PlanET

KICKOFF WEEK REPORT

October 2011

Presented to the PlanET Community Leadership Team
PlanET Kickoff Week Summary
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PlanET Kickoff Week occurred the week of October 10, 2011. Designed to introduce PlanET to community leaders, the regional media, and the public at large, this series of events included a large introductory meeting, tours of the five counties that comprise the PlanET region, and smaller meetings with different community leaders and stakeholder groups. Details about each event follow.

### Kickoff Celebration

On Tuesday, October 11th, the Knoxville Regional Transportation Organization (TPO) and the Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) hosted the first public event for PlanET. Intended primarily to introduce the process to the area media, this meeting included a brief overview of PlanET, stories from three area residents about their experiences in East Tennessee, and an open house that allowed participants to interact with innovative tools designed to capture public input and talk one-on-one with members of the project leadership team.

The Kickoff Celebration originally was scheduled for Market Square, but had to be moved to the nearby East Tennessee History Center due to rain. This did not limit turnout, however, as more than 100 people attended the indoor meeting. Mountain Soul, a local band, provided music before and after the meeting.

### PlanET Kickoff Celebration Agenda

**October 11, 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</table>
| 11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. | OPENING REMARKS  
(Mayor Tom Beehan, City of Oak Ridge) |
| 11:15 a.m. – 11:35 a.m. | EAST TENNESSEE VOICES: STORIES FROM  
THREE GENERATIONS*  
(J.V. Waller—Union County; Melissa Knight—Knox County; Roshni Dave—Oak Ridge) |
| 11:35 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. | WHAT’S NEXT?  
(Mayor Tom Beehan, City of Oak Ridge) |
| 11:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | OPEN HOUSE |

*Residents’ stories can be viewed via a link to YouTube on the PlanET website: [http://planeasttn.org](http://planeasttn.org)
Media Coverage

All major Knoxville-area media outlets included coverage of the PlanET Kickoff Celebration on October 11, 2011. Stories appeared in local newspapers, including the Knoxville News-Sentinel, the primary daily newspaper in the five-county PlanET region. All four network affiliates (ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC) featured stories about PlanET and the Kickoff Celebration on their evening news shows and in text-based form on their websites. WJXB-FM also included a brief story about the event on its news webpage.

Coverage of the event also was posted online on the Department of Housing and Urban Development's web portal. Additionally, the PlanET Facebook page, Twitter feed, and webpage all contained information about the Kickoff Celebration and other events of the week. Links to videos of the Kickoff Celebration “stories” (speakers pictured above) can be found on the PlanET website.

(More details about PlanET media coverage and links to online stories can be found in a separate section at the end of this report.)
County Bus Tours

Members of the PlanET Community Leadership Team (CLT), the consultant team, and Knoxville-Knox County MPC/TPO staff toured each of the PlanET region’s five counties, stopping at key locations along the way and briefly meeting with community representatives. Each tour lasted approximately four hours and covered major highway routes, business centers, natural/recreation areas, and attractions in each county. Tour dates and highlights can be found in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Tour Date</th>
<th>Tour Highlights</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knox</td>
<td>Afternoon of October 11th</td>
<td>Downtown Knoxville, South Knoxville, Magnolia Avenue corridor, Mascot, Corryton, Central Street corridor, Old City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>Morning of October 12th</td>
<td>Knoxville’s Broadway corridor, New Paulette Elementary School, Maynardville Pike, Plainview, Tazewell Pike, Hickory Pointe development, Norris Lake, Big Ridge State Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>Afternoon of October 12th</td>
<td>Museum of Appalachia, Anderson County Park, Norris Lake Dam, Lake City, Eagle Bend Industrial Park, Downtown Clinton, Green McAdoo Center, Jackson Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blount</td>
<td>Morning of October 13th</td>
<td>Alcoa Highway and airport, Pellissippi Place Research Park, Maryville College, Little River Watershed, Chilhowee Mountain, Blount County Library, greenways in Maryville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loudon</td>
<td>Afternoon of October 13th</td>
<td>Greenback, Lake Tellico Lodge, Rarity Pointe development, Tellico Village, Sweetwater Valley Farm, Tennessee National development, Downtown Loudon, Downtown Lenoir City</td>
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County Conversations

Each county’s bus tour also included a meeting with key stakeholders from that area. These groups varied by county, but generally included a mix of county/city officials, government staff, business leaders, and community leaders. Most meetings had 10 to 15 attendees, but the Anderson County meeting attracted approximately 35 participants. These “County Conversations” were intended to be very informal in nature, centered around a discussion of each county’s assets, challenges, and priority issues.

Meeting formats differed according to participants and venue, but each meeting divided into three basic parts:

1. **Introduction to PlanET:** process overview by the consultant team

2. **Group discussion:** Assets to build on and challenges to overcome in the county and the region

3. **Group discussion:** How the PlanET team should communicate the project in each county and what outreach strategies might be successful

Some meetings also included a presentation by area stakeholders to MPC/TPO staff and the PlanET consultant team. In Knox County, representatives from communities involved in Healthy Knox’s Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities program discussed critical issues in their communities, program outcomes, and outreach methods. In Blount County, county officials and local government staff discussed important partnerships between Blount County governments and successful initiatives that show the value of cooperative planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Meeting Date</th>
<th>Meeting Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knox</td>
<td>October 11, 2011</td>
<td>Knox County Health Department, Knoxville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>October 12, 2011</td>
<td>American First Financial Services, Plainview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>October 13, 2011</td>
<td>New Hope Center, Oak Ridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blount</td>
<td>October 13, 2011</td>
<td>Blount Memorial Wellness Center, Alcoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loudon</td>
<td>October 13, 2011</td>
<td>Loudon County Visitors Bureau, Lenoir City</td>
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The PlanET team meets with Union County residents

Anderson County stakeholders meeting, introduced by Mayor Tom Beehan of Oak Ridge
Although the region’s communities differ in size and character, including rural areas, small towns, and urban settings, the County Conversations discussions revealed many perceptions, aspirations, and issues shared across these communities. Major themes that emerged are listed in the graphic box below.

