with asthma. In response to these challenges, a diverse consortium of organizations and local governments from across the Knoxville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has formed to address these common issues and identify opportunities to create a more sustainable East Tennessee. Members of the Consortium recognize the need to address critical issues such as air and water quality, economic development, affordable housing, healthy living and transportation issues from a regional perspective.

Based on these needs, the City of Knoxville and its partners were awarded \$4,327,446 to develop a comprehensive regional plan for sustainable development for the MSA. Consortium partners have pledged to match federal funds in the amount of \$2,485,853. This represents a local match of leveraged resources of 57 percent.

The Consortium includes organizations that represent many facets of the Knoxville area, from economic development agencies to local government and private nonprofit organizations. Additional participants will be asked to join early in the planning process. The Consortium's main objective will be to engage the communities they represent and solicit greater representation from those groups in the development of a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development for the Knoxville MSA that will be called Plan East Tennessee (PlanET). The primary goal of planET is to grow leaders, educate new ones and develop regional capacity to improve the quality of life for the residents of this region. Throughout the 36-month planning period, the City of Knoxville and

its partners will work to increase capacity within the Knoxville area to think and plan regionally.

The Need for Regional Planning in the Knoxville Region

The Knoxville MSA is located in a broad valley in the heart of Appalachia, between the Cumberland Mountains and the Great Smoky Mountains. It includes five counties (Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon and Union) covering more than 1,900 square miles with total population of 680,444, ranking it third among metropolitan areas in Tennessee. Knoxville is the central city with a population of 177,646. Like much of Appalachia, the Knoxville region struggles with poverty, substandard housing, poorly funded education systems, inequitable access to employment, limited transportation options and air and water quality concerns. Steady population growth and urban sprawl exacerbate these issues.

The region's problems are not isolated in pockets throughout the region, rather they span the entire area. While efforts have been undertaken in recent years to address some of the problems, they have occurred primarily at sub-regional levels which could, at best, achieve small results, not areawide solutions. The Consortium seeks to create and implement an ambitious regionwide, multi-jurisdictional plan that will integrate land use, environment, infrastructure and public health elements in a comprehensive manner to address area needs. Under PlanET, growth will still occur and progress will be made toward alleviating area issues by introducing new ways of thinking to those involved in order to create a sustainable vision for our future.

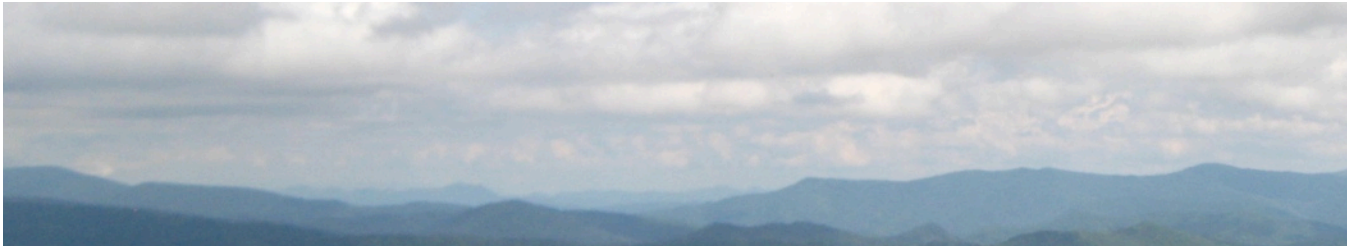
Major Tasks

Plan East Tennessee will have three primary goals:

Year 1: Establish an initial identity and direction.

Year 2: Engage, educate and develop a shared sustainable vision.

Year 3: Adopt a regional plan for sustainable



development and a regional implementation strategy with a focus on five demonstration communities, one in each county of our region.

In order to accomplish these goals, the Consortium has identified these major tasks:

Capacity Building and Community Engagement — The first 24 months of the 36-month planning process will focus on capacity building and knowledge sharing, one of HUD's Policy Priorities. Building the capacity of stakeholders to engage in planning efforts — local agencies, locally elected officials, private businesses, state partners and the general citizenry — is essential to creating a visionary plan for the region. To build capacity to create a more sustainable future, the Consortium's primary focus will be to engage and educate stakeholders at all levels, from mayors to school children to those typically not participating in civic processes.

Data Collection and Analysis — Recognizing a need for more robust data to inform the development of a regional vision, the Consortium will collect meaningful and relevant data that can be monitored, evaluated and used to further the goals of the region. Developing a centralized system for tracking and evaluating data is an essential component of this proposal and will be used to further the implementation strategies. A clearinghouse of data will expand knowledge and awareness of conditions in our region for all participants.

Visioning and Plan Development — The Consortium will conduct an extensive visioning and planning process for the five-county MSA that will result in a regional plan for sustainable development. It will integrate and coordinate existing plans while also addressing planning gaps. The plan will consider many diverse yet interdependent topics, all with the goal of creating a more sustainable future for the East Tennessee region.

Process Evaluation — Process evaluation will focus on implementation issues and will include periodic interviews with program staff to elicit information, reviews of relevant documents and materials, an annual survey of key stakeholders, and focus groups with community partners. Evaluation will also focus on individual, programmatic and contextual factors that may have impacted the program's success.

Plan Implementation — Implementation begins on day one of the visioning process. Establishing trust and legitimacy among all participants is key to success. Therefore, the first step will establish buy-in early on in the process of developing a shared vision. The second step will work collaboratively to identify implementation strategies that can be supported by the Consortium and all stakeholders. The third step will ensure that dialogue continues after the process is completed and the plan is formally adopted.

The Outcome

One of the most profound outcomes for this process will be the establishment of a committed coalition of leaders that will follow the plan through implementation and continue the regional dialogue. To begin to comprehensively and collaboratively address issues of sustainability will be a huge step forward for the Knoxville region.

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For a complete copy of the grant proposal please visit: www.knoxtrans.org