



SPRAWL DEVELOPMENT ALONG KINGSTON PIKE

The five-county PlanET region, consisting of Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon, and Union Counties, is projected to grow from a population of 698,000 in 2010 to 996,000 by 2040 - a 43% increase. As the focal point of this growth, Knoxville will solidify its position as the center of this dynamic region over this period. This growth will be accompanied by extensive new construction, new infrastructure. However, the nature, effectiveness, and impact of the growth can vary widely depending on our choices, goals, and vision.

Within the context of recent transportation proposals and the regional Plan East Tennessee (PlanET) effort, *Knoxville 2040: Centers and Corridors* envisions a future where growth has been incentivized to support the creation of walkable neighborhoods, provide robust transit options, and counteract the negative effects of sprawl. The report uses Transit Oriented Development (TOD) techniques, which concentrate development around well-served transit hubs, as a fundamental basis for its proposals. However, these techniques are not seen simply as a way to ensure the viability of new transit systems. To ask the question this way is to get it the wrong way around. Rather, the report asks the more compelling questions of what types of neighborhoods and civic spaces might arise from leveraging the possibilities presented by expanded transit systems and what types of lives might be available to Knoxville's citizens in these places.

By focusing on the urban design possibilities inherent in nodes linked by diverse transit options, *Knoxville 2040: Centers and Corridors* certainly intends to move civic thinking away from

the development models that drive sprawl. This shift is not made out of a sense of obligation, though the environmental and social arguments for doing so are compelling. Instead, the plan is driven by the desire to create places where Knoxville residents are able to pursue healthy, active lifestyles; are socially connected to their neighbors; have easy access to civic amenities; enjoy clean air and water resources; reap the benefits of energy efficient buildings and urban areas; and can move around the city easily and affordably. In other words, the plan endeavors to create the places where people want to live that are not currently available.

By pursuing the primary goal of quality placemaking, the *Knoxville 2040: Centers and Corridors* scenario generates significant collateral benefits. These include protecting the region's rural and natural landscapes and critical habitats, positioning the city to respond to an uncertain energy future, allowing for the efficient use of existing infrastructure while providing a path to transition to decentralized infrastructure, and fostering the ability for the city to be agile in its future transportation choices. The result is an efficient, dynamic city positioned to attract and retain the intellectual capital and active citizenry necessary to compete in the 21st century.

While this is an ambitious vision, it is important to remember that the changes to come in the next 30 years will be tremendous whether or not we shape them to our advantage. To keep the status quo, which is to follow the sprawl model of the last several decades, will also lead to a radical reshaping of the city that will continue to devour

land; stretch municipal infrastructure and services; put mobility out of the reach of more of our citizens; make the city more susceptible to unpredictability in energy markets; make us less economically and energy efficient; put greater burdens on our air, water, and habitat; estrange us from our neighbors; and create spaces loved by no one. Ultimately, it will put us at a significant disadvantage when competing for the best and brightest citizens in a world where capital, work, and information are increasingly fluid.

The Knoxville of 2040 is as distant as we look forward in time as is the city's 1982 World's Fair is looking backward. The fair imagined a bright future defined by amazing energy technologies. We have realized some of that promise. Much is still waiting to be claimed. Since 1982 we have developed a much deeper understanding of the connection between our cities and the wider environment and have rediscovered the power of place in creating better lives for our citizens. Cities across the US, Knoxville included, have experienced a renaissance that few could have predicted in 1982. The hope of this proposal, therefore, is to not only fully claim the vision of 1982, but to move well beyond it to a Knoxville of 2040 that is integrally tied to both its people and its region while competing on the national and global stages.