**COUNTY CONVERSATIONS COMMON THEMES**

**WE NEED TO BUILD ON THESE ASSETS:**

- The natural beauty of the area and the recreational/tourism opportunities it affords
- The unique history/heritage of the region
- Our good highway access
- The colleges and universities in the region
- Our strong sense of community and the friendly/welcoming nature of area residents

**WE FACE SEVERAL MAJOR CHALLENGES:**

- Business development, especially in the non-urban counties
- Workforce education/training
- Limited communication between the different communities in the region
- An aging population that needs new services and transportation options in order to stay in their home communities
- Getting younger people to stay in or return to the area
- The loss of farming as a viable means of making a living and the sale of agricultural land for development
- Our aging housing stock and the need for better and affordable middle-income housing
- Protecting the area’s natural/scenic resources while still supporting tourism, agriculture, and business development
- A widespread resistance to change among citizens and leaders
- Citizens who typically do not get involved in planning processes and are unused to being asked what they need and want

*(Notes detailing the full range of each County Conversations discussion can be found at the end of this report.)*
Stakeholder Group Meetings

The consultant team also met with different sector stakeholders during Kickoff Week. These meetings were intended to introduce different non-profit, institutional, and business groups to the consultant team; initiate discussion about particular interest groups and the issues they focus on; consider how these groups can contribute to PlanET; and develop a list of additional parties who should be interviewed for PlanET. Meetings included:

- A discussion with area business leaders (October 13th; Peerless Restaurant, Knoxville)
- A discussion with area conservation leaders (October 13th; Chesapeake’s, Knoxville)
- A discussion with the University of Tennessee’s Center for Business and Economic Research (October 14th; University of Tennessee)

Other stakeholder group meetings will occur each time the consultant team returns for PlanET events.

Upcoming Regional Forum Series 1

PlanET Kickoff Week served as a prelude to a broader series of public meetings that will engage the entire regional community in a dialogue about current conditions in East Tennessee. Scheduled for the week of November 14, 2011, “Regional Forum Series 1” will include at least one public meeting in each county and offer multiple ways for citizens to provide input about regional opportunities and issues (e.g., the meeting itself, online forums, social networking sites, and Meeting-in-a-Box). Ideas and comments received during Regional Forum Series 1 will help the consultant team create the Plan ET Livability Report in late 2011/early 2012 and prepare for the next forum series, which will focus on developing a regional vision for 2050.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Meeting Location and Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/14/2011</td>
<td>Knox</td>
<td>East Tennessee History Center, Knoxville; 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/14/2011</td>
<td>Blount</td>
<td>Clayton Center for the Arts (Maryville College), Maryville; 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/15/2011</td>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>Alex Haley Farm, Clinton; 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/15/2011</td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>Plainview Community Center, Plainview; 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/16/2011</td>
<td>Knox</td>
<td>STEM Academy, Haslam Commons, Knoxville; 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/17/2011</td>
<td>Loudon</td>
<td>Loudon County Technology Center, Lenoir City; 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>REGIONAL FORUM SERIES 1</td>
<td>Project Introduction, Perceptions of Livability, &amp; the State of the Region</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Week of November 14, 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>REGIONAL FORUM SERIES 2</td>
<td>Shared Values &amp; Aspirations for 2050</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>April 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>REGIONAL FORUM SERIES 3</td>
<td>Imagining Alternative Scenarios for the Region’s Future</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid 2012</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>REGIONAL FORUM SERIES 4</td>
<td>Selection/Validation of Preferred Scenario</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Late 2012</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>REGIONAL FORUM SERIES 5</td>
<td>Framework Validation, Barriers to Overcome, &amp; Action Priorities</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Early 2013</td>
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PART ONE: PRESENTATION BY HEALTHY KIDS, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Inskip community issues
(Inskip is a neighborhood in northwest Knoxville outside I-640)

- Accessibility of open space/recreational activities
- Need for fresh foods
  - This is an issue especially for the Latino community
- Walkability, especially sidewalks
- Community involvement; overcoming apathy
- Traffic calming
- Need greenways and mini-parks
- Residential zoning to reduce the amount of traffic in the neighborhood
- Did neighborhood survey in spring of 2010; good response rate
- Communication/getting the word out about meetings
  - Inskip has a bilingual community association
  - Fliers in mailboxes
  - Potlucks are the most successful
  - National Night Out also brought people, included food

Lonsdale community issues
(Lonsdale is a neighborhood in northwest Knoxville inside I-640)

- Issues are similar to those of Inskip
- Lonsdale is “one of the most diverse communities in Knoxville”
- Has a large Latino community; many residents are not proficient in English
- Safety/crime
• No jobs in the community
• Fresh foods/access to healthy foods
• Child obesity rates
• No destinations
• Few recreational facilities for kids
  o Neighborhood does not have a ballfield
  o Community worked together to rebuild playground after it was destroyed by fire
• Low household incomes/poverty
• Major needs:
  o Community pride/ownership in the community
  o Sense of hope
  o Common culture area
• Accomplishments: potlucks, rebuilt the playground, community gardens, cooking class

**Mascot community issues**
(Mascot is a rural community in eastern Knox County)

• Community only has one park; needs to be place for elders and children
• No sidewalks
• No bike lanes
• No community center—need central location/area to help define the community
• No destinations
• Connectivity issues
• Can only get around by car
• Need to preserve rural character
• Need recreation center
• Seeking “one small success” to energize community/serve as model

**Commonalities/shared challenges**

• Continuity is difficult
• Hard to deal with hopelessness and keeping people encouraged
  o Economic issues contribute to hopelessness
  o Hopelessness spreads easily
• Have to overcome fear and safety concerns
• Need for exchange with decision makers
• Need to be able to show small successes, both in home community and in nearby/related areas
  o Will demonstrate to people that something can be done
  o Will also help people see what’s working and what can be replicated (examples from other communities)
• Different neighborhoods/communities need to meet, talk, and share; communities can learn from each other
• Communities have common issues; need to work together and present a common voice to decision makers
  o Larger numbers/unified groups will have more influence
  o Also need to collect data ourselves to present to decision makers—must support what we are saying/advocating for
PART TWO: PlanET OVERVIEW AND GROUP DISCUSSION

I. What are the key assets in this region? What can we build upon for the future?

- Various groups coming together to get political leverage—power of people talking to one another
- Regional pride—pride in being from your community, pride motivates people to make things better
- Communities have “done their homework”—gathered their own data to support ideas, prove viability
  - Example of Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities survey
- Natural beauty of the region—people come to the region to be a part of this beauty
- Knoxville as a city has a lot of attractions and a major university; region also has Oak Ridge
- Region is temperate deciduous forest; has a unique topography—these things are still pretty accessible, but they are threatened by development
- Individuals who are committed to making their communities better (although they face challenges, have to sacrifice)
- Experienced neighborhood group leaders who know the system
  - Sometimes these leaders form coalitions; lots of value in looking at these neighborhood leaders and connecting them with other experienced people to build a network and share information (also an opportunity to engage the next generation of leaders)
- Lengthy growing season; food issues are getting more attention, farmers’ markets are increasing—our area has a self-reliant approach, so there is a focus on farming, preservation, etc.
- Cultural heritage, lots of great stories and storytelling, music
- Strong faith-based communities
- Independent spirit

II. What are the challenges/issues that we need to address over the next 20 years in order to realize our vision?

- Many people will not participate (“even if their pants were on fire!”)
- Politicians tend to disappear after elections, especially in communities like Lonsdale and Inskip
  - They focus more on other areas of Knoxville
- Lots of paving in places like Inskip; the region’s agricultural areas are being developed too—there’s not a lot of natural beauty remaining in some communities; kids are growing increasingly out of touch with nature
  - We have the opportunity to not repeat past mistakes of development; need to retain natural beauty and connection of people to nature
- Leadership and individuals have to sacrifice a lot to make a difference
  - Hope there’s an opportunity with PlanET to encourage community leaders to stay the course, achieve their visions
- Family involvement in the community is lacking
  - If families were motivated, this could be a great asset (e.g., family involvement in churches, community groups, etc.)
- Community involvement is low (apathy; failure to participate), which means politicians don’t listen when so few are voting
  - Apathy is a challenge; it’s hard to get people to show up to a meeting and then keep coming.
- Losing our agricultural land
- External forces: increased gas prices, the national economy, and unemployment
- Graduation rates are too low generally
- The “best and brightest” have a tendency to leave the region
- Obesity rates, both childhood and adult, are too high; associated costs
- Stubbornness (flip side of independent spirit); resistance to change
- Distrust of “Yankees”; people from “away”
- Multiple generations of multiple cultures—how can we celebrate this, cultivate it within East Tennessee’s cultural heritage?
- New arrivals (especially immigrant populations) do not always feel welcome, or they don’t participate in community activities, often because there’s a language barrier
- Cultural insensitivity/ignorance
• Broader cultural trend of homogenization of culture—almost a global occurrence, facilitated by technological advances; these advances have a tendency to isolate us—cohesion/community is what we need
• Towns used to have unique characters; now they all look the same
• What are we going to use to measure success?
• Heritage and beauty barrier: lots of people see the beauty of East Tennessee, but are concerned about air quality
  o We’re the asthma capital of the U.S.

PART THREE: SUGGESTIONS FOR OUTREACH / PUBLICIZING PlanET

How do we get the community involved? Whom should we contact? How can you help us connect to community stakeholders?

• Everyone in this room will spread the word about the first set of PlanET forums (week of November 14)
• Must communicate how this is different from “just another meeting”
• Connect with existing programs, efforts—leverage what communities are already doing, their networks; develop a “coalition of the committed”
• Delivering flyers on foot may not be effective—only got one phone call when we did this for a neighborhood meeting
• E-mail lists of neighborhood associations often are very small; lots of times people don’t actually read the e-mails—you need to go door-to-door and talk to people face-to-face
• Schools—ask to attend PTA meetings
• Have meetings with different ethnic groups
• Serve a lot of meals (if you feed them, they will come)
• Every little bit helps; five people is five more people
• No one knows about this [PlanET]!
• There are a large number of people who need to be convinced that a plan is worthwhile and planning isn’t “evil.” Seems like a waste of money to a lot of people to get money to do a plan. You must overcome the perception that a plan is government imposing something on the community.
• Growth and change are inevitable; you need to talk about how this process [PlanET] allows people to say what they want, how they want to direct this growth.
• Don’t use planner jargon!
• Focus on storytelling.
• What you’re doing is against this area’s culture: asking people “What is good for you? What are your needs?” doesn’t happen often. People aren’t used to answering this and telling the government what they need—it’s a switch of mindset.
• Provide some examples of successes from other communities, but be careful that this doesn’t suggest PlanET will simply emulate other communities’ plans
• Share successes along the way
• Measuring success by who comes to meetings isn’t enough
County Conversations: Union County
American First Financial Services, Plainview
October 12, 2011

MEETING ATTENDEES

Joyce Meltabarger, Union County Commission and Schools
Sheila Buckner, Union County Commission, Chamber of Commerce, and Library
Kay Jones, City of Plainview Planning
Shannon Perrin, Agricultural Extension Agent
Debby Perry, Carmeuse Mines
Bill Mannier, KUCB
Junior Loy, Union County Sheriff’s Department
Marilyn Toppins, Union County Schools
Denny Patterson, Business Owner
J.V. Waller, Union County Historical Society
Deputy Mayor Jody Smith, City of Luttrell
Tom Keaton, City of Plainview Planning
Gary Kitts, Union County Highway Department
Clayton Helms, Union County Highway Superintendent
Dave Breder, President of Hickory Pointe Homeowners Association
Mike Butcher, Union County Sheriff’s Department
Jim DeVault, Union County Road Commissioner
Mayme Smith, City of Luttrell Volunteer Fire Department
Gina Singleton, City of Maynardville
Brandy Williams, Union County Leadership/Courthouse
Melina Sharpe, Business Owner
Betty Satterfield, Business Owner
Richard Sharpe, Business Owner
Chantay Collins, Town of Maynardville Library

PART ONE: PROJECT OVERVIEW

Questions from opening discussion

• What specific, concrete thing will we have at the end of the process that we can point to that shows where the money went?

• How will we implement the plan? Will there be ways for us to access money to make sure the plan is implemented?

• Can we contact the MPC/TPO directly with our questions? Can we contact specific people outside of these meetings? Who would they be?

• When we have the regional forums, who will get the word out to encourage people to attend?

• Union County is a place where people come in from work, turn on the news, feed the kids, etc. How do we get people out to a weeknight meeting?
PART TWO: GROUP DISCUSSION

I. Think about Union County 30 years ago. What was life like? Now think about today. What is better than 30 years ago?

- People are more interested and engaged in what’s happening
- Better communication
- Better roads—for the most part.
- More public employment.
- More housing, although still not enough
- Better housing
- More diversity of thought, mostly due to new people that have moved into Union County

II. What has been lost over the last 30 years?

- Rural farmland—residential development has encroached upon it. Now we don’t see as much of the rolling land with no houses.
- Farming is no longer a way to make a living. Now it is a hobby for most because of increases in cost.
- No one grows tobacco anymore—Union County farmers that remain raise some crops but mostly raise cattle.
- Farmers are struggling today. We need new development and jobs in the area to compensate for what farmers can’t do with farming.
- Younger people don’t understand how difficult it is to grow crops and provide food. Our cities couldn’t survive without farmers.
- Our children aren’t going into farming—they’re probably going to Knox or elsewhere for jobs, since we don’t have jobs here in Union County.
- How can we keep the farming/agricultural look and feel but include new development for jobs?

III. What hasn’t changed over the past 30 years?

- The strong sense of community in Union County

IV. Growth and change are inevitable. Knowing this, and that PlanET offers Union County and the region a chance to “get ahead” of the growth and prepare for it, what things do you want to keep? What community assets must be protected?

- Keep farming, keep the views, keep our rural feel
- Keep hilltops, views—this is why people come here. People have said, “We came here because it looks like this.”
- Farming as a way to make a living
- Ability to live on the land your family owns. Right now, the next generation is not going to keep the land—they will sell it. They are not going into farming because you can no longer make a living off the land.
- We need business and industry, but located in areas out of the public eye so we don’t ruin the beauty of Union County. These businesses could serve the community, create local jobs, and not have the highway look bad.
- We have an industrial park, but it is not currently used
- We need local jobs. It is too long of a commute to Knoxville—especially with today’s gas prices. We need to lay the groundwork in this community so the next generation won’t have to commute 30 miles to work.
V. What are the challenges facing Union County today?

- Getting employers to come here. You can’t get trucks into the industrial park we have, which is why it’s empty. Need to fix the half mile of road so trucks can get into Luttrell.
- No hotels, no restaurants. Not enough restaurants to accommodate real tourism. People come up to go to marinas—could get tourist money at restaurants, hotels.
- We need more home-grown businesses for this, not chains
- Telecommunications need to be improved.
- Could have farms convert to vineyards. We could become Tennessee wine country. It’s not just a crop—vineyards and wineries also attract tourists. (We’re a dry county, but just because you grow it doesn’t mean you have to drink it!)
- Farmers need affordable health insurance.
- Health care in the region has improved, but there are no specialists. You have to go to Knoxville or other places for that.
- The population is getting older, but you can’t age in place and there are no assisted living facilities. There are some group homes, day care, nursing homes, but this won’t sustain the population. People want to stay in Union County.
- There are few transportation options for seniors. We especially need transportation to medical services in Knoxville.
- We need a community college.
- Limited broadband access is a problem for attracting businesses
- QUESTION: What would be the impact of large industry on Union County?
PART ONE: PROCESS OVERVIEW

**Questions/comments**

- How will PlanET integrate with the comprehensive plans of different communities?
- Who is actually running this show? Will there be implementation money?
- Is Nine Counties, One Vision the grandfather of this new process?
- What time horizon are we looking at for PlanET?
- What are some examples of similar processes that have been successful?

PART TWO: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

More than ___ people attended the meeting in Anderson County, which made it necessary to break up into five small groups to discuss key questions. Each group answered the following:

1) **What existing assets could be used to accelerate progress?**
2) **What challenges must be overcome in order to take advantage of these assets?**

The groups also were asked to prioritize their responses if time permitted. Each group’s responses are summarized below.
GROUP ONE

Assets
\textit{(priority assets are marked with an asterisk)}

- Lakefront property
- *Lots of open farmland, the potential to grow and eat local if we don’t ruin the land*
- Unique history is an asset; first community selected to be a center for development of atomic weapon, community is planned community, “future is in your past”, lots of planning examples that could be learned from
- Lots of lessons to learn from
- *Department of Energy facilities and budget here*
- *Have an abundance of resources for energy: gas, coal, hydro power, wind, solar*
- *Have lots of lakes, river, mountains, hiking, biking, football, baseball—need more, and need more people to know what the region has to offer*
- *Higher education, UT, Pellissippi, Maryville College, etc. lots of schools, including technical schools. Higher ed. has a willingness to develop programs where needed; Roane State developed carbon fiber business; Pellissippi had a program for Green Mountain Coffee. This is a draw for industry.*
- Have a lot of living “habitat”: urban to rural, small town, etc.
- Can work and have a short commute; can live and work in Oak Ridge
- *At the crossroads of two major interstates and several rivers*
- Within a day’s drive of 75% of the nation’s population
- Could sell as a driving vacation crossroads
- *Climate is a great asset; people are moving up from Florida to take advantage of it*
- Become a bedroom community for “half-backs”
- Lakes, mountains are a draw
- Lots of people are moving to the area to retire. These people have high average incomes.

Challenges/Issues
\textit{(priority issues are marked with an asterisk)}

- Traffic flow problems and lack of connections—need either light rail or high-speed rail transportation to deal with traffic flow problems, and tie community together (Maryville-Knoxville-Oak Ridge-Airport)
- Rail line might disappear, could it be made to fit into a larger transportation idea? Light rail might be a different route altogether.
- **People don’t know what the region has to offer**
- Not known as a “metro area” like Atlanta, Birmingham, etc.—each community wants to have its own identity, not connected
- People think of driving to another community is really far, even though it’s the same amount of time that you’d spend driving in a city; people have a mental block about this.
- Not enough people who work in Oak Ridge live in Oak Ridge.
- Drug traffic goes through here—other side of central location, driving accessibility
- Become a bedroom community for a “half-backs”
- There is some feeling that you actually DON’T want people to know how great it is here.
- Air quality, in EPA noncompliance—need to clean up cars, or provide alternative transportation
- *Serious current problem is the lack of money; developers can’t borrow the money for housing starts*
- Lots of poor people in the community, lots of people are slipping from middle class to poor with the recession
- *DOE with its big budget—it’s hard to diversify the economy. Oak Ridge, West Knoxville, and the entire region has a problem.*
- Population growth would help a lot of these challenges—let people know the advantages of living here.
GROUP TWO

Assets

- Natural environment in TN; from Oak Ridge with Milton Ridge area and greenways
- Location – near UT, Dept. of Energy, and I-40 and 75
- Demographics – lots of institutional knowledge in town (high number of PhDs per capita) and lots of volunteerism – source of knowledge
- Local educational systems – Oak Ridge school system, Roane State, and UT
- Cultural assets are different for a city our size (Oak Ridge): band and symphony, theatre (9 for 30,000 people)
- International influence of national lab and highly skilled workforce
- Transportation – with interstate connections (e.g., Pellissippi Parkway and planned four-lane highway going north)
- Water quality and quantity (other places don’t necessarily have that asset, e.g., Georgia)
- Lack of density that allows plenty of opportunity for growth
- Sense of community (not on regional scale but within local communities, e.g. Knoxville and Oak Ridge)
- Recreational opportunities in Oak Ridge with ball fields, hiking trails, Cumberland Trails, Smokey Mountains, and lakes
- Lots of history in this area (e.g., coal mining)
- TVA utility – low-cost electric rates
- Understanding of nuclear industry that is unlike other places – we’re not as afraid of nuclear as other places and its consequences
- Be easier to sell a power source that’s nuclear here than any other (TVA getting off hydro and coal fire)
- If you go upstream – fishing industry that could be better capitalized on (trout fishing) – related to recreational lakes
- Health care facilities in Oak Ridge (hospitals and UT)
- Attraction that will draw people from outside (excellent recreational facilities, Smokey Mountains nearby, and Pigeon Forge – that will bring visitors and dollars from outside)

What are the 3-5 most important assets?

