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For more information, contact:
Kristy Altman, kristy@marybethwest.com
Tyra Haag, tyra@marybethwest.com
865-982-6626
www.planeasttn.org

PlanET Releases Results of Round 3 Public Input

Environment and Agriculture Emerge as Top Issues

Knoxville, Tenn.— The public input from Plan East Tennessee’s (PlanET’s) third round of Regional Outreach Series was held in March and April, during which, more than 900 people participated. The results obtained from this round could not be clearer: issues relating to protecting the environment, redeveloping land and increasing transportation options dominated the discussion. “Participants expressed a strong desire to protect natural resources by improving air and water quality and also to expand local agriculture as the region grows,” said Amy Brooks, Project Manager for PlanET.

Participants were asked to consider the expected growth rate of 300,000 people in 30 years as they provided input in two areas: growth priorities and regional growth concepts. The majority showed a strong preference for growth patterns that strengthen cities and small towns, create quality suburban centers and preserve farmland.

In the growth priorities exercise, a list of 13 issues that would be affected by future growth was provided and participants were asked to select the five most important from that list. The top three issues identified were water quality, air quality and local agriculture. Among the participants were nearly 300 area high school students who indicated that these three environmental issues were their top concerns as they considered their future in this region. For respondents over the age of 18, three additional issues also emerged: opportunities for walking and bicycling, convenient transit and land redevelopment.

With the priorities identified, participants were next asked to review four growth concepts, compare them to a 30-year projection of the current growth trend, and identify

which one they preferred. Across the region, the most strongly favored concepts were ones that focused growth within the region's cities and small towns, and in dynamic suburban centers where both housing and jobs could be congregated.

Over the last 18 months, PlanET has asked residents to share their visions for the future of East Tennessee. The number of people who have answered that call has reached nearly 6,000. A more balanced approach to growth, with development in urban areas, small towns and suburban communities, was strongly favored over continued growth exclusively in lower density suburban styles. Through previous rounds of public input, four central themes have emerged at the heart of a regional vision:

- Build strong towns
- Grow quality places
- Improve health of people and places
- Expand choices for all

In the fourth round of public input, in progress now, PlanET will build on the outcomes of these exercises and ask residents to identify the best ways to make their goals a reality. To review findings from round 3 or to learn how to participate in round 4, see the PlanET website at <http://www.planeasttn.org/Participate>.

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.

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