PlanET Gears Up for Regional Forum Series 2 Events

Shared values and aspirations for 2040 are being discussed at the second round of public forums. East Tennessee citizens are urged to weigh in: "What kind of East Tennessee region do you want future generations to inherit?"

Plan East Tennessee, or PlanET, invites community members throughout Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon and Union counties to participate in its upcoming Regional Forum Series 2 events. Forums are scheduled to take place April 23-28, 2012. The forums focus on five areas: jobs, housing, transportation, a clean environment and community health. A full list of meeting locations and times can be found on the PlanET website.

"While PlanET’s Phase One process asked citizens ‘where are we now?’ as a region, Phase Two will ask, ‘what kind of East Tennessee do we want future generations to inherit?’" said Mayor Tom Beehan, City of Oak Ridge and PlanET Board of Mayor’s Chair.

The Regional Forum Series 2 dialogue events will take two hours each, beginning with a 30-minute open house. During this time citizens will be able to visit five stations relating to the PlanET focus areas and view presentation boards and hand-outs about the Phase One findings for each focus area. Participants can also talk individually with members of the PlanET team as well as local leadership who are involved.

Next, a 10-minute presentation will recap the top strengths and challenges identified in Forum 1 and highlight the PlanET Livability Report’s "scorecard."

From there, 50-minute small-group discussions will ask participants to answer three questions related to a regional vision. Following a short break, group responses will be consolidated, and members of each small group will be able to vote on priorities they think are most important.

As a final point, the forum meeting will conclude with an overview of what will happen with that meeting’s results.

"We’re now getting to the really fun part and some of the most substantive elements of PlanET, and that’s the conceptual thought about what the people of this five-county East Tennessee area want their region to be," said Mayor Beehan. "We hope to see a big turn-out at each of the regional forum dialogue events in all five counties - plus participation online through MindMixer."
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The PlanET regional partnership includes:
Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon, and Union Counties

New Technologies Push PlanET Forums Beyond the Average Public Meeting

Gone are the flips charts, color-markers and sticky notes used for decades. Laptops, LCD projectors and keypad voting are the new standard for collecting public input.

If you attended the Plan East Tennessee Regional Forum Series 1 events, you know that technology played a central role in gathering participants' ideas. The same technology that was used to identify and prioritize East Tennessee's top strengths and challenges at the first round of PlanET forums, will again be employed at Forum Series 2 as the focus shifts to the future and visions for 2040 are discussed.

PlanET consultant PlaceMatters is an industry leader in employing technology to facilitate public input sessions. Last November, PlaceMatters previewed new software called Brainstorm Anywhere and citizens used it to help submit and prioritize thousands of ideas during the Forum Series 1 events. Participants found the software particularly useful and nearly 90% stated the technology was a beneficial part of their forum experience.

Brainstorm Anywhere is a web-based tool that allows groups of 8-10 participants to gather around tables and work together to create, sort, and prioritize lists of ideas about their community and region. The top ideas generated at each table are then presented to all meeting attendees for voting using another emerging technology, electronic polling.

Keypad voting uses a small, wireless polling device that lets meeting participants vote on the top ideas emerging from small group discussions. Typical voting asks respondents to select the top three ideas presented from a list of the most popular concepts. After each question is presented, results are immediately displayed on large screens allowing participants to develop both a clear understanding of the community's ideas and its preferences for a future direction.

PlanET Forum 2 events are scheduled for April 23-28, 2012. Dates and times are available in the sidebar of this email or on the PlanET website.