- Transportation
- Job opportunities – leveraging DOE assets, especially those related to green energy and technical innovations and new research
- Building on enhanced quality of life (including recreational, water quality / quantity, electrical access)
- Lack of density? We have hundreds of acres to develop, big areas where density could be increased and expanded for development

Challenges/Issues

- Retail (for Anderson County); low sales tax per capita
- Communicating our assets – how do you let people know?
- Older housing stock that needs to be upgraded (especially in Oak Ridge)
- Jobs – plants have fairly high salaries, but our people are not qualified to work at the plant; where do the kids that don’t go to college work here? They don’t have employment opportunities.
- Attracting younger residents into the city
- Educating about green technologies (e.g., building related to solar, wind, etc.) so that they can be utilized in the community and start training
- For economic development, lack of available property (don’t have a large tract) and a population that doesn’t want to take a risk to invest in assembling land
- Not much flat land, plus limited rail access and limited interstate frontage
- DOE won’t release more land to be developed due to conservation easements (controlled by federal government)
- Commercial and landlocked (we stop before we get to the interstate and stop at the river)
- Other items (Anderson) – shortage of industrial parks between Clinton and Oak Ridge; can’t expand because parks are built out or optioned
- Can’t go over the river and over the ridge
- School financing – spread higher costs per capita among fewer people; when you do tax comparisons, the rates are higher here
- Clean up of the nuclear waste and a dwindling budget to work with (some progress, but lots to go)
- Image of Oak Ridge – outside the community (those guys glow in the dark; Secret City tradition); don’t let light shine throughout the region
- Public transportation and walkability of the city; not appealing
- No things for young people to do; not tailored to younger crowd

What are the 3-5 top priority issues facing the region in the next decade (from the list above)?
- Housing -- #1
- Attractiveness to next generation group as residents (related to jobs, housing stock, after hours activities, job availability, etc.)
- Diversity of retail – you can buy what you need but you can’t buy what you want (e.g., boats, etc.)
- Image of community

GROUP THREE

Assets

- Employment base – strong.
- Education systems – primary and secondary – very strong.
- Unmatched natural systems – lakes, woodlands, park systems.
- “Cheap energy”
- Historical significance.
- Small town atmosphere with proximity to bigger-town amenities.
- Highly educated workforce – technology base.
- Community organizations – robust – symphony, and many others.
- Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Y-12.
- Diversity – ORNL/Y-12 draws in people with many different backgrounds (race, culture, nationality).
- Many different communities with different assets: natural resources (coal, etc.), tourism focus, ORNL/Y-12.
- Transportation access – interstates.
- Two hydroelectric power plants.
- Recreational opportunities.
- Heritage/tourism/dynamic history.
- “Energy leader.”
- High-level security clearance employment base.
- Moderate climate.
- Available land.
- Abundance of lakefront property.

Top Assets
1. Workforce
2. Quality of life – natural resources, community organizations
**Challenges/Issues**

*Numbers in parentheses represent number of priority votes*

1. Tax equalization – people leaving because of high tax rates. (3)
3. Drug problem – meth labs, etc. (6)
4. Pockets of poverty in Anderson County. (1)
5. Transitioning neighborhoods – aging, absentee landlords (Oak Ridge). (6)
6. Can’t get employees to live here – big tax issue. Becoming a bedroom community to Knoxville. (6)
7. Aging infrastructure. (3)

**GROUP FOUR**

**Assets**

- Green space/belts
- OR National Lab & federal employment
- Recreational opportunities: parks, public space
- Scenic assets, gateway to natural treasures
- History
- Transportation nexus
- Educational institutions (especially higher education)
- Federal investments
- Medical facilities leading hospitals
- High education level of the residents
- Very good local primary & high schools
- Seeing youngsters succeed
- Low cost of living with high quality of life
- Energy sufficient, some hydroelectric
- Water
- Diversity for a relatively small community
- Cosmopolitan atmosphere
- Rich historical background
- Museums
- Sports for children and adults

**Challenges/Issues**

- Transportation largely limited to single-occupancy vehicles
- Congested periods
- Topography, narrow corridors, rivers funnel traffic & expands sprawl
- Fiscal base limited to sales & property tax: recession sensitive, limit public resources & options
- Lack of good planning & zoning so that poor quality development spreads
- Meth, costs of crime
- Replacement of well-paying jobs with lower-paying jobs
- Entities that don’t invest back in the community, heavy dependence on government and corporations not locally based: tax revenue, philanthropy, lack of circulation of money within the community
- Chicken or egg question of good retail/residential development
- Government controls so much land, little land is available for private development
- Legacy contamination & its stigma
GROUP FIVE

Assets

- Educated/skilled workforce in Oak Ridge
  - Other areas too?
- Strong sense of community within Oak Ridge
- People come from all over the place (national and international)
  - Diverse experiences and viewpoints in Oak Ridge
- Educational system (Oak Ridge)—high quality; will attract young families
- Anderson County: history (especially TVA, coal mining, Manhattan Project, Clinton)
- Museum of Appalachia
- Cultural assets in Oak Ridge (symphony, playhouse, etc.)—impressive for a city its size
- Improved roads; great transportation system in county
- Close to I-40
- Natural environment—can be hiking, in park, etc. within 10-20 minutes
- Variety of recreational opportunities that not all communities have (rowing, hiking, mountain biking, etc.)
- Cleaning up the environment
- Balance of urban, rural, and wilderness

