PlanET to Kick Off 2013 with Regional Symposium: Advancing East Tennessee's Regional Competitiveness

Advancing East Tennessee's Regional Competitiveness is the focus of an upcoming symposium sponsored by Plan East Tennessee in partnership with Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley, Inc.

Plan East Tennessee will kick off 2013 with a symposium targeting the regional business community, entitled "Advancing Regional Competitiveness."

Developed in partnership with Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley, Inc., the symposium will feature a series of panel discussions led by local experts that will encourage a frank dialogue among the participants about the relationship between East Tennessee's competitiveness and our health, education systems and the communities we live in.

Doors will open for the Symposium at the East Tennessee History Center in downtown Knoxville at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 9, 2013, with the event taking place from 1:00-4:30 p.m. A networking reception will follow. Online registration is available at www.planeasttn.org/ETcompetes.

"This event will draw together the wealth of expertise in the region from both the public and private sectors to uncover the critical issues of regional competitiveness for East Tennessee-- including a look at where we are now and how to become a more competitive region 10, 20, or 30 years from now," said Oak Ridge Mayor Tom Beehan, chairman of PlanET's board of mayors, which includes mayoral leaders of all five PlanET counties--Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon and Union.

"Competitiveness is not just about job creation and economic growth, although those aspects are cornerstones," Beehan said. "It's also about creating a place where people want to live because the quality-of-life drivers are strong."

Moderated by Ted Abernathy, executive director of the Southern Growth Policies Board, the symposium will feature panels on preparing East Tennessee's workforce and positioning the region for prosperity by capitalizing on quality-of-life assets essential to
The symposium intends to provide a platform for people--particularly professionals from diverse areas of the business community--to share the successes and challenges they've experienced, with the aim of advancing dialogue about East Tennessee's competitiveness for future generations.

As PlanET, which began in late summer 2011, enters its third and final phase in 2013, the symposium will help focus the ideas generated in Phases One and Two to create a targeted, meaningful outcome.

Phase One (August 2011 - July 2012) brought East Tennesseans together to establish a shared identity and vision. Phase Two (April 2012 - March 2013) will take that vision and develop a shared direction with continued citizen input. Phase Three (January 2013 - December 2013) will produce and report the final product and, with continued citizen input, focus on implementation activities.

The public is encouraged to follow PlanET as well as the upcoming symposium online at [www.planeasttn.org](http://www.planeasttn.org), on Facebook and on Twitter via [@PlanEastTN](https://twitter.com/PlanEastTN) and #ETCompetes.

### Sign Up Now for PlanET's Third Round of Meeting in a Box

PlanET will move into its third series of public input activities in January, and we want to know "How do YOU want our region to grow?"

By the year 2030, our five county area is projected to grow by 298,000 residents and more than 240,000 jobs. Where do you think we will all live, work and play? What are your priorities in determining where new transportation and housing options should be located? How can we preserve what you love about the region and grow in ways that make our communities stronger and more competitive?

From late January through mid-March, we will provide a variety of methods for you to share your input including online tools and small group discussions.

It's not too early to sign up for our popular Meeting in a Box tool that lets us bring the meeting to your civic organization, church or community group.

With formats lasting 30, 60, or 90 minutes, we can tailor the length of the meeting to fit within your organization's regular meeting time.

For groups with less than 30 people, the meeting will include the use of iPads and will allow participants to explore regional development alternatives in a dynamic and interactive way.

Please contact Sherith Colverson, PlanET Outreach Coordinator, at sherith.colverson@planeasttn.org or at (865) 661-3216 to learn more about the activity and schedule your meeting day and time.

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The PlanET regional partnership includes: Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon, and Union Counties

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