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PlanET Releases Second Community Survey of E. TN Region Focusing on Jobs, Housing, Transportation, Clean Environment and Community Health Issues

Knoxville, Tenn. – The University of Tennessee on behalf of Plan East Tennessee, or PlanET, released the results of a second community survey that measures public opinion about challenges and opportunities facing the region and priorities for future growth.

The University of Tennessee conducted a telephone survey for PlanET with residents from Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon and Union counties. PlanET is a regional partnership of communities in these five counties building a shared direction for the future.

Although the results on a regional level showed that 78 percent of survey respondents rated the quality of life in their community as “good” or “excellent,” respondents cited improving the quality of education in public schools and creating more manufacturing jobs as the two most important economic and workforce development factors for improving life in the future.

Union County Survey Highlights:

- Those who live in or near a city ranked the quality of life higher than those living in a rural area. Respondents living in Union County the least likely to rate the quality of life as good or excellent (54.0 percent).
- Residents of Union County were significantly more likely to indicate that expanding or creating manufacturing jobs was most important for improving the economy than were those in the other four counties. Almost one in three respondents in Union County (30.4 percent) indicated this factor was their top priority.
- The most important environmental factor for improving the quality of life in the future varied by county and by different segments of respondents. Those in Union County indicated that reducing water pollution in lakes, streams and rivers was the top priority.
- Attitudes about protecting or preserving agricultural land also differed between counties demonstrated by respondents from Union County being more likely than others to identify protecting or preserving agricultural land as the most important environmental factor.

- Almost one in four (22.7 percent) from Union County indicated this was the most important environmental factor.
- The desire to reduce drug abuse was reportedly highest in Union County with almost half of the respondents (47.3 percent) from this county stating this was the most important factor for improving the future of their county.
- The quality of roads was significantly more important to residents in Union County than other counties. Almost half of those from Union County (43.2 percent) indicated that improving the quality of local roads and streets was the most important to them.

“This survey has helped identify the long-term quality of life priorities for people in the five-county PlanET region,” said Mark Donaldson, director of the Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission. “Added to the results of the first survey completed last year, the second offers corroboration of the values and vision expressed by residents of the region during the earlier phases of the PlanET process.”

For more information about PlanET, how to participate in the community forums, or the survey results, please visit www.planeasttn.org.

Survey Methodology

The University of Tennessee’s College of Social Work Center for Applied Research and Evaluation (CARE) conducted a telephone survey of residents in Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon, and Union Counties to measure their attitudes and preferences for improving the future quality of life in their counties. Telephone interviews were completed with 400 residents in each county for a total of 2,000 East Tennessee residents from the five-county region. Interviews were conducted between August 12, 2012 and October 9, 2012 utilizing a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The sample size for this survey results in a +/- 2.19 margin of error at the 95 percent confidence interval for regional results and +/- 4.9 margin of error at the 95% confidence interval for results reported at the county level.

About PlanET

Plan East Tennessee (PlanET) is a regional partnership of communities building a shared direction for the future of Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon and Union counties.

PlanET seeks ideas about preserving valuable resources and addressing challenges regarding jobs, housing, transportation, a clean environment, and community health. The goal: to create long-term solutions for investments in the region and to define the next chapter in the region’s rich history, leaving a legacy of optimism and opportunity for future generations.

PlanET is overseen by the Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) and managed by the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), through a grant awarded from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program to the City of Knoxville.