Top 3 assets (in no particular order):
- Educated/skilled workforce
- History—highly-varied and, in Oak Ridge, unique
- High-quality educational system in Oak Ridge

Challenges/Issues

- Communication/cooperation between municipalities; acting as a region
  - Anderson County not a member of Knoxville-area transportation planning organization (TPO)
  - Communities don’t talk to each other
  - Communities within Anderson County have very different characters/perspectives
- Many people employed in the community do not live here
- Aging in place—average age is getting older
- Housing needs updating/demolition
  - Significant amount of housing is WWII-era housing
  - 1/3 of housing is blighted
  - Some people protest demolition or improvements by saying that housing is historic (especially housing relating to Oak Ridge facilities)
  - Property rights issues
- Who can afford to buy homes once current residents leave?
- Anderson County image challenge: Blount County is seen as progressive and unified—the big communities work together, but in our area there is a widespread perception that Oak Ridge is viewed as a progressive city dragging along a county that is not at all progressive
- Legacy contamination in parts of the community—people fear this; affects perception of whether Oak Ridge is a safe place to live
- History is an important asset, but no one wants to allow change—there is a high resistance to change, even in Oak Ridge (example of Jackson Square discussed)
- Some people do not want Oak Ridge to grow
- Leaders are not entrepreneurial; are not comfortable making changes/taking chances/making investments/spending money
- Reliance on DOE funding, things made available for the community (Oak Ridge is an “entitlement town”)
  - What happens without this?
- Retail opportunities—lack of this; need this to finance things for the community
- Lack of social gathering places (these places often go hand-in-hand with retail areas)
- Property rights issues when it affects MY property
Many people say they are in favor of something, but if it affects them directly, they resist
- Good roads enable Oak Ridge workers to live elsewhere (often West Knoxville)
- Ease of getting to Knoxville—people living in Anderson County head to Knoxville for entertainment, shopping, etc. instead of Oak Ridge

PART THREE: SUGGESTIONS FOR OUTREACH / PUBLICIZING PlanET

- You need to engage civic organizations—Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis—all of these organizations are big
- Make a DVD that we can send to churches and schools; kids take things home to their parents all the time
- Need a description that is short and simple: who is planning what, what kind of benefits will this provide, and to whom?
- Send “who is doing what for the benefit of whom” description (one sentence?) in e-mails about the public meetings
- African-American and Hispanic populations need to be represented
- Differentiate this from the Nine Counties, One Vision process
PART ONE: PRESENTATION OF NOTABLE INITIATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN BLOUNT COUNTY

- Blount County is known for partnerships and local cooperation
- Community Health Initiative
  - Each county in Tennessee is required to have a health council
- Tourism
- County library
- Parks and recreation (partnership between county, Maryville, and Alcoa)
- Environmental Health Action Team (partnership between hospital and Blount County Chamber of Commerce)
- Great Smoky Mountains Greenway Council
- For county: greenways master plan and green infrastructure plan (cooperation between county, Maryville, and Alcoa)
- Water quality forums: Little River watershed and Baker Creek watershed (collaborating with Loudon County)

PART TWO: GROUP DISCUSSION

Community Assets

- Friendliness of our people
  - Our residents/community make everyone feel welcome
  - Communicate this to help sell the county—market this to make people want to live here or visit
  - Make our residents aware of how important this is—they can help get the word out
- Greenway system
- Cooperation between county communities—especially with economic development
  - Economic Development Board has worked hard to bring jobs here
  - Cooperation is one of our biggest assets
- Beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains attracts visitors who pass through Blount County—this beauty and our friendly people make many people want to move here
  - Tourism is often people’s first point of contact with Blount County
  - We call ourselves “The Quiet Side of the Smokies”
Top-Priority Issues

- Growth in the area has come to a standstill—we’re facing tough economic times
- We have a good bit of debt but no growth
  - The recent 4% housing growth is just a fluke
- Our population is aging—older citizens, lots of retirees
- Business development—we have to keep businesses coming into the area
  - Need road improvements—road infrastructure will be the key
- Need to keep the sales tax
- Infrastructure for the parkway extension (Pellissippi Parkway)
- More efficiency with tax dollars
- Resistance to change by long-term residents
  - But newer residents are more involved, more willing to come to meetings (Friendsville)
- Low tax base (Friendsville)
- Friendsville wants to improve its relationships with the larger cities
- Jobs/workforce development
- Need for affordable housing
  - Needs to be discussed so people will have affordable options when the economy picks up again
- Environmental/health-related issues
  - Tennessee has very poor ratings on a number of health metrics
- Preserve the beauty of our community so people will still want to move here when the economy recovers
  - A lot of visitors talk about how beautiful Blount County is and how they would like to be a part of it
- Region is quickly becoming an area of older citizens (aging in place plus retirees)
  - This will have an impact on regional economics

PART THREE: SUGGESTIONS FOR OUTREACH / PUBLICIZING PlanET

- All five PlanET counties need to receive the same message—we all need to be speaking the same language
- Most people are not aware of PlanET
- Area is “visioned to death”
- And other visioning efforts were perceived as people here to do “to” you rather than “with” you
- Need to convey sense of community ownership
- Identify several “points of access”—groups we have been working with already
  - Community health focus is good
  - Need to keep planning commissions informed
  - Meeting in a Box will be a good tool to use with these contact groups
- Emphasize what the process will mean for various sectors/community groups
- The message must be simple and action-oriented
  - What this will do for YOU—put the meat of what we’re doing in simple terms
  - Must emphasize will be listening and doing
    - This will be different from other processes
  - List actual topics rather than using the term “vision”
  - Must also emphasize that this is about how we can make the community better at no cost to you (i.e., no higher taxes will be imposed)
PART ONE: GROUP DISCUSSION

Focus/Priorities

- Focus on health, pedestrian friendliness
- More progressive zoning
- Tourism is 2nd largest business; farming is still the top business in Loudon County
- Would like to see tourism grow - it is a job creator; heritage tourism would be a good example of a niche
- Find ways to manage growth, revitalize downtowns, and provide good retail
- Sustain growth in a quality fashion
- Increase educational opportunities and bring people who have better educations back
- How do we manage growth? We need solutions other than increasing highway lanes and buying ROS
- Build upon our heritage and maintain our uniqueness
- Ensure economic viability with a vibrant group of middle-income households
- Need middle-income housing
- Connections to encourage commerce - bus and rail routes
- Need affordable workforce housing
- Need to address aging housing stock - rehabilitation, addressing health issues
- Need a quality educational system to attract people - educational excellence is key
- Alternative modes of transportation
- Focus on senior citizens and their needs
- Open space preservation - our open areas are being lost to subdivisions
- Transportation along U.S. 321
- Get all five cities in Loudon County to work together
• Focus on the next 5, 10, 15 years

PART TWO: SUGGESTIONS FOR OUTREACH / PUBLICIZING PlanET

• Identify specific capital projects
• Newspaper notices
• Posters at the stores
PlanET

Media Coverage Summary
## PlanET Kickoff Week Media Coverage

### Traditional Media (newspapers and television)

#### Newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loudon County News-Herald</strong> (weekly newspaper)</td>
<td>Editor participated in October 13th stakeholder meeting; story about the project and the stakeholder meeting appeared on October 14th.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Television

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station Name</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WATE (ABC)</td>
<td>Covered Kickoff Celebration in is 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. newscasts on October 11th. Repeat coverage aired on the next morning’s Good Morning Tennessee program (4:30 a.m. – 7:00 a.m.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBIR (NBC)</td>
<td>Aired segments about the Kickoff Celebration on its 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. newscasts on October 11th. Repeat coverage aired the next day during the 4:30 a.m. – 7:00 a.m. newscast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVLT (CBS)</td>
<td>Broadcast a story about the Kickoff Celebration on its 4:00 p.m. news program, as well as on its 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. newscasts on October 11th.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTNZ (Fox)</td>
<td>Aired WBIR’s news coverage in its 10:00 p.m. news program on October 11th. (WBIR provides news broadcast services for WTNZ.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Online media (Internet pages and social networking sites)

#### Newspaper Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knoxville News-Sentinel</td>
<td>Online version of Kickoff Celebration article that appeared in the October 12th print edition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Television Websites

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<tr>
<td>WATE (ABC)</td>
<td>Text-based article about Kickoff Celebration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WJXJ</td>
<td>Recap of the Kickoff Celebration posted on the station’s news page.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### Other Websites

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Coverage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HUD (Department of Housing &amp; Urban Development) website</td>
<td>Article about the Kickoff Celebration posted on HUD’s news portal page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan East Tennessee website</td>
<td>Brief summary of project and events, plus links to Facebook, Twitter, &amp; YouTube.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>Videos of each of the three Kickoff Celebration speakers telling their stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahoo! News</td>
<td>WBIR news story of Kickoff Celebration posted in its Knoxville-area local news feed.</td>
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## Social Networking Sites

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>PlanET Facebook contains links to all of the news stories published about the Kickoff Celebration and other events, plus photos of the Kickoff Celebration and posts from the Kickoff Week Twitter feed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>Real-time coverage of the PlanET bus tours and stakeholder meetings in the five PlanET counties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Links to Online Stories/PlanET Information

### Newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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### Television News

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JTgk3_Fp90">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JTgk3_Fp90</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZmCXHRS2ww">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZmCXHRS2ww</a></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video (2): <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxhnNbPqCQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxhnNbPqCQ</a></td>
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### Digital Media

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<tr>
<td>PlanET website</td>
<td><a href="http://planeasttn.org">http://planeasttn.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube (Kickoff Celebration speaker stories)</td>
<td>Video (1): <a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/PlanEastTN#p/u/5/il5LCVPVJyU">http://www.youtube.com/user/PlanEastTN#p/u/5/il5LCVPVJyU</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video (2): <a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/PlanEastTN#p/u/6/1cOyXR3tcMc">http://www.youtube.com/user/PlanEastTN#p/u/6/1cOyXR3tcMc</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video (3): <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyNbmNguy4s">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyNbmNguy4s</a></td>
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</table>
Plan East Tennessee (PlanET) is a regional partnership of communities working toward a shared vision. We seek ideas about protecting our valuable resources and addressing challenges regarding jobs, housing, transportation, a clean environment, and community health. Our goal is to create long-term solutions for investments in our region and to define the next chapter in our rich history, leaving a legacy of optimism and opportunity for future